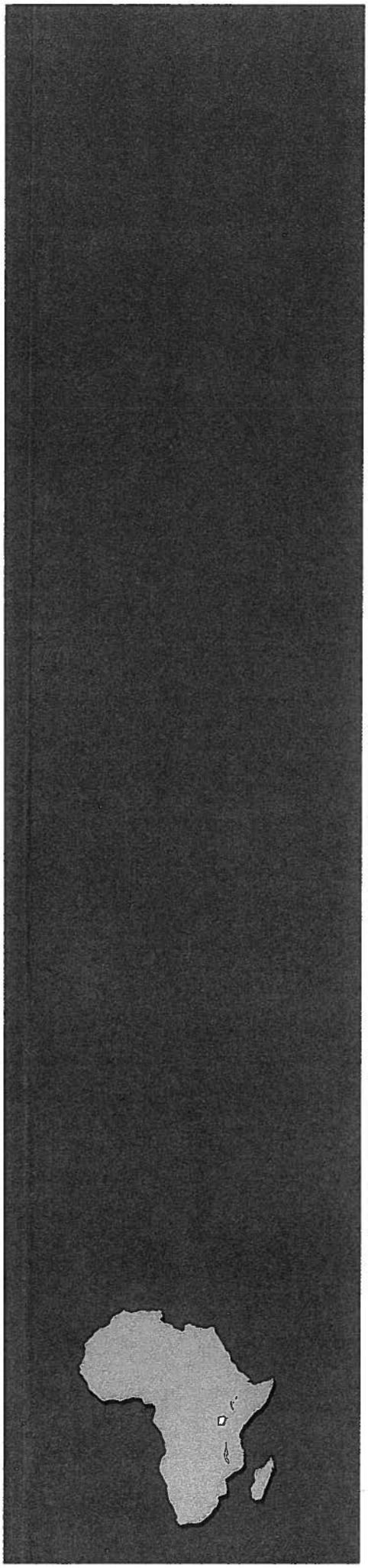

International Peace Academy

An Assessment of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, 1993-2000

Monde Muyangwa and Margaret A. Vogt

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Monde Muyangwa was hired by the International Peace Academy in February 2000 as a Consultant. A citizen of Zambia, she received her Bachelor's degree in Public Administration and Economics from the University of Zambia. She obtained a second Bachelor's degree in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics in 1990 from Oxford University. Dr. Muyangwa was both a Rhodes and Wingate scholar at Oxford, and completed a doctoral thesis in International Relations in 1995 on Regional Cooperation and Integration in Africa, with particular reference to southern Africa. After her doctoral studies, Dr. Muyangwa served as Director for International Education Programs at New Mexico Highlands University, before working as a Gender Consultant for Development Alternatives, Inc. She then joined the National Summit on Africa in March 1997 where she worked as Director of Research until 2000, coordinating all substantive Summit publications on African development and US-Africa relations, managing the nation-wide dialogue on US-Africa relations, focused on US-Africa trade linkages, and serving on the Foreign Policy Advisory Committee and Expert Groups dealing with African affairs. Dr. Muyangwa has presented papers on Regional Cooperation, Economics, and Gender and Development in Africa and published in the Africa Policy Information Center volume, "Talking About Tribe: Moving from Stereotypes."

Executive Summary

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) established its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in 1993 to address conflicts in Africa. The Mechanism has three main goals. First, to anticipate and prevent situations of potential conflict from developing into full-blown wars; second, to undertake peacemaking and peace-building efforts if full-blown conflicts should arise; and third, to carry out peacemaking and peace-building activities in post-conflict situations.

During the decade of the 1990s, Africa has witnessed numerous conflicts. The OAU Mechanism has been involved both directly and indirectly in many initiatives aimed at managing these conflicts. These efforts have resulted in transforming the OAU into an organization that has had more impact, increased visibility, and an elevated profile in the conflict management arena. This is especially true when one compares the organization's performance after the creation of the Mechanism to the preceding three decades of its existence. This increased visibility is due, in part, to the fact that, unlike in the pre-Mechanism era when Africa was wracked by liberation struggles and the proxy wars of the Cold War era, member states have been willing, in an environment that is less affected by external intervention, to utilize the OAU's conflict management mechanism. This has allowed the organization to move from the *ad hoc* approach to conflict management that characterized the pre-1993 era to a more systematic and institutionalized approach.

However, even with this institutionalized approach and increased visibility, it is also clear that the OAU Mechanism has so far been largely ineffective in managing African conflicts such as Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Comoros. In many cases, the OAU has not been able to focus on its stated priority of anticipating and preventing conflicts. Instead, the organization has been preoccupied with efforts to resolve existing conflicts across the continent. While the creation of the Mechanism theoretically placed the OAU at the center of conflict management efforts in Africa, the reality is that the OAU has, thus far, been an active but peripheral actor in most cases. The UN and sub-regional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have often taken the lead in managing conflicts in countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Lesotho and DRC. The reasons for the OAU's marginal role in these conflicts are three-fold: first, the OAU is relatively new to the field of conflict management and is still acquiring the necessary experience; second, the number, intensity, scope, and range of conflicts in Africa have often been overwhelming for the OAU Mechanism; and third, the OAU has still not been able to overcome several of the financial, organizational, and mandate-related limitations that proscribed its conflict management role in the pre-1993 era.

The performance of the OAU Mechanism since its creation reveals that while the organization has become involved in issues that previously would have been considered as purely "internal" matters (issues related to intra-state conflict, unconstitutional changes of government, and elections), the experience of the last seven years also reveals that the Mechanism continues to be hampered in its actions by key provisions in the OAU charter. Specifically, some member states still continue to view sovereignty as sacrosanct and, by so doing, place severe constraints on the OAU's scope of action and room for maneuver. If the OAU Mechanism is to become effective, the OAU will have to address this difficult question directly and not at the margins, as it has done over the last few years.

The creation of an OAU Peace Fund to serve as a financial reserve for its peacemaking efforts raised hopes that the Mechanism would be able to overcome the financial woes that have plagued the organization since its inception. While the Peace Fund has been able to raise revenue from African and external sources, three issues have become obvious over the last seven years: first, the conflict management needs of the continent have far outweighed the resources of the Peace Fund; second, the failure of member states to meet their financial obligations has adversely affected the work of the Mechanism; and third, if the Mechanism is to be successful, then the Peace Fund must be financed on a regular and long-term basis.

In addition to increased conflicts in Africa, the OAU Mechanism's performance has also been impacted by the changing international system with the end of the Cold War and Africa's reduced strategic value for external powers. This has resulted in a long and, as

yet, unsettled debate about the role of the United Nations and sub-regional organizations in Africa and their relationship with the OAU. This debate has centered mainly on questions regarding the appropriate division of labor between these organizations. Simultaneously, the emergence of several western-sponsored conflict management initiatives in Africa (like the U.S.-sponsored ACRI and the French-sponsored RECAMP) have raised questions about the perceived dissonance between these initiatives and the OAU Mechanism.

The future success of the OAU Mechanism will depend on how well it is able to develop relationships with African sub-regional organizations like ECOWAS, SADC, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD). Throughout the 1990s, nearly all of Africa's sub-regional organizations have begun to develop mechanisms for conflict management in their respective sub-regions. The challenge for the OAU is to ensure the establishment of strong and mutually supportive relationships between the OAU Mechanism and those of Africa's sub-regional organizations. The OAU also recognized early on that its Mechanism could not succeed without the active participation of Africa's civil society actors who often play an important role in managing African conflicts. The OAU has discussed ways of incorporating civil society groups into the work of its Mechanism, but the organization has not made much progress toward implementing these recommendations. Similarly, the OAU has expended considerable effort during the last seven years in determining how best to enhance and make fully operational the capacity of its Mechanism. The OAU has received many recommendations on this issue, some of which have been implemented, including the establishment of a Conflict Management Center and regular meetings of the 16-member Central Organ. But much remains to be done particularly at the highest political levels before the OAU Mechanism can fully realize its potential.

H.E. Dr. Salim A. Salim and Professor Margaret A. Vogt.

Introduction

This report assesses the role and performance of the Organization of African Unity's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (henceforth, "the Mechanism") since its establishment in 1993. The report is divided into five main sections.

Part I provides a brief history of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It addresses the political environment for the goals, structure, mandate, and tools adopted by the Organization. The OAU came into existence at a time when three major global factors converged in Africa: the demise of colonialism and the consequent independence of African countries; the peak of the ideals of Pan-Africanism; and the first manifestations of the Cold War in Africa. These factors not only affected the goals of the new organization, but also the role that the OAU would play in the maintenance of continental peace and security. This section also summarizes the major lessons learned from the OAU's involvement in conflict management during the first thirty years of its existence. It provides a background against which the performance of the OAU in the security field can be measured, with respect both to lessons learned and to the effectiveness of the organization in the area of conflict management since 1963.

Part II looks at the factors and issues leading to the creation of the OAU Mechanism in 1993. It also outlines the goals and mandate of the Mechanism, including its two main bodies: the Central Organ and the Conflict Management Center. Part III addresses the role played by the Mechanism in preventing, managing, and resolving African conflicts in the five case studies of Rwanda, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Ethiopia/Eritrea. This section assesses the effectiveness with which the OAU Mechanism has performed its role. While the OAU Mechanism has been able to achieve positive results in some of these conflicts, it has often struggled to find durable solutions to them.

Parts IV and V consider the future of the OAU Mechanism. Part IV addresses the need for building and clarifying the relationship between the OAU and key conflict management institutions at the sub-regional, extra-regional, and civil society levels in order for the Mechanism to become effective. Specifically, this section focuses on the OAU's relationships with four sets of actors: the United Nations (UN), individual Western governments and institutions, African sub-regional organizations, and African civil society groups. Part V addresses the structures and institutions that the OAU has established in its efforts to make operational and enhance the effectiveness of its Mechanism. It assesses the performance of several key elements of the Mechanism such as the Peace Fund, the Early Warning System, the Central Organ, the Field Operations Unit, the OAU charter, and the Conflict Management Center. The section also outlines some of the measures that the OAU is currently undertaking or will have to undertake in order to enhance the effectiveness of its Mechanism.

Part One: An Overview of the Creation of the Organization of African Unity

1.1 Creation of the OAU

The attainment of independence by an increasing number of African states in the late 1950s and early 1960s was accompanied by calls for unity among African leaders. These leaders saw unity as necessary for the rapid eradication of colonialism and for the continent's economic and political development. However, African leaders could not agree on what unity entailed or how it was to be achieved. There emerged three main groups–Brazzaville, Casablanca, and Monrovia–each with its own belief as to the nature and form of unity that was best suited to Africa. While all three groups supported the need for a pan-African body, there were major differences as to whether such an organization should be a political union of all African states (with significant implications for the economic and political sovereignty of individual African countries) or whether it should be a body based on cooperation and the voluntary participation of African states.

The Casablanca group (mainly socialist-leaning countries) strongly advocated political and economic unity among African states.[1] This group was also concerned about the need for all African countries to gain their independence and was fearful of the role that the colonial powers might play in opposing or compromising such independence. For the Casablanca group, the Congo crisis which erupted in 1960 was clear proof of the dangers posed by external powers to Africa's future, and of the need for Africa to unite and defend itself against such external interventions. The Monrovia group, which encompassed members of the Brazzaville group, called for a more gradual approach to the question of African unity.[2] The Brazzaville group (consisting of former French colonies) was concerned about the liberation war in Algeria (1954-1962) and wanted to find a way of mediating the conflict without alienating France, on which its members depended for economic and military support. Its members wanted to ensure that individual countries within this group could continue their relationship with France and believed that African unity should be defined and practiced in a manner that did not sacrifice the sovereignty of individual African countries. The goal of the Monrovia and Brazzaville groups was the attainment of "progress on the road to inter-African cooperation founded on neighborhood culture and community of interests...."[3] Or, as was so succinctly put by the Foreign Minister of Congo (Brazzaville): "...We want to keep our own personality within the framework of African unity."[4]

It appeared that these ideological differences would prevent the attainment of a consensus on the issue of how to proceed with the creation of a pan-African body. However, in 1963, the various groups met in Addis Ababa and were able to resolve their differences. On 25 May 1963, thirty-two countries signed the charter creating the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The new organization had the following goals: to promote the unity and solidarity of African countries; defend the sovereignty of members; eradicate all forms of colonialism; promote international cooperation having due regard for the charter of the United Nations (UN) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and coordinate and harmonize the policies of member states in the educational, health, welfare, scientific, and defense sectors.[5]

The charter of the new organization revealed that those advocating the supremacy of national sovereignty had won the day. African countries had chosen to create an organization based on political and economic cooperation rather than on suprana-

[1] The Casablanca group was made up of Ghana Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Libya, and Algeria.

[2] The Monrovia group was composed of Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo, Tunisia, as well as Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Dahomey, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Malagasy, Mauritania, Senegal, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), and Niger, the twelve countries comprising the Brazzaville group.

[3] The C.O.C. Amate, *Inside the OAU: Pan Africanism in Practice*, Macmillan Publishers, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1986, p.44.

[4] Alfred T. Moleah, 'Pan-Africanism and Liberation Struggles in Africa," in W. Ofuatey-Kodjoe, ed., *Pan-Africanism, New Directions in Strategy*, University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 1984, p. 152. This chapter also provides a good discussion of the issues and blocs surrounding the creation of the Organization of African Unity.

[5] The Organization of African Unity, The Charter, Addis Ababa, 1963.

tionalism. The charter also stipulated that the OAU would be guided by a number of fundamental principles. Key among these, and of critical importance to the role that the OAU would play in the management of conflicts in Africa were: non-interference in the internal affairs of individual African countries; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of individual African countries; and adherence to the sanctity of African borders as defined by the colonial powers. Furthermore, with regard to security issues, the OAU rejected Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah and the Casablanca group's vigorous arguments for a common defense system, under one African High Command. Instead, the OAU created the Commission on Mediation, Arbitration and Reconciliation and the Defence Commission to spearhead the OAU's peace and security agenda. The charter also enjoined OAU members to work for the "peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arbitration."[6] But what did this mean for African peace and security in practice?

During its first 30 years, the OAU has successfully resolved numerous disputes over international borders.

1.2 The OAU and Conflict in Africa, 1963-1993

During the first thirty years of the OAU's existence, Africa experienced numerous challenges to its peace and security, including struggles for independence, civil wars, and inter-state conflicts. Some of the notable conflicts during this period include those in Nigeria, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia; the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe, Namibia and the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, and the subsequent civil wars in those countries; the fight to end Apartheid in South Africa; and the security situation in the Horn of Africa. Many of these conflicts were fueled by the Cold War, as the United States and the Soviet Union fought for ideological dominance and strategic position in Africa.

The record of the OAU in attempting to be the custodian of continental peace and security during the first three decades of its existence is well documented, as are the factors that prohibited the OAU from playing a more central role in the management of conflicts in Africa. Rather than re-examine the OAU's performance, it is sufficient for our purposes simply to summarize and highlight the major lessons learned from the OAU's conflict management experience from 1963, when the OAU was created, until 1993, when its security mechanism was established.

Often over-looked in analyses of the OAU is the fact that during the first thirty years of its existence, the organization had some successes in conflict management. In the immediate post-independence period, numerous disputes over the definition of international borders became a major factor in Africa's international relations as many of the young African states struggled to come to terms with the arbitrary nature of their colonially-inherited borders and their implications for nation-building. It is in managing these types of disputes that the OAU has registered some of its most notable successes. In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, the OAU was successful in resolving a number of border disputes, including those between Algeria and Morocco, Mali and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Somalia and Kenya, and Ethiopia and Somalia.

Another area in which the OAU played a significant role was in helping to end colonialism on the continent. Following the downfall of the Portuguese colonial empire and the independence of Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Sao Tome and Principe by the late 1970s, the OAU was able to shift its attention to southern Africa, the last vestige of colonialism. There, the OAU was able to work with the UN to pressure the international community to act, and to gather support for the actions of the Frontline States of southern Africa and the UN in support of the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe (which gained independence in 1980), Namibia (which was able to achieve self-determination

[6] *Ibid.*

from South Africa in 1990), and South Africa (which achieved majority rule in 1994).[7] The OAU was, and remains active in trying to find a solution to the conflict that erupted between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front in 1976 following Spain's withdrawal from, and Morocco's occupation of, Western Sahara. The OAU's main contribution was the establishment, in 1978, of an *ad hoc* "Wise Men's" Committee to investigate the conflict. The Committee's report to the OAU in 1979 recommended a referendum to enable the Saharawi people to exercise their right to self-determination. However, the UN-organized referendum has been repeatedly delayed, though the OAU continues to maintain civilian observers in Western Sahara.[8] Despite these efforts and successes, however, the OAU's overall record at securing Africa's peace and security during this period was disappointing. Several factors account for this record including the limitations of the OAU's mandate and conflict management institutions; the lack of political will among its members; the lack of capacity, experience and financial resources; and the impact of external intervention on the OAU's capacity to manage conflicts.

The OAU's role in resolving intra-state conflicts has been hampered by key provisions of the OAU Charter.

i. **Limitations of the OAU's mandate:** In the immediate post-independence era, a number of conflicts erupted which exposed the OAU's limitations in dealing with the full range and scope of conflicts in Africa. Chapter III of the OAU's charter stipulates non-interference in the affairs of member states, and sanctifies the integrity of their territories. These stipulations hampered the OAU's role in resolving intra-state conflicts as was so devastatingly illustrated by the eruption of the Nigerian civil war in 1967. The republic of Biafra's attempt to secede from Nigeria was the most serious conflict to confront the OAU in the first decade of its existence. Although the OAU was greatly concerned about the conflict and established a consultative mission of six heads of state to support peace efforts in Nigeria, the OAU's ability to act was greatly restricted by a number of factors related to its own charter. According to the OAU charter, Biafra's position not only threatened the territorial integrity of Nigeria but the war was an "internal" matter and, therefore, one to be settled solely by Nigerians. Interestingly, the Biafra war also highlighted rare public discord among African leaders as four OAU members (Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania, and Zambia) challenged the charter's stipulations on territorial integrity and non-interference by pledging their support for the Biafran secessionist cause. Overall, the OAU was able to do little to end the bloody war, which was concluded only after Biafra surrendered in 1970.[9]

The impact of the OAU's non-intervention clause was evident in other conflict situations as well. This was especially so in Ethiopia and Somalia where, for over thirty years, the OAU appeared unable to act even as the impact of conflict and superpower machinations resulted in devastation throughout the region.[10]

ii. **Lack of Political Will of OAU Members and Limitations of the OAU's Conflict Management Institutions:** Due to the weakness of its charter in dealing with disputes among its members, whenever conflicts or tensions arose, it was not to the OAU that its members turned. In fact, it appeared that members did not have much respect for the machinery that the OAU had established for purposes of conflict management. Rather than take their cases to the Commission on Mediation, Arbitration and Reconciliation for resolution, OAU members preferred to take them to other fora, such as the International Court of Justice. In the end, the OAU had to plead with its members to allow it the first attempt to resolve potential and actual conflicts and disputes.

Even when the OAU was given the opportunity to

[7] For more background on the OAU's role in conflict management see Hugo Dobson, "Regionalism and UN Peacekeeping Activities: Developments and Prospects," <http://hows1.u.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~mikami/rv1regio>.

[8] The OAU recognized the POLISARIO Front's Saharan Arab Democratic Republic Front (SADR) in 1984. This led to the withdrawal of Morocco from the OAU.

[9] For accounts of the Nigerian civil war, see Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria*, two volumes, Oxford University Press, London, 1971; Ken Saro-Wiwa, *On a Darkling Plain: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War*, Lagos and Surrey: Saros International Publishers, 1989; and John Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1977.

[10] James Jonah, "The OAU: Peace Keeping and Conflict Resolution," in Yassin El-Ayouty (ed.), *The Organization of African Unity After Thirty Years*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1994, pp.3-13.

attempt to resolve conflicts among its members, the Commission on Mediation, Arbitration and Reconciliation was overlooked in preference for other tools, primarily *ad hoc* mediation and consultation committees and delegations, diplomacy, and good offices. In fact, the OAU's Commission was never presented with a single case for resolution. It was no surprise then that the Commission on Mediation, Arbitration and Reconciliation and the Defence Commission failed to produce the expected results and were, in fact, largely moribund.[11] The changing membership of the committees also hampered continuity in the mediation process.[12] As a result of this mode of operation, the OAU failed to set norms and to institutionalize capabilities for conflict management. Furthermore, even when the deficiencies of the OAU's mandate and mechanisms became evident, it appears that its member states were unable or unwilling to garner the necessary political will to create security mechanisms that would have enabled the organization to address conflicts more effectively through an institutionalized framework.

iii. **Limitations of Capacity and Experience in Core Conflict Management Areas:** Conflict management encompasses a number of activities including peacemaking and peacekeeping. Over the first 30 years of its existence, it became clear that the OAU had neither the experience nor the capacity for peacekeeping. This was clearly evidenced by the OAU's experience in the civil war in Chad. By 1980 the war had deteriorated to such an extent that the OAU felt compelled to dispatch its first peacekeeping force to oversee a cease-fire and the political transition process that the internal parties had earlier agreed to. This was the OAU's first such undertaking and it was a failure. While the OAU can be credited with taking unprecedented military action in Chad, its intervention was late, poorly planned and financed, lacked a clear mandate and the resources necessary to accomplish the mission. The mission, which had been approved in 1980, failed to arrive in Chad until 1981 by which time the cease-fire had broken down. The ill-equipped peacekeepers were forced to withdraw from Chad in 1981 and the civil war continued unabated.[13]

iv. **Lack of Financial Resources:** The OAU was plagued by a lack of financial resources almost from its inception. Some analysts argued that this lack of resources was reflective of its members' lack of serious regard for the organization, and the OAU's funding situation only worsened with the decline of African economies in the 1980s. In fact, some have linked the OAU's political malaise directly to Africa's economic crisis,[14] while many analysts also increasingly regard declining African economies as a major source of conflicts on the continent. For the OAU, an organization dependent on membership contributions, the inability of many countries to fulfill their financial obligations greatly hampered its performance. In 1987, for example, the OAU's members had paid only $3 million out of its $25.3 million annual budget.[15]

v. **International Politics and Impact on OAU Conflict Management:** The OAU was affected by the pernicious influence of external powers in pursuit of their own interests in Africa, particularly during the Cold War.[16] In the immediate post-independence era, Africa emerged as a battleground for the United States and the Soviet Union as the two superpowers competed for ideological and strategic dominance on the continent. This was especially true in the Horn of Africa and southern Africa where the superpowers infused great amounts of financial resources and military material that not only prolonged conflicts in those regions but also intensified the devastation caused by numerous external interventions, particularly involving France, during the Cold War.[17]

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[11] See Michael Wolfers, "The Institutional Evolution of the OAU," in Yassin El-Ayouty and I. William Zartman (eds.), *The OAU After Twenty Years*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1984, pp.86-87 and I. William Zartman, "African Regional Security and Changing Patterns of Relations," in Edmond J. Keller and Donald Rothchild (eds.), *Africa in the New International Order*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1996, p.60.

[12] Astrid Espegren, *The Organization of African Unity and Conflict Management: Still a Toothless Bulldog?*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Report Number 247, July 1999, p.31.

[13] On the Chad operation, see Margaret Vogt and Lateef Aminu (eds.), *Peacekeeping as a Security Strategy in Africa: Chad and Liberia as case studies*, two volumes, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., 1996.

[14] For more on this issue, see Zdenek Cervenka, "The Organization of African Unity and the Continuing Search for Peace in Western Sahara," in Nosakhere O. Obaseka, *Africa and the Superpowers: External Involvement in Regional Disputes*, International Peace Academy, Report No. 14, New York.

[15] Gino Naldi, *The Organization of African Unity*, Mansell, London, 1989, p.30.

[16] Ameen Jan, "It Can Work: Strengthening the OAU Conflict Resolution Mechanism," *Track Two*, Vol. 6. No. 2.

[17] See, for example, John Chipman, *French Power in Africa*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Part Two: Establishment of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution

2.1 Creation of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the international order had begun to witness dramatic changes. The Cold War had ended, leaving in its wake a proliferation of conflicts in Africa, particularly those of an intra-state nature. The deteriorating security landscape in Africa, the predominance of internal conflicts, the demise of the Cold War and the Western powers' diminished interest in Africa prompted the OAU to take stock of the changes occurring in Africa and in the international system. The OAU was forced to reconsider its own role in this new climate, particularly in relation to Africa's economic development and security.[18]

The OAU was forced to reconsider its role after the dramatic changes marking the end of the Cold War.

At the 1990 OAU summit, African leaders noted that the prevalence of conflicts on the continent had seriously hampered their individual and collective efforts at political and economic development, and pledged to work together to reduce the scourge of conflicts in Africa. At the OAU summit meeting in Dakar in 1992, Salim Ahmed Salim, the OAU Secretary-General, submitted a report entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on Conflicts in Africa: Proposals for an OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution." In that report, Salim argued that the OAU's *ad hoc* approach to conflict management had proven inadequate and that there was an urgent need for the organization to adopt a new security agenda as well as develop an institutional framework within which African conflicts could be better addressed. While a few African leaders expressed concern about the implications for national sovereignty posed by a more central role for the OAU in managing intra-state conflicts, the overwhelming view was that a new approach was necessary and the Secretary-General's proposal was accepted by the OAU's leaders in principle. Following this decision, the OAU began to conceptualize the structure and process by which it could effectively manage conflicts in Africa.

The first of the major discussions on this issue were held in 1991 in Kampala when the African Leadership Forum convened a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation,[19] and the second in 1992 when the International Peace Academy (IPA), a New York based institution, held a seminar on internal conflicts in Africa. Among other things, the Kampala discussions concluded that there was a need to build a new African security framework. This framework would include a definition of security that went beyond military considerations to include the economic, social, and political dimensions of individual, family, community, local, and national life. The framework would be underpinned by mechanisms for mediation, conciliation, and arbitration including, but not limited to, the building of a continental peacekeeping machinery, development of non-aggression pacts, establishment of an African Elders' Council for Peace, utilization of confidence-building measures, and lowering of military expenditures. The IPA seminar reinforced the need for the OAU to take a more pro-active approach to conflict management in Africa and underscored the imperative for the organization to address the issue of internal conflicts regardless of the non-interference clause contained in its charter.

Subsequent OAU/IPA-sponsored consultations, particularly one held in Addis Ababa in 1993, built on the foundations provided by the 1991 and 1992 discussions, and helped to elaborate further on the OAU's potential role in managing African conflicts. The OAU/IPA consultation made recommendations

[18] OAU, "Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World," Addis Ababa, 11 July 1990.

[19] See Olusegun Obasanjo and Felix Mosha (eds.), *Africa: Rise to Challenge*, Africa Leadership Forum, New York, 1993.

pertaining to goals and priorities, approaches to conflict management, strategies and tools for conflict management, structures and institutions, approaches to cooperation between the OAU and various international and sub-regional actors, and the financing of conflict management in Africa. The OAU drew heavily from the results of this and previous consultations to shape and develop the core of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.[20] The Mechanism was presented to the OAU summit in Cairo in 1993 and was adopted by all but two countries.[21]

2.2 Goals of the OAU Mechanism

As its name implies, the objective of the OAU Mechanism is to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts in Africa. Specifically, the Mechanism is charged with:

i) Anticipating and preventing situations of potential conflict from developing into full-blown conflicts.

ii) Undertaking peacemaking and peace-building efforts if full-blown conflicts should arise.

iii) Undertaking peacemaking and peace-building activities in post-conflict situations.

The OAU Mechanism's primary focus is on the anticipation and prevention of conflicts.

While the OAU's leaders were interested in achieving all three of its goals, they decided that its primary focus should be on the anticipation and prevention of conflicts. This would entail undertaking a variety of measures to prevent disputes from arising, keep existing disputes from escalating into full-scale armed conflicts, and limit the spread of existing conflicts. It was thought that such an emphasis on conflict prevention would negate the need for the OAU to undertake complex and resource-demanding peacekeeping and post-conflict operations, which its members could not afford. The OAU's leaders also noted that the organization's lack of experience, resources, and institutional capacity limited the role it could play in cases where conflicts had already erupted. As such, peacekeeping and peace enforcement were not to be priorities for the OAU. Instead, peacekeeping tasks would be left to the UN, the organization primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security, and where possible, Africa's sub-regional organizations. In such cases, the OAU committed itself to examining ways and means through which its members could contribute effectively to UN and sub-regional peacekeeping operations in Africa.

2.3 Structure of the OAU Mechanism

After considerable debate on the structure of the OAU Mechanism, it was determined that it would comprise two main bodies: the Central Organ and the Conflict Management Division (later renamed the Conflict Management Center). The Central Organ, composed of the 16 states elected annually to serve as members of the Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, would be the decision-making body of the Mechanism, a sort of African Security Council. In order to provide for a seamless transition, the states of the outgoing and incoming OAU chairmen would serve as members of the Central Organ. Other OAU members, particularly those in conflict-afflicted areas, could also be invited to participate in its deliberations.

As the decision-making body of the Mechanism, the Central Organ would be responsible for examining issues affecting peace and security on a continuous basis, and providing the OAU Secretary-General with the political leadership necessary to initiate appropriate actions to address these issues. The Secretary-General and the Conflict Management Center, located in the Political Affairs Division of the OAU Secretariat, would serve as the operational arm of the Mechanism. The Conflict Management Center would be responsible for supporting the Secretary-General in the implementation of strategies to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. In order to

[20] For more on the recommendations emanating from the Joint OAU/IPA consultation that laid the framework for the establishment of the Mechanism see Ian Johnstone and Tandeka Nkiwane, *The Organization of African Unity and Conflict Management in Africa*, Report of the Joint OAU/IPA Consultation, Addis Ababa, 19-21 May, 1993.

[21] Eritrea and Sudan expressed their reservations.

carry out this mission, the Center would:

i) Collect, collate, and disseminate information relating to current and potential conflicts on the continent;

ii) Prepare and present policy options to the OAU Secretary-General on how best to address current and potential conflicts, and support the Secretary-General in the presentation of OAU decisions in the area of conflict management;

iii) Undertake or commission analysis and long-term research into the root causes of conflicts and their implications for conflict prevention and peace-building efforts; and

iv) Support and manage political, civilian, and military observer and monitoring missions, and coordinate regional training policies to support peacekeeping operations.

The OAU also decided that it would establish several key units as part of its security Mechanism. These would include an Early Warning System capacity to identify and gather information on the causes of conflicts on the continent as well as information on impending conflict situations. This information would then be used by the OAU to identify and implement appropriate actions for anticipating and preventing the outbreak or escalation of conflicts. A Field Operations Unit, designed to enable the OAU to undertake observation and monitoring missions of limited scope and duration was also established. Another critical element of the Conflict Management Center would be the Peace Fund, created to finance the Mechanism's operational activities.[22]

22 OAU, *Enhancing Peace and Security in Africa: The OAU's Programme for Strengthening the Conflict Management Centre*, 1999, p.8; and International Peace Academy, *Civil Society and Conflict Management in Africa*, Report of the IPA/OAU Consultation, 29 May-2 June, Cape Town, South Africa, p.21.

Part Three: Performance of the OAU Mechanism: 1993-1999

The security turmoil into which the OAU Mechanism was injected was partly evidenced by the fact that in 1993 there were 5.2 million refugees and 13 million internally displaced persons in Africa. Since then a number of the conflicts responsible for this dislocation have ended but some have continued while new ones have erupted. Such conflicts include those in Angola, Somalia, Liberia, the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Comoros, Lesotho, and the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict. Many of these conflicts have been complex, varied in intensity and scope, and have ranged from smaller intra-state conflict, such as the secession-based conflict in the Comoros, to bigger and more complicated conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which began as an intra-state dispute and then took on regional dimensions.

Rather than attempt to provide an assessment of the OAU's role in all of the conflicts that have ravaged Africa since the Mechanism was established, this section provides five brief but illustrative case studies of the conflicts in which the OAU has played a prominent role: Rwanda, Burundi, Comoros, DRC and Ethiopia/Eritrea. The five case studies illustrate both the diversity of conflict situations that the OAU has had to deal with as well as the broad range of tools and resources that the organization has utilized in its efforts.[23] The fact that this approach omits some long-standing and devastating conflicts, such as the one in Sudan, where the OAU has been only peripherally involved, speaks volumes about the security crisis facing the continent and the continuing constraints under which the OAU operates.

Rwanda: Perhaps no other conflict in recent memory has embodied the horrors and devastation of war as much as the genocide that occurred in Rwanda in 1994. In October 1990, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded northern Rwanda from Uganda to force the sharing of political power in the country. Between 1990 and 1992, the OAU launched a mediation effort which resulted in a cease-fire agreement as well as an arrangement for the OAU to send a 55-person observer force to Rwanda to oversee the ceasefire. The OAU observer mission, the Military Observer Group in Rwanda (NMOG) arrived in the country in 1991.

In 1992, peace negotiations were held in Arusha, with Tanzania acting as the principal mediator. The OAU, Rwanda's neighbors, the United States, and several European countries attended these talks as observers. The Arusha peace agreement was signed in August 1993 with all parties agreeing to the inclusion of the RPF in an integrated national army and to the presence of a neutral international force to provide security and supervise the inauguration of the transitional government, demobilization of combatants and creation of a new army, and preparations for national elections. In October 1993, a 2500-person UN peacekeeping force, UNAMIR, arrived in Rwanda. NMOG was subsumed into this force since the OAU had great difficulty maintaining and financing it.

In 1994, tension in Rwanda exploded into violence as thousands of people were massacred and thousands more were uprooted from their homes. As the situation in Rwanda deteriorated, the OAU begged the UN to intervene to protect civilians. However, with the debacle of the UNOSOM II experience (the UN operation in Somalia during which 18 American Rangers, 25 Pakistani peacekeepers and an estimated 1,000 Somali civilians were killed in 1993) still so fresh in the UN Security Council's collective memory, the US led the decision to reduce the number of UN peacekeepers in Rwanda. After the scale of the genocide in Rwanda became public and international pressure for action increased, the UN's mandate was changed to include a bigger peacekeeping force. But the UN Secretariat had difficulty securing a larger and enhanced mission to Rwanda. Instead, the UN Security Council requested African countries to provide the troops for a mission to Rwanda. The OAU countered by accusing the Security Council of trying to "tribalize" peacekeeping but agreed to coordinate the commitment of about 6,000 troops. However, the deployment of the troops was delayed for five months due to a lack of logistical and other equipment required for such an undertaking which western

[23] Part Three draws on previous work conducted by the OAU and the International Peace Academy particularly the reports available at the Organization of African Unity's website (<http://www.oau-oau.org>) and International Peace Academy, *Report of The Joint OAU/IPA Task Force on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping in Africa*, March 1998, New York.

countries were to have provided.[24] In the meantime, UNAMIR was quickly overwhelmed by the situation and was withdrawn, even as the genocide escalated with an estimated 800,000 people killed in about three months.

Burundi: The OAU undertook a number of measures to try to resolve the crisis that engulfed Burundi in 1994 following the murders of two successive Hutu presidents. These included the OAU Secretary-General's frequent visits to Burundi, his appointment of a special envoy, the dispatch of an African Women's Solidarity Mission in 1997 to encourage the participation of women in the peace-building process, and the deployment of a 52-person Observer Mission to Burundi (OMIB), after the UN had politely but firmly refused to send a peacekeeping force to that country.[25] While there is no doubt that OMIB was too small for a confidence-building mission among the parties, it is generally acknowledged to have been successful in tempering the situation in Burundi.

In addition to its own initiatives, the OAU supported regional efforts to end the crisis. These centered on a peace dialogue mediated by President Julius Nyerere, the former President of Tanzania, beginning in 1995. The OAU withdrew OMIB amid a deteriorating security situation following another coup by Pierre Buyoya in July 1996. Sub-regional states condemned the coup, agreed to impose economic sanctions against Burundi, and resolved to continue their efforts at finding a solution to the Burundi crisis. The OAU Central Organ endorsed the decisions of the regional states.

By 1998, Buyoya had undertaken efforts to generate a national dialogue and to establish partnerships for peace between the government, parliament, political parties, and civil society organizations. The OAU encouraged Buyoya's efforts and urged a revival of the Arusha peace process, which resumed in June 1998. However, the peace process stalled following the illness and subsequent death of Nyerere. In 1999, former South African President, Nelson Mandela was appointed to assume the role of chief mediator in Burundi, and to continue efforts to bring to a close a war in which over 200,000 people had died since 1993. The OAU has continued to monitor the situation in Burundi closely and to participate in efforts to bring the conflict to an end. For example, the OAU participated in the consultative meeting in Arusha in March 2000, and another in New York two months later. The organization has been consistent in issuing statements condemning the perpetrators of the violence in that country while also continuing to work with regional states and Nelson Mandela to get all parties to sign a cease-fire agreement and to bring peace to Burundi.

Comoros: In August 1997, separatists on Anjouan and Moheli, two of the four islands comprising the Comoros, declared independence from the Grande Comoros. The government responded by sending troops to restore order, resulting in the death of forty people. Comorian President Taki approached the OAU, the UN, and the Arab League for assistance. The OAU responded by asking the government to refrain from the use of force by sending a special envoy, Pierre Yere, to the Comoros. The OAU sent a ministerial delegation to the Comoros. Mr. Yere was able to convince the separatists and the government to participate in talks. These talks, attended by all parties, led to the agreement for an inter-island conference to determine the institutional framework within which the legitimate concerns of the people on the island would be addressed, and to the establishment of a follow-up mechanism to be chaired by the OAU.

The ministerial delegation reported to the OAU that diplomatic efforts were not working and that the OAU needed to explore other options. In June 1998 the OAU endorsed these findings and in August 1998, the Central Organ authorized the dispatch of a 24-person Observer Mission in the Comoros (OMIC) to monitor the situation and act as a confidence-building mechanism. OMIC was able to work on all islands except Anjouan, where the separatists refused it entry. Before the proposed inter-island conference could be held, however, Anjouanese separatists held a referendum and, in December 1998, drafted a constitution for their island. The OAU responded by arguing that the secessionists were undermining the territorial integrity of the Comoros. More violence erupted and

24 Margaret A. Vogt, "The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Conflict Management in Africa," paper presented at the International Resource Group Conference, Mombasa, November 6-9, 1996.

25 "OAU Agrees to Stand-by Force," Agence France-Presse International News, June 27, 1995.

President Massonde, who had assumed the presidency following Taki's death in November 1998, requested military assistance from the OAU. In February 1999, the OAU launched a new peace initiative that, among other things, called for an inter-island conference.

This conference took place in Madagascar and led to an OAU-mediated agreement known as the Antananarivo Agreement. The agreement, signed in 1999, provided the two islands with greater autonomy, but not independence, and also introduced a three-year rotating presidency among the islands. However, the Anjouanese delegation refused to sign the agreement. This precipitated violence against Anjouanese citizens which, in turn, resulted in a coup on the island in April 1999 and a derailment of the peace agreement. The military observers within OMIC were withdrawn while a skeletal civilian component remained to try to re-establish dialogue. In October 1999, the Central Organ reiterated its commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros and reaffirmed its commitment to continue working for a solution to the situation.[26] The OAU has continued its efforts to resolve the crisis while steadfastly maintaining its unwillingness to compromise on the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros. It spent much of 2000 trying to get the Anjouanese separatists to cooperate with the OAU in the search for a lasting solution to the crisis. The OAU is also considering military-related measures against the separatists, and has requested regional states, under South Africa's leadership, to take the lead in this effort. Meanwhile the OAU Secretary-General continues to work with the Comorian parties in a bid to ensure the speedy return to constitutional government.

Democratic Republic of Congo: In May 1997, Laurent Kabila's Alliance of Forces for the Democratic Republic of Congo (AFDL) ousted Mobutu Sese Seko who had ruled Zaire for three decades. Kabila became president and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo. In August 1998, a rebellion broke out in the eastern region of the DRC. It soon became clear that Rwanda and Uganda, whose leaders had actively supported Kabila's effort to oust Mobutu, had now joined forces with the rebels to fight Kabila. Salim Ahmed Salim urged both sides to exercise restraint and to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. He also dispatched a fact-finding mission to the region, under the leadership of his Special Representative to Burundi. Based on information from the mission, the Central Organ met in August 1998. It asked both sides to seek a peaceful solution to the problem, condemned all external involvement in the conflict and encouraged the efforts of regional states, particularly Southern African Development Community (SADC) members, to seek a solution to the crisis. After a SADC meeting in 1998, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia as well as Chad and Sudan decided to send troops to assist President Kabila. Meanwhile, Uganda and Rwanda continued to support the rebels militarily.

With the conflict in the DRC now threatening to engulf the entire Great Lakes region, the OAU moved quickly to convene a meeting with the regional states in August 1998. The meeting resulted in "The Cease-fire Agreement" and "The Mechanism for Setting Up an OAU Observer Mission or a United Nations Peace-keeping Operation." However, largely because the rebels were not party to these discussions, the cease-fire was not enforceable. Meanwhile, regional efforts, under the leadership of the Tanzanian and Zambian presidents, continued.

In April 1999, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni met with Kabila in Sirte, Libya, where they signed a peace agreement. The Sirte agreement turned out to be the basis for the Lusaka peace talks in April 1999 which were undertaken by SADC with the support of the OAU. That same month, Kabila signed a collective defense pact with the leaders of Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe in which the four signatories committed themselves to a joint response in the event that one of them was attacked. In July 1999, after another round of talks in Lusaka, Kabila, the rebels, and all the countries involved in the conflict agreed to a cease-fire. However, the cease-fire failed to hold, with both sides accusing each other of violating the agreement.

In 2000, the OAU has been extremely active in its diplomatic efforts to bring the DRC conflict to an end. In January, the OAU participated in a series of meetings, including one with UN officials, to discuss ways in which they could coordinate their efforts in the DRC. Later that month, the OAU participated in

[26] Anneke Galama, "The Comoros: Independence or Back to Colonial Times?" <http://www.euforic.org/euconflict/sfp/part2/406>.

the fourth session of the Joint Military Committee, in the third session of the Political Committee on the DRC Peace Process, and in the special session of the UN Security Council on the DRC. This meeting resulted in the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1291, under which a peacekeeping mission was to be sent to the DRC.

Since then, the OAU has seen a flurry of activities aimed at getting the parties to the conflict to commit to a cease-fire and agree to the disengagement and redeployment of their troops on the ground and, in the long-term, to bring peace to the DRC. OAU officials have accompanied the facilitator for the Inter-Congolese dialogue, Sir Ketumile Masire, former president of Botswana, to the region for discussions with parties to the conflict which have so far proved unsuccessful. Kabila refused to accept Masire as the mediator, accusing him of bias, and asked for his replacement. The OAU has also participated in several meetings of the Joint Military Commission, the Political Committee, and served as an observer in the summit of the parties to the conflict. Other peace efforts in DRC include a mini-summit convened by the OAU in April 2000 following massive violations by all sides of the cease-fire agreement. The Zambian government, the chair of the regional initiative for peace in the DRC, has appealed to OAU members for continued financial and material support to bolster the peace process. The OAU has also asked member states to take the lead in the provision of troops in support of Resolution 1291. Furthermore, the OAU has continued to work with the UN to examine the Joint Military Committee's relations with the UN observer mission to the Congo, MONUC, particularly with regard to the co-location of their facilities, and their efforts to demilitarize and disengage the warring factions.

The OAU still lacks the capacity, resources and experience to defuse and resolve conflicts by itself.

Eritrea and Ethiopia: In June 1998, a territorial dispute erupted between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since then the situation deteriorated with thousands killed on both sides, expulsions of Eritreans from Ethiopia and Ethiopians from Eritrea. The OAU and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a sub-regional organization that includes Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda, have been involved in seeking a solution to this crisis. The OAU established a high-level delegation that studied the problem and submitted proposals for a Framework Agreement to achieve a cessation of hostilities. The OAU Central Organ endorsed the Framework Agreement. However, both Eritrea and Ethiopia expressed reservations about certain aspects of the agreement. The OAU worked with both countries to provide them with clarifications on the proposals. Algeria's President Abdelazziz Bouteflika, in his capacity as Chairman of the OAU, also expended much diplomatic effort on resolving this conflict. In February 1999, IGAD issued a declaration supporting the OAU's efforts and encouraging the two protagonists to exercise restraint. The UN also endorsed the OAU's efforts to find a solution to the crisis. A peace agreement was signed by Ethiopia and Eritrea, and by October 2000, the UN had started to deploy observers to the disputed border region in cooperation with the OAU. The level of collaboration between the OAU and UN appears to be more extensive in this mission than in previous cases, and some lessons seem to have been learnt from cooperation in the DRC, as plans are being made to co-locate OAU and UN military observers in the Horn of Africa.

In undertaking to resolve these five conflicts, the OAU has utilized a wide range of preventive tools and measures. These have included direct mediation, as the OAU has done with the secessionist crisis in the Comoros, as well as the application of political pressure including the regular issuance of statements and endorsement of sanctions against military putschists. The OAU has also employed special envoys in Burundi and Comoros. In addition, the Secretaries-General of the OAU and the UN have worked together in efforts to resolve the Ethiopia/Eritrea and DRC conflicts. The OAU has deployed fact-finding missions, as well as three military observer missions to Rwanda, Burundi, and Comoros. While these missions have registered mixed results (there can be no doubt that the size of these missions was inadequate for the tasks

[27] See Report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council on Ethiopia and Eritrea. 30 June 2000, S/2000/643.

required), they nonetheless enabled the OAU to begin establishing a credible presence in the area of conflict management in Africa.

The performance of the OAU Mechanism has also demonstrated that the scale and scope of conflict, juxtaposed against the organization's lack of capacity, resources, and experience, is such that the OAU does not, at this time, have the capacity to defuse and resolve conflicts in Africa by itself. As a result, the question of how best to work with other sub-regional and extra-regional entities for purposes of managing African conflicts is one that has preoccupied the OAU since the establishment of its Mechanism in 1993. While some level of cooperation exists between the OAU, the UN and Africa's sub-regional organizations, the OAU has sought to strengthen this cooperation. One critical issue in the OAU's efforts to strengthen cooperation with these organizations has been the need to clarify the division of labor among the UN, international donors, the OAU, Africa's sub-regional organizations and its civil society groups.

Part Four: Building Collaborative Relationships for Conflict Management in Africa

4.1 The OAU Mechanism and the United Nations

The relationship between the UN and the OAU, as mandated in their respective charters, aims to be one of complementarity. Chapter VIII of the UN charter spells out the importance of regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security, while its security Mechanism requires the OAU to "cooperate and work closely with the United Nations not only with regard to issues relating to peacemaking but also those relating to peacekeeping. Where necessary, recourse will be had to the United Nations to provide the necessary financial, logistical and military support for the OAU's activities in conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa in keeping with Chapter VIII of the UN charter..." The OAU Mechanism also noted that in situations where conflict degenerated "to the extent of requiring collective international intervention and policing, the assistance or, where appropriate, the services of the United Nations will be sought under the general terms of its charter. In this instance, our respective countries will examine the ways and modalities through which they can make practical contribution to such a United Nations undertaking and participate effectively in the peacekeeping operations in Africa."[28] Thus, from the very establishment of the Mechanism, the OAU's position has been that it would focus on the early detection and prevention of conflict, while the UN (since it holds primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and has more resources, capacity, and experience), would take the lead in mounting peacekeeping operations in Africa, including maintaining command and control of military forces dispatched for this purpose.

Between 1960 and 1999, the UN undertook a total of 19 peacekeeping operations in Africa.[29] It is reflective of the deteriorated security landscape on the continent, and the turmoil that the OAU Mechanism has had to face, that all but two of these missions were initiated after 1990. In conducting these missions and other conflict management activities on the continent, the UN has worked in cooperation with the OAU. Such collaboration has included OAU and UN observer missions working together in South Africa, Mozambique, and Burundi to reduce political violence and facilitate the democratization process in these countries, as well as continued collaboration in efforts to achieve self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. The UN mission to Rwanda, UNAMIR, established in 1993 to implement the Arusha Peace Agreement, incorporated the OAU's NMOG II in its structure. The OAU and the UN also made collaborative efforts to end the conflict in Somalia and to support the process of national reconciliation in that country. In Sierra Leone, the UN authorized the Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), an OAU-supported effort, to enforce the sanctions that it had imposed on that country.

Apart from their collaboration in field operations, the UN and OAU have worked together in diplomatic efforts. For example, the two organizations appointed a joint Special Representative to the Great Lakes region, and both have worked together to support mediation efforts in Burundi. Further collaboration between the OAU and UN is evident in the latter's decision to establish a liaison office at the OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa to consolidate cooperation, facilitate the exchange of information, and

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28 Organization of African Unity, "Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the Establishment Within the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution," Cairo, 1993.

29 UNAVEM I (January 1989-June 1991), UNAVEM II (June 1991-February 1995), and UNAVEM III (February 1995-June 1997)-United Nations Angola Verification Mission; MONUA-United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (July 1997-February 1999); MINURCA-United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (April 1998-February 2000); UNASOG-United Nations Aouzou Strip Observer Group (May-June 1994); ONUC-United Nations Operation in the Congo (July 1960-June 1964); UNOMIL-United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (September 1993-September 1997); ONUMOZ-United Nations Operation in Mozambique (December 1992-December 1994); UNTAG-United Nations Transition Assistance Group (April 1989-March 1990); UNAMIR-United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (October 1993-March 1996); UNOMUR-United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (June 1993-September 1994); UNOMSIL-United Nations Mission of Observers in Sierra Leone (July 1998-October 1999); UNOSOM I (April 1992-March 1993) UNITAF-United Task Force (December 1992-May 1993) and UNOSOM II (March 1993-March 1995)-United Nations Operation in Somalia; MONUC-United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo; November 1999-; UNAMSIL-United Naitons Mission in Sierra Leone, October 1999-; MINURSO-United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; April 1991-.

coordinate efforts at managing conflicts in Africa.[30] Finally, the OAU has, through its member states, provided personnel for UN peacekeeping operations in Africa and elsewhere. Despite this collaboration, there has been growing concern in Africa and other quarters about what is increasingly perceived as the UN's failure to respond adequately to conflicts in Africa.[31]

In 1992, the UN reviewed its strategy for conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Non-payment of contributions and the reluctance of Western countries to commit their military personnel to undertake difficult peacekeeping operations resulted in UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* recommending, among other things, the partial delegation of peacekeeping operations to regional organizations.[32] The failure of UNOSOM II, the UN mission in Somalia, in 1993, marked a turning point in the UN Security Council's attitude toward a prominent UN role in conflict management efforts in Africa. This new attitude led to what was, by the UN's own admission, a patent failure the following year in Rwanda, where despite evidence of impending massacres, the UN Security Council proved unwilling to act.[33] Similarly, in Burundi, the UN left the mediation of that conflict to neighboring countries.

Concerned about the slow and inadequate response to the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi, the OAU once again stated its position in a 1995 Declaration, that while it could under exceptional circumstances conduct peacekeeping operations of a limited scope and duration, the UN was best placed to deal with peacekeeping operations. The issues of effective conflict management in Africa, the role of the OAU in peacekeeping, and the types of missions the OAU should or could undertake, were further defined at the 1996 and 1998 meetings of African army Chiefs of Staff. Africa's top military brass reaffirmed the OAU's focus on anticipating and preventing conflicts, but also suggested that the OAU should begin to develop the capacity to undertake limited peacekeeping missions. To get this effort underway, at their 1998 meeting in Harare, the Chiefs of Staff recommended that each of Africa's five sub-regions should contribute one hundred observers to an embryonic pan-African force.[34] Based on these recommendations, the OAU is now developing procedures for military deployment and is making plans for building capacity to enable it to mount at least two short-term political and military missions (for fact-finding, confidence-building, and mediation purposes) and two permanent missions.

Since the OAU still lacks the capacity to mount full-scale peacekeeping operations, Africa's army Chiefs of Staff also recommended strengthening the OAU's capacity for effective participation in UN peacekeeping activities. Under this proposal, the OAU would assume the role of coordinating and supporting African participation in UN initiatives including the maintenance of a roster of African troops available for UN peacekeeping operations in Africa; instituting regular meetings of African Chiefs of Staff (which the OAU in fact initiated in 1996) in order to improve coordination of African planning for UN or sub-regional peacekeeping operations; coordinating the development of a common doctrine and concept of operations among African armies; facilitating the joint training of African forces for peacekeeping; and developing common stores for logistical, communications, and transportation equipment to be used in peacekeeping operations in Africa.[35]

The debate regarding the appropriate division of labor between the OAU and the UN has continued well into 2000 as evidenced, in part, by the criticisms of the UN for its lackluster response to the crises in the DRC and Sierra Leone, two of the most devastating conflicts on the continent.[36]

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30 OAU, *The OAU's Programme for Strengthening the Conflict Management Centre, op. cit*, p.9.

31 For more on the OAU's relations with the UN see Margaret Vogt in Gunnar M. Sorbo and Peter Vale (eds.). *Out of Conflict, from War to Peace*, Nordiska Africainstitutet, Uppsala, 1997, and Dobson, *op. cit.*

32 Sandile Gwexe, "Prospects for African Conflict Resolution in the Next Millenium: South Africa's View," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1999, p.105.

33 See Report of the Secretary General, *The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa*, United Nations, New York, May 1998, <www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/sgreport/report>.

34 OAU, *Enhancing Peace and Security, op. cit*, p.11.

35 Ameen Jan, *op. cit.*

36 See Jerome Hule, "UN Unwilling to Support Peacekeeping in Africa-Chiluba," Panafrican News Agency, September 22, 1999; and "UN Abandoning Africa," Interpress Service International, July 7, 1995.

4.2 The OAU Mechanism and Sub-Regional Organizations

The declaration establishing the OAU Mechanism notes that it is expected to work closely with sub-regional organizations, and cooperate appropriately with neighboring states with respect to conflicts arising in their respective sub-regions. This close collaboration is necessary because sub-regional organizations are often thought to possess comparative advantages in dealing with conflicts in their own sub-regions. Such advantages include their proximity to conflict situations and hence, ability to respond quickly; their knowledge of local conflict situations; the likelihood that they will have personal relationships with some of the key players, and can therefore embark on preventive diplomacy efforts much more quickly than outsiders; and their shared cultures and historical experiences with other countries in the sub-region.

Additionally, the political will for sub-regional countries to act is often thought to be stronger since these countries understand only too well how a conflict in a neighboring country can have negative consequences with the potential to jeopardize their own security and stretch their already limited resources. For example, in 1994, the civil war in Rwanda resulted in over 1.2 million refugees fleeing to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) and Tanzania, the Liberian civil war spilled over 750,000 refugees into Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone, while the Sierra Leone conflict resulted in over 500,000 people seeking refuge in Guinea and Liberia. One of the consequences of the large population movements is that Guinea has the highest per capita population of refugees in the world.[37] Given situations in which conflicts in one country often spill over into neighboring states, it is imperative to take collective action in seeking a comprehensive resolution of these regional conflicts. Thus, sub-regional mechanisms for conflict management have assumed great importance in Africa.

It is, however, important to note that the very reasons that make it compelling for sub-regional organizations and neighboring countries to participate in the search for peaceful solutions to conflicts in their own sub-regions can also lead to further complications and the spread of conflicts. Examples of such complications are provided by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (where at least six neighboring countries are supporting either the government or the rebels and, by so doing, spreading and complicating the devastation) and the conflict in the Sudan (where members of IGAD support different sides to the conflict).[38]

In addressing the role of sub-regional organizations, it must be remembered that the *raison d'être* of many sub-regional organizations in Africa was economic. For example, IGAD, known as the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) prior to 1995, was initially established to address matters related to drought and desertification; SADC focused on development issues, although a number of its members belonged to the Frontline States and played a critical role in the liberation struggles of Mozambique, South Africa, and Namibia; and ECOWAS focused on building a free trade area in West Africa. This means that sub-regional conflict management efforts have been of an *ad hoc* nature. For example, all ECOWAS leaders did not initially approve the two ECOMOG interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Despite this lack of institutionalized crisis prevention mechanisms in Africa, the OAU has worked with sub-regional organizations in managing regional conflicts. This has been especially true of ECOWAS, IGAD, and SADC, all of which have assumed increasing political, and in some cases military, responsibilities in their respective sub-regions. In cases where formal and informal sub-regional organizations have taken the lead in peacemaking or peacekeeping, the OAU has played a supportive role. Such support has included the OAU's efforts to raise financial and other resources for the operations undertaken by ECOWAS in Liberia and Sierra Leone which were spearheaded by ECOMOG, as well as support for SADC's efforts to

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37 UN Secretary-General's Report to the UN Security Council, *The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa*, New York, May 1998.

38 A good discussion of the issues pertaining to conflict management relationships among the OAU and sub-regional organizations is provided by *Mark Malan, The OAU and African Sub-regional Organizations–A Closer Look at the Peace Pyramid*, Institute of Security Studies, Occasional Paper No. 36, January 1999, p.1.

re-instate the legitimate government in Lesotho when the military attempted a coup in that country in 1994. In a stand against unconstitutional changes of government, SADC asked the Lesotho military to reverse itself or risk punitive action. The Lesotho military complied.

The OAU also worked to encourage and, when it stalled, resuscitate the regional peace dialogue for Burundi under former President Nyerere and, later, former President Mandela as mediators. It endorsed the economic sanctions imposed on Burundi by regional states following Buyoya's 1996 coup. In the Central African Republic, the OAU supported the Conference on Consensus Building and Dialogue initiated by the Central African Republic's neighbors after violence broke out in that country in 1997. This dialogue resulted in a truce known as the Bangui Accords which, in turn, led to the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Bangui Accords (MISAB). The OAU supported MISAB by providing some financial and logistical support. Other support for regional efforts included working closely with countries in the Great Lakes and SADC regions in search of peaceful solutions to the crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), as well as the OAU's close collaboration with IGAD in seeking a resolution of the Ethiopia-Eritrea war.[39]

After ECOMOG intervened in the Liberian civil war, the OAU took on the task of mobilizing international political, financial, and material support for the peacekeeping force. Similarly, the OAU has liaised and worked with SADC in support of its efforts in Lesotho and in the DRC. The OAU's collaboration with IGAD has perhaps been the most tenuous of any of its relationships with Africa's sub-regional organizations active in the area of peace and security. Nonetheless, the OAU has steadfastly supported IGAD's efforts in the Horn of Africa, especially in mediation efforts in Sudan between the government and rebel factions. The work of these organizations, particularly that of ECOWAS in West Africa, has provided the OAU and the sub-regional organizations with a sense of confidence, a road map, as well as critical lessons on which to build for the future.

In recent years Africa's sub-regional organizations have determined that they need to develop institutions that will enable them to become more active and effective in conflict management. In 1996, SADC decided to establish an Organ on Politics, Defence and Security to fill the gap left by the Frontline States. ECOWAS leaders agreed in 1999 to establish a sub-regional security mechanism. The ECOWAS Protocol for Conflict, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, proposed and debated in Abuja in October 1998, was signed at the ECOWAS summit in Lomé in December 1999. Similarly, in 1998 IGAD agreed on a "Statement of Objectives for Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Management" and restructured its Secretariat to include a Division for Peace, Security and Humanitarian Affairs. By 1999, IGAD had developed terms of reference for a program on Conflict Prevention, Resolution, and Management for purposes of tackling conflicts in its sub-region. Clearly the OAU and the sub-regional organizations are cognizant of the need for coordination. A major step in this direction was taken when ECOWAS stated in its Protocol that it would inform the OAU when undertaking missions. Likewise, IGAD's terms of reference complement those of the OAU Mechanism.[40]

As Africa's sub-regional organizations define and develop their conflict management mechanisms and operational procedures, there is a need to clarify their relationship with the OAU and UN. A critical issue will be the funding of sub-regional peace operations. Again, the ECOMOG experience offers some valuable lessons. Although the UN and OAU were involved in mobilizing financial support for the ECOMOG operation in Liberia, they were unsuccessful in attracting sufficient resources to fund the entire operation. As a result, Nigeria bore a disproportionate amount of the cost of the operation in financial and human terms. The problem continued with ECOMOG's participation in Sierra Leone between 1997 to 1999. Soon after his election as President of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo withdrew most of Nigeria's 12,000-strong ECOMOG contingent from Sierra Leone, leaving about 3,500 troops under a new UN peacekeeping force.

The number of sub-regional organizations in Africa

[39] For a more detailed discussion on the role played by the Mechanism in seeking to resolve African conflict see International Peace Academy, *OAU/IPA Joint Task Force Report, op. cit.*

[40] Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, "Programme on Conflict Prevention, Resolution, and Management: Terms of Reference," N.D.

and their overlapping memberships and mandates also raise important questions with regard to how and with which organizations the OAU should interact at the sub-regional level. Currently, the OAU gives priority to interacting with only one sub-regional organization from each of Africa's five geographic areas: IGAD in the East; ECOWAS in the West; the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) in the North; SADC in the South; and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the Central African sub-region. With regard to their conflict management activities, ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD are the most active of these organizations while ECCAS and UMA have been less active.[41]

The recent decision to incorporate the Treaty for Non-Aggression, Assistance and Mutual Defence, a francophone West African sub-regional group (known by its French acronym, ANAD) into ECOWAS is significant and could result in increased effectiveness and economies of scale in regional security matters. However, there are still a number of important questions to be determined. For example, while the re-establishment of the East African Community (EAC) provides for the possibility of joint military operations among its members, it is unclear how the peacekeeping role of the organization would fit in with existing agreements and overlapping memberships with other sub-regional organizations.[42] In 1999, another organization, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), whose membership includes most SADC, EAC, and IGAD countries, began examining ways in which the organization could be involved in conflict prevention and resolution.

Another important issue is the scope and nature of the relationship between the OAU and Africa's sub-regional organizations. A critical question is whether sub-regional organizations need to seek authorization from the OAU before taking action (or if it is sufficient for the sub-regional organization only to inform the OAU of its actions), and what procedures should be followed in doing so. For example, to the extent that the regional interventions in Lesotho and the DRC could be said to be SADC operations, prior authorization was not sought from the OAU. It is clear therefore that the OAU needs to develop policies that will regulate its relationship with Africa's sub-regional organizations.[43] Such institutionalization of procedures would not only enhance cooperation between these organizations but also reduce the perception of the overwhelming power of some countries within these sub-regions. For example, during ECOMOG's operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, questions were raised about Nigeria's overwhelming role and about the decision-making procedures within the peacekeeping mission. But the ECOWAS security Protocol of 1999 pledged only to inform the UN and OAU of its decisions rather than to seek their formal permission, out of concern that such permission could slow or prevent needed action. The lack of formal conflict management procedures in the interventions in Lesotho and the DRC also resulted in the perception that they were respectively South African and Zimbabwean rather than SADC operations.[44]

There is need to further clarify the OAU's relationship with the UN and sub-regional organizations.

Finally, the OAU and sub-regional organizations need to determine whether their systems are going to be supplementary or complementary. For example, will there be an OAU Early Warning System and several sub-regional early warning systems? If so, how will these operate? Will they be separate or will they form part of one larger system? Clearly, the OAU is aware of, and concerned about, the need to establish complementary relationships with sub-regional organizations in Africa. In November 1998, the IPA and the OAU hosted a seminar that addressed peacemaking and peacekeeping issues in Africa, the relationships between the OAU and sub-regional organizations, as well as the development of sub-regional mechanisms for conflict management.

41 Malan, *op. cit.*, p.3.

42 *Ibid*, p.2.

43 Cedric de Coning, *Preparing for the Third Millenium: Towards a Policy Framework for the OAU Conflict Management Mechanism*, ACCORD, Occasional Paper 4/99, pp.9-10.

44 *Ibid*, p.2

However, according to Cedric de Coning, as of 1999, the OAU, ECOWAS, and SADC were proceeding with developing their early warning systems with only limited coordination. Since the development of the OAU and the sub-regional early warning systems are in their infancy, the OAU should take the lead and work with these sub-regional organizations to articulate and develop the necessary policy framework for collaboration in this and other areas.[45]

4.3 The OAU Mechanism and Civil Society

Since the creation of its security mechanism in 1993, the OAU recognized that civil society actors could play a critical role in managing conflicts in Africa. After all, civil society groups are often best placed to identify tensions building within communities well before conflicts erupt. To this end, the OAU has sought to develop recommendations on how best to integrate civil society organizations into the work of its Mechanism. In 1996 the OAU partnered with the IPA to sponsor a consultation involving 75 African civil society participants representing a variety of sectors, including religious and traditional leaders, scholars, women's organizations, the business community, and current and former government officials, to discuss concrete ways through which civil society groups in Africa could contribute to the management of conflicts. The meeting looked at how the numerous conflict management activities undertaken by African civil society organizations could be supported, strengthened, and sustained; how linkages could be developed for networking and sharing information among African civil society actors; how resources and information could be most effectively channeled from international entities to African civil society groups; and how greater understanding of the OAU Mechanism could be promoted among civil society actors in Africa. The 1996 IPA/OAU Consultation resulted in some concrete and practical recommendations for OAU partnerships with civil society organizations in Africa.[46]

One key recommendation from this Consultation addressed the need for the OAU to establish a register of Africa-based scholars, institutions, and non-academic individuals working in the area of conflict management at the local and community levels. The OAU could then use this register to create an advisory group of eminent civil society individuals, including practitioners and scholars, to assist the OAU Secretary-General in the implementation of the Mechanism, including conducting research and serving on secondment to the OAU. There were also calls for the creation of a focal point within the OAU for ongoing consultation with interested civil society actors, and for the establishment of linkages with neo-Diaspora individuals and institutions, as well as international organizations with knowledge and extensive expertise in African peace and security issues.[47]

It is important to acknowledge that the OAU has made progress toward implementing some of these recommendations. For instance, civil society groups are now attending some OAU meetings. The OAU has also developed a "Building Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations" program. Based on the belief that civil society organizations constitute an influential force in democratization processes, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and socio-economic development, this program seeks to strengthen the foundations of civil society actors in Africa. The goals of the program include encouraging networking and the sharing of resources among the diverse participants in civil society (NGOs, grassroots organizations, academic institutions, media, etc.); improving collaboration between the OAU and civil society organizations to promote good governance, democracy, respect for the rule of law, and the promotion of human rights; and increasing the involvement of civil society actors in peace-making activities and in the OAU Conflict Management Mechanism.[48]

The OAU has recognized that women and children disproportionately suffer the consequences of conflict even though they are often not the perpetrators, and that in recent years, women have been organizing

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[45] *Ibid*, p.10.

[46] *Report of the IPA/OAU Consultation on Civil Society and Conflict Management in Africa 29 May-2 June 1996*, Cape Town, South Africa, International Peace Academy, New York, p.1.

[47] Chairman's Summary Report, *IPA/OAU Consultation on Civil Society and Conflict Management in Africa*, 29 May-2 June 1996, Cape Town, South Africa; and *The OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution*, an International Peace Academy Report, p.23.

[48] See "Organization of African Unity" at <www.euforic.org/euconflict/guides/orgs/africa>.

themselves to participate in peace-building and conflict management activities. As a result of this recognition, the OAU has begun to take practical steps to include African women and utilize their skills in resolving conflicts in Africa. For example, in 1997, the OAU dispatched an African Women's Solidarity Mission to Burundi with the goal of encouraging the participation of women in the peace-building process in that country. In 1998, the OAU, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), created an advisory body called the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development whose role was to foster the full participation of women in continental efforts to manage conflicts. Since then, the Women's Committee has undertaken a number of activities. For example, it has issued statements against human rights abuses in Sierra Leone, and has endorsed the efforts of West African Women's Crusade for Peace and various other Sierra Leoneon women's groups.[49]

However, the OAU may need to revisit its approach and strategy for incorporating women into the work of its Mechanism. Some concerns have been expressed that the Women's Committee is weak and not integrally incorporated in the Mechanism. The OAU needs to empower a Committee to be more effective. There is also a sense that, at this point, the Women's Committee is little more than a symbolic gesture for the inclusion of women in the OAU's conflict management efforts. This perception has been further fueled by the Central Organ's request for clarity about the OAU's financial and institutional responsibilities for the sustenance of the Committee.[50] There also remain concerns that the Committee will not be effective since it is too elitist in composition. Overall, the OAU could do considerably more to involve civil society groups in the work of its Mechanism. Numerous and solid recommendations have been advanced as to how this can best be achieved. The OAU now needs to act on these recommendations.

The OAU should involve civil society groups in the work of its Mechanism.

4.4 The OAU Mechanism and International Peacekeeping Initiatives

Another critical issue concerns the efforts of individual Western countries and institutions, often working outside the framework of the UN, to build the capacity of African states to manage regional conflicts. The most prominent of these initiatives include those sponsored by the British, the French, the Americans, and the European Union (EU). The British initiative has focused on ways of strengthening Africa's ability to prepare and deploy troops for peacekeeping (under the auspices of either the UN or OAU), emphasized the establishment of an early warning system, a skills development center and an institutional framework for preventive diplomacy between the UN and the OAU. The French initiative, announced at the Franco-African summit in Biarritz in 1994, centered on the creation of a rapid intervention force, known as *Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix* (RECAMP) that could be deployed into emergency crisis situations. The US initiative began with the adoption of the African Conflict Resolution Act in 1994 aimed at institutionalizing Africa's conflict resolution capabilities. This led to the creation of the African Crisis Response Initiative at the core of which was the creation and training of an African force that could intervene in crisis situations at very short notice. The EU initiative, announced in 1995, proposed a strategy through which the EU could support conflict management efforts in Africa. The main thrust of the EU's initiative was to assist African states to prevent conflicts and to create guidelines for more rapid responses to African crises. The EU has now institutionalized a dialogue on conflict management with the OAU and Africa's sub-regional organizations. The first EU-OAU ministerial meeting took place in 1997, and director-level meetings are now held twice a year.[51]

While appreciative of the assistance of donor govern-

49 OAU, "Establishment of the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development," <www.oau-oua.org/oau_info/pressrelease/1.html>.

50 OAU, Communiqué of the Fifty-ninth Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at the Ambassadorial Level, Addis Ababa, October 1, 1999.

51 Leba, *op. cit.*

ments in the development and strengthening of African capacities for peacekeeping, many African analysts and policymakers have argued that these initiatives are not always consistent with the UN charter, the OAU mandate, and the unity of the continent. Such critics are concerned that the OAU has not been consulted or invited to participate in the design or implementation of these externally-led initiatives. This has led some to suggest that the initiatives are being developed mostly because Western countries want Africans to shoulder the full burden of conflict management activities in Africa, including peacekeeping and peace enforcement. This view was most succinctly expressed in a 1996 communication from the EU which stated that "Africans are primarily responsible for conflict prevention, management, and resolution in Africa, and the Union should actively assist Africans to assume a lead role...."[52] While African leaders realize that the UN has primary responsibility for managing African and other conflicts, the OAU agrees that it shares a responsibility for managing Africa's conflicts. Many African leaders are nonetheless concerned that the international community, and the UN Security Council in particular, is abandoning them at a time when they clearly lack the capacity to manage the complex security issues on the continent. They accuse Western powers and the UN of a double standard in which African conflicts are not afforded the same level of attention as conflicts in other regions, such as the Balkans where UN and Western reaction has been markedly more engaged and pro-active.

Furthermore, it is not clear how these external initiatives complement the conflict management framework and structures established by the OAU. For example, many African countries responded with suspicion to the US-sponsored ACRI primarily because of a widespread perception that this was a unilateral attempt by Washington to determine Africa's peace agenda. The problems also stemmed from concerns about the complementarity of ACRI (which is implemented at the bilateral level and is developed only with countries that are deemed to be democratic by the US) with the OAU Mechanism.[53] Other critics have questioned the emphasis placed by these initiatives on training Africans for peacekeeping arguing that it is the lack of logistics and sustainability of peacekeeping operations that pose the greatest challenge to the OAU and not training *per se.*

IPA/OAU Consultation on Civil Society and Conflict Management in Africa, 29 May-2 June 1996, Cape Town, South Africa.

[52] For a detailed description of the EU dialogue about conflict in Africa and the EU's ties to the OAU Mechanism, see Martin Landgraf, "Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention in Africa," <www.oneworld.org/thinktank/eucoop/edit4.html>.

[53] For more on international peace management initiatives in Africa see Leba, *op. cit.*

Part Five: Performance and Enhancement of Key Aspects of The OAU Mechanism

5.1 Capacity Enhancement: An Ongoing Process

Even as the OAU has been out in the field, searching for peace in various African conflicts, it has also been working to enhance the structural and organizational capacity of its Mechanism. In the declaration establishing the Mechanism, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government directed the OAU Council of Ministers "... in consultation with the Secretary-General, to examine ways and means in which the capacity within the General Secretariat can be built and brought up to a level commensurate with the magnitude of the tasks at hand and the responsibilities expected of the Organization."[54] In seeking to carry out this charge, the OAU and the IPA held annual consultations on various aspects of the Mechanism's work, including a 1994 meeting, during which the OAU, IPA, and the government of Egypt co-sponsored a consultation that was attended by over 150 senior political, diplomatic, and military officers, and scholars from all over Africa, to review the Mechanism.

One of the major recommendations to emerge from this meeting was the need for a task force to assist the OAU in proposing and undertaking practical measures to make the Mechanism fully operational. Following this recommendation, the OAU partnered with the IPA in 1995 to create the Joint Task Force on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping in Africa whose main purpose was to develop an overall conceptual framework for the conduct of peacemaking and peacekeeping in Africa. Since then, the task force has held several meetings for purposes of reviewing the performance of the OAU Mechanism; developing ways of making it more effective; proposing ways in which the OAU can establish relationships with international and regional institutions involved in conflict management, and defining the parameters of those relationships; providing training for officials involved in the implementation of the Mechanism; outlining ways of involving African civil society groups in conflict management; and discussing the acquisition of infrastructure and human resources necessary for the OAU to fulfill its conflict management mandate, especially with regard to the prevention of conflicts. By so doing, the IPA/OAU Task Force has sought to provide the OAU with a framework and options for conducting its peace management activities on the continent.

Based on its own analysis and on the work undertaken in collaboration with the IPA (including the 1998 reports of the Joint OAU/IPA Task Force and the OAU/IPA Seminar on the relationship between the OAU, the UN and African sub-regional organizations) the OAU developed a framework in 1999 within which it would work to make operational its Conflict Management Center. This framework, aimed at enhancing the OAU's decision-making in the area of conflict management, identifies the tools and capabilities that the OAU needs in order to play an effective role in conflict prevention, management, and resolution; identifies the resources needed for developing the above-mentioned tools and capabilities; and provides a blueprint for mobilizing resources and support for its capacity-building program. Included in this document are the OAU's plans for implementing key elements of the Mechanism.[55]

5.2 The Peace Fund

Prior to the creation of the Mechanism in 1993, a lack of financial resources had greatly constrained the OAU's general performance, including its role in conflict management. In an effort to ensure that the Mechanism would not be rendered ineffective due to inadequate finances, the OAU created a Peace Fund to finance the Mechanism's operations. The Peace Fund was to be supported by a fixed 5 percent of the OAU's regular budget (later increased to 6 percent), as well as through voluntary contributions from member states and other sources within Africa. The OAU also authorized the Mechanism to accept contributions from sources outside Africa, provided that any such contributions had the prior agreement of the Central Organ and did not compromise the principles and

54 Organization of African Unity, "Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government," Cairo, 1993 *op. cit.*

55 See OAU, *Enhancing Peace and Security in Africa, op. cit.*, p.7.

objectives of the OAU charter.[56] This was a big departure from previous OAU policy in which the financial well-being of the organization had been highly dependent on contributions from member states.

However, the reality is that the OAU in general, and the Mechanism in particular, have not been insulated from the economic problems that have continued to plague most African countries in the 1990s. At the Council of Ministers' meeting in 1995, it was pointed out that the inability or unwillingness of some OAU members to pay their dues had contributed to the organization's debt of over $58 million, and that this debt was hampering its conflict management potential.[57] The gravity of the problem was such that the OAU threatened the ten slowest paying members with sanctions, including the withdrawal of voting rights and prohibition of membership on commissions. The threat of sanctions apparently worked. Many members responded by paying their arrears, and the OAU's coffers were partly replenished. However, it appears that this improved cash flow was ephemeral. During 1997/98 arrears accumulated once again and, as a result, the OAU was owed $50.6 million--a staggering 160 percent of its annual budget. In response, the OAU imposed sanctions against eight countries that had been in arrears since 1997. Other countries sought and were granted permission to reschedule their debt.[58] The OAU's finances deteriorated further in 1999. By May 2000, only 22 countries had fully paid their dues for the 1999/2000 financial year while total arrears stood at $48.8 million.

This situation obviously impacts on the Peace Fund since it derives some of its monies from the regular OAU budget. The importance of sufficient financing to the success of the Mechanism cannot be overemphasized. Peace management is a very expensive undertaking. For example, it cost the OAU nearly $300,000 per month (i.e., approximately $7.2 million over two years) to maintain OMIB, its observer mission to Burundi, from 1994-96: a figure that is nearly 62 percent of its Peace Fund. In 1996, the OAU disbursed another $1.5 million on preventive diplomacy in the Comoros, Congo, Gabon, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Togo.[59] The OAU conflict management agenda has also been impacted by this financial strain. Despite its stated emphasis on the prevention of conflicts, the OAU Secretary-General has had to allocate less than 10 percent of his conflict management budget to this critical aspect due to prolonged financial strain being experienced by the organization.[60]

The OAU will need to rid itself of this financial bottleneck if it is to succeed with its plans, announced in 1999, to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the Mechanism. These plans indicate that the OAU's capacity-building program for the Conflict Management Center will cost approximately $707,000 to set up, and $3,384,531 each year thereafter to operate. This is especially important since the OAU's regular budget is expected to cover half of these costs while the rest is expected to be covered by extra-budgetary contributions.[61]

Apart from the high costs of peace management, and the small size of the Peace Fund in comparison with the conflict management demands in Africa, the role of extra-African financing also raises another important dimension to the Mechanism's operations. The OAU is concerned about the fact that, even though some member states have made voluntary contributions to the Peace Fund, the vast majority of monies in the Fund come from outside Africa. For example, between 1993-1996, the OAU received a total of $12 million, of which $8 million (or 75 percent) came from outside Africa. In fact, as the OAU itself points out, it was "particularly thanks to the aid and assistance of non-African donors" that the three

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56 For more on the goals, objectives, and structures of the OAU Mechanism see the OAU, "Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the Establishment," Cairo, 1993 *op. cit.*

57 "OAU Ministers Discuss Peacekeeping," Agence France-Presse International News, June 21, 1995.

58 See "Council of Ministers of OAU and Ordinary Session in Addis on Finance, Conflicts and Restructuring," <www.addistribune.ethiopiaonline.net/Archives/1999/03-26-99/council.html>.

59 Cedric de Corning, *op. cit.* p.4, and Margaret A. Vogt, "Regional Arrangements, the United Nations, and Security in Africa," in *International Security Management and the United Nations*, Alagappa, M. and Inoguchi, T. (eds.), United Nations University Press, Tokyo, 1999, p.319.

60 International Peace Academy, *OAU-IPA Seminar on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, Addis Ababa, 29 November-3 December, 1998, p.6.

61 OAU, *The OAU's Programme for Strengthening the Conflict Management Center, op. cit.*, p.16.

observer missions to Burundi, Rwanda, and Comoros could be deployed.[62] Additionally, the fact that international contributions have been made sporadically and/or for a specific aspect of the Mechanism's work has also raised concerns about the possibility of undue external influence on the OAU's conflict management agenda and the impact that this could have on the overall effectiveness of the Mechanism.

Clearly, resolving this shortfall and ensuring regular and adequate funding are vital to the success of the Mechanism. Given the prevailing dependence on outside sources of funding, it has been argued that the OAU needs to do more to explore and expand the pool of resources available from within Africa. In 2000, the OAU decided to begin exploring strategies for drawing non-governmental organizations, non-traditional sources, and the African business sector, into the development of an overall financial support base for the OAU Mechanism.[63] Such an expansion of an African resource base, coupled with the inclusion of civil society actors in the operations of the Mechanism, would raise the visibility of the OAU in Africa, enable Africans to claim ownership of the OAU and its work, and move the OAU beyond the perception long held by many ordinary Africans that the OAU is, for the most part, an elite club for Africa's leaders.

Regular and adequate funding by OAU member states is vital to the success of the Mechanism.

5.3 Conflict Management Center

i. Early Warning Capacity: When the OAU Mechanism was created in 1993, the OAU decided that its primary task would be to focus on the anticipation and prevention of conflicts. This decision was informed by its members' belief in the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." It is much less costly, in human, development, and financial terms, to prevent a conflict than it is to try to stop a conflict once it has erupted. In order to accomplish its task of preventing the outbreak of conflicts, the OAU decided to establish an Early Warning capacity within the Conflict Management Center.

The primary task of the Early Warning System Unit is to gather information and provide the OAU with advance notice of impending conflicts. Specifically, the Unit was mandated to:

i. Develop a database and analytical capability to keep track of and identify developments and events which could be precursors to violence;

ii. Develop a communications capability to keep up with events throughout Africa and communicate with OAU teams that are assigned to work on specific conflict situations;

iii. Establish a 24-hour watch center, run by trained military officers;

iv. Develop a capacity to plan and co-ordinate peace operations in Africa, and

v. Develop a network of national mediators at country level to respond quickly when violence threatens.[64]

This is not to suggest that the OAU has not made any progress towards the establishment of an Early Warning capacity. To the contrary, in 1996, the OAU Secretary-General organized a seminar further to conceptualize and discuss measures and modalities for establishing an Early Warning capacity within the OAU.[65] The OAU has had to consider carefully issues such as the structure of the Early Warning capacity, the process by which it will gather information, its relationship to sub-regional organizations, and the coordination between the Early Warning System Unit, decision-making, and action. The OAU has also had to contend with the political sensitivities that accompany the gathering of such information. In fact, some African governments have already expressed skepticism about the development and functions of any early warning

62 See Ameen Jan, *op. cit.*, and <www.oau-oua.org/document/mechanism/english/conc>.

63 International Peace Academy, *The OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution: An International Peace Academy Report, op. cit.*, p.22.

64 Report to the IDRC on the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Area of Governance.

65 Wawa Ossay Leba, "Conflict Management in Africa," *The Courier ACP-EU*, No. 168, March-April, pp.76-78.

system. This, in turn, has given rise to concern in some quarters that the collection and analysis of political and socio-economic data necessary for an effective early warning system could lead to criticism and repression of the forecasting agency by some governments, particularly from those that are prone to react defensively to any criticisms.[66]

The OAU has made the determination that its Early Warning System Unit should not seek to replicate but to complement the information and systems that already exist. Such a system of relationships would necessarily involve focal points within the OAU, UN, sub-regional organizations, member states, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. The constituencies mentioned above would be involved in both the gathering and use of information gathered by the system, and the OAU would be responsible for coordinating the system.

A key element of the Early Warning System pertains to what happens after the alert has been delivered. In order for an Early Warning System to be effective, knowledge of an impending crisis has to be translated into preventive action. For example, in both Somalia and Rwanda there were early warnings of impending crises, but African institutions and the UN Security Council failed to act decisively even as the conflicts escalated. In fact, some are now arguing that giving priority to the development of an early warning capacity is misplaced "since the failure to respond swiftly to African conflicts is rarely due to a lack of prior warnings of impending catastrophes"[67] but rather to the lack of political will to take decisive action. The key then is to have an Early Warning System that is complemented by the political will, as well as the capacity of the OAU to act quickly and decisively. In other words, the Early Warning System will be of little use unless there is timely political action.

The OAU Early Warning System must be complemented by political will to take action

In 1999 the OAU admitted that "...more than five years after the adoption of the Declaration establishing the Mechanism, the Central Organ still lacks adequate information to effectively predict, plan for, prevent, and manage the complex and numerous conflicts that have plagued the region. It also lacks the capacity for in-depth analysis for strategic options on which to base its decisions".[68] A major step toward the creation of an Early Warning capacity was taken in July 1999 when the OAU accepted the proposal of the U.S.-based Fund for Peace for the provision of a specialized, tailor-made module to be used for the analysis of information and for the production of early warning reports. It is expected that the proposal will be implemented and completed in 2000.

More recently the OAU has established regional desks which some believe to be the real crux of the Mechanism since they will be responsible for monitoring and analyzing potential and actual conflict-related developments on the continent. The Mechanism has also established an Outreach Program, which is part of the Early Warning Unit. This Program has a Resolving Conflicts Publications Unit. The Publications Unit has started to produce high-quality reports and is also responsible for ongoing analysis for use by the Central Organ. This is a major achievement since the OAU previously did not produce such materials. Still, as the OAU itself noted in 2000, it needs to act to ensure that the Early Warning capacity is " made fully operational expeditiously."

ii. **Human Resource Requirements:** Another major issue for the Conflict Management Center pertains to human resource needs. In 1997, the Center had a staff of only fourteen. A staff of this size is too small to collect and analyse information about developments across the continent and has, therefore, not yet produced the results expected of the Center. OAU plans released in 1999 show that the Center needs a staff of forty-nine people to operate effectively. Lack of financial resources has prevented the OAU from acquiring the necessary personnel. The OAU also notes that it currently "... does not, and is unlikely in

66 William Godwin Nhara, "Early Warning and Conflict in Africa," Occasional Paper No. 2, April 1996, p.3.

67 International Peace Academy and CODESRIA, *War, Peace, and Reconciliation in Africa*, November-December 1999, Dakar, p.13.

68 OAU, *Enhancing Peace and Security in Africa, op. cit.*, p.7.

the foreseeable future to have the financial resources to pay for a large number of permanent staff." As such, the OAU will need to find other ways of mobilizing internal and external human resources to staff the Center.[69]

Beginning in January 2001, twenty-three of the required forty-nine staff will be funded from the regular budget of the OAU, and the remainder (temporary and short-term contract staff) will be funded from extra-budgetary contributions. The OAU is working with several international partners to fill the staff requirements. For example, the United Nations Development Programme, through its project for *Strengthening of Human Resources of the Conflict Management Center*, recruited six people in 1999 to staff the OAU Information Network Center with a view to recruiting three more in 2000. This team is expected to complement and train staff for the Center in areas such as analysis of information for the OAU Early Warning System, building a conflict data-bank, providing technical and advisory support for the OAU Intranet System, and manning the OAU Information Network Center.[70]

Several recommendations have been advanced to the OAU as to how it could overcome this human resource shortfall. These include secondment of academic, diplomatic and military expertise from member states; ensuring that any grant proposal explicitly state the expertise required so that the post comes built into the grant; and the use of African experts as facilitators.[71]

5.4 The Central Organ

The Central Organ is the heart of the Mechanism. Since the Mechanism came into being, a number of recommendations have been made as to how the Central Organ could better perform its role and, by so doing, improve the effectiveness of the Mechanism. One major recommendation pertains to the composition of the Central Organ. Currently, the Central Organ comprises sixteen members, elected annually on the basis of equitable sub-regional representation. However, a strong argument has been that this formula for membership does not take into account the realities of power and influence on the continent. Specifically, it is quite possible that in any given year none of the key African countries – South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt – will be represented on the Organ. This means that a situation involving critical conflict management decisions could arise during a period when none of the countries with the necessary influence and military and economic resources are part of the decision-making process.

The second factor concerns the locus of decision-making within the Central Organ itself. Initially, the OAU Mechanism provided for operation of the Central Organ only at the level of Heads of State. However, soon after its establishment, a number of summit-level meetings failed to take place due to the lack of a quorum. Many heads of state simply could not afford the time to be in Addis Ababa with the frequency required by the Mechanism's work. This was a major problem since decisions pertaining to the Mechanism could not be made and, therefore, action could not be undertaken.

In order to improve decision-making, the OAU decided to restructure the Central Organ. The Organ now meets at the Heads of State, ministerial, and ambassadorial levels, but decision-making is now vested at the level of the ambassadors. This has greatly improved the efficiency of the Central Organ since the ambassadors are based in Addis Ababa and can thus meet more regularly, at short notice if required, and at little cost. Summit-level meetings continue to occur once a year and ministerial-level meetings twice a year. The ambassadors have been meeting on a regular basis (currently once a month). This shift in decision-making from the summit-level to the ambassadorial-level has increased the effectiveness of the Central Organ.

5.5 The Field Operations Unit

The major tasks of the Field Operations Unit include coordinating the OAU observer and monitoring missions, and maintaining contact with and coordinating activities between UN peacekeepers and sub-regional organizations. To achieve these goals, the Unit relies on military contributions from African states.

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69 OAU, *Enhancing Peace and Security in Africa..., op. cit.*, p.10.

70 United Nations Development Programme, "Project RAF/97/028: Status Report of Key Areas of Activity as at 15th February 2000," UNDP, New York, 2000.

71 International Peace Academy, OAU-IPA *Seminar on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, Addis Ababa, 29 November-3 December 1998, p.7.

Since its creation, the Field Operations Unit has organized three civilian/military missions: NMOG, OMIB, and OMIC. As limited in scope and size as these missions have been, the OAU's experiences in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Comoros have provided it with both the confidence and foundation on which a limited peacekeeping capacity can be built. These field operations have also enabled the OAU to develop a critical base of trained observers on which it can draw for the future. As an important first step in this direction, and as part of its capacity enhancement program, the OAU intends to create standby arrangements and logistical backstop facilities that would allow it to dispatch rapidly a military observer group to the field. The OAU plans to identify a pool of 500 trained military and civilian observers (100 from each African sub-region) for this purpose. In 1996, the OAU requested its members to identify and delegate troops that could be called upon at short notice to participate in either UN or OAU operations. This plan provides a foundation for the future development and deployment of more ambitious peacekeeping operations.

However, the OAU still has much work to do if it is to realize its goals of developing and institutionalizing a peacekeeping capacity. In 1997, Africa's army Chiefs of Staff met in Harare to discuss and make recommendations regarding the development of a limited peacekeeping and peace support capacity within the OAU Secretariat. Their recommendations addressed matters pertaining to procedures and structures necessary for establishing such a capacity, ensuring uniformity of training, the exercise of command over such structures, monitoring of operations at various levels, and joint operations between the OAU, UN, and sub-regional organizations. Most of these recommendations are yet to be implemented. Even when the OAU has made an effort to begin developing this capacity, its efforts have fallen short. For example, when the OAU asked African countries to send military attachés to Addis Ababa to help with planning missions, only a few countries responded. There is now growing concern that the attachés are not being fully utilized.

In addition, the OAU has also been active in election monitoring and in training election monitors. Between 1989 and 1996, OAU observers participated in over 50 elections in 33 countries.[72] Generally, the monitoring teams have been rather small (often three to six people) and some of them have experienced problems such as arriving after elections have already begun. This has led some to suggest that the OAU's efforts are symbolic and may be aimed simply at pandering to the international donor community.[73] Undoubtedly, there is room for the OAU to improve on its election monitoring work. However, its efforts in this area should be seen as an important development in the OAU's thinking about the causes of conflict in Africa. The OAU's leaders increasingly believe that the lack of democracy is a major cause of conflict on the continent and that supporting initiatives that promote democracy would help to reduce the scourge of conflicts on the continent. The OAU's election monitoring experience also provides the organization with a base of expertise upon which it can build expanded and more meaningful monitoring programs in the future. For example, as it further develops its election monitoring capacity the OAU must also ensure that it approves only those electoral processes that have been conducted freely and fairly, where due process has been followed, and in which it has had a monitoring presence from the beginning.[74]

5.6 Office of the Secretary-General

Since he assumed the office of OAU Secretary-General in 1989, Salim Ahmed Salim has been more active in the conflict management arena than any of his predecessors. In fact, many analysts credit Salim with playing an instrumental role in the establishment of the Mechanism. In addition to Salim's personal interest in conflict management, it is also important to recognize that the OAU has made some changes with regard to the role of the Secretary-General. Before 1993, the Secretary-General's role was mainly administrative and his role in conflict management was on an *ad hoc* basis. Over the last seven years, we have seen a Secretary-General who is not only responsible for the administration of the OAU but also

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72 See Chris Bakwesegha, "Conflict Resolution in Africa–A New Role for the Organization of African Unity?", in Gunnar Sorbo and Peter Vale (eds.), Out of Conflict: From War to Peace in Africa, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1994, pp.79-96.

73 Astrid Espegren, *op. cit.*, p.41.

74 Ameen Jan, *op. cit.*

possesses institutionalized conflict management responsibilities, including having more latitude in program and policy matters. Thus the OAU Secretary-General is empowered to work with the Central Organ and parties "to deploy efforts and take all appropriate initiatives to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts."[75]

With these new powers, we have seen the OAU Secretary-General take the initiative in the peace and security arena (e.g. appointing special envoys), issue more statements on conflict matters than anyone else who has held that position, and use his office to bring sustained focus to issues of conflict management in Africa. While these are all important developments, it is also clear that more can still be done to improve the OAU's effectiveness in this vital area. It has been argued, for example, that the issuance and wide dissemination of regular periodic statements about the OAU's conflict-related activities would go a long way in publicizing the organization's work and thus ensure that it is given recognition as a major and important actor in continental matters.

5.7 The Mechanism and the OAU Charter

Finally, one of the most important issues for the OAU remains that of its charter and its impact on the organization's role in conflict management. When the Mechanism was established, the OAU did not revise its charter to accommodate the much more expansive conflict management mandate it had just adopted. Rather, the declaration establishing the Mechanism notes that it "will be guided by the objectives and principles of the OAU charter; in particular, the sovereign equality of member States, non-interference in the internal affairs of states, the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, their inalienable right to independent existence, the peaceful settlement of disputes as well as the inviolability of borders inherited from colonialism. It will also function on the basis of the consent and the co-operation of the parties to the conflict."[76]

As seen from the prevailing conflict situation on the continent and from some of the case studies addressed in this paper, the causes and scope of recent or current wars in Africa reveal that the once strict dichotomy between internal and international conflict no longer exists. While conflicts may have internal origins, they can and often do take on regional and international characteristics and dimensions, be it through the direct involvement of neighboring countries in a conflict (as in the Democratic Republic of Congo), neighboring countries suffering the consequences of conflict (e.g., the massive refugee flows from the Rwanda conflict into Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and those from the Sierra Leone and Liberian conflicts into Guinea), or the international concern generated by massive loss of life and human rights abuses generated by these conflicts.

In recent years, the OAU has shown increasing readiness to respond to internal conflicts.

The OAU has shown an increasing readiness to take a clear position in responding to internal conflicts in recent years. For example, following the *coup d'état* in the Comoros in September 1995, the OAU condemned the putsch and was forced to consider the issue of unconstitutional changes of government in Africa. The issue was once again raised at the Harare Summit in 1997 following the coup in Sierra Leone in May of that year, once again prompting the OAU to determine what measures it should apply in such situations. It was the general feeling that the OAU needed to tackle this problem directly even though its charter does not address the matter of unconstitutional changes of government. At the Algiers Summit in 1999, the OAU went a step further and decided that it would not recognize governments that came to power through unconstitutional means.

That same year, the OAU reactivated the Central Organ's Sub-Committee on Unconstitutional Changes of Government, which had been created in 1996.[77] The Sub-Committee has worked to develop a framework that defines an unconstitutional change of government and proposes what action the OAU should take in such circumstances. Significantly, the

[75] OAU, "Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State," Cairo, 1993, *op. cit.*

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] The Sub-committee was expected to submit its report to the Central Organ by January 2000.

Sub-Committee has also proposed that its mandate be extended to include undemocratic changes of government since its original designation implied that all constitutions were democratic, which is not the case. The Sub-Committee submitted a framework to the Central Organ in February 2000. The OAU has also requested its Secretary-General to be actively engaged in assisting in the application of programs intended to return such countries to constitutional and democratic government.[78] The real test for the OAU will be to ensure that it is consistent in imposing agreed sanctions/actions against *any* and *all* perpetrators of unconstitutional changes of government that have taken place since the Harare summit in 1997. So far, the OAU has unequivocally condemned coups in Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Comoros, and Côte d'Ivoire as soon as they occurred and has continued to demand the return to constitutional government in these countries. The military governments of Comoros and Côte d'Ivoire were barred from attending the OAU summit in Lomé in 2000. The OAU also supported the return to constitutional government in Niger and Guinea-Bissau in 1999 and 2000 by contributing to the preparation and observation of elections in both countries.

Additionally, the OAU has supported actions dealing with what would previously have been considered internal issues. Two such examples relate to the OAU's support for ECOMOG's military actions to restore to power the democratically-elected government of Sierra Leone and SADC's effort to restore constitutional order to Lesotho. These are significant steps forward for the OAU which, prior to the creation of the Mechanism, would not have generated an official comment on the grounds that these were matters internal to individual countries.[79] The changed international order and the changing nature of African conflicts have led to discussions about the need to revisit the charter on the basis that it serves as an impediment to effective regional conflict management. The OAU took a step in this direction when it established a committee to review its charter.[80]

However, given some of the problems faced by the OAU (some of which are outlined in Part I of this paper) it is important to ask whether it is sufficient just to amend the OAU charter without a major rethinking of the foundations of union and the weaknesses inherent therein. For example, it is clear that sovereignty continues to reign supreme within the OAU and this continues to place severe constraints on OAU action in the security field. Clearly, this is a question that the OAU will need to address directly, and not just at the margins, if it is to become an effective organization for managing conflicts in Africa.

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78 OAU, AHG/Draft/Dec. 12 (XXXV).

79 Makumi Mwagiru, "Conflict and Peace Management in the Horn of Africa: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives", Paper presented at the International Resource Group Conference, Mombasa, 6-9 November 1996 (revised 1998).

80 For more on the revision of the OAU charter see Makumi Mwagiru, "Who Will Bell the Cat? Article 3(2) of the OAU Charter and the Crisis of OAU Conflict Management," Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya at <http//:www.ukc.ac.uk/politics/kentpapers/mwagiru>.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the OAU Mechanism has elevated the organization's profile in African conflict management – this is evident when one compares the organization's performance before and after the creation of its Mechanism. Since 1993, the OAU has been involved both directly and indirectly in many initiatives aimed at managing conflicts in Africa, resulting in increased impact and visibility for the OAU in this area. This increased visibility is due, in part, to the fact that the Mechanism has allowed the OAU to move from an *ad hoc* approach to conflict management that was employed in the pre-Mechanism era, to a more systematic and institutionalized approach. Additionally, the creation of the Mechanism signaled a new determination among many African leaders to play a more central role in managing African conflicts. This new determination can be seen in the fact that many states now regard the OAU as the entity of first resort, whether of containing the impact of a conflict that has already erupted (e.g., Burundi) or addressing a conflict in its early stages and preventing it from escalating into a crisis (e.g., Comoros).

Other important developments include the fact the OAU now has some latitude to intervene in what would previously have been considered "internal" matters and therefore "no-go" areas for the organization. Hence we have seen the OAU take a stand against unconstitutional changes of government in several states and take measures to support the restoration of legitimate governments. The OAU Secretary-General's office, which was purely administrative prior to the creation of the Mechanism, is now central to decision-making related to the OAU's role in conflict management. The OAU, previously considered an elite club for Africa's leaders with little practical meaning for the average African has now begun to make some overtures to ordinary Africans, including civil society groups and women, in an effort to include them in the management of conflicts on the continent.

However, this increased visibility has not translated into a more peaceful continent. It is also evident that despite some successes, the OAU Mechanism has not been totally effective on the ground and is, in fact, struggling to keep pace with and take charge of conflict-related developments on the continent. Since the beginning of the 1990s there has been a proliferation of conflicts in Africa and the OAU has not been able to find long-term solutions to many of these conflicts. In fact, it could be argued that while the creation of the Mechanism sought to place the OAU at the center of conflict management activities in Africa, the reality is that the OAU has, thus far, been an active but peripheral actor in most cases. The reasons for this are manifold. These include the fact that the number, intensity, scope, and range of conflicts have been overwhelming for the Mechanism. Other factors include: the relatively recent advent of the OAU to the field of conflict management; the ongoing impasse between the UN and the OAU regarding the division of labor in managing African conflicts; and the fact that the OAU has still not been able to overcome several of the serious financial, organizational, and mandate-related limitations that proscribed its role in conflict management in the pre-Mechanism era.

The OAU is aware of these limitations and has been working to improve the capacity of its Mechanism. It is clear that sovereignty is still regarded as sacrosanct by most states within the OAU and that this has had an impact on the work of the Mechanism. It is hoped that the determination that OAU leaders have shown in trying to tackle conflicts on the continent will extend to a consideration of the foundations of union. Key provisions of the OAU charter currently restrict the Secretary-General and the Mechanism to a minimalist, rather than the necessary pro-active approach, to addressing conflicts. The OAU's decision to establish a committee to examine the revision of its charter is an important starting point.

The OAU has also sought and received recommendations on various aspects of the Mechanism's work. In this regard, its partnership with the IPA has been especially productive. For example, the OAU formed a Joint Task Force with the IPA for purposes of developing and outlining ways in which the capacity of the Mechanism could be enhanced. These include building relationships for conflict management with the UN, African sub-regional organizations and African civil society groups, and doing so in a manner that addresses the appropriate division of labor as well as complementarity of roles among these organizations. The OAU has also expended much effort on structural and organizational changes

necessary to improve the performance of key elements of the Mechanism such as the Peace Fund, the Central Organ, and the Early Warning System Unit. The OAU has, through bodies that it has constituted as well as outside consultants (e.g. those pertaining to the Harare army Chiefs of Staff meeting, those of the IPA/OAU Task Force, and the OAU and African civil society groups), generated numerous recommendations on making the Mechanism operational and effective. The organization has made some progress with implementing some of these recommendations but the vast majority of them have yet to be implemented.

One of the important problems for the OAU Mechanism remains that of the lack of publicity regarding its work. Many people, in Africa and abroad, are simply unaware of the work that the Mechanism is conducting given the difficulty of obtaining comprehensive and current information about the OAU, its decisions, and its programs. Again, the OAU has made some progress on this front in recent years. The creation of the OAU website, including information about the Mechanism, has gone some way towards publicizing the OAU's work.[81] However, the website should contain more information about the organization, including annual reports, ongoing African conflicts and OAU pronouncements and actions on these conflicts. Such information should be updated on a regular basis. To ensure wide dissemination, this information should not only be available in electronic but in other media formats as well.

The OAU's efforts to deal with African conflicts deserve credit but much more remains to be done in order for its potential to be fulfilled.

The OAU should be given credit for the effort it has expended and for the important steps it has taken to deal with African conflicts over the past seven years. The OAU's efforts at making operational and enhancing the capacity of its Mechanism reveal a determination to move from a position of concerned bystander (with a capacity to make a difference only on the periphery of conflicts) to an organization that can make an effective contribution, along with the UN, Africa's sub-regional organizations and civil society actors, in maintaining peace and security in Africa. Overall, the brief history of the Mechanism demonstrates that the OAU has considerable potential to address peace and security crises in Africa, but much work remains to be done, particularly at highest political levels, in order for this potential to be fully realized.

[81] The OAU website is located at <http://www.oau-oua.org/>.

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