NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

SUB-COMMITTEE ON NATO PARTNERSHIPS (PCNP)

SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRANSITION AND DEVELOPMENT (ESCTD)

MISSION REPORT

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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1.   Obtaining insights in Africa's security dynamics related to the evolving security landscape in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was the main focus of a NATO PA visit to Addis Ababa from 23 to 25 September 2019. The current state of cooperation between the African Union and NATO, as well as the European Union's, as well as the United Nations' support for the AU in the security field also featured prominently on the agenda of the visit. Moreover, AU and Ethiopian views on regional security issues and their implications for security in the MENA region completed the programme.

2.   The NATO PA delegation included 14 parliamentarians from eight NATO member states, representing the NATO PA Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships (PCNP) and the Sub-Committee on Transition and Development (ESCTD). The delegation was led by PCNP Chairman Miro Kovac (Croatia) and also included NATO PA President Madeleine Moon (United Kingdom) as well as Assembly Vice-Presidents Vitalino Canas (Portugal) and Osman Askin Bak (Turkey). The main takeaways from the visit were the following.

3.   The stability of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and that of the Euro-Atlantic area are closely interconnected. Developments in Africa proper have a tangible impact on the security of the MENA region and by extension the southern flank of the Alliance. Violent conflict in Africa is rooted within states, between states, as well as across states. The impact of climate change is likely to fan conflict further in the region, interlocutors agreed. Violence across states has been on the rise in the last decade; there is particular concern about the deteriorating situation in the Sahel region, especially Mali, but also Burkina Faso.

4.   Three "megatrends" will have a tangible impact on Africa's future security landscape. These are: demography, the inability of African nations to provide sufficient livelihoods for their population, and rapid urbanisation.   Africa is the continent with the largest demographic expansion; the expected population growth from 1.2 billion people today to approximately 1.7 to 1.8 billion in 2035 represents a dramatic increase. African nations are unable to provide sufficient jobs and basic services, including health and education, to match this population growth.   To merely maintain current employment levels, African nations need to create approximately 18.6 million jobs every year, the delegation heard. While job markets and employment opportunities vary greatly across the continent, it is evident Africa will have a large, unemployed population. This problem is compounded by the third megatrend: rapid urbanisation. In the near future Africa will host a dozen megacities; this development will generate several challenges, including building and maintaining the required infrastructure for these cities.

5.   While Africa is a potentially rich continent with abundant resources, large parts are underdeveloped. Interlocutors in Addis Ababa considered this underdevelopment and poor governance to be the root causes of insecurity and instability. Climate change will increase existing tensions as is already visible in the Lake Chad region. Making better use of the continent's natural resources is an obvious way to improve the livelihoods of Africans, but progress has been halting. For example, while AU member countries recognise the need to develop the "blue economy", i.e. the sustainable use of ocean resources, they are still facing some serious challenges such as maritime piracy, inefficient resource management, and illegal fishing. At the same time, with an average annual economic growth rate of between 4 % and 5%, Africa is the second fastest growing region of the world. The AU's decision to create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of people and investments – the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) – promises to unleash Africa's economic opportunities. The CFTA is a key priority of Africa's Agenda 2063 and has the potential to substantially boost from the rest of intra-Africa trade from an existing level of about 13% to 25% or more over the next decade, thus contributing to economic growth and attracting investments both from within Africa and the world. However, while expectations of the positive impact of the African free trade area are high, the hard part comes now, as bringing down tariffs and reducing protection of certain industries will take time, the delegation learned. Moreover, the AU has no mechanism in place to prepare the implementation of the African

free trade agreement. Moreover, corruption is a big challenge; according to the latest report by Transparency International, 6 of the 10 most corrupt countries of the world are located in Africa.

6.   Existing economic, social, and environmental conditions, as well as poor governance and limited state capabilities, hamper the AU from making faster progress towards a more stable Africa. Considering the short time since its inception, the AU has made appreciable progress in advancing peace and stability on the continent, international diplomatic representatives stressed. In the security field, the AU has increasingly taken on the responsibility for peace support operations and for peace enforcement, even if the AU's focus remains limited to conflict mediation and prevention. The progress achieved in Somalia in the last 20 years, as well as in Sudan, where the AU has been the key mediator, are concrete examples. At the same time, however, the AU's effectiveness is limited by the fact that it is not a supranational organisation like the EU. In comparison with the EU, the AU - which has 55 member states - is far behind in the political integration of its member states. This lack of political integration and limited resources are also a reason why implementation of AU decisions has been lagging, according to interlocutors in Addis Ababa. Moreover, one diplomatic observer noted that some AU member states tend to take ownership of issues back to their national states. As a result, acting on a continental level has not advanced much, and in many cases, cooperation is happening only on a regional level, the delegation heard. As member countries and their political systems, which include democracies and autocratic regimes, are very diverse, institutions designed to protect human rights and democracy remain fragile. Financing the AU remains an issue, as 40% of the organisation's budget is provided by other donors, particularly the European Union.

7.   The need to institutionalise democratic and participative governance was emphasised by the Director of the AU's Political Affairs Department, Khabele Matlosa. Progress in the areas of security and peace will create a conducive environment for development, he said, adding that the AU's vision of Africa is that of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent, representing a dynamic part of the international community. Dr Matlosa pointed out that military coups are no longer a big security concern in Africa, which is also due to the AU's zero-tolerance approach in this area. Other political and economic issues which impact security on the continent remain, however. These include a trend towards "tenure extension" where incumbent political leaders remain in power after their mandate expires.

8.   Cooperation between NATO and the AU was welcomed by all participants as both share numerous common security concerns, such as terrorism, radicalisation, illegal migration, and environmental concerns. Thus far, however, the AU-NATO relationship has developed only slowly. One of the reasons of this slow development is that there is still a "hangover" among African states from NATO's engagement in Libya in 2013 which, according to one international interlocutor, has led to a perception of NATO as a "war machine" among African countries. African nations also perceive the West as having ignored African security issues for too long. NATO-AU cooperation dates back to 2005 when the Alliance, upon a request by the AU, provided logistical and airlift support to the AU's mission in Sudan, the NATO Senior Military Liaison Officer (SMLO), Colonel Omur Kosemehmet, informed delegates. Since then, cooperation between the two organisations has expanded and now covers three areas: operational support, capacity-building support, and assistance in developing and sustaining the African Standby Force (ASF). NATO has also established a liaison office at the headquarters of the AU in Addis Ababa. The main areas of the AU-NATO partnership are information and intelligence exchange, although NATO also plays an important role in the capability development of military and security tools for the AU and for AU member states.

9.   NATO-AU cooperation has been beneficial to both sides, stressed Theodora Adekunle from NATO's Operations Division. She added that NATO strives to establish a relationship of equal interest and parity and underlined that the Alliance is not competing with other nations' engagements in Africa.

10.   The AU also cooperates with the United Nations (UN) in the area of peace and security, where the UN provides advice to the AU on long-term capacity building and short-term operational support matters.   The United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) was established in 2010 and allowed both sides to develop their cooperation from *ad hoc* relationship to a more systematic and focused partnership, according to Gerald Mitchell, Deputy Head of Office and Director of Political Affairs at the United Nations Office to the African Union. Together with the Departments of Peace and Security and Political Affairs of the AU Commission, the UNOAU has developed joint work plans, which focus on four areas: governance issues; support the AU to operationalise the African Peace and Security Architecture; regional coordination (harmonisation of continental norms and practices); and conflict prevention and mediation. With regard to the latter, the UN and the AU work together to achieve a shared understanding of the root causes and drivers of violent conflicts in Africa to promote harmonised approaches to preventing conflicts before they occur, mitigating ongoing conflicts, and building the peace in the aftermath of conflicts.

11.   The European Union plays an important role in the stabilisation of Africa. Taken together, the EU and its member states provide some EUR 20 billion annually in assistance to African nations, making them the biggest donor to the African continent, according to Ranieri Sabatucci, Head of the EU Delegation to the AU. In the security realm, the Africa-EU Partnership seeks to ensure a peaceful and secure environment and to foster political stability and effective governance, while enabling sustainable and inclusive growth. **The African Peace Facility (APF),** an instrument financed under the European Development Fund (EDF), is the EU's main instrument to support African-led peace support operations, the operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and initiatives under the Early Response Mechanism (ERM). Since 2004, approximately EUR 2.7 billion has been dispersed. In 2016, 95% of the African Union's peace and security operations were funded by the EU, the delegation learned. Like NATO, the EU also supports capacity building, and the EU support for the AU's continental early warning system is a key focus. The main focus of the work of the EU Mission to the AU is the broader Sahel and Libya.

12.   Both Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have markedly increased their activities in Africa in recent years. However, NATO member states remain actively engaged in the continent, both politically and in the security realm. Referring to a report by the consulting firm McKinsey*, a diplomatic representative said that although China has become Africa's most important economic partner in the last two decades, Chinese influence remains limited to the economic sphere. Several interlocutors also mentioned that there has been increasing proxy tension in Africa, and around the Horn of Africa in particular, emanating from the Gulf.

13.   Members of the delegation stressed that it is essential to have a lasting solution to Libya as the continuing instability there not only facilitates irregular migration to Europe but also destabilises the Sahel zone.

14.   The United States is a key player in Africa, it provides a considerable political, economic, and development assistance to many countries on the continent. Youth engagement, economic growth, and gender equality are priorities of US development policy in Africa, according to John Kelley, Deputy Head of the US Mission to the AU. In the security area, Washington is encouraging African governments to take more proactive leadership in mediating to prevent conflicts. In this context, the US administration is very focused on working with the AU on African solutions for African issues. US Africom's activities in Addis Ababa are primarily focusing on strengthening partner networks and enhancing partner capabilities,

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*   Kartik Jayaram, Kassiri, Omid, and Sun, Irene Yuan, "Dance of the lions and dragons: How are Africa and China engaging, and how will the partnership evolve?*", McKinsey Featured Insights June 2017;* https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/middle-east-and-africa/the-closest-look-yet-at-chinese-economic-engagement-in-africa

Colonel William Boswell informed the delegation. Unlike the EU, the UN, and NATO, US Africom focuses on bilateral support for individual countries.

15.	The last part of the programme concentrated on Ethiopia and regional issues. Ethiopia plays a stabilising role in the region and is a security provider for the region, according to Wro Almaz Mekonnen, State Minister for Peace. Stable and peaceful neighbours are a prerequisite for a secure Ethiopia, she noted and stressed the need to bring stability to the Horn of Africa. Hirut Zemene, State Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry, underlined that Ethiopia is a strong believer in multilateralism and in collective security. She added that transnational issues like climate change and population growth can only be tackled successfully by close international cooperation. Diplomatic representatives noted that Ethiopia is one of the fastest growing economies of Africa. Moreover, with approximately 650,000 refugees in the country and 3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), Ethiopia is a hub for mixed migration movements, the delegation learned.

16.	The three-day programme provided the delegates with a comprehensive overview of the main security developments in the region and of the evolving cooperation between the AU and NATO.

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