

Workshop 3: Organizing Peace: The Institutions and Processes for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution

At a time when Africa is facing a twofold danger, namely the eruption of conflicts and the disengagement of major partners now that the Cold War is over, it must take on increased responsibilities. The OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, created in 1993 in Cairo, is more effective than what had previously existed. Discussion of it was a focus of the workshop.

A permanent body designed to play a political role, the Mechanism has an essentially preventive mandate. It has proven more than once that it can be effective provided the parties concerned accept OAU mediation. And because mediation is not enough in this area, efforts must also be directed to economic and social factors. Among the concerns raised about the Mechanism was its place in civil society.

Since prevention does not always work, some workshop participants expressed strong interest in an inter-African intervention force, although not all agreed. Other participants felt that peacekeeping was a United Nations duty. There nonetheless seemed to be agreement that African troops should participate in such efforts, and perhaps not only in Africa. African states should make troops available for collective peacekeeping efforts, meaning that troops from various countries would have to be prepared to act in concert and must have the means available to do so.

The Mechanism does not have all the resources needed to fulfil its mandate. However, progress has been made in the attitude of the OAU, which is now more receptive toward receiving contributions from outside Africa to support its conflict prevention, management and resolution efforts. The OAU also knows that it can benefit from the support of the European Union and the United Nations. For instance, in the training of personnel, the sharing of planning and logistical expertise and the creation of a monitoring centre, as suggested by the OAU Secretary-General, the United Nations (which has such a centre) could provide assistance.

La Francophonie can also make a contribution. So far, it has not been involved in conflict prevention as such, but it has contributed unofficially. Since 1989, in particular through the ACCT, its activities have sought to promote human rights, reinforce the rule of law and strengthen judicial and legal institutions, and to support free and fair elections; it has thus gained considerable expertise that it can share. Nonetheless, la Francophonie does not have the structures for monitoring in the field. Nor is it a regional organization; its activity extends beyond Africa.

La Francophonie has neither the capability nor the desire to take the place of the regional and sub-regional organizations positioned to defend peace in their part of the world; rather, it must support them. One participant pointed out that la Francophonie must not duplicate the work of such organizations, that contradictory messages must not be sent to the field, and that the resources devoted by la Francophonie in these areas would have to be taken from somewhere else. Another suggested that the CPF become