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BRIEFING NOTE

**STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON AFRICAN DEFENSE AND SECURITY POLICY, WITH
SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE OPERATIONALISATION OF THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This briefing note provides an overview of the status of implementation of the Common African Defence and Security Policy and other relevant instruments on defence and security on the Continent. It provides an update on the operationalization of the Africa Standby Force (ASF). To this end, it will highlight the key achievements made to date in the implementation of the policy with a recognition of the challenges being faced, and will end with recommendations on the way forward.

2. Guided by the principles enshrined in the African Union (AU) Constitutive Act and in the United Nations (UN) Charter, the AU Heads of State and Government developed the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP) of 2004. The CADSP is a common vision of a united and strong Africa based on the scrupulous respect for human rights, peaceful coexistence, non-aggression, non-interference in the internal matters of Member States, mutual respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State. It aims to enhance the collective security, peacekeeping and conflict management and resolution capabilities in Africa. As a policy, it serves as a critical framework for AU Member States to coordinate their defence and security efforts in an effort to promote stability on the Continent.

3. The Policy is premised on a common African perception of what is required to be done collectively by African States to ensure Africa's common defence and security interests and goals. It recognizes the indivisibility of security in Africa, that the defence and security of one African country is directly linked to that of other African countries – with the desire of harmonizing the activities of Member States in these areas. Member States also undertake to consult among themselves and to adopt common positions on matters relating to defence that affect or constitute a potential threat to the collective security of the Continent.

II. AU LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND INSTRUMENTS ON DEFENCE AND SECURITY IN THE CONTINENT

4. The CADSP draws upon several existing instruments, including the 1977 Convention for the Elimination of Mercenaries in Africa, the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba), the Bamako Convention on the Ban of Import and Control of Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes Within Africa, the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on Illicit Proliferation, Circulation, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, the Plan of Action from the first Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines, among others. These instruments are complemented by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, declarations on political and socio-economic situations, conflict prevention mechanisms, and cooperation agreements on health, development, and inter-African relations. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for addressing diverse security challenges in Africa. In addition to the CADSP, several other AU instruments and legal frameworks contribute to the overall defence and security landscape in Africa.

5. Article 3 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU identifies “the development of a Common Defence Policy for the Union” as one of the objectives of the PSC, in alignment with Article 4(d) of the AU Constitutive Act. Furthermore, Article 7 of the Protocol grants the PSC the authority to implement the Common Defense Policy of the AU. Within this same Protocol (thereinafter referred to as the PSC Protocol), article 13 provides for the establishment of an African Standby Force, to enable the PSC perform its responsibilities with respect

to the deployment of peace support missions and interventions pursuant to article 4(h) and (j) of the AU Constitutive Act (2000).

6. The ASF is a key pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) established in 2002 as a comprehensive agenda for conflict prevention, management and resolution on the Continent. It comprises the AU PSC, Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the ASF, and Panel of the Wise. The APSA plays a critical role in supporting the implementation of the CADSP by facilitating regional and continental cooperation on security issues. The ASF is thus a key component of the APSA and is designed to provide rapid and effective response to conflicts and crises in the Continent.

III. PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CADSP

7. The CADSP is guided by a set of principles and values, as outlined in Article 4 of the AU Constitutive Act. These principles include, among others, respect for the sovereign equality and interdependence among AU Member States, the peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States through agreed-upon means, non-interference in the internal affairs of other Member States, and the right of the AU to intervene in a Member State in case of grave circumstances such as war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, or a serious threat to legitimate order. This intervention can be initiated by a decision of the AU Assembly upon the recommendation of the AU PSC, or Member States can request intervention from the AU to restore peace and security.

8. Within the same context, one of the objectives of the Policy includes the provision of “a framework to establish and operationalize the ASF” as provided for in the PSC Protocol¹. In the same vein, the Policy defines the ASF as an implementing mechanism for the decisions of the PSC.

IV. STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS OF THE AU POLICY ORGANS

9. The implementation of the CADSP rests with the Organs, specialized agencies and specialized institutions for implementing the Common Defence and Security Policy for the African continent. These include the AU Assembly, the AU PSC, the AU Commission, and the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs). Similarly, the RECs/RMs have adopted policies on defence and security issues, which are considered as the building blocks of the Policy. The Policy also provides for coordination between the PSC and other Continental bodies, as well as with the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations – as provided for in the PSC Protocol. The PSC cooperates and works closely with the UN Security Council (UNSC), within the context of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

10. With regards to the ASF, the AU Assembly through Assembly Decision [Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.1\(XIV\)](#) declared the ASF as fully operational through its 14th Extraordinary Assembly on Silencing the Guns held on 6th December 2020. It further directed the AU PSC to utilize the ASF framework in mandating and authorizing AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs). Pursuant to paragraph 2(d) of the Declaration of the 14th meeting of the STCDSS, the Commission facilitated an AU-RECs/RMs-Member States working group meeting from 24 to 26 October 2022 that finalized the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and the RECs/RMs on the ASF.

11. Pursuant to this Assembly decision, and as guided by the 14th meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense Safety and Security (STCDSS), the Commission submitted a Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the AU and the RECs/RMs on the ASF for consideration by the 15th meeting of the STCDSS held on 12th May 2023. The MoU was adopted by the

¹ Paragraph III, Article 13 (q)

STCDSS, and will subsequently be submitted to the 37th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly for further endorsement ahead of further implementation. Within the same context, the Commission has continued to support Member States to implement the various areas of a CADSP, including the treaties, charters, conventions, agreements, and declarations. Specifically, the Commission is supporting Member States in the disarmament, nonproliferation and arms control agenda. This includes Conventional Weapons, whose ability to damage comes from kinetic, incendiary, or explosive energy. It comprises small arms and light weapons (SALW), defensive shields, sea and land mines, conventional bombs, shells, rockets, missiles and cluster munitions, and in the implementation of the Lomé Charter on Unconstitutional Changes of Government. The support includes for Member States to meet their obligations under these instruments – including domesticating them and accessing the global technical and financial support available for implementing them. The other category of arms is Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). These include nuclear, biological, radiological and chemical weapons.

12. The Commission is supporting Member States in the fight against illicit SALW in mine action, to counter improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other conventional weapons. In the category of WMDs, the Commission is supporting Member States in the implementation of the African Nuclear Weapons-Free-Zone Treaty in nonproliferation – while promoting peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. It does this in partnership with the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) and other international partners.

V. PROGRESS ON THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE ASF

13. The Commission has registered significant strides in the full operationalization of the ASF. Pursuant to the directives of the 14th meeting of the STCDSS the Commission conducted the Inaugural Lessons Learned Forum (LLF) from 1 to 3 November 2022 in Abuja, Nigeria which assessed the lessons from the conduct of 27 Africa-Led PSOs (over the last 20 years) since the establishment of the AU and adoption of the PSC Protocol to guide the reconceptualization of the ASF – pursuant to paragraph 2(e) of the Declaration of the 14th meeting of the STCDSS. The LLF concluded that the Revised ASF Concept should clarify what should constitute AU and/or RECs/RMs mandated PSOs, including the required support and coordination that should be facilitated to ensure effective ASF operations. The LLF conclusions informed the conduct of a workshop on the Reconceptualization of the ASF from 29 to 31 March 2023, which formed a basis of an update submitted to the 15th meeting of the STCDSS. The 15th meeting of the STCDSS further requested the Commission to conduct a strategic review of the ASF, with the participation of both, the Member States and RECs/RMs, and to report to the 16th Ordinary Meeting of the STCDSS.

14. The strategic review of the ASF Concept will also be facilitated simultaneously with the development of an AU PSO Capability Generation Guidelines that will provide strategic guidance to the AU, RECs/RMs and Member States in the generation, preparation, and management of multidimensional AU PSO capabilities as well as finalization of an ASF Guidelines on Standby Arrangements that seeks to enable rapid deployment. This will enable readiness and verification of pledged capabilities whose reports will be submitted to the STCDSS - in accordance with paragraph 3(d) of the declaration of the 12th meeting of the STCDSS.

15. As directed by the 14th STCDSS, the Commission is also facilitating assessments of pledged strategic lift aircrafts from the Republic of Congo, Republic of Gabon, Republic of Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, Republic of Angola, Republic of Uganda, and Republic of Cameroon as part of efforts to enhance strategic lift capability, and finalizing MoUs for the utilization of these assets. Alongside these processes, the Commission is also finalizing the Strategic Lift Concept, which will be validated with the RECs/RMs later this year

(2023). The Concept will incorporate contributions from Member States, including the Republic of Tunisia that has proposed the establishment of an Africa Air Mobility Wing.

16. In the same vein, the Commission has revised the ASF Communication, Command, Control and Information Systems (C3IS) Concept, and will work with RECs/RMs for its finalization. Following the guidance received by the 15th meeting of the STCDSS, the Commission will be facilitating efforts to operationalize the ASF C3IS capability and work with the RECs/RMs to finalize the Strategic Lift Concept, for consideration by the 16th meeting of the STCDSS in 2024.

17. Additionally, the Continental Logistics Base (CLB) has since its operationalization, donated specialized equipment of about US\$8,759,666.00 and US\$7,122,720.73 to SAMIM and MNJTF respectively from the CLB, in support of ongoing efforts against terrorism and for the enhancement of the capabilities and operations of these missions. The Commission has also established the Continental Movement Coordination Centre (CMCC) to facilitate coordination of strategic lift and movement of AU personnel and equipment for the deployment of PSOs.

VI. CHALLENGES

18. Despite the considerable progress made in the operationalization of the ASF, there are significant challenges that have been identified that are hindering its full operationalization as per the current ASF concept. In this regard, the following are the key observations on crucial thematic areas:

- a) **The Vision of the ASF:** It has been noted that the AU, RECs/RMs and Member States have not utilized the ASF as envisaged by the Policy Framework on the ASF and Military Staff Committee (2003). This is in consideration of the fact that whilst the ASF was envisioned to be continentally coordinated and utilized by the AU, it has been regionally owned and used by the RECs/RMs, at times without indicating whether their deployments are done within the framework of the ASF.
- b) **Political Decision Making and Utilization of the ASF:** the current ASF Concept anticipated that all political decision making of AU PSOs would be initiated by the AU PSC, which would then request the five RECs/RMs PLANELMs to deploy PSOs using the ASF framework. However, Africa-led PSOs have been deployed through a variety of means, where some did not necessarily utilize the ASF framework. As such, Member States have preferred to use capabilities that are closer to a crisis or are directly affected by it, to have more of a direct strategic interest in its resolution– and thereafter seek authorization and/or endorsement from the AU and by extension the UN for political recognition and support of such operations.
- c) **Standby Arrangements:** The Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) or pledged capabilities of the Regional Standby Forces (RSFs) of the RECs/RMs have not be used as initially designed. This is the case, in that the RECs/RMs have indicated that they neither envisage deploying their RSF outside their region, nor do they expect another REC/RM to deploy in their own sub-region which they have primary responsibility to secure.
- d) **Planning Elements (PLANELMs) and Logistical Bases:** The ASF Logistics Concept indicates that Strategic Deployment Stocks (SDCs) should be stored in the Continental Logistics Base (CLB) as they are critical for rapid deployment and mission start-up. It also calls for the prepositioning of required materials and equipment in established Regional Logistics Depots (RLDs) of each REC/RM to ensure rapid lifting and movement of such resources to mission areas within respective regions as required. However, none of the RLDs have been

fully established or operational to support ASF deployments. Thus, all SDCs have to be lifted from the CLB to support any conflict situation on the continent.

- e) **Funding:** The lack of predictable, adequate and sustainable funding is a primary factor that has adversely affected the effective utilization of the ASF. This challenge is recurrent in the implementation of various PSOs and ASF-related activities, including training, exercises, force generation, deployment, sustenance, management and liquidation of missions. Without the use of the AU Peace Fund and its replenishment through annual contributions by Members States, investments and partner contributions to the Fund, realization of the objectives of the Peace Fund may not be achieved.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

19. While progress has been made in implementing the CADSP and other relevant instruments on defence and security in Africa, challenges and gaps persist especially concerning the full operationalization of the ASF. Notwithstanding, it is important to acknowledge the progress made in the operationalization of the ASF and its critical role in enabling Africa-led PSOs. The recently adopted Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and the RECs/RMs on the ASF by the 15th meeting of the STCDSS is a step in the right direction in bridging some of the identified gaps concerning the full operationalization of the ASF. However, there are critical areas that would need to be addressed. In this regard, this Ministerial meeting of the PSC may wish to consider the following:

- a) Calling on Member States to demonstrate and renew their political will and commitment to the CADSP, as well as for the utilization of the ASF for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts on the continent;
- b) Reiterating the call of the 15th meeting of the STCDSS and urge the Commission to expedite the strategic review of the ASF, taking note of the Conclusions of the Inaugural Lessons Learned Forum adopted by the PSC at its 1129th meeting held on 20 December 2022 and ensure the alignment of the ASF Concept to enable its effective utilization.
- c) Urging Member States to intensify its efforts in addressing the issue of predictable, adequate and sustainable funding for peace and security activities and priorities of the AU, including through commitment to ensure annual contributions to the AU Peace Fund according to the approved scales of assessment, as well as through ongoing engagements to determine the modalities for the use of UN-assessed contributions to support Africa-led peace and security priorities authorized by the UNSC on a case-by-case; and,
- d) Requesting Member States to continue strengthening institutional capacity-building efforts and coordination among RECs/RMs to facilitate Africa-Led and Africa-owned initiatives in addressing peace and security challenges on the continent.

2023-06-22

Communiqué of the 1159th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 22 June 2023, on the Briefing on the Status of Implementation of the Common African Defence and Security Policy and Other Relevant Defence and Security Instruments on the Continent, with Specific Focus on Update on Operationalization of the African Standby Force.

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