

**Meeting the Challenge of  
Conflict Prevention in Africa**

Towards the Operationalization of the  
Continental Early Warning System

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**FRAMEWORK FOR THE  
OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE  
CONTINENTAL EARLY  
WARNING SYSTEM**

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# FRAMEWORK FOR THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE CONTINENTAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM <sup>1</sup>

1. Within the framework of the efforts to operationalise the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), as provided for by article 12 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), a meeting on early warning and conflict prevention, bringing together governmental experts from AU Member States and representatives of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), namely the Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), was held in Kempton Park, South Africa, from 17 to 19 December 2006. The meeting was also attended by representatives of African research centres and academic institutions, NGOs, as well as international organizations, including the United Nations, as observers. The meeting was a follow up to the decision of the PSC taken at its 57<sup>th</sup> meeting, held in Addis Ababa on 21 June 2006, which requested the AU Commission to hasten the operationalization of the continental peace and security architecture, including the CEWS.

2. The meeting, which was opened by H.E. Mr. Ronnie Kasrils, Minister for Intelligence Services of the Republic of South Africa, in the presence of the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Ambassador Saïd Djinnit, had the following objectives:

- to take stock of the progress made so far towards the operationalisation of the CEWS and challenges encountered in this process;
- to examine international experiences on early warning and their relevance to Africa's efforts to fully operationalise the CEWS;
- to agree on the key steps that should be taken for the full operationalisation of the CEWS, including (i) the collection of data, (ii) strategic analysis of the data collected, through an appropriate indicators module, (iii) early warning reports and engagement with decision makers, and (iv) the coordination and collaboration with the Regional Mechanisms for conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and other stakeholders on conflict prevention and early warning in Africa; and
- to adopt a Roadmap that would clearly spell out the steps to be taken towards the operationalisation of the CEWS and the role of each of the stakeholders, as well as the timelines for implementation.

1 This paper was presented at the Meeting of Governmental Experts on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention, Kempton Park, South Africa, 17–19 December 2006. Reference: PSD/EW/EXP/FRAMEWORK (I)

3. During the general debate, the meeting acknowledged the progress made in developing the overall African peace and security architecture and noted the increasing close collaboration between the AU, its Member States and the RECs on early warning and conflict prevention.
4. The meeting acknowledged the efforts of the AU and the RECs, in the context of the relevant provisions of the PSC Protocol and other relevant instruments, to strengthen their conflict prevention capacity, and welcomed the progress made toward the operationalisation of the CEWS.
5. The meeting commended the AU Commission for the preparation of the relevant documentation in support of its deliberations, namely the Draft Roadmap for the Operationalisation of the CEWS, the Draft Proposal for an Indicators Module, and the document entitled “Civil Society Participation in Conflict Prevention in Africa: An Agenda for Action”; as well as Background Papers.

#### **A) ON THE STATUS OF THE OPERATIONALISATION OF THE CEWS**

6. The meeting noted the progress made in operationalising the CEWS, including the two workshops on early warning held in Addis Ababa on 30 and 31 October 2003 and 25 to 27 April 2006, respectively. The meeting further acknowledged the critical role of these workshops in enabling the development of a shared framework for the implementation of the CEWS and called for the continued collaboration of all stakeholders in the operationalisation of the CEWS.
7. The meeting was briefed on the status of implementation of early warning systems in the AU Commission and the RECs, as well as their collaborative efforts to accelerate the establishment of the CEWS. In this context, the meeting noted the increasing need for analytical and conflict prevention capacity within the continent, and welcomed the approach within the AU and the RECs to consider early warning and conflict prevention, peace support operations and post-conflict reconstruction and development as interdependent issues.
8. The meeting also noted that the RECs were at various levels of development of their respective early warning systems. In this respect, it stressed the need to speed up the ongoing efforts at regional level, especially in those RECs that are still at the initial stages of developing their early warning systems, and urged their completion by 2008. The meeting welcomed the steps taken within the framework of the Africa Peace Facility (APF), established by the European Union (EU) at the request of the AU, to enhance the early warning and preventive capacity of the RECs.

#### **B) ON THE KEY ELEMENTS FOR THE OPERATIONALISATION OF THE CEWS**

9. The meeting emphasised that the purpose of the CEWS is the provision of timely advice on potential conflicts and threats to peace and security to enable the development of appropriate response strategies to prevent or resolve conflicts in Africa. It is, therefore, es-

essential that the CEWS be designed to meet the requirements of the continent. The CEWS should be need-based, and all efforts should be made to mobilise the resources required. In particular, the meeting made recommendations on the following issues.

**(i) Data collection, analysis, and indicators module**

**10.** The meeting recognised the need to adopt a pragmatic approach towards early warning that would allow the AU to undertake preventive diplomacy within the framework of the relevant principles enshrined in the PSC Protocol. In this regard, the meeting recalled that the collection and analysis of data relevant to the prevention of violent conflict is a major task of the relevant AU structures, in particular the Conflict Management Division and its Situation Room. The meeting reiterated that the collection and analysis of data should be done in a systematic manner, using a specific framework in accordance with the provisions contained in the PSC Protocol. The meeting discussed the need for institutional linkages between the AU and the RECs to ensure complementarity of their early warning systems, as well as the possibility of incorporating inputs from existing early warning systems, whether on conflict or other issues.

**11.** The meeting further recalled the relevant provisions of the PSC Protocol that call for collaboration with the United Nations, its agencies, other relevant international organizations, research institutes, academic institutions and NGOs. The meeting recognised that the effective functioning of the CEWS requires that data be obtained from multiple sources, with emphasis on African sources, including the AU, the RECs, Member States, research centres, including the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, academic institutions, NGOs, the media, as well as the United Nations and its agencies, and other relevant international organizations, as provided for by the PSC Protocol. The meeting underlined the need to ensure accuracy, reliability, transparency and objectivity in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. At the same time, the meeting stressed that sensitive information should be treated with the appropriate level of confidentiality, and should be transmitted through secure channels.

**13.** The meeting welcomed the development of the module of generic indicators in line with the relevant provisions of the PSC Protocol, which call for a common framework of political, economic, social, military and humanitarian indicators. It noted that the module was based on existing OAU/AU documents adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government and other organs of the AU, including the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Framework Document, the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) process, the Common African Defence and Security Policy, the Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact, and other relevant AU instruments, taking into account best practices and lessons learned in conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa.

**14.** The meeting requested that the indicators module and subsequent analysis and generation of response options be gender-mainstreamed, in accordance with the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and

Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). The meeting also recommended that the generic indicators be clustered according to the categories under article 12(4) of the PSC Protocol, and that other categories, such as environmental indicators, be considered when relevant to conflict prevention.

**15.** The meeting observed that, while the immediate focus of information gathering and analysis should be on significant threats of violence and loss of life, the indicators' module should also focus on the root causes of conflicts.

**16.** The meeting stressed that early warning required continuous monitoring, not only to prevent the outbreak of conflict but also to warn of escalation or resurgence of conflict. The meeting further stressed that policy options can only be developed based on strategic analysis of trends and dynamics, and their significance in specific contexts. The meeting recognised that the indicators' module, while not comprehensive or exhaustive, could be adapted to particular conflict situations for which specific and easy-to-monitor thresholds can be developed. The meeting recommended the adoption of a realistic approach that will focus attention, in the short-run, on a limited number of cases, namely: (i) situations likely to escalate into violent conflict in the immediate future, (ii) situations of ongoing crises or conflicts, (iii), and post-conflict situations.

**17.** The meeting emphasized the importance of ensuring that the staff tasked with early warning functions (data collection, verification, analysis and the provision of policy options) possess the requisite analytical capability, expertise, and experience. The meeting also recognized that the efficient management of data and information should include adequate collection, compilation, management and distribution systems, and that some level of automation may be required in light of the complexity involved in dealing with considerable amounts of information. The meeting agreed that all efforts should be made to strengthen the relevant capacities (human, financial and technical) at the AU and the RECs, to ensure the effective functioning of the CEWS.

#### **(ii) On Early Action and Engagement with Decision Makers**

**18.** The true test of the CEWS will be its ability to generate not only timely analysis but also effective response options – an inextricable link to early action is a core principle of an effective early warning system.

**19.** Consequently, there is need to tailor the CEWS to the requirements and specific needs of its end-users, and decision-makers, in particular the Chairperson of the Commission and the Chair of the PSC, as well as other organs and structures such as the Panel of the Wise, the Pan-African Parliament and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Moreover, and in view of the wide range of stakeholders involved and the information that should be communicated, the meeting stressed the need to ensure the provision of appropriate reports for the various categories of AU decision-makers.

**20.** Assuring quality (comprehensiveness, accuracy, reliability and relevance), efficiency (timeliness), objectivity, diversity and appropriate formatting in the presentation of analy-

sis and options for response by the CEWS are critical. The meeting recognized that the full implementation of the CEWS would entail improving the quality of existing products and the development of new ones such as Early Warning Reports, which would be the subject of appropriate consultations between the Commission and the country (ies) concerned, drawing on lessons learnt from the NEPAD Peer Review Mechanism.

21. The meeting stressed that the development of means of engagement with all decision-makers is a priority, and fully endorsed the recommendations put forward in the Roadmap for the Operationalisation of the CEWS in this regard. These include, *inter alia*, the production of regular Reports of the Chairperson to the PSC on the overall peace and security situation in the five regions of the continent, with a strong early warning component; the inclusion, where appropriate, of early warning focused sections in the regular Reports of the Chairperson to the PSC; the strengthening of the PSC and the Chairperson's bi-annual reports to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the state of peace and security in Africa. The meeting agreed that these reports should identify different response options, including preventive diplomacy, appropriate sanctions and intervention, if necessary, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitutive Act. In this regard, the meeting called upon the RECs/Regions to accelerate the operationalisation of their regional standby brigades.

22. The meeting noted that the full operationalisation of the CEWS would strengthen the engagement of the Pan-African Parliament and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights with the Chairperson of the Commission and the PSC in conflict prevention, as provided for in the PSC Protocol. The meeting underlined the need for the above-mentioned organs to address the PSC on a regular basis.

23. The meeting underlined the critical role that should be played by the Panel of the Wise in conflict prevention. In this regard, the meeting urged the Chairperson of the Commission to swiftly operationalise the Panel.

### **(iii) On Co-ordination and Collaboration**

24. Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution are important components of the overall peace and security architecture of the AU. Synchronisation, coordination, collaboration and harmonisation between the AU and the RECs are essential for the effective functioning of the CEWS. The meeting noted the considerable progress that the AU and the RECs had achieved in coordinating their activities and collaborating on matters of peace and security in Africa.

25. However, in light of the varying levels of development and implementation of regional early warning systems, there is need to support the RECs through financial and technical assistance, to finalize the process of developing their respective systems. This is especially important in view of the requirement of the PSC Protocol for observation and monitoring units of the Regional Mechanisms to be linked directly, through appropriate means of communication, to the AU Situation Room for the purposes of transmission of data, information and analysis.

**26.** The meeting endorsed the various recommendations contained in the Roadmap for strengthening the relationship between the AU and the RECs, including: a system of regular exchange of information and the establishment of secure website to that end; the convening of periodic meetings on early warning; exchange of experiences; joint training and capacity building actions; the systematic participation of RECs and other relevant regional mechanisms in discussions on issues brought before the PSC and of interest to them the establishment of liaison offices; and the commencement of joint activities in early warning and conflict prevention as soon as possible. The meeting further recommended that guidelines and benchmarks be developed in consultation with the Regional Mechanisms, to enable the harmonization of systems in the short term and enhance synergies and complementarity.

**27.** The meeting called for the swift conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and the RECs in the areas of conflict prevention, management and resolution, which would help to streamline the relationship and establish a framework for the effective flow of information.

**28.** The meeting also welcomed the recommendation in the Roadmap to strengthen the cooperation and continued interaction with the United Nations and its agencies, and, in particular, the Security Council and the Office of the Secretary-General. In particular, the recommendations regarding the exchange of information, the holding of periodic meetings and consultations on peace and security, and the possibility for organizations of the UN system to address the PSC were regarded as critical. The meeting equally welcomed the recommendations for collaboration with other relevant international organisations.

**29.** The meeting stressed the importance of involving and closely collaborating with civil society organisations, including community-based organisations, women's and youth organisations, the academia, think-tanks and research centres, whose active participation in providing relevant information, making recommendations for the development of specific policy options and addressing the various AU organs, particularly the PSC, as well as contributing, where appropriate, to early response, owing to their proximity and/or presence in affected areas, is essential in order to ensure the effective functioning of the CEWS, as called for by the PSC Protocol. In this regard, the meeting welcomed the proposal by the Commission for an accreditation mechanism for CSOs and relevant private sector actors, specifically tailored to the purposes of the CEWS and based on transparency.

**30.** The meeting underlined the importance of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) in complementing the CEWS, particularly in the process of data collection and verification.

### **C) THE WAY FORWARD**

**31.** The meeting urged the AU Commission and the RECs, working together with the stakeholders identified in the PSC Protocol, to take all necessary steps to implement all of the above-mentioned observations and recommendations, within a timeframe of three (3) years, to ensure that the CEWS is fully operational by 2009. In this regard, the meeting

requested the Commission to submit regular reports on progress made and challenges faced to the relevant AU organs (the PSC, the Executive Council and the Assembly).

**32.** The meeting urged all Member States, as stipulated in article 7(4) of the PSC Protocol, to “extend full cooperation to, and facilitate action by, the PSC for the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts”.

**33.** The meeting further urged Member States, as well as AU partners, to provide the necessary assistance to facilitate the timely operationalisation of the CEWS.

**34.** The meeting recommended that the AU Commission convene another meeting of Governmental Experts, within two years, to review the progress made and chart the best way forward.