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To:	Delegations

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Subject:	Court of Auditors' Special Report No 20/2018: The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support - Council conclusions (4 March 2019)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the Court of Auditors' Special report No 20/2018 on "The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support", as adopted by the Council at its 3675th meeting held on 4 March 2019.

Council conclusions**on the Court of Auditors' Special report No 20/2018 on****"The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support"**

1. The Council welcomes the Court of Auditors' Special Report on the "African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support". The Court offers valuable and timely recommendations that can strengthen the effectiveness of the EU's support to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).
2. The Council recalls the EU's strategic interest in supporting peace and security efforts in Africa, and recognises the potential of the APSA to become an effective set of tools for promoting stability on the African continent. The Council recalls that EU funding to the implementation of the APSA increased by 150% in the 2014-2020 programming period.
3. The Council acknowledges the difficult environment in which the APSA operates and the challenges that it continues to face, particularly with regard to the need for increased financial ownership by the Africa Union Commission (AUC) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) / Regional Mechanisms (RMs), as well as continued dependency on donors. Although expected results have not been reached systematically, there is evidence that the EU's support to the APSA is instrumental in advancing peace and security in Africa. On this basis, the Council reiterates its commitment to continue its partnership in supporting the operationalisation of the APSA, based on African ownership and the principle of reciprocity.

4. The Council takes good note of the Court's overall assessment that EU support to the APSA was too focused on basic operational costs and lacked a long-term vision. The Council also takes note of the Court's view that EU support was affected by delays in contracting; that financing instruments were not always used coherently; and that existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms did not provide sufficient information on results. Furthermore, the Council takes note of the risks identified by the Court related to allocating more funds to regional organisations, taking into account the existing problems related to subsidiarity. The Council appreciates the Commission's extensive reply and the ongoing efforts to take account of the Court's recommendations and respective timeframes.
5. The Council acknowledges that the operational costs of the African Union are increasingly covered by its Member States. It welcomes the AU's decision to finance in full the operational costs of the Union, 75% of AU programmes and 25% of peace support operations gradually by 2021. In that context, it welcomes the AUC's efforts to improve its financial sustainability and its broader reform agenda, as well as the EU's support to it. The Council emphasises the significance of maintaining the dialogue with the AUC on the topic. While stressing the importance of the AU commitment to achieve financial independence, the Council recognises that ad hoc support to the operational costs of APSA is still relevant, when linked to achieving specific results or if embedded in wider support and, where appropriate, in a clear exit strategy.
6. The Council appreciates the recommendations of the Court. The Council stresses the importance of strengthening the AU ownership of the APSA, and its full operationalisation as an effective and coordinated framework for peace and security in Africa. It also highlights the need to ensure that interventions are conducted in a spirit of partnership and reciprocity, are well-focused and consistently results-based in a carefully planned and monitored manner and within the wider objective of African integration.

7. The Council acknowledges the difficulty created by retro-active financing and related delays in contracting and calls on all parties involved to better streamline the workflow and limit the timeframe needed from AU financing requests to EU financing decisions, contracting and payments.
8. The Council invites the Commission and the EEAS to discuss with EU Member States ways to ensure a more coherent and forward looking approach of EU's support to APSA, building on the EU-AU MoU on Peace, Security and Governance signed on 23 May 2018, the Joint Africa-EU-Strategy and the Abidjan Summit Declaration. The Council calls on the Commission to:
 - a) Progressively, and in a carefully planned and monitored manner, refocus support from APSA's basic operational costs to well-targeted, results-based capacity building programmes that are aligned with the African Union reform agenda and its commitment to African financial ownership;
 - b) Further improve results-oriented monitoring systems and indicators of the APSA capacity building programmes to achieve standardised and consistent application and evaluation;
 - c) Continue to work towards best use of available financing instruments in the area of peace and security.
