

REPORT OF

UKUMBI PARTNERS' FORUM

ON

AFRICAN CAPABILITY FOR PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



SaferAfrica
Progress with Security

Held on 03rd May 2005 in Pretoria

On the 3rd of May 2005, the AU-NEPAD Programme of SaferAfrica held its Fifth *Ukumbi* Partners' Forum in Pretoria. Addressed by Mr. Tsepe Motumi, Deputy Director General in the South African Department of Defence, the forum focused on the progress made in developing the African capability for peace support operations in Southern Africa. In attendance were members of the diplomatic corps and government officials based in Pretoria. The presentation sketched out the progress towards the development of the AU African Standby Force (ASF), its realisation by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It then focused on the various aspects of the SADC brigade, including its' structure and procedures for its operationalisation. This was followed by a rich question and answer session.

Introduction

South Africa has been in an advantageous position in terms of the continental and regional developments of the African Peace and Security architecture. In 2002-2003, it was the Chair of the AU and a member of the SADC Organ Troika, and is currently, the Chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. However, this engagement has not been without its challenges.

Pursuant to South Africa being the chair of the African Union, a number of initiatives took place, chief of which was the launch and operationalisation of the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC), which set the tone for a revitalised energy and frankness in the continent's approaches to peace and security. This was spurred on by the renewed vigour with the launch of the African Union, replacing the erstwhile Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which, although having played a significant role in the liberation and independence of the states on the continent, had also become besieged by a lackadaisical approach in dealing with the continent's peace and security agenda.

One area that became emphasised with the launch of the African Union in 2002 was the need to strengthen regional economic communities (RECs) as building blocs for the continental body. This renewed focus on regions was reflected in the momentum for the establishment of the AU's African Standby Force (ASF), envisaged to be formed by regional standby brigades, which form its building blocs. Thus, all of the five regional blocs of the AU – from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to the East African Community and Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); and Economic Community of Central African States in Central Africa – have been mandated to establish the AU's regional brigades, in line with the guidelines issued by the AU and adopted by the Summit of Heads of State and Government at Sirte, Libya in February 2004.

Alignment of the SADC's Peace and Security Agenda with the AU Vision

The AU peace and security vision demands the alignment of RECs to the AU peace and security architecture. SADC has taken cognisance of this requirement and pursue it in the realisation that such alignment strengthens

SADC's Peace and Security Agenda as well as SADC itself. Alignment is also critical because even before the AU formulated her robust peace and security agenda, the SADC region already had a track record of conflict prevention, management and resolution since the early days of the Front Line States (since the late 1970s) and later the formation of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS) in the '90s. This organ is structures and operates in ways that feed into the AU frameworks.

The SADC Organ is structured at the level of the Heads of State and Governments in the region, with structures comprising: the Ministerial Committee of the Organ (MCO), which is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and includes Ministers of Defence and Security. This Committee operates directly below the Summit. Below the MCO are two committees - the Inter State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) comprising of Ministers of Defence and Security, and the Inter State Politics and Diplomacy Committee (ISPDC), comprising primarily of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. These two committees make recommendations to, and are implementers of decisions taken by, the Heads of State. Finally, the decisions taken by the Summit are conveyed to the AU. This alignment is strengthened by the practice of SADC, which prior to every meeting of the AU, holds regional consultations at ministerial and ambassadorial level to map out a common position in pursuance of the AU objectives and strategy for pursuing a progressive agenda speedily towards implementation of resolutions that get adopted.

The SADC Organ and the African Standby Force

Initially SADC led other regions in the process towards the formation of the SADC Brigade. However, the region has fallen behind due to delays in decision-making processes in the region. Notwithstanding, the region through the offices of the current chair have convened three military planners meetings. The main aim of these meetings was to work out modalities of establishing the SADC brigade. Initial meetings provided an opportunity to boost trust between military staff officers and their civilian counterparts from Member States, helped countries come to terms with SADC's responsibilities towards the African Standby Force, and led to the setting up of the planning element of the SADC Brigade in line with the AU plans.

A number of issues await determination and approval by the Principals, including the size and shape of the SADC Standby Brigade, the overall cost of the regional components as well as the associated architecture such as the HQ. At the moment all the figures are approximations. It is hoped that these decisions will be made soon because according to the AU Plans the SADC Brigade is supposed to be operationalised by June 2005.

Civil and Military Components of the SADC Brigade

Although most peace support operations provide for a civilian component, this is usually at the level of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG). Usually, troop contributing countries do not provide the required civilian capabilities nor do most Heads of Missions insist on it. The framework of the SADC brigade makes provision for the civil component in the areas of legal advice, public relations and civil-military coordination. The civilian component is particularly critical because civilians are less likely to be targeted in combat zones. Furthermore, they are key players in the post-conflict reconstruction and development phase, after peacekeepers withdraw.

A critical gap within SADC is the limited engagement of civilian actors in discussions on the brigade. Article 10(1) of the Organ spells out the procedures for engagement with SADC and civil society partners need to participate more meaningfully in these processes.

Monitoring Mechanism

Monitoring will take place through established SADC structures such as the Inter State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) which receives regular feedback from the Chiefs of Staff of the SADC region, the civilian police and the state security and intelligence structures. The information given to the ISDSC is fed to the Ministers of Defence and Security and to the SADC Summit. There are also regular report backs to the AU, in line with implementation schedules agreed upon.

In addition, the Military Staff Committee (MSC) of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union is expected to oversee implementation of the ASF and make recommendations on deployment of missions to the PSC for refinement and forwarding to the AU Summit for the final decision.

Lessons Learnt from other regions

There have been some lessons from African regions that have carried out Peace Support Operations such as ECOWAS and even SADC. In West Africa, the ECOWAS involvement in conflict zones in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'ivoire generates a number of lessons. Lessons from SADC can be derived from Operation Boleas in lesson and its engagement in the DR-Congo. Both operations underlie the significance of collaborative action, and have enhanced the regions cohesion in pursuit of peace and stability.

SADC has also been taking lessons from non-African players in particular the SHIRBRIG, the European High-Readiness Brigade on which the idea and concept of the African Standby Force is based. Even before the ASF, SADC had sent a team of military experts to examine how SHIRBRIG worked and its applicability to the SADC region. Unfortunately, because of the pressure placed on the region to address issues in the DRC at that time, the lessons were never applied. The integration of best practices is viewed as a priority because, in the face of dwindling interest in the West for deployment on the continent, Africa is under pressure to build its own PSO capabilities.

The attempt by African regions and the AU to become self-sustaining can also be supported by various international frameworks. For instance, there is a SADC-EU forum within which support from the West can be coordinated to complement and add value to the SADC efforts. This forum meets twice annually and is driven at the level of Executive Secretary of SADC.

Challenges facing the operationalisation of the SADC BRIG

Insufficient resources remain the biggest obstacle. Nearly two years ago costs estimates for the establishment of the ASF were estimated at 120 million for a period of 3 years. By March 2002 the Peace Fund had attracted about USD 48 million. Peace Support Operations run under the SADC umbrella will quite clearly contribute to making these operations more sustainable. In spite of this obstacle SADC Member States are involved in a number of peace support operations, under the AU and UN mandates, and sometimes absorbing such costs.

In addition to money, Peace Support Operations require logistical capacity, particularly in the heavy lift transportation capability. The flexibility and skilful operation in either war or peace support operations depends largely on logistical capacity. This point was captured poignantly in 1946, and remains as relevant today:

“the more I see of war, the more I realise how it all depends on administration and transportation...it takes little skill or imagination to see where you would like your army to be, and when; it takes much knowledge and hard work to know where you can place your forces, and whether you can maintain them there. A real knowledge of supply and movement factors must be the basis of every leader’s plan; only then can he know how and when to take risks with those factors, and battles are won only by taking risks” (1946:78-79, quoted in van Creveld 1976:232)

There is also concern about the HIV/Aids among the forces. Although the level of HIV and AIDS infection amongst soldiers in the armed forces is relatively low, policy is currently being developed by the military health regulatory sub-committee to address this issue. The policy will take into account experiences of Member States and the UN policy on the matter. Currently, soldiers go through stringent health assessments prior to deployment, in line with UN recommendations. Those that are infected with HIV and/or Aids are not eligible for deployment.

The quality of the training of the African Standby Force is a concern but this can only be addressed when it is properly constituted. It is envisaged that the training of the Regional Brigades will take place in the form of workshops between June and December 2005. The due date for the completion of the SADC brigade has been extended and will follow on from this training. The workshops aim to assist in the operationalisation of regional and continental brigades.

Envisaged benefits of a SADC BRIG

The SADC brigade will bring benefits to the region and beyond. Cooperation within the region will result in enhancing regional security. Once fully fledged, it will be an integral part of the ASF – hopefully by 2010 – capable of being deployed anywhere on the continent. The Brigade will address such threats to security as humanitarian crises resulting from natural disasters, threats to constitutional governments etc, which are covered in the Algiers Declaration.

Reflection on the role of various stakeholders and valuable international support

All stakeholders have a role of play particularly in ensuring that pledges made by African partners, since Kananaskis in 2002, translate into support for the African Standby Force.