The mission’s integrated structure enables the UN actors to work more closely together. The mission can rely on the UNCT’s programmatic capacity and expertise in several areas of cooperation, including electoral assistance, DDR, rule of law, human rights and child protection, while the UNCT can use BINUCA’s political leverage to encourage government cooperation. A similar dynamic exists with the PBC, where the Chair of the country configuration contributes to the SRSG’s political influence and can assist in reinforcing sensitive messages. The PBC has been an important mechanism for sustaining cooperation between the various institutions, but also articulated the major priorities and gaps to be addressed moving forward.

The key components of the architecture include: Peace and Security Councils, the African Stand-By Force (ASF), the Continental Early-Warning System (CEWS) and the Peace Fund and Panels of the Wise. While there is general coherence between efforts to create the ASF and CEWS, the rest of the system seems to be developing independently. In particular, Africa’s mediation capacity saw substantial growth in 2011, as many of the RECs began to build structures to better resolve their own regional conflicts.

The Economic Commission for West African States (ECOWAS) has a network of offices in West Africa as part of its Early Warning and Response Network as well as offices of Special Representatives of the President of the ECOWAS Commission that assist Member States in dealing with crisis situations, or provide support in post-conflict settings. In the East African Community (EAC), the drafting process for their “Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution” framework is nearing completion and will provide the guidance for the organization’s development in the peace and security realm. Within this structure, a Negotiation, Mediation and Good Offices department will establish a Panel of Eminent Persons in order to facilitate regional solutions. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in April 2011 announced that it will soon complete preparations for its own regional Mediation Support Unit. Based upon IGAD’s experiences fostering Sudan’s CPA and its current efforts at the Somalia Peace Facilitation Office, the Unit aims to further enhance IGAD’s mediation capacity and provide a link between the official representatives and civil society. Furthermore, COMESA (the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) in June 2011 activated its Committee of Elders when a few members joined an AU assessment mission to Egypt to assist in the country’s political transition. In Central Africa, ECCAS’s (the Economic Community of Central African States) conflict prevention and mediation capacity receives additional support through the newly established UN Office for Central Africa.

These initiatives are positive developments, as they represent sincere attempts to improve the African peace and security architecture. As these new structures grow, it will be a central challenge of the regional bodies to overcome their institutional differences and inter-state rivalries, and support one another in their efforts to resolve conflict across the African continent.

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