

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Thursday, 8 June, 2023 | 10:00 AM EDT



Background

While the Charter of the United Nations vests the Security Council with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations encourages the establishment of cooperative relationships between the UN and regional organizations. It recognizes the potential of regional organizations to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, and outlines the conditions and principles that should guide such cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Over the years, the United Nations Security Council has become increasingly aware of the potential role of regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security, as reflected in its resolutions and presidential statements. Recent discussions have focused on the mediation and peace-guaranteeing role of regional organizations, their efforts to settle disputes peacefully, the complementary functions of the UN and regional organizations, and the comparative advantages of regional organizations in supporting the maintenance of global peace and security.

Within this context, the United Nations Security Council and the League of Arab States (LAS) continue to work towards a common goal of promoting peace, security, and stability in the Arab region and beyond. The Council has recognized the importance of closer collaboration with the LAS to promote the coherence and effectiveness of their respective efforts, reinforcing this commitment most recently through its presidential statement of 23 March 2022 (S/PRST/2022/1). The Council has also taken steps to increase its engagement with the LAS, including through informal interactive dialogues, beginning with the first held in September 2021.

The relationship between the UN and LAS Secretariats has also grown, with the fifteenth General Cooperation Meeting between the two held in Geneva in July 2022 to discuss cooperation across the full range of issues

affecting the Arab world. In addition, the United Nations Liaison Office to the LAS, based in Cairo, has helped to foster ever increasing engagement between the two organizations, with a focus on peace and security issues.

This is done, inter alia, through meetings of United Nations Special Envoys and Representatives with senior League officials as well as through enhanced communication channels between the League and the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), Department of Peace Operations (DPO), Department of Operational Support (DPO) as well as the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT).

These developments in the relationship between the UN and the LAS are all the more important given the multifaceted challenges the Arab region continues to face, including ongoing conflicts in Libya, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, and the long-standing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which have led to unimaginable suffering for millions of people. In addition, countries such as Lebanon and Somalia are facing deep economic crises, high unemployment and spiraling inflation, thereby exacerbating fragilities and humanitarian needs. The 2023 Syria-Türkiye earthquake added another layer of complexity, as it intensified the existing humanitarian crises in the region. This devastating earthquake resulted in widespread destruction, numerous casualties, and the displacement of millions. While the humanitarian response was substantial, it also faced considerable obstacles particularly in coordinating assistance from various donors.

Like many regions around the world, women and youth are disproportionately affected by situations of conflict, highlighting the urgency for their effective protection and meaningful participation. The Arab Declaration to Combat All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls adopted by the League in March 2022 is an important cornerstone in ensuring that women and girls in the region are protected from violence. Ensuring the prevention of violence is crucial to enabling women to fully, equally, and meaningfully participate in society across all areas, from education to politics and economics. This, in turn, can play a vital role in conflict prevention, reconciliation, and recovery efforts in the region. Spaces and platforms on a regional level that allow women to fulfill their potential as agents of peace, such as the LAS Arab Women Mediators Network, are essential mechanisms that require support by Member States and international and regional organizations. Partnering with UN Women and local organizations should be an integral element of any of the efforts to these ends.

Moreover, with approximately 30 per cent of the population between the ages of 15–29 and 60 per cent under the age of 30, it is important to address the many issues that principally affect children and youth in the Arab world, including the impact of conflict on child recruitment, education and youth employment. By involving youth in peace-building processes, we do not only improve the conditions for young people in the region, but we also

advance economic growth, social inclusion, and political stability in the region. To this end, the League of Arab States' General Secretariat has developed an inaugural Arab Strategy focusing on Youth, Peace, and Security, slated for launch later this year. This marks the first strategy of its kind in the Arab region that aims at fostering collaboration for youth participation in peace and security issues and developing national strategies for peace and security through an implementation plan over a four-year period. This strategy has been developed with support from the United Nations Liaison Office to the League of Arab States, in concert with other key partners.

Terrorism also remains a significant and pervasive threat to the security of the region and beyond. In 2022, with the support of the United Nations, the Council of Ministers of the Interior of the LAS adopted a comprehensive Arab counter-terrorism strategy. This strategy serves as a significant example of effective collaboration and coordination towards a shared goal, particularly through its inclusion of an implementation plan that aligns with the seventh review of the UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/75/291), and which encourages the development of national, subregional, and regional plans to support the implementation of the strategy.

In this context, this briefing provides an opportunity to build on existing cooperation and explore ways to expand joint efforts to address the interrelated peace, security and humanitarian challenges facing the Arab region.



Objectives

The purpose of this briefing is to examine a number of important topics, including:

- Evaluate the progress made in cooperation between the United Nations Security Council and the LAS and find ways to broaden and institutionalize consultations and collaboration on areas of mutual concern.
- Discuss challenges in resolving conflicts and promoting reconciliation in the region, and identify practical methods to utilize the unique position and expertise of the LAS in the service of preventative diplomacy and mediation efforts.
- Address the challenges of donor coordination in emergency humanitarian crises, such as the 2023 Syria-Türkiye earthquake, and explore ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aid delivery.

- Explore how cooperation between the UN and the LAS can directly contribute to strengthening the inclusion and participation of women and youth across the region in all matters relevant to peace and security
- Explore effective ways to advance the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, building on the regional strategy, as well as potential future collaboration with the emerging UN Youth Office.
- Analyze the evolving threat posed by terrorist groups to the region and beyond, and determine ways to increase the coordination of LAS efforts, including through its counter-terrorism strategy, with measures taken within the UN's counter-terrorism architecture.
- Consider the need for capacity building and training for League officials as well as for affected countries in the region, including in disarmament, non-proliferation, mediation, and other peace and security issues.



Questions

The following questions have been developed to help guide the discussion:

1. What are the major obstacles facing the maintenance of peace and security in the Arab region, and how can these obstacles be overcome?
2. How can the United Nations Security Council and the LAS enhance their collaboration to promote tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and human fraternity, while aligning their approaches across the peace continuum, from conflict prevention to post-conflict peacebuilding, in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter?
3. In the context of emergency humanitarian crises, what challenges do donor coordination efforts face, and how can the United Nations and the LAS work together to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aid delivery in such situations?
4. How can the United Nations Security Council and the LAS coordinate their efforts to effectively fight terrorism, address its root causes, and prevent the use of new technologies by terrorist groups, in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter?

5. How can the contributions of women and young people in peacebuilding be better acknowledged and supported by the United Nations Security Council and the LAS? What actions can be taken to improve the meaningful involvement of women and youth in peace and security initiatives in the Arab region?

Format



The meeting will be chaired by His Excellency Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates. Briefings will be delivered by the following speakers:

- His Excellency Mr. Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.
- Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.
- Dr. Omnia El Omrani, COP27 Youth Envoy.