



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

2 January 2015

Dear Mr. President,

The Security Council, in resolution 2167 (2014), underscored the importance of developing effective partnerships in the area of peacekeeping between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant statutes of regional and sub-regional organizations. In that context, it requested, in paragraph 13, that I initiate, in full and close cooperation with the African Union, a lessons learned exercise on the transitions from the African Union peace operations to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Mali and the Central African Republic, and provide specific recommendations that could be used for possible future transitional arrangements.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) led this lessons learned exercise, which was conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), and in consultation with the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and relevant United Nations departments, offices, agencies, funds and programmes. The methodology of the exercise included a desk review of relevant reports, including from the African Union and ECOWAS as well as interviews with United Nations and African Union officials and other key stakeholders. On 19 November 2014, representatives from the United Nations, the African Union, and Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms held a consultative meeting in Cairo, Egypt, to discuss the findings and recommendations, which were endorsed on 12 December 2014 during a joint United Nations-African Union validation meeting at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

His Excellency
Mr. Christian Barros Melet
President of the Security Council
New York

The transitions from the African Union peace operations to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Mali and the Central African Republic took place against the backdrop of an enhanced partnership at both the strategic and operational levels. The role of the African Union and sub-regional organizations over the last two decades has been critical in jointly addressing crises on the continent within the framework of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. From the peacekeeping endeavours in Burundi to Sudan and Somalia, various models of cooperation have gradually emerged between the African Union and the United Nations, anchored in the principles of complementarity and comparative advantage. Various processes and liaison mechanisms have been established at a number of levels to facilitate and enhance cooperation, information-sharing and consultation. These include the United Nations-African Union joint task force on peace and security and a desk-to-desk consultative meeting on the prevention and management of conflicts. The establishment of UNOAU in 2010 has also contributed significantly to fostering a more dynamic partnership between the two organizations.

In response to the multi-dimensional crises in Mali, on 13 November 2012, the African Union Peace and Security Council requested the Security Council to authorize, for an initial period of one year, the planned deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). Security Council resolution 2085 (2012) authorized the deployment of AFISMA and requested the establishment of a multidisciplinary United Nations presence in Mali – the United Nations Office in Mali (UNOM) – in order to provide coordinated and coherent support to the political and security processes. Subsequently, resolution 2100 (2013) provided for the transfer of authority from AFISMA to MINUSMA on 1 July 2013. Around 6,103 military personnel, 20 individual police officers and three formed police units comprising 368 officers were re-hatted from the African-led peace operation on that date.

Regarding the Central African Republic, on 19 July 2013, the African Union Peace and Security Council requested the Security Council to authorize the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) for an initial period of six months. The transfer of authority between the Peace Consolidation Mission in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX), which had been operating in the country since 2003 under an ECCAS mandate, and MISCA took place on 19 December 2013. Security Council resolution 2127 (2013) authorized the deployment of MISCA for a period of twelve months. The transition from MISCA to MINUSCA was defined under resolution 2149 (2014), which set the date for the transfer of authority on 15 September 2014. It also requested the immediate transformation of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) into MINUSCA. Those transitions also brought to the fore the important role played by bilateral and multilateral partners, including the French operations Sangaris and Serval and the European Union Force (EUFOR-RCA) in helping to address the crises.

The swift deployment of AFISMA and MISCA was critical to the international community's efforts to protect civilians in those countries. It also paved the way for a smooth transfer of authority to MINUSMA and MINUSCA. Although the contexts for cooperation between the United Nations cooperation with the African Union in Mali and in the Central African Republic were distinct, a number of common lessons emerged. This letter contains the key findings and recommendations on the strategic, operational, coordination and support arrangements required to enhance coherence and inter-operability between the two organizations.

Strategic cooperation pre and post-transitions

As the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, its relationship with the African Union Peace and Security Council is at the core of the overall strategic partnership between the two organizations, which has been guided by the decisions and resolutions of both Councils. The lessons learned from Mali and the Central African Republic underscore that successful transitions from African Union peace operations to United Nations peacekeeping operations require political coherence and the harmonization of policy and strategies at the highest levels. The lessons learned exercise also highlighted the need to ensure that, to the extent possible, the mandates given by the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council to operations supported by both organizations are developed through close consultation. They should also be written in a way that demonstrates unity of strategic vision in order to facilitate the strategic planning process and enable a more coordinated response.

A comparison between the processes leading up to the transitions in Mali and the Central African Republic shows that specific instructions from the Security Council on the conduct of joint, strategic assessments and planning processes were key to ensuring a coordinated response between the United Nations, the African Union and the sub-regional organizations concerned. In the case of Mali, Security Council resolution 2085 (2012), which authorized the deployment of AFISMA, requested the Secretariat to jointly assess with the African Union, ECOWAS and other partners, the operational requirements for this African-led operation. In the case of the Central African Republic, strategic direction was provided by the Security Council in several resolutions, including resolution 2127 (2013), which requested the Secretariat to undertake, in consultation with the African Union, expeditious contingency preparations and planning for the possible transformation of MISCA into a United Nations peacekeeping operation.

The subsequent assessment missions led by my Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, in November 2013 and February 2014, with the participation of African Union and ECCAS representatives, contributed to the provision of harmonized recommendations and informed the mandate formulation process that led to the transfer of authority from MISCA to MINUSCA. The DPKO leadership's engagement with the African Union liaison office and Ambassadors from ECOWAS and ECCAS Member States also helped in this regard. Notwithstanding the differences that emerged, enhanced consultations between members of the two Councils, including through the African members of the Security Council and an exchange of letters between the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and myself, in February 2014, also contributed to a harmonized approach to the transition process.

The transitions in Mali and the Central African Republic also indicated that an effective partnership in peacekeeping between the United Nations and the African Union has to be anchored in a clear division of labour, including beyond the transfer of authority. Sustaining regional engagement and leveraging the comparative advantages of the United Nations, the African Union and regional actors to move the political process forward has proven critical in the search for lasting peace and stability in both Mali and the Central African Republic. The Support and Follow-Up Group on the situation in Mali and the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic have served as effective instruments in strengthening coordination among members of the international community and national stakeholders in support of the peace process. They have also helped to create an enabling environment for the implementation of the mandates of MINUSMA and MINUSCA.

As indicated in my report on the Central African Republic of March 2014 (S/2014/142), a United Nations peacekeeping operation can only succeed when the region plays an important and complementary role. In that regard, and in order to enhance regional engagement in the Central African Republic, Security Council resolution 2149 (2014) requested MINUSCA, within its existing resources and mandate, to assist the political efforts of the African Union and ECCAS in support of the transition process, following the transfer of authority on 15 September 2014. The establishment of strong, post-transition African Union missions, such as the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) and the African Union Mission for the Central African Republic and Central Africa (MISAC), contributed to sustaining regional engagement and maintaining coherence and unity of vision at the strategic level. In the long term, this could also contribute to facilitating United Nations exit strategies.

Lessons learned from the experiences in Mali and the Central African Republic pointed to the need for greater clarity on the timelines and conditions under which transitions takes place in order to increase their predictability. An early indication from the Security Council – as was the case for the Central African Republic in resolution 2127 (2013) – of its intention to eventually transform an African-led peace operation into a United Nations peacekeeping operation, in coordination with relevant regional entities and the host nation, can facilitate the early strategic engagement of both Secretariats. Such an indication can also facilitate the development of mission concepts and benchmarks that can contribute to a smoother handover process.

Operational planning and coordination

The process leading up to the transfer of authority from MISCA to MINUSCA benefitted from lessons drawn from the transition from AFISMA to MINUSMA. In the case of Mali, the United Nations enhanced its support for the planning process of AFISMA in line with Security Council resolution 2071 (2012), which requested the Secretariat to deploy military and security planners to assist ECOWAS and the African Union in planning for AFISMA. However, these efforts were hampered in part by the fact that, at that time, both ECOWAS and the African Union had started to develop distinct concepts of operations.

Formal planning only started following the 19 October 2012 meeting of the Support and Follow-Up Group on the situation in Mali, which endorsed the African Union-led Strategic Concept for the Resolution of the Crisis in Mali. Subsequently, the African Union and ECOWAS, held a series of meetings with the support of the United Nations and other partners to harmonize the concept of operations of AFISMA. It was eventually endorsed by the ECOWAS Summit on 11 November 2012 and by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 13 November 2012. Building on the momentum generated by the adoption of the strategic concept, regular consultations were held at senior levels between the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS Headquarters to coordinate operational support to AFISMA, including within the framework of an integrated task force.

Meanwhile, in the Central African Republic, the United Nations worked from the outset to support the transition of authority from the ECCAS-led operation, MICOPAX, to the African-led operation, MISCA which took place on 19 December 2013. The United Nations also participated in the African Union-led assessment missions, as early as April 2013, in support of the development of the MISCA concept of operations. As called for in Security Council resolution 2127 (2013), the Secretariat provided technical and expert advice to support the planning and deployment of MISCA and strengthen its command and control, administrative infrastructure and training capacity, including through the Mobile Training Team model designed and delivered in coordinated fashion by the United Nations and the African Union.

Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2149 (2014), the African Union and the United Nations developed a transition plan focusing on key strategic and operational measures to be implemented. The United Nations MISCA support team, which deployed to the Central African Republic in February 2014, played an important role in operationalizing the transition plan and linking operational planning with donor support planning in Addis Ababa and New York. The support team also served as the nucleus of the transition team recommended in my report of March 2014 (S/2014/142). The deployment of this transition team, which was tasked with planning the establishment of MINUSCA and preparing for the transfer of authority, with the participation of MISCA and BINUCA, contributed greatly to a smoother transition.

Command and control

Clear command and control structures are critical to the success of peacekeeping operations particularly as they operate in volatile political and security environments. This is very important in transitions when operations are undertaken in coordination with another organization. The need for clear strategic and operational guidance is vitally important. The transitions in Mali and the Central African Republic re-emphasized that complex multinational peace operations require a clear and effective command and control framework. In both contexts, the African Union encountered challenges due to the lack of means of communication between force headquarters and sector headquarters, as well as a lack of clarity on reporting procedures.

In Mali, the relatively short transition time frame affected command and control structures in part by triggering the dissolution of the Joint Operation Centre (JOC) of AFISMA. This challenge was better managed in the Central African Republic through the establishment of a joint JOC between the African Union and the United Nations ahead of the transfer of authority. In addition, continuity in command and control was facilitated by the re-hatting of the MISCA Force Commander following a competitive recruitment process, as well as some of the staff officers and several civilian MISCA staff members. Despite initial challenges regarding the establishment of communications infrastructure, coordination between MISCA, Operation Sangaris and EUFOR-RCA was facilitated by the integrity of the command within the respective forces and the clarity of their respective mandates, a lesson that should be taken into account when planning joint endeavours in the future. The effective and continued direction provided by the leadership of BINUCA/MINUSCA and MISCA throughout the transition was also instrumental.

Re-hatting modalities

The re-hatting police and force contingents operating under African-led peace operations is a central element of the operational planning process during transitions. In Mali and the Central African Republic, the Security Council, in resolutions 2100 (2013) and 2149 (2014), requested the United Nations to absorb as many military and police personnel as possible from the African-led peace operations into the United Nations peacekeeping mission, in accordance with United Nations standards and in coordination with ECOWAS and ECCAS. In March 2013, the Secretariat conducted an assessment to identify critical shortfalls among AFISMA troops. Efforts were also undertaken to bring troop levels in line with operational requirements, enhance awareness of United Nations peacekeeping mandates and upgrade equipment and self-sustainment capabilities. In the case of the Central African Republic, a capability assessment was conducted jointly with the African Union and ECCAS in May 2014. Shortfalls were then communicated to concerned troop – and police – contributing countries and to bilateral donors in an effort to raise their capacities prior to the transition.

Despite these efforts, which included the provision of grace periods and other measures aimed at strengthening and aligning the missions' command and control structures and harmonizing doctrines and policies, most of the contingents that MINUSMA and MINUSCA inherited on the date of their respective transfers of authority had equipment and self-sustainment capabilities that remained below United Nations standards. The transitions in Mali and Central African Republic, therefore, highlight the need for increased collaboration on force generation between the African Union and the United Nations at an early stage, including through joint pre-deployment visits in order to facilitate the re-hatting process. The challenges around troop standards underscore the need for continued support to broader efforts to build the capacity of African contingents, including through support from bilateral partners.

Challenges also arose in both countries with regard to the implementation of the United Nations Human Rights Screening Policy due to concerns about the human rights record of some contingents to be re-hatted, including contingents belonging to national forces listed in the annexes of my annual report on Children and Armed Conflict for the Recruitment and Use of Children and Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Human Rights Screening Policy requires the United Nations to ensure that it does not deploy for service any person who has been involved in violations of international human rights or humanitarian law. As far as AFISMA and MISCA were concerned, the application of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces revealed several factors and risks that the Organization was compelled to take into consideration ahead of the re-hating process in the Central African Republic. Those concerns were only partially addressed by putting in place mitigation measures, including training and additional proactive screening of MISCA contingents in the case of the Central African Republic. In future, timely coordination on and implementation of the Human Rights Screening Policy at the earliest stages of the African Union-United Nations transition planning would enhance compliance with human rights standards.

Civilian Capacities

The transitions in Mali and the Central African Republic also had implications for the coordination and implementation of specific civilian mandated tasks, principally human rights and the protection of civilians. There were also issues related to coordination with the humanitarian community. In both countries, the African Union deployed multi-disciplinary civilian capabilities to support the military and police components and enhance the capacity of AFISMA and MISCA to deliver on their protection of civilians mandate and coordinate with other stakeholders. However, the lessons learned from both transitions suggest that the work and expertise of the African Union in the area of human rights could be further harnessed. There is also a need for greater harmonisation between African Union and United Nations standards and working methods, particularly when it comes to monitoring, reporting and following-up on human rights violations. There were improvements in the case of the Central African Republic due, notably, to the establishment of coordination mechanisms. However, the African Union and the United Nations need to improve their common understanding of the protection of civilians. The work of both organisations in this area would also benefit from more systematic coordination, combined with enhanced civilian capacity to implement protection of civilians strategies.

Support arrangements

An operationally robust African Union peace support operation that can seamlessly integrate, at the operational level, into a United Nations peacekeeping operation, is critical to a successful transition. In this regard, the ability to secure adequate support is a major constraint facing the African Union in the conduct of its peace operations. The Security Council has repeatedly emphasized, including most recently in resolution 2167 (2014), the need to enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for regional organizations when they undertake peacekeeping operations under a United Nations mandate. The resolution also recalled the responsibility of regional organizations to secure resources for their activities, including through contributions by their member States and support from partners.

The Security Council requested in resolutions 2085 (2012) and 2127 (2013), that I provide a package of “soft” support to AFISMA and MISCA, respectively. Given the lack of available personnel, both AFISMA and MISCA required additional support staff and civilian personnel during their start-up phases. In accordance with resolution 2127 (2013), the deployment of United Nations experts to support MISCA provided additional technical surge capacity to the African Union mission, including in the areas of mission support, communications, and military and police planning. Meanwhile, in resolution 2149 (2014), the Security Council authorized the deployment of military enablers to MINUSCA before the transfer of authority on 15 September 2014, including to help stand up the military and police components of MINUSCA.

The Security Council requested me, in resolutions 2085 (2012) and 2127 (2013), to establish trust funds to support AFISMA and MISCA operations, in compliance with the HRDDP policy, in order to supplement the own resource mobilization efforts of the African Union. As a result, the trust funds established for AFISMA and MISCA received US\$ 44 million and US\$ 5 million, respectively. The trust fund established for the Central African Republic enabled the delivery of a communications package to MISCA. Disagreements persisted, however, over the condition of some equipment and led to a delay in its installation. In Mali, the trust fund was initially intended to address some of the needs identified for AFISMA through the acquisition of critical equipment from the United Nations Strategic Deployment Stocks.

The terms of reference of the AFISMA trust funds, established separately by the African Union and the United Nations, allowed for the full range of logistical support to be covered, including food, fuel, strategic lift, as well as reimbursement of contingent owned equipment (COE). However in the case of the United Nations-managed trust fund, the relatively limited amount of funds available, coupled with the uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the trust fund mechanisms, shifted the focus towards one-time acquisition of equipment, instead of direct operational support. Most of the pledges made by donors were generally earmarked for non-lethal assistance, and thus precluded the African Union from using them to reimburse COE. This was notably the case for 98 per cent of the support pledged at the donor conference for MISCA held by the African Union on 1 February 2014 in Addis Ababa. The African Union also had to contend with the low rate of disbursement of the pledges made by partners in Addis Ababa.

The lessons learned from the transitions in Mali and the Central African Republic demonstrate that the planning for AFISMA and MISCA, in terms of troop strength and capabilities, was influenced predominantly by the estimated availability of voluntary contributions rather than the actual needs on the ground. This was, however, partially offset in both cases by the use of pre-established, bilateral and multilateral, African Union-managed reserve funds for African-led peace support operations. In response to the requests made by the Security Council in resolutions 2085 (2012) and 2127 (2013), for Member States and partners to provide financial support and contributions in kind to AFISMA and MISCA to enable their deployment, some Member States, particularly France and the United States, provided significant non-lethal and lethal support directly to a number of troop- and police-contributing countries. The provision of weapons and vehicles by France and strategic lift and other support by the United States were essential for the deployment of additional MISCA contingents. However, notwithstanding these measures, some of the bilateral support to troop- and police-contributing countries was delivered only after the transfer of authority from MISCA to MINUSCA.

Conclusions and recommendations

The specific circumstances of each conflict should determine the particular model of collaboration between the African Union and the United Nations. However it is important to continue to improve the manner in which the two organizations, as well as the regional economic communities, collaborate to prevent and manage conflicts. In that context, the issue of subsidiarity between the African Union and its sub-regional organizations needs to be addressed with renewed vigour, within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), as partnerships work best when there are common strategic objectives, political coherence and a clear division of responsibilities. It is equally important that efforts are pursued to enhance cooperation between the secretariats of the two organizations. This should include the strengthening of existing mechanisms such as the United Nations-African Union Joint Task Force.

The Security Council and the Peace and Security Council have significant roles to play in setting the strategic direction for collaboration, particularly in the context of a possible transition. It is therefore recommended that the two Councils continue their constructive efforts to strengthen consultation and information-sharing regarding countries on their respective agendas. This is important at all times but particularly during the process of mandating and deploying African Union-led peace operations. In this regard, I am encouraged that the Security Council, in accordance with its presidential statement of 16 December 2014 (S/PRST/2014/27), intends to hold timely consultations and conduct collaborative field missions with the African Union Peace and Security Council, as appropriate, to formulate cohesive positions and strategies, on a case-by-case basis, in dealing with conflict situations in Africa.

The transitions in Mali and the Central African Republic have highlighted the importance of early engagement by the two organizations in joint assessments and planning from the outset, taking into account the political and security dimensions of the conflicts concerned. Such planning should allow the United Nations and the African Union to develop a common vision, resulting in increased efficiency and more cost effective mission support plans and doctrines. When the transition from an African Union operation to an United Nations peacekeeping mission is envisaged, an early indication that this is the intended course of action would improve planning during this period.

To ensure greater predictability, the two Organizations should identify context-specific benchmarks that could be used to determine the conditions under which a transition should take place, given the needs in the country and the situation on the ground. These benchmarks should also take into account the time required to set up support arrangements for an African Union peace operation and the lead time needed to deploy a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

The transitions in Mali and the Central African Republic also confirmed that continued regional engagement remains vital to furthering stabilization efforts and sustaining political momentum. Future planning for transitions should therefore take into consideration the role of post-transition, African Union-led presences and mechanisms. It should also assess the support that the United Nations would be able to continue providing to sustain such multidimensional presences. In this regard, I take note of the Security Council presidential statement of 16 December 2014 (S/PRST/2014/27), in which it stressed the importance of supporting the political role of the African Union during transitions, as well as in the formulation and implementation of governance and other reforms to be carried out in addressing the root causes of conflict in Africa.

Where re-hatting of personnel from African Union to United Nations peace operations is envisaged, it is important for the two Organizations to collaborate from the outset on force and police generation. They should consult closely with troop- and police-contributing countries about the required capabilities and their compliance with United Nations policy and doctrine, particularly with respect to human rights. This should be envisaged within the broader context of the support of the United Nations for the operationalization of the African Standby Force, whose deployment in Mali and the Central African Republic has opened up new avenues for cooperation.

Early joint planning and coordination should also apply to the transition of civilian capacity, including with respect to the human rights and protection of civilians mandates of the peace operations concerned. In this regard, the African Union could consider developing an institutional framework for deploying human rights personnel to peace operations. The United Nations could provide support for the development of relevant policies, methodologies, and planning processes. In addition, increased coordination and understanding of the two Organizations' respective protection of civilians mandates and the strengthening of civilian capacity would be critical to ensuring the effective delivery of those mandates.

Predictable and sustainable support remains critical to the success of transitions from African Union peace operations to United Nations peacekeeping operations. This should continue to be led by regional organizations who should secure resources from their Member States and partners. However, experiences in Mali and the Central African Republic have also confirmed that no support modality is sufficient on its own. The predictability and sustainability of funding is even more important in the context of peace enforcement operations. In this regard there is a need to pursue efforts to optimize the full range of support modalities, including for the timely operationalization of the African Standby Force.

This can be done through a combination of voluntary, assessed, and bilateral support, as appropriate. Pre-approved modalities for the use of trust funds and the establishment by the African Union of pre-approved standing contracts with service providers could also be envisaged.

This would help shorten timelines for the operationalization of support and enhance the management by the African Union of extra-budgetary support packages provided by partners, such as the European Union-supported African Peace Facility. In this regard, I welcome the report of the High-level Panel on Alternative Sources of Financing under the chairmanship of the former President of Nigeria, Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo.

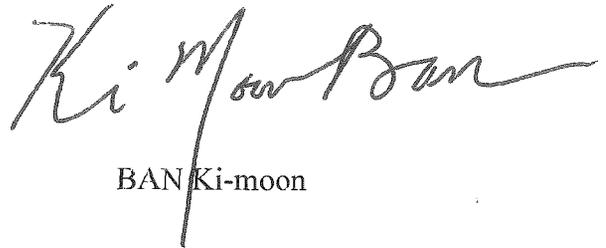
The African Union and the United Nations, in consultation with other partners, should conduct a lessons learned exercise to review and assess the various mechanisms available to improve the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing African Union peace operations authorized by the United Nations Security Council. In addition, as was done in the Central African Republic, the Security Council could consider authorizing soft logistical support packages or technical support teams, as appropriate. The early deployment of United Nations expertise and military enablers, including engineering assets and tactical lift capabilities could also be considered. The provision of additional United Nations technical and planning advisory capacity, and other bilateral assistance, would enhance the capacity and effectiveness of African Union operations and facilitate a seamless transfer of authority. Where a transfer of authority is envisioned between the two organisations, the early deployment of a joint transition team would also be important for the effective implementation of the transition plan.

I remain committed to ensuring closer interaction between both Secretariats and strengthening the existing mechanisms that guide their collaboration. This would facilitate future transition processes, including with respect to decision-making and tasking. To ensure a more coherent framework for global peacekeeping, the United Nations is committed to working with the African Union to develop a creative and flexible transition toolbox embodying a common vision that the United Nations and African Union would employ, when and where appropriate, to inform future transition processes. The toolbox would include guidance and standards on: i) joint assessments and planning, ii) pre-deployment visits and force generation, iii) coordination mechanisms, iv) continuity in command and control, as well as re-hatting, v) transfer of civilian capacity, vi) support mechanisms, and vii) arrangements to increase troop standards.

In this regard, as requested by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 16 December 2014 (S/PRST/2014/27), I intend to present a report on ways to further strengthen the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa including the work of the UNOAU in 2016. The outcome of this lessons learned exercise also has implications for cooperation between the United Nations regional organizations, more broadly, including the critical role played by bilateral partners during transitions. I intend to explore these further in my report on the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations in peacekeeping to be issued by 31 March 2015, as requested by the Security Council in resolution 2167 (2014).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ban Ki-moon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

BAN Ki-moon