



DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Defining Pathways Forward: Enhancing the Partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in Peace Operations

Date and Time: 6th November 2025 at 09:00/09:30-11:40 EST

Location: AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN, 305 East 47th Street, 5th Floor

Please register using this link:

<https://nupinytt.wufoo.com/forms/m1wyrzxb1wnlk7i/>

Background

Over the past decade, the geopolitical, normative and operational landscape of peace operations in Africa has undergone significant change, marked by a notable rise, of ad-hoc forms of African-led peace support operations (PSOs) alongside the drawdown of major United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKO) missions on the continent. These shifts have also been marked by a lack of sufficient or adequate action on the part of the African Union (AU) and the UN, shifting geopolitical alliances, hybrid threats, rising demand for and often resort to localised, agile and context-specific responses and a heightened scrutiny of multilateralism itself.

Since the signing of the 2017 UN-AU Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and more recently the UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023) on using UN-assessed contributions to finance AU-led PSOs, expectations concerning the partnership's ability to respond to Africa's evolving security threats have grown, which are testing the foundations and functionality of the partnership.

The shifting nature of conflicts, marked by asymmetry, fragmentation and transnational threats, has exposed the limits and often the inadequacy of existing peace operation models across the continent. Simultaneously, regional actors have moved to fill the vacuum. This includes not only RECs and ad-hoc coalitions but also private security actors, often operating under politically complex and resource-constrained conditions. Beyond these changes in the security dynamics, the international system is undergoing a fundamental transition from a unipolar order historically dominated by Western powers to a more fluid and contested multipolar configuration. While formal multilateral institutions remain in place, the actual management of global order increasingly occurs through ad-hoc negotiation, tactical alignments, and regional power bargains among a mix of primary and middle powers. This emergent order is less rules-based and more transactional, marked by shifting coalitions, divergent normative frameworks and uneven commitments to multilateralism.

In view of the foregoing, the importance of the partnership between the AU and the UN and the role of the AU have acquired particular significance as encapsulated in UNSC Res 2719 and the Pact for the Future despite the partnership not always being equal. In this context, the two institutions will need to find a way to navigate these dynamics going forward. Therefore, the AU-UN partnership must move beyond the familiar burden-sharing and capacity building assertions to confront the current fundamental challenges such as strategic alignment, political coherence, sustainable financing, accountability mechanisms, shared assessments and adaptive mission design.

The *Defining Pathways Forward: Enhancing the Partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in Peace Operations* event, held during the Peace Operations Review Week, aims to facilitate a bold and forward-looking conversation. It will convene leading African and international policy and research institutions, as well as AU and UN officials, to discuss not only possible models but also a wide range of ways in which the two organisations can work together going forward. As a result, the event will serve as a platform for honest assessment and creative policy thinking.

Objectives

The main objectives of the event are as follows,

1. Critically assess the evolution of the AU-UN partnership, highlighting progress and limitations;
2. Interrogate entrenched assumptions around mandates, legitimacy, operational sequencing and financing;
3. Examine persisting risks, dilemmas and challenges;

4. Explore innovative and realistic engagement and deployment models;
5. Explore pathways for institutional, normative and operational innovation;
6. Propose forward looking policy recommendations, including the roles of diverse actors, RECs/RMs, civil society, youth and knowledge institutions.

Agenda

Time	Activity
09:00 – 09:30	Participant arrival, registration and coffee.
09:30- 10:00	<p><i>Welcome Remarks and Moderator:</i></p> <p>Prof Cedric de Coning, Training for Peace Programme, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and ACCORD</p> <p><i>Opening remarks:</i></p> <p>Amb Mohamed Edrees, Permanent Representative of the African Union to the United Nations in New York</p> <p>Representative, The Permanent Mission of Ghana to the United Nations (TBC)</p> <p>Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, United Nations</p> <p>Amb Andreas Løvold, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway</p>
10:00-11:30	<p><i>Panel discussion</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesutimilehin O. Akamo, Coordinator, Research and Policy Analysis, Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) 2. Dr Emma Birikorang, Director of Research of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) 3. Jacqueline Seck Diouf, Chief, African Union Partnership, Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations 4. Dawit Yirga, Deputy Managing Editor, Security Council Report <p>Q&A</p>
11:30-11:40	<p><i>Closing Remarks</i></p> <p>Air Commodore David Anetey Akrong Commandant, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC)</p> <p>Amb Amar Bendjama, Permanent representative of Algeria to the United Nations</p>