

DRAFT REPORT OF THE A3 PLUS RETREAT
“ENHANCING THE A3 PLUS: AN INNOVATIVE TOOL FOR SUSTAINED ADVOCACY WITHIN THE
UN SECURITY COUNCIL”
13 APRIL 2024, WESTIN HOTEL, JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

A. BACKGROUND

1. The African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations (AUPOM) convened the 3rd edition of its biennial Retreat of the African Members States of the UN Security Council (A3) Plus Mechanism on 13 April 2024. The Retreat was conducted as part of the mission and efforts of the AUPOM to support the A3 Plus. It was attended by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Amb. Adeoye Bankole, the AU Permanent Observer, H. E. Amb Fatima Kyari Mohammed, past and current Permanent Representatives of members of the A3 Plus Mechanism, representative of the African Union’s Chair and the Africa Group’s Chair of the month and invited Member States and guests from the UN system and Think Tanks (list annexed).
2. The Retreat serves as an opportunity to continue deepening discussions and exchange of ideas among previous and current African members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to ensure continuity of the A3 Plus mechanism. It also serves as a platform for reflection on emerging issues and in setting up the appropriate ecosystem for an inclusive approach for effective coordination and engagement among the A3 Plus on critical issues on the UNSC’s agenda, including Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security.
3. Within this context, the retreat provided a platform for interaction between the previous and current A3 Plus members and relevant stakeholders regarding progress made on coordination as well as in strengthening Africa's voice on critical issues on the agenda of the UN Security Council. Aimed at enhancing coordination among A3 members, and to reinforce the “Plus mechanism” going forward, the retreat represents a framework for maintaining the momentum of the Annual High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, referred to as the Oran Process, particularly following the conclusions and recommendations of the 10th session held in Oran Algeria in December 2023.
4. The adoption, in November 2023, of the A3 Plus Guiding Principles, serves as a step to institutionalize this innovative mechanism for coordination among African Member States within the UN Security Council, with the objective to also strengthen close coordination and consultations with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Member States within the UN Security Council. The mechanism also represents an important bloc that will enable further collaboration with other interested Member States in the UNSC

that will consider aligning with the A3 Plus on specific situations to achieve broader consensus on issues of critical importance.

B. OBJECTIVES

5. The Retreat was aimed at exploring ways to strengthen this innovative mechanism in articulating and promoting common African positions and reflecting the decisions of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) as well as the Assembly of the AU within the UNSC. Specifically, the retreat:
 - a. Took stock of progress achieved by the A3 Plus mechanism, highlighted the achievement and impact during 2022-2023 as well as reflected on challenges encountered;
 - b. Considered the A3 Plus Mechanism Guiding Principles which aim to enhance coordination among the members;
 - c. Discussed coordination between the AUPSC and the African Members of the UNSC and the Plus mechanism (A3 Plus);
 - d. Reflected on strategies for the strengthening of Africa's voice and representation in the UNSC through the A3 Plus mechanism, including engagements of the A3 Plus within the E-10 as well as progress regarding coordination with the Permanent Five (P5), and in achieving Penholdership and Co-Penholdership;
 - e. Discussed A3 Plus priorities, including strengthening AUPSC-UNSC political and strategic partnership, in preparation of the next session of the Annual Joint Consultative Meeting between the two Councils; and
 - f. Discussed the way forward for the implementation of the UNSCR 2719 and UNGA Resolution 78/257, in light of the dynamics within the UNSC and preparations for the Summit of the Future.

C. OPENING REMARKS

6. In her opening remarks, the African Union Permanent Observer to the UN, Amb. Fatima Kyari Mohammed welcomed the current and past A3 Plus members, as well as invited guests to the Retreat noting their efforts in promoting Africa's interests and those of the Plus mechanism as a whole at the UN. She commended the collective efforts of the A3 Plus members in driving critical UNSC resolutions and processes to achieve peace and security in Africa and beyond. Within this context, she acknowledged the fruitful outcomes of the 10th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa (the Oran Process) adding that the AUPOM will continue to support the A3 plus mechanism, in line with the guidance provided by the AUPSC and the Commission to strengthen coordination and collaboration.

7. As the current Coordinator of the A3 Plus, the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the UN, H.E. Amb. Imran Kanu thanked the AUPOM for facilitating the retreat and commended the efforts of the Past and Current A3 Plus Permanent Representatives. He underscored the foremost role of the A3 Plus to champion Africa and the Plus members' interests, foster stronger collaboration among members of the UN Security Council and to continue strengthening the mechanism as a significant tool for improved advocacy. Additionally, he took stock of major achievements of the A3 Plus, urging that the A3 Plus must endeavor to continue driving strategic discussions and processes, leveraging on its strength and unity to remain a strong mechanism for the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa and beyond.
8. The Permanent Representative of Angola to the UN, Chair of the Africa Group for the Month of April 2024, H.E. Amb. Francisco José da Cruz, commended the AUPOM and the A3 Plus for conducting the Retreat and reiterated the commitment of the Africa Group in supporting the efforts of the A3 Plus towards achieving the continent's aspiration for a secure, safe and prosperous Africa. He highlighted that the Retreat serves to ensure regular and effective dialogue on peace and security towards securing consensus on African issues in the Security Council as well as those that are of interest to Africa. He added that the A3 Plus platform is an innovative solution for global peace and an avenue to take forward the aspirations of the AU, including the Women and Youth Peace and Security (WPS/YPS) agendas.
9. The Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the UN, Chair of the AU for 2024, H.E. Amb. Sidi Mohamed Laghdaf, expressed appreciation to the Permanent Observer of the AU to the UN and the A3 Plus for organizing the Retreat. He recognized the strong impact of the A3 Plus and urged them to continue speaking with one voice and to defend African common interests, noting that approximately 70% of the UNSC's work is geared towards Africa.

D. SESSION 1: THE A3 PLUS - AN INNOVATIVE MECHANISM, LESSONS AND BEYOND

10. This session reflected on the evolution and efficacy of the A3 Plus Mechanism, drawing insights from previous and current members, noting valuable lessons learned from its role in addressing African affairs in the UNSC. Initially conceived as a coordination framework for African UNSC members, the A3 mechanism has evolved into a pioneering model for collaboration and consultation. The session also drew upon the significant expansion of the A3 Mechanism which now incorporates the Plus initiative, with the inclusion of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) in 2020 and Guyana in 2024. In this regard, participants engaged in a retrospective analysis of the Mechanism, highlighting the significance of the

A3 Plus Guiding Principles, including its utility in enhancing effective coordination among the A3 Plus members as well as with the AUPSC, with the support of the AUPOM and the AU Commission.

11. The A3 Plus, since its establishment has positioned itself to enable a good balance of power within the UNSC and continues to demonstrate that through coordination and collaboration among African Members in the UNSC, Africa's voice and perspectives can inform decisions of the Council. As an innovative mechanism, it is clear that unity of purpose and coherence of the mechanism should be at the center of the work and methods of the A3 Plus, including in increasing joint statements, maintaining same positions for outcome documents of the Council and in ensuring consensus in Council voting processes. In this regard, the role of the AUPOM is of utmost importance in ensuring technical backstopping, institutional memory and smooth transition of responsibilities on critical files from outgoing to incoming A3 Plus members.
12. The incorporation of the Caribbean States (SVG and Guyana) into the A3 Mechanism was natural and organic yet should be managed closely, noting that any possible addition beyond the current scope should guard against any possible Trojan plan that can negatively affect the unity of the A3 Plus. This is to note that there are some countries that may have an interest in ensuring the A3 Plus unity does not affect their interests and decision making processes in the Council. Taking into account and incorporating the priorities and agendas of the Caribbean Plus Member is critical in ensuring that the Plus mechanism is not a cosmetic arrangement but a partnership that is grounded on mutual interest.
13. The need for increased media engagement and communication was reiterated in ensuring more media stakeouts to project the role and position of the A3 Plus on critical issues, and to not leave this to be presented by other media outlets that may not necessarily portray the mechanism as expected. The need to use the UNGA High Level Week to have Heads of States to do Media Stakeouts and institutionalize the role of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of States in the working methods of the A3 Plus Mechanism, including regularity of annual meetings, was also reiterated

E. Session 2: Strengthening Africa's voice and representation in the UN Security Council through strategic partnerships

14. The second session on "Strengthening Africa's Voice and Representation in the UNSC through Strategic Partnerships" discussed the ongoing efforts of the A3 Plus mechanism in bolstering Africa's influence, representation, and priorities within the UNSC. It served as a platform to examine how the A3 Plus collaborates within the E-10 framework,

engages with the P5 members, and coordinates across the UNSC to advance African interests. Furthermore, the session underscored the A3 Plus' endeavors to secure roles as Penholder and Co-Penholder to advocate for Africa's concerns on critical files. By fostering collaboration, leveraging strategic partnerships, and assuming proactive roles in key UNSC processes, the A3 Plus has emerged as a formidable advocate for Africa on the international stage, contributing to the realization of a more inclusive and representative UNSC agenda.

15. The A3 Plus continues to promote Africa's permanent voice in the UNSC, even without a permanent seat, including through sustained cohesion and increased penholder and co-penholdership of critical Council resolutions. Within this context, the A3 Plus should devise its own mechanisms on how such a role can transition from outgoing to incoming A3 Plus members and also ensure adequate capacities within their Permanent Missions, including supporting efforts to ensure adequate capacities also at the AUPOM to enable technical backstopping to the A3 Plus in this regard. Strengthening Africa's voice in the UNSC can also be seen in the adoption of UNSCR 2719 which calls for the greater collaboration between the AU and the UN, including noting the role of the A3 Plus in pioneering the E-10 co-penholdership on the resolution on Gaza.
16. Through the A3 Plus, Africa has a permanent voice in the UNSC which it should learn to use more effectively, through unity – backed by institutional memory, which should enable coherence of Africa's perspectives and position in the UNSC . Any delay of the AUPSC and AUPAPS in providing clear direction to the A3 Plus on critical issues provides space for national positions to flourish. For instance, there is need to ensure that guidance from Addis Ababa is provided more frequently and promptly to decisions of the UNSC that the A3 Plus champions, including technical backstopping by PAPS through the AUPOM to enable cohesiveness in projecting Africa's perspective and position on critical issues in the UNSC.
17. The meeting highlighted the importance of strengthening Africa's voice in world affairs, particularly in the face of current challenges; the potential of expanding the A3 Plus formula to increase its influence and coherence within the UNSC, with a focus on stronger cohesion and improved coordination was underscored. Speakers expressed confidence in Africa's growing voice in the international system, advocating for further continental integration and strengthened partnerships between the AU and the UNSC and an enhanced working method for greater impact and voting patterns within the group and to strengthen their influence in the Council.
18. The meeting also emphasized the need to adapt to changing dynamics and evolving politics, including working with a multitude of actors and fostering stronger partnership

with the key UN bodies, the European Union and international financial institutions to increase the influence of the AU within the UN. The importance of cooperation between the Council and regional organizations was also highlighted noting the potential for enhanced collaboration, and to defend Africa's priorities.

F. Session 3: A3 Plus - priorities ahead

19. The session began with Commissioner Bankole outlining the AU's priorities regarding peace and security. He emphasized the need for peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa and finding lasting solutions. The commissioner highlighted the importance of 'Silencing the Guns' across the continent and addressing climate change's impact on security. Upcoming events like September's Summit of the Future and AUPSC's 20th anniversary were noted as opportunities to prioritize the peace and security agenda.
20. The meeting then emphasized the need for coordination and coherence between the AUPSC's priorities and those of the UNSC. The commissioner also discussed AU efforts to reform the multilateral system, including ongoing UNSC reform discussions. He called for collaboration on conflict situations like in Sudan. Furthermore, the meeting highlighted AU investments in peace processes totaling \$22 million in the past two years.
21. Agenda 2063, Silencing the Guns as well as the decisions of the Assembly and AUPSC provides serves as guides to the priorities of the AU, including on country files and thematic issues which the A3 Plus needs to take forward in its engagement within the UNSC. In this regard, ensuring that the AUPSC considers an issue first before the UNSC is critical in providing the A3 Plus with Africa's perspectives that it should take forward for UNSC decisions to reflect Africa's views. Thus, the role of the Commissioner for PAPS is critical in providing clear guidance to the A3 Plus pursuant to the decisions of the Policy Organs of the AU. In the same context, the A3 Plus members should continue to enhance current modalities on how to manage possible divergences in positions to still ensure that the unity of Africa is maintained.
22. Adoption of UNSCR 2719 is at the core of AU-UN partnership currently, with a need to ensure that this resolution enables the AU and UN to further articulate better working methods towards enhancing joint efforts to address peace and security in Africa. Within this context, further guidance by the AUPSC will provide further clarity that will enable AU-UN engagement to determine detailed modalities for implementation of this resolution, including through utilizing it for any specific case that the two Councils will consider to support. Importantly, the UNSC and Secretariat should try to reduce red-tape and allow the AU the required flexibility to effectively command, control and manage AU-Led PSOs. On the other hand, the AU should also consider making token contributions as

part of the 25% to have a voice and ensure decision-making is not taken away from the AU, as well as ensure AU capacity to plan, deploy and manage AU-Led PSOs.

23. 9 of the 31 members of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) are part of the A3 Plus and AU, 60% of the Peacebuilding Fund – over \$200 million have been expended in Africa, with the Annual AUPSC and PBC meeting ensuring that the linkages in the work of the AUPSC and PBC is taken forward by the A3 Plus in the engagement in the UNSC. Within this context, there is need for the A3 Plus and African members to better utilize the PBC, including through regular engagements by the A3 Plus with PBC members as well as involvement in the discussions and engagement on issues beyond Africa, so that these experiences can be used as leverage in negotiations in the Security Council also. In this regard, implementation of the GA Resolution 78/257, which calls for a review of the ToR for the Peacebuilding Funding, needs to consider how UNSCR 2719 can be complemented. The 2 resolutions will greatly help in deepening AU-UN partnership and also bring the AU and the RECs/RMs closer to better address peace and security challenges in Africa.

G. Closing Remarks

24. The closing remarks provided a comprehensive summary of the key discussions and outcomes from the meeting sessions, highlighting the emphasis placed on strengthening the coordination mechanism between members and maintaining unity of purpose on agenda issues. The inclusion of Caribbean states, namely St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana into the coordination mechanism, was also described as a natural, organic approach in strengthening the mechanism. Additionally, improving strategic media engagement and using periods like UNGA high-level week to promote coordination were discussed.
25. The interlinkages between the various coordination mechanisms like the AU PSC and the UN PBC were reiterated, with emphasis on closer cooperation to continuously enhance all efforts aimed at promoting Africa's voice and interest in the UNSC. Challenging dynamics on the continent combining political, security and socioeconomic issues like climate peace and security nexus were raised as increasing challenges in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Furthermore, upcoming opportunities mentioned by the AU Commissioner included the June review of the UN program on Small Arms and Light Weapons and using the consensus paper on financing for further engagements for the effective implementation of UNSCR 2719 and UNGA Resolution 78/257. The two resolutions were considered as opportunities to enhance AU-UN partnership, financing of joint efforts and deepen cooperation in addressing peace and security challenges

26. The need for coherence and coordination between New York and Addis Ababa, including increased technical support from the AU, was underlined, as well as utilization of existing AU initiatives like Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns Initiatives to guide A3 Plus efforts. Members agreed to continue enhancing modalities to manage divergent positions while maintaining African unity. Knowledge management and institutional memory were stressed as important areas for further engagement. Ambassador Fatima then thanked all chairs, representatives, and guests for their insightful contributions throughout the productive discussions.

H. Conclusion and recommendations

27. The meeting underscored the critical role of the A3 Plus in advancing Africa's peace and security agenda in the UNSC. In this regard, it was reiterated that the A3 Plus should continue prioritizing strategic collaboration, advocating for adequate, sustainable and flexible funding, and investing in capacity-building initiatives, to significantly enhance peace and stability in the continent, including through the following:

- a. **Enhanced coordination and consultation between the AU Peace and Security Council and the A3 Plus:** To strengthen regular engagement and information-sharing for timely guidance on positions, and information sharing on relevant PSC decisions and documentation to enhance unified strategic decision-making. This should also include monthly engagement between the AUPSC and the A3 Plus Coordinator to align priorities and sequence council sessions on critical issues to ensure adoption of AUPSC decisions to inform consideration of same issue by the UNSC. Furthermore, and additional to the Oran Process, engagements of the A3 Plus – as well as their coordination with the AUPSC, at ministerial and Heads of State levels, including during annual summits and meetings should be facilitated, to increase high-level political buy-in and support for the efforts of the A3 Plus.
- b. **Advancing strategic partnership between AUPSC and UNSC:** To strengthen collaboration and foster mutual understanding, through regular dialogues between the two councils that goes beyond information sharing towards implementation of joint initiatives, including undertaking joint missions and actions in conflict-affected countries.
- c. **Strengthen AUPSC and UNPBC coordination:** To Strengthen coordination between the AUPSC and UNPBC, including interaction between the AUPSC with African members of the UNPBC to promote Africa's interest, including in the finalisation of the terms of reference for the review of the UN Peacebuilding

Architecture, to better direct resources towards prevention efforts aligned with African priorities like youth engagement and climate security.

- d. **Contribution to the Summit of the Future:** To contribute to the negotiations on the Summit of the Future, which presents an opportunity to reassess the global governance system and also address peace and security challenges in Africa and beyond. This should include enabling renewed commitments to conflict prevention, enhanced cooperation on peace operations, and strengthened partnerships between the UN and regional organisations like the AU.
- e. **Implementation of UNSC Resolution 2719 and GA Resolution 78/257:** To facilitate concerted efforts by AU member states, the UNSC, and the international community in advocating for adequate, sustainable and flexible funding and logistical support for AU-led PSOs as well as peacebuilding support to countries in transition. Within this context, the A3 Plus should work with the African Member States in the PBC to ascertain how the GA Resolution 78/257 can offer complementary financing for peacebuilding efforts in Africa. The A3 Plus can thus leverage these resolutions to maximize the impact of interventions by promoting coherence, alignment of funding priorities, and enhancing coordination mechanisms with robust capacity-building initiatives to guarantee effective support to African States towards achieving stability, peace and prosperity in Africa.
- f. **Development of an online digital repository housed within the AUPOM:** To archive institutional knowledge on the A3 Plus mechanism, its positions on relevant issues over the years, and lessons learned from all iterations of A3 Plus configurations, to support incoming A3 Plus members and ensure sustained advocacy and efforts over time.
- g. **Increased A3 Plus strategic engagement:** To use the AU Assembly and the UNGA High Level Week and other opportunities to promote the work and coordination efforts of the A3 Plus, including through Joint Media Stakeouts at Head of States and Ministerial Levels as well as to regularize their annual meeting and institutionalize their role in the working methods of the A3 Plus Mechanism.