

PART 3:

OBSERVATIONS BY THE SURVEY TEAM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The observations which follow are based in part on the comments and recommendations of the various countries. Some of the observations made below have also been reinforced by the experience of the OAU team during the course of the survey, including visual impressions and informal communications from/with officials from the various host countries. They are made with full awareness of the limitations of this study as articulated in section 1.5 of this report.

3.2 OBSERVATIONS

3.2.1 There is a positive attitude amongst the majority of countries surveyed towards participation in multinational peace operations and towards improving preparedness for such participation. Indeed, the visit of the survey team was welcomed in most cases as an opportunity for countries to reflect with others on a number of factors pertaining to training and preparation for participation in peace operations.

3.2.2 Some form of dedicated training for peace operations was conducted in all the countries which were surveyed, but there are significant differences in the level and scope of and approach to such training. Substantial past participation in peace operations has acted as a catalyst for the development and improvement of national training programmes for peace operations. However, those countries with the greatest scope and depth of experience are also those which are currently stretched in terms of troop contributions to ongoing peace operations. Nevertheless, new contributors may benefit from whatever training assistance such countries are willing to provide. Clearly there is much scope and requirement for closer co-operation in this regard.

3.2.3 A large measure of commonality already exists in the approach to training for peace operations in the command and staff colleges of six of the countries which were surveyed. In addition, one other country is a regular beneficiary of the training presented

at a number of these colleges. Indeed, most of the countries surveyed have student and staff exchange programmes with other African and non-African command and staff colleges. Co-operation and collaboration is strongest among countries with a similar military culture, including language and approach to training. However, such co-operation appears to take place within the framework of a number of bilateral agreements on command and staff-level training (including packages for peace operations), rather than as part of a wider effort to enhance African capabilities for the conduct of peace operations.

3.2.4 The peace operations ‘packages’ presented at the various military staff colleges range from two to four weeks in duration. All concentrate on the background knowledge at the command and staff level which is essential for officers who will participate in operations as part of a multinational (primarily UN) force. The syllabi all include aspects such as the history, Charter, structure and functioning of the United Nations as a body charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. Particular attention is paid to the history, concept and conduct of UN peace operations, including lessons learned from operations in Africa. Some thought is given to the non-military dimensions of peace operations, but in general no solutions are being sought to the problems of ‘aggravated’ peacekeeping, complex emergencies, and the concept of peace enforcement in Africa. The tendency is rather to follow well-beaten paths, including a recognition of the failings of the UN system in the realm of collective security and international peacekeeping. The danger of such an approach is that individual Member States, and the OAU collectively, will tend to emulate the inadequacies of the UN system and its approach to resolving conflicts in Africa.

3.2.5 There is far less commonality in the approach of the various countries to background training for peace operations at levels below that of command and staff course training, as well as in pre-deployment training. This is perhaps not surprising, as the greatest investment in military training normally (and appropriately) accrues to the future top military leadership cadre (mid-ranking career officers). Moreover, none of the countries surveyed maintain and train forces exclusively for participation in peace operations. This is not a negative factor per se, as a solid foundation of conventional soldiering skills is essential to meeting the demands of peace operations in the post Cold War era. However, as part of the trend in many African countries towards the adoption of a less aggressive and offensive force posture and design, there is scope for the expansion, improvement and co-ordination of military background training for peace operations as part of general force preparation. This would obviously require a far greater degree of doctrinal clarity than exists at present, if such training is to extend beyond the general workings of the UN system and the principles and skills underpinning past UN peace operations.

3.2.6 The harmonisation of pre-deployment training for various national contingents is, in many ways, subject to the same limitations as those which inhibit a common approach to background training. In addition, such training is normally mission specific, which means that the refinement and co-ordination of such training, for new missions at least, has an important temporal dimension, i.e. it cannot occur until accurate information is available on the mandate, concept of operations, and area of operations.

3.2.7 Despite the correspondence from the OAU Secretariat indicating that the scope of the survey included institutions concerned with the training of civilians for peace operations, the survey itinerary in each country was overwhelmingly dominated by the military. In most countries, the entire programme consisted of briefings by the military. Most staff colleges utilise civilians as resource people for the presentation of their peace operations phase of training (officials from foreign affairs and other state departments, UN and other international organisations and agencies, academics and NGOs). A few colleges also allow such people to attend as students. However, there is an indication that very little dedicated civilian training for peace operations is being conducted (civilian police, human rights monitors, election observers, etc.). Only a few countries have nascent dedicated training institutions which cater for both military and civilian role players in contemporary multifunctional peace operations. The military therefore remain the focal point for African training endeavours for participation in peace operations, despite an international recognition of a ‘new peacekeeping partnership’ which is heavily dependent upon a variety of non-military actors for success.

3.2.8 The capacity of all countries to enhance dedicated training for peace operations is severely limited by financial constraints. This means that any measures suggested in this regard must place appropriate emphasis on the issue of cost-effectiveness and the optimal utilisation of scarce resources. As a step in this direction, a number of countries suggested the identification, development and utilisation of regional training centres. While a number of countries are making sterling efforts in the realm of command and staff-level training for peace operations, it is perhaps premature to speak of ‘centres of excellence’ at this early stage. Moreover, apart from the military observers courses conducted by two countries, the countries surveyed did not appear to present co-ordinated and dedicated specialist courses for peace operations (movement control officers, liaison officers, logistics officers, etc.). Most rely on existing courses presented by UN training teams upon deployment, or on a select number of berths on courses presented by ‘traditional’ peacekeeping countries, such as Canada and the Nordic countries. Aside from the limitations imposed by cost factors on the number of personnel that can be trained in this manner, over-reliance on such an approach means that Africans will remain dependent on extra-continental thinking and practice in these areas.

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3.2.9 The clearest and most urgent need expressed by all countries was for the development of coherent policy and guidelines, and the dissemination of a common, Pan-African, doctrine for the conduct of peace operations. Ideally and logically, doctrinal clarity should precede all efforts to enhance training at all levels for participation in peace operations in Africa. Effective and standardised training cannot occur amidst a conceptual and doctrinal debate which rages internationally while innocent Africans remain the victims of genocidal conflicts, and the international community agonises over the appropriate mandate and means to alleviate the suffering. It is a tragic fact, that at a time when thousands of Africans are dying in eastern Zaire, there is no international consensus on the policy and doctrine needed to execute anything beyond 'classical' peacekeeping. Policy and doctrinal development must therefore focus on the conduct of more ambitious peace operations, such as those which enable peaceful political transition, provide security for humanitarian aid, and coerce recalcitrant parties into complying with the terms of peace agreements or the collective will of OAU and UN Member States.

3.2.10 Meeting the above need is not only the greatest challenge posed to the OAU, but must also be the point of departure and framework for attending to all other recommendations made by the countries which participated in the survey, such as:

- ◆ greater consultation and co-operation among OAU Member States ;
- ◆ improved sharing and dissemination of information regarding peace operations;
- ◆ standardisation of African training for peace operations;
- ◆ co-ordination of external training initiatives in Africa;
- ◆ establishing African standby units;
- ◆ strengthening the OAU Secretariat in order to provide more effective leadership;
- ◆ achieving a balance between mandates and means; and
- ◆ improving the logistic support of peace operations.

3.2.11 Clearly the issue and efficacy of a Pan-African policy and doctrine for peace operations cannot be addressed without considering sub-regional dynamics and influences. As articulated by one of the participating countries, *“too much emphasis on co-operation within sub-regional groupings such as SADC and IGADD may dilute the relevance and effect of the Central Organ of the OAU”*. The utility of common policy and doctrine, and the successful implementation thereof, depends in no small measure on the role of the various sub-regional economic groupings and security mechanisms and their relationships with one another and with the OAU.