



## Summary

Online Discussion from 26. January 2021

### Between Multilateralism and Geopolitics – Taking stock of Germany's role on Africa in the UN Security Council (2019-2020)

**Background:** Peace and security in Africa took centre stage during Germany's 6th term as an elected member of the UN Security Council in 2019-20, whether it concerned peace mediation and implementation of sanctions in Libya, supporting Sudan's fragile transition process, or peacekeeping in Mali.

These were often situations of strategic importance to German and European foreign policy. Challenged by major geopolitical tensions and the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's work on Africa oscillated between animosity and collaboration. At the same time, the African Union is aspiring a greater role as the primary guarantor of African peace and security.

#### Highlights:

- **The Berlin Conference on Conflict Resolution in Libya is also an expression of Germany's committed Africa policy in the UN Security Council**
- **An orderly transition from the UN mission UNAMID to UNITAMS was achieved under the co-leadership of Germany and the UK**
- **Germany and the African states in the UN Security Council worked closely together in the areas of humanitarian aid, climate and security**
- **German engagement for and in Africa will continue at a high level even after the end of the Security Council membership**
- **Conflicts on the African continent are becoming more regional; conflict mitigation measures must therefore also include the respective region**

#### Welcome Remarks and Moderation

**David Schwake**  
Secretary General,  
*Deutsche Afrika Stiftung*

#### Discussion

**Dr. Christoph Heusgen**  
Permanent Representative  
of the Federal Republic of  
Germany to the United  
Nations

**Bintou Keita**  
Assistant Secretary-  
General for Africa,  
*United Nation Secretariat*

**Dr. Gerrit Kurtz**  
Research Associate,  
*DGAP*

## German Africa policy in the UN Security Council

Africa is the continent that is most frequently on the agenda of the *UN Security Council*. Violent conflicts in Africa in particular dominate the agenda. In the *UN Security Council*, Germany had tried very hard to focus on African countries, said **Ambassador Dr Heusgen**. Germany was by no means focusing solely on the refugee problem but wanted to promote the development of Africa as a whole in a sustainable manner. **Heusgen** cites the *Berlin Libya Summit* as an example, which led to the adoption of a Security Council resolution on Libya. This was an important joint step that made a fundamental contribution to bringing about a ceasefire in Libya. **Dr Gerrit Kurtz** went on to discuss Germany's role and goals in Sudan. He said that the UN mission *UNITAMS* had been set up to replace *UNAMID*, whose mandate ended on 31 January 2020. **Bintou Keita** agreed with **Kurtz** that the establishment of the *UNITAMS* mission was a success. **Kurtz** also stressed that the co-leadership, which Germany shared with the United Kingdom, had contributed significantly to this success. It was also an achievement that Germany had taken on the co-leadership, as the P5 do not usually share their power, which is also expressed in holding the lead. However, despite the efforts of Germany, the US and Great Britain, no clear criteria for a smooth transition to peacekeeping had been created - the reason for this was the Sudanese government, which wanted to regulate this transition process independently, **Kurtz** said. **Heusgen** and **Kurtz** also discussed the disadvantages of the rapid termination of the UN mission *UNAMID* in Sudan. The latest massacres in the conflict region of Darfur were seen by **Kurtz** as an indication that the government, contrary to its statements, was not yet in a position to protect the civilian population. **Heusgen** also criticised the premature withdrawal of *UNAMID* troops, which had been demanded in particular by Russia, China and Sudan. He saw it as a fundamental problem that China in particular was strongly aiming at national identity and prestige and that many countries saw it as a stigma to appear on the agenda of the Security Council. **Kurtz** summarised that Sudan is an example of how relative successes do not necessarily feel like victories but can be seen as such. *UNITAMS* was such a relative success.

## The appearance of African countries in the UN Security Council

**Heusgen** spoke of close cooperation with African countries in the *UN Security Council* - especially on thematic issues and the Middle East. For example, on issues concerning Syria, humanitarian aid, the climate and security, they have pulled together. In principle, the A3 cooperate very closely internally and have acted together on many issues, **Heusgen** said. Nevertheless, there are of course differences of opinion between Europeans and Africans. While the European states in the *UN Security Council* wanted to bring conflicts such as the one in Ethiopia onto the agenda quickly, the African representatives were more reserved and emphasised the responsibility and competence of the *African Union*.

## UN action to bring Africa's interests into focus

**ASG Keita** stressed that African countries could make their voices heard more in the *UN* if cooperation between the *UN* and the *AU* also grew. A key aspect is that framework agreements on conflict resolution need to be developed jointly with the *AU*. To strengthen cooperation between the *UN* and the *AU*, the *UN* is currently conducting analyses, consultations and discussions. In addition, there are monthly meetings of the *A3* with the *AU* to prepare the substantive work of the *Security Council*. Another measure could be to support the *AU* special representatives in the respective countries. The *AU* also wants the *UN* to finance its own *AU* peacekeeping missions. According to **Keita**, the *United Nations* must intensify conflict prevention and horizon scanning in order to detect new developments at an early stage, assess them in terms of potential opportunities and risks, and then systematically derive options for action. **Heusgen** spoke of a lively exchange between the *UN* and African countries, as demonstrated, for example, by *Security Council* trips to Africa in November 2019. However, the main responsibility for development in Africa does not lie with the *UN Security Council*, but with the respective national governments. Ultimately, the *UN* could only support existing developments.

## Germany's future work in the UN

Germany's Africa policy at the *UN* will continue despite the end of Germany's term in the *UN Security Council*, **Heusgen** said. Even before its time in the *Security Council*, Germany had been involved in conflicts on the African continent. Especially after the Libya conferences in Berlin, it was foreseeable that Germany would continue to closely follow the conflict in Libya. Furthermore, Germany's engagement in Sudan will continue; GER is now prominently represented there by a German *UN* Special Representative. All in all, Germany is expected to remain active in Africa in the future, also by promoting close cooperation between the *EU* and the *UN*, using bilateral relations with Great Britain and Norway, which is very active in Africa, and trying to exert influence through *UN* sub-organisations.

## Challenges for Africa in 2021

**Keita** spoke of how the conflicts in Ethiopia, the situation in Somalia and the Horn of Africa as a whole could become more important in 2021. In addition, the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea are regions that need to be monitored. Basically, however, the whole of Africa is facing great challenges because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary not only to look at individual countries, but to include entire regions. The conflicts are becoming more regional, so that the instruments for resolving them must also transcend national borders.