

UN, African Union sign new partnership framework to better respond to evolving challenges

19 April 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and the Chairperson of the African Union, Moussa Faki Mahamat, today signed a new landmark framework to strengthen partnership between the two organizations on peace and security pillars and better respond to the changing dimensions and evolving challenges of peace operations.

“We no longer have the traditional peacekeeping operations, where peacekeepers separate two countries or two groups within the same country that have signed an agreement, and a makeshift peace essentially prevails,” Mr. Guterres [told the press](#) at a stakeout, alongside Mr. Mahamat, after signing the framework at UN Headquarters in New York.

“We are witnessing, in Africa, as around the world, changes [...] that force us to have a strategic review of the way peace operations take place,” he explained.

The Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhancing Partnership on Peace and Security is expected to boost the coordination between the two organizations at all levels. It is also anticipated to strengthen cooperation on issues ranging from human rights and good governance, to sustainable and inclusive development.

The new understanding will also help align the African Union’s Agenda 2063 with the global [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development to ensure that they are both a “success story” in the continent.

Prior to the stakeout, Mr. Guterres and Mr. Mahamat jointly led the first Joint UN-AU Annual Conference where they discussed the complementarity between the 2030 Agenda and the AU’s Agenda 2063, as well as the fight against terrorism and the financing of operations led by the AU.

They also discussed situations in several countries, including Libya, Mali, the Central African Republic, and Somalia, and discussed efforts to combat the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group.

Momentum on political process must be

renewed if Libya's many challenges are to be addressed – UN envoy

19 April 2017 – It is more important than ever to forge unity within Libya, the United Nations envoy for the country told the Security Council today, while calling on the Libyan stakeholders to regain the optimism generated by the 2015 Political Agreement, which has faded and is being replaced by “frustration and disappointment.”

In his briefing to the Council, Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, said that the majority of Libyans and the international community continued to [strongly support the political agreement](#) and its institutions and recognized the Presidency Council as the sole national executive authority.

“Both Libyans and the international community support the Agreement. Yes, it can be amended. But no, there is no alternative, there is no ‘plan B.’ And there is no need for one,” he said, underscoring: “If the parties do not uphold their responsibility in the [Libyan Political Agreement](#), there is no reason to think that they will have any greater commitment to an alternative agreement.”

Turning to the many other signs of positive developments in the country, including recent developments in the fight against terrorism and the improvement of the security situation in Tripoli, Mr. Kobler said that on the economic front, Libyan wages are on the rise and oil production has increased.

Despite progress, uncertainty contributing to ‘dangerous political power vacuum’

But the optimism generated by the signing of the Agreement has diminished, reported Mr. Kobler, emphasizing that instead of the “sharp horizon” established by the Agreement he now sees instead “frustration, disappointment, sometimes anger, and often it is justified.” He cited rising criminality, which remains widespread throughout the country, the division of institutions and the lack of guarantee of public services for the population.

The country’s gross domestic product (GDP), he added, has been steadily declining since 2012, not to mention the persistence of the parallel economy and illegal activities.

Mr. Kobler regretted that the current political vacuum is hampering efforts to create a united security force, to the point where some actors are considering a return to a military solution. “Competition for the control of national resources risks generating new violence,” he said, adding: The results of these divisions are setting Libya on a worrying path. Public services, including access to electricity, health, education, water, are failing many.”

Against this backdrop, he said the time has come to return to the negotiating table and “regain the spirit of Skhirat,” referring to the seaside Moroccan town where the deal was reached. For this, he said, the country needs a strong international support, not only from an institutional point of view. He thus defended the creation of partnerships with Libyan society.

Seven steps to peace

With all this in mind, Mr. Kobler called on all political actors to agree on a fair and inclusive process to amend the political agreement. Secondly, he called for an immediate end to violence, including in the south of the country, as well as establishing unified security and confidence-building measures. In this regard, he said, the Committee responsible for supervising the ceasefire in Tripoli is an excellent starting point.

He went on to call for improving cooperation between the Presidency Council and all the economic players. The UN Mission in Libya ([UNMIL](#)), which he heads up, should help them to do so, he said.

Finally, the Special Representative called on the international community, including the UN, regional organizations and neighbouring States, not only to react after the fact but to anticipate the Libyan problems.

[General Assembly confirms appointment of Achim Steiner as new UN development chief](#)

19 April 2017 – The United Nations General Assembly today [confirmed](#) the appointment of Germany’s Achim Steiner as the head of the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)).

Mr. Steiner’s nomination for UNDP Administrator was forwarded to the General Assembly by [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres following consultations with UNDP’s Executive Board.

In an announcement of the four-year appointment, which begins on 20 April, Mr. Guterres noted that Mr. Steiner brings to his new position “[extensive senior leadership experience](#) both at the grassroots and at the highest levels of international policymaking addressing environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic development.”

Among his most recent experiences, Mr. Steiner was the head of the UN Environment Programme (UN Environment) and Director-General of the UN Office in Nairobi.

In today's announcement, the Secretary-General thanked outgoing UNDP Administrator Helen Clark of New Zealand, who Mr. Guterres called "a highly effective communicator" and champion of development, among myriad key priorities.

Mr. Steiner takes the helm of UNDP, the largest of the independently funded UN agencies, which, under its special General Assembly mandate, leads the world body's work on eradicating extreme poverty and promoting good governance in the developing world.

Senior UN official in South Sudan warns women and girls face 'extremely high risk' of sexual assault risk

19 April 2017 – Without peace in South Sudan, millions of people will go hungry and millions of women and girls could be raped as they try to go about their daily lives, including as they search for food, a senior United Nations official today warned.

"While humanitarians will continue to do all that is possible to alleviate suffering, the fact remains that unless the guns fall silent, the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate," said Eugene Owusu, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan.

Speaking to journalists in Juba about the violence and related food insecurity facing the country, Mr. Owusu noted that 7.5 million people are in need of humanitarian aid and an estimated 3.5 million have been uprooted from their homes.

That figure includes many women and children, who have sought shelter in places such as swamps and subsisting on water lilies, to get away from fighters.

Cases of sexual assault and gender based violence increased by 64 per cent in 2016 compared to the previous year, according to a recent survey cited by Mr. Owusu.

"Against a backdrop of prevailing impunity, a major fear for women and children in this country is, sadly, the fear of being raped," he told the press.

Violence is also a concern for humanitarian workers seeking to deliver aid, the senior UN official said, urging officials to ensure "free, safe and unhindered access to all areas of this country in order to avert the spread

of famine.”

He noted “repeated” challenges to reaching people in need as a result of insecurity and access denials at the sub-national level.

In addition, at least 83 aid workers have been killed since the latest outbreak of violence in December 2013, with three contractors killed just last month.

Funding is another concern, with only about 27 per cent of the \$1.6 billion appeal met so far, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

Despite these challenges, UN and international donors have worked with the Government to deliver lifesaving aid to at least 1.6 million people, including to some 400,000 people affected by the famine in Leer and Mayendit.

“Our response has focused on scaling up food assistance, nutrition and health provisions, WASH [water, sanitation and hygiene], and enhancing livelihood opportunities for those unfortunate citizens in those parts of the country,” Mr. Owusu said, using the common acronym in the humanitarian community for water, sanitation and hygiene.

Ultimately, he noted, the long-term answer to the humanitarian situation is recovery, stabilization and development.

He called for investment in livelihoods, tightly linked to peace and relative security at community levels, to build up resistance and support basic social services to the most vulnerable in society.

[Peacekeepers in South Sudan working to strengthen protection of civilians – UN chief](#)

19 April 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan has done “significant work” to more effectively protect civilians and respond in case of a crisis, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has said in a letter to the President of the UN Security Council.

The letter summarizes the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the independent special investigation into the violence in Juba in July 2016 and the actions of the UN Mission, known as UNMISS.

“[Significant work has been undertaken](#) over the last five months to enhance the ability of UNMISS to protect civilians, better plan and prepare its

response to crisis situations and increase staff safety and security,” the Secretary-General wrote in the letter to Ambassador Nikki Haley, the Permanent Representative of the United States to the UN, in her capacity as President of the Security Council for April.

In particular, Mr. Guterres noted the establishment of a weapons-free zone around the Protection of Civilians (POC) sites and UN House in Juba, which he said “has contributed to a significant drop in reported crime and violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.”

In addition, UNMISS peacekeepers are conducting dismounted patrols within the area throughout the day and night, as well as cordon-and-search operations within the POC sites to disrupt arms trafficking.

The observations in the letter are based on an independent follow-up mission last month led by Major General (retired) Patrick Cammaert. He was looking into how the UN handled its response to fighting that occurred between 8 and 12 July 2016 between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). Hundreds of people were killed and more than 200 raped during that time period.

Among other observations, the letter noted a “positive change” in the operations and posture of military and police components as a result of corrective actions taken by UNMISS as well as troop and police contributing countries.

The Departments of UN Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support have also made “important changes” in more thoroughly training and monitoring performance of peacekeepers.

Mr. Guterres noted that “while much has been achieved, more needs to be done to raise and sustain the performance bar,” including through ongoing reviews and revise strategies.