The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is the operational framework for crisis management in Africa. Although the Africa-EU Partnership for peace and security has been relatively successful, serious concerns remain. There remains a discrepancy between the African Union’s (AU) capacity on paper and its actual impact in crisis situations. There is poor leadership, a lack of consensus in the AU and weak early warning capabilities in the intelligence field. These weaknesses are also compounded by a lack of financial and institutional capacity for intervention. As a result the AU is often taken by surprise and found to be reacting too late to crisis situations.

Nevertheless, the AU remains the only continental institution that is able to present and represent pan-African interests and views on the world stage, but its strategic decision-making and policy implementation are affected by:

- The dynamics of inter-governmentalism and tensions within its supranational governance architecture;
- Weak institutional and political integration of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), that are supposed to serve as building blocks for the AU;
- The pace of economic and political integration of the various REC’s differs greatly, as do their priorities;
- The model of inclusiveness employed is based on geographical location rather than a common political vision and shared values;
- There are ambiguities in terms of common governance values and standards which has implications for adherence to such values and standards by all Member states;
- Further issues arise from overlapping agendas, scarcity of resources and donor dependency.

The AU has had a number of relative success stories in terms of peace and security, but the AU lacks good communication tools and subsequently lacks positive visibility of the organization. For instance, the AU helped to prevent the crisis in Niger, suspending the country’s
membership in February 2010 after the military coup, and demanded a return to constitutional order. On this point, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), which was adopted in 2007, is a positive step forward and a reference point for the sustained political reform on the continent. The problem is that although the ACDEG exists (like other democratic tools), the Member States do not actually adhere to nor commit themselves to its norms and values. The same observation goes for the Panel of the Wise and the African Standby Force (ASF), the latter’s establishment being delayed and the former not being fully involved in its conflict resolution efforts.

The AU’s credibility, authority and reliability have suffered following the recent crises in Libya and Côte d’Ivoire. The proposed AU roadmap for resolving the conflict in the Libya crisis has not been given proper attention by the international community, and has rather been criticized within and outside the continent. Similarly, the AU has also been criticized for having mismanaged the quick resolution of the conflict in Côte d’Ivoire, among others, by not being forthright in supporting the ECOWAS position on intervention.

The Libya conflict: Arab awakening
The AU appears to have lost credibility due to the interplay of the following fundamental factors:

- Perception: the popular protests in North Africa (including the Libyan crisis) and the Middle East have been perceived as an ‘Arab Spring’, rather than an African issue. This perception was fed by the lack of consultation between African and European leaders on the issue, and further aggravated by the predominance of the Arab League on this file and the relatively slow reaction of the AU. Given the fact that the Libyan crisis has important political and financial implications for the AU, this issue should have been prioritized by the organization from the beginning.

- Internal divisions: Three African states voted in favour of UNSCR 1973 (South Africa, Gabon and Nigeria), despite the AU High Panel (Toumani Ture/Mali, Zuma/RSA, Museveni/Uganda, Abdul Aziz/Mauritania, Nguesso/C-Brazzaville) taking a different position.

- Subsequently, the AU five-point Roadmap, which included a ceasefire, the protection of civilians, humanitarian aid, dialogue, and an inclusive transitional period, meeting the aspirations of the Libyan people gathered much criticism. The AU’s mediation proposals (11/12 April) were rejected by the Libyan opposition (Transnational National Council), which insisted on Gaddafi’s departure.

The conflict in Côte d’Ivoire: Classic demonstration of subsidiarity
The situation in Côte d’Ivoire showed that the AU Panel lacked a coherent strategy. The AU’s choice to send Thabo Mbeki to resolve the dispute between Gbagbo and Ouattara in December 2010 failed on two accounts. First, Mbeki did not combine efforts with ECOWAS. Second, South
Africa was seen as a peacemaker that often opted for a pro-government (in this case pro-Gbagbo) approach. Similarly, Raila Odinga compromised his neutrality as a mediator when he supported military action prior to confirmation by ECOWAS, which had not reached an internal consensus on the matter at the time - as a result both parties felt that they were dealt with unfairly. Outgoing Malawian President Bingu wa Mutharika visited Côte d’Ivoire in an effort to salvage the declining role of the AU, but he proved unsuccessful. Eventually, Teodora Nguema was considered too controversial to be involved in the resolution of the crisis because of his questionable human rights credentials.

The level of consensus regarding the legitimacy of Ouattara achieved at the ECOWAS level provided a basis for AU and an international consensus. The AU Resolution (9 March 2011) endorsed Ouattara’s legitimacy.

The AU attempts at a peaceful resolution of the Côte d’Ivoire crisis was hampered many times by internal divisions between Member States that undermined the credibility of the AU as the main political mediator. These divisions were reflected within the AU mediation team, notably when RSA sided with Gbagbo and claims emerged from the Ouattara camp that RSA had stationed a naval warship off the coast to prevent an ECOWAS intervention. It later emerged that South African naval presence was part of a mutual military exercise between Côte d’Ivoire and RSA.

Some Policy Considerations
- The crisis situations in North Africa, in particular in Libya, demonstrate the necessity of improving the AU-EU working methods and coordination in peace and security cooperation.
- Some African countries should act as lead States, but should do so with support from other states, on the basis of a broad internal consensus. Experience shows that the AU does not speak with a united voice. The AU can take decisions but where national interests prevail, supranationalism comes to a halt. The AU should work in close collaboration with leading African nations such as South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Angola and others, in order to enhance political leadership within the organization.
- In practice, the RECs and Regional Mechanisms should be the driving force of the AU. Presently, however, only SADC, ECOWAS and EAC are deemed to be working effectively towards this end.
- Shared interests and key challenges should be better defined and communicated between the RECs and the AU. Furthermore, the AU needs to ensure greater commitment from the RECS/RMs and member states to the norms and values of the Organization.
- The AU system of a ‘consensus model’ of inter-governmental integration suffers from some inconsistencies. However, the alternative of small value-based groupings of integrated states would undermine the concept and
spirit of African unity, and deprive the continent of a voice on the world stage.

- AU policy stances are, in general, informed by ‘hybrid diplomacy’ based predominantly on political sovereignty, but also influenced by diplomatic, military security and humanitarian factors. EU and other African partners may continue to leverage African positions owing to AU dependency. AU may not have another choice beyond ‘putting its money where its mouth is’.