

Southern African Civil Society Consultation on the Commission for Africa Report
14th - 15th June 2005
Johannesburg, South Africa

Report by the Expert Group on Peace & Security

Introduction

The Chair opened the discussions, providing a brief overview of Peace & Security as presented in the CfA Report. She suggested that there had been no intent by the CfA to conduct any new research - rather, the component on peace and security was a compilation of existing work in this arena. In discussing their role, the participants of the group concluded that they would provide their input concerning the Report's analysis as well as recommendations (as outlined on pp 69 - 70).

Specifically, in responding to the question "what does the CfA seek to accomplish?" the group determined that the Report aims to:

- provide the landscape of peace and security on the continent
- pull together a vision of best practice
- give a general but clear view of the challenges facing Africa
- provide general recommendations to overcome such challenges.

The group found the Report often easy to challenge, being too brief in some cases and omitting important facts in others. The participants recognized that the focus of the Report was not peace and security, but rather development in the classical sense. They noted, however, that one cannot speak of development without reference to peace and security, and that, as a result, the issues raised would have to be addressed in terms of development. One participant, quoting from the Report - "[i]nvesting in development is itself an investment in peace and security" - offered that the inverse was also true.

While the participants applauded the majority of the analysis of Peace & Security in the Report, they failed to reach consensus on the overall potential success of its recommendations and likely impact. The question "what will the CfA probably achieve?" was said to be dependent upon two variables: the amount of resources provided by donor nations and the extent to which Africans take ownership of the Report.

General concerns raised during the discussions included:

- Has the Report achieved the mandate to "do no harm"? Is there danger of undermining the work already done in respect of peace and security by in a sense "reinventing the wheel"?
- Is there sufficient political will to see the recommendations through?
- Who is the target audience of the Report? Was the goal of the UK government in creating the Report simply to convince other donor nations to "buy in"? If so, and Africans do not take ownership of the Report, how can it accomplish what it has set out to do?
- What is the shelf-life of the Report? Does it have a future, beyond the G8 Summit at Gleneagles?

In critiquing the Report, the participants reached agreement on the following broad points:

- The main issue is the provision of resources and aid for the continent, including human resources.
- What is called for is funding for capacity building. We need less policy and more efforts at implementation. It is here the G8 countries can offer their support.
- The initiatives contained in the Report must be more concretely linked to existing ones - namely, those treaties, protocols, mechanisms, etc. already in place in Africa by virtue of the AU, NEPAD, SADC/SIPO, ECOWAS, EAC, IGAD, COMESA, and others.
- If the substance of the Report is an effort at supplementation (e.g. vis-à-vis NEPAD), the CfA must be more specific about the way the initiatives will feed into the current peace and security architecture on the continent.
- Unless the Report is an appendage to existing documents, Africa cannot take ownership of it because it would fail to recognize what is already on the ground.
- The G8 countries must harmonize and coordinate their own policies concerning Africa. When these policies conflict and are not tailored to the reality of peace and security in Africa, they operate to undermine one another, and any efforts being made.
- Priorities in respect of peace and security are best set within Africa, for example by means such as the APRM, and not by donor nations who may be influenced by irrelevant external forces.

The group debated the merits of and evaluated a number of specific recommendations made in the Report.

Conditionalities

- The proviso "in return for the implementation of effective financial accountability by the AU" relating to the financing of 50% of the Peace Fund must be removed. It has no place in this Report. Moreover, funding ought to be given unconditionally, so as to deny donors a "way out" of meeting their obligations.

Arms Trade Treaty

- The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) may not be viable. Certainly, the timeline for its development is over ambitious. As a controversial plan, it may distract from ongoing efforts to control the arms trade in Africa (note that 2006 is the year the non-proliferation agreement is being reviewed). Rather, we may be best advised to continue to keep the pressure high on current initiatives (e.g. the landmine agreement which has yet to be ratified by several key nations).

Early warning

- Although this has been a function of states, other significant actors - especially civil society - should be explicitly brought into the agenda. Civil society has been engaging in this area (for example, through think tanks) but there has been no open engagement with state structures. The reluctance of states to allow for this kind of participation is a challenge that must be overcome.

Security sector reform

- The Report speaks to security sector reform, but should reference security sector “transformation” instead - this terminology will remove the air of hostility surrounding efforts at “reform”.

Conflict resources

- In securing a definition of “conflict resources” the Report should have considered the definition of “war economy” (ECOWAS; NEPAD). There is a need for greater linkages between the Report and the existing peace and security architecture within Africa.
- In attempting to find a solution to the prevalence of conflict rooted in the trade of resources, the Report does not recognize the locus of responsibility for the problem - that is, both the buyers of resources and the suppliers of weapons used in conflict are one and the same (Western powers).
- In this vein, the CfA ought to take into consideration the recommendations of the UN relating to the proliferation of small arms. The problem has become politicized and has not been appropriately addressed in the past.
- The CfA should provide resources to fight the war economies, through processes like the Kimberly process.
- A permanent Expert Panel under the control of the UN should be established.

Peacekeeping and the UN Peacebuilding Commission

- The issue of peacekeeping must be viewed as a larger function than the provision of a military force. It is about peacebuilding, conflict management, prevention, peacemaking, mediation, sanctions capacity, etc.
- Interestingly, the CfA adopted recommendations of the High Level Panel. Specifically, there must be support for the UN Peacebuilding Commission, recommended by the UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which builds upon the prevalence of early warning mechanisms. It is possible, however, that this initiative duplicates the function of the AU Peace and Security Council.
- Efforts at post-conflict peacebuilding must be given adequate financial support.

One final issue briefly discussed by the group was the use of private security firms or mercenaries. It was said that there is a need for developed countries to concern themselves with this issue.

The group found that states lack capacity to be adequately engaged in the Report and, accordingly, that there is room for civil society organizations (CSOs) to have an impact on the ground (for example, by fulfilling an early warning function). The problem with some African states, it was noted, was that they are not as open-minded when it comes to seeking the input of CSOs, meaning that this perspective never comes to light. Moreover, the participants remarked that some donors do not want involvement with CSOs because of the politicization of their work. They further recognized that the aims of CSOs, however, are typically not political at all. The group expressed concern that in any event civil society did not have a voice at the Consultation, as the attendees were primarily experts who were engaging in a debate over the policy postulated in the Report.

Group participants

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