



NON-PAPER ON THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE CONTINENTAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (CEWS)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on the provisions of the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council (PSC), this paper presents the (a) critical decision to be made the Commission for the African Union (AU) in moving forward on the implementation of the commitment reflected in the Protocol to establish and operationalize its Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). The paper also (b) proposes a structure and costing of the CEWS.

In brief the paper proposes that the Commission separate the functions of early warning and policy implementation, establishing a separate unit for early warning analysis that serves a number of Divisions within the Commission. In practical terms, the Division on Peace and Security should serve as the focal point for the unit. Other proposals include the combination of the situation room with the operations room of the Commission and reliance upon a wide variety of sources for its information. The paper argues against the development of a sophisticated database linked to an automated indicators module, but instead proposes that the unit source out its electronic clipping service and adopt any of a number of off-the-shelf indicators modules.

Staffing of the CEWS should occur in two phases. During phase one the staff complement should reach 14, to be expanded to a total of 21 during a second phase. During the first phase the unit should prioritize its capabilities regarding Western, Central and Eastern/Horn of Africa.

Once fully staffed the CEWS would require running costs of less than US\$1 million per annum.

Prepared by the Institute for Security Studies

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I INTRODUCTION

1. The massive amount of information publicly and privately available on potential and actual conflict situations in Africa is of little use to the Commission of the African Union if it is not relevant to the institutions available to the Commission (such as the Panel of the Wise), or the means at the disposal of the Chairperson and the Peace and Security Council (such as the use of special envoys), accurate and contextualized.

2. For the Commission, early warning needs to consist of more than just the timely provision and sharing of relevant information. It involves the collection and analysis of data in a uniform and systematized way and according to a commonly shared methodology within the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). Early warning requires the formulation and communication of analysis and policy options to relevant end-users (the Commission and relevant policy organs of the AU) – information towards action. In this sense, **the aim of early warning is to strengthen the capacity of the Commission and the Peace and Security Council to identify critical developments in a timely manner, so that coherent response strategies can be formulated to either prevent violent conflict or limit its destructive effects.**

II PURPOSE AND SCOPE

3. The purpose of this non-paper is to motivate and propose an operational, cost-effective CEWS within the obligations as stipulated by the PSC. The paper is structured as follows:

- a. A first section deals with the mandate as reflected in the Constitutive Act and the Protocol on the PSC;
- b. A second section deals with a series of critical issues and assumptions that serve to inform the subsequent design;
- c. A final section deals with proposed structure and costs

III THE MANDATE AS REFLECTED IN THE CONSTITUTIVE ACT AND PSC PROTOCOL

4. The establishment of the CEWS flows logically from the fact that conflict prevention lies at the heart of the AU's peace and security agenda.

Conflict prevention is a Principle (“...early responses to contain crisis situations so as to prevent them from developing into full-blown crises.”¹). Hence the PSC is explicitly required to perform functions regarding “Early warning and preventive diplomacy”²

5. Article 2 (1) of the PSC Protocol defines its nature as “...a standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. The PSC shall be a collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa.”³ Article 2 (2) thus provides that “...the Peace and Security Council shall be supported by the Commission, a Panel of the Wise, a Continental Early Warning System, an African Standby Force and a Special Fund.”⁴

6. The broad structure of the AU and its related Peace and Security Council is reflected in figure 1.

7. Article 12 (1) of the Protocol stipulates that a “Continental Early Warning System to be known as the Early Warning System shall be established”⁵ as “one of the five pillars of the PSC”. The CEWS is tasked with providing the Chairperson of the Commission with information in a timely manner so that he/she can advise the Council on “potential conflicts and threats to peace and security’ and ‘recommend best courses of action”.⁶ In fact, “the Chairperson of the Commission shall also use this information for the execution of the responsibilities and functions entrusted to him/her under the present Protocol”.⁷ The Panel of the Wise specifically aims to support the efforts of the PSC and those of the Chairperson of the Commission, “particularly in the area of conflict prevention”.⁸

¹ Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the AU Peace and Security Council, 9 July 2002, Article 4 (b).

² Ibid, Article 6 (b) and (f). According to Article 3 of the Protocol, the PSC’s objectives are to: Promote peace, security and stability in Africa, in order to guarantee the protection and preservation of life and property, the well-being of the African people and their environment, as well as the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development; Anticipate and prevent conflicts... Promote and implement peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction activities to consolidate peace and prevent the resurgence of violence; Promote and encourage democratic practices, good governance and the rule of law, protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for sanctity of human life and international humanitarian law, as part of efforts for preventing conflicts’.

³ Ibid, Article 2 (1)

⁴ Ibid, Article 2 (2).

⁵ Ibid, Article 12.

⁶ Ibid, Article 12 (5).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, Article 11.

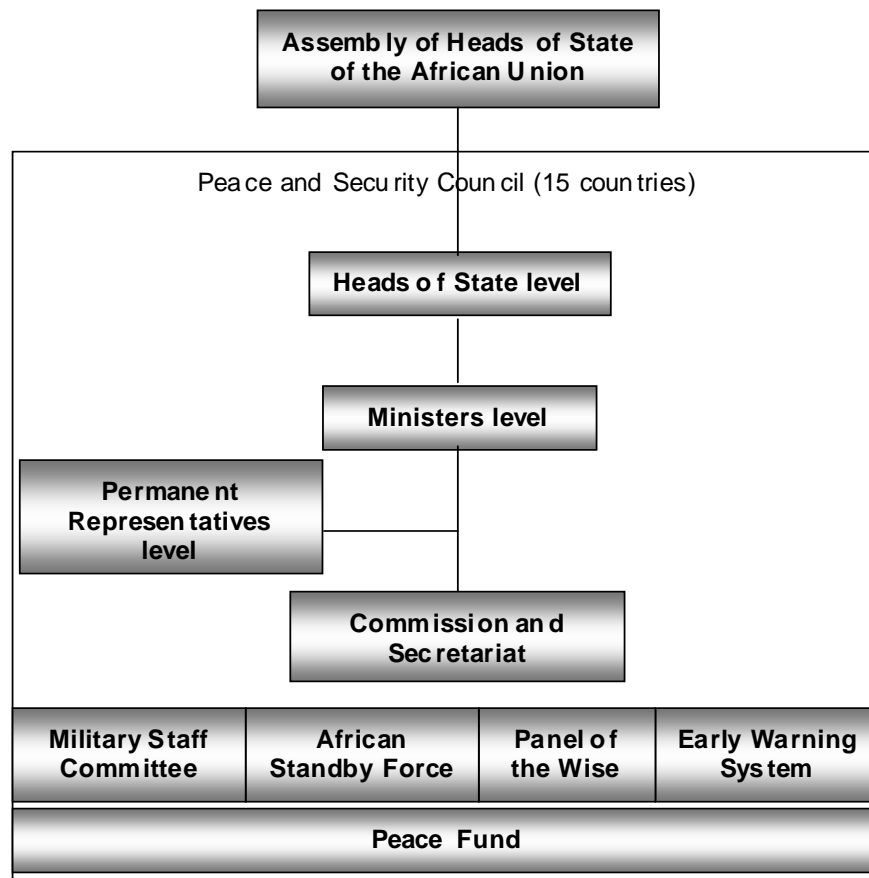


Figure 1: Broad Structure of the AU and its Peace and Security Council

8. The Protocol further stipulates that the CEWS shall consist of “an observation and monitoring centre, to be known as the ‘Situation Room’, located at the Conflict Management Directorate of the Union, and responsible for data collection and analysis”.⁹

9. As regards methodology, the Protocol determines that the collection and analysis of data must be based on the development by the Early Warning System of “an early warning module based on clearly defined and accepted political, economic, social, military and humanitarian indicators”.¹⁰

10. The CEWS is specifically mandated to collaborate with the United Nations, its agencies, other relevant international organizations, research

⁹ Ibid, Article 12 (2, b).

¹⁰ Ibid, Article 12 (4).

centres, academic institutions and NGOs.¹¹ Such collaboration, defined in Article 12 (3) is meant to 'facilitate the effective functioning of the Early Warning System'.¹²

11. Regional Mechanisms are considered an integral part of the overall security architecture of the Union and the PSC is mandated with the task of harmonizing, coordinating and working closely with Regional Mechanisms.¹³ Thus:

- a. "Observation and monitoring units of the Regional Mechanisms are to be linked directly through appropriate means of communications to the Situation Room, and which shall collect and process data at their level and transmit the same to the Situation Room."¹⁴
- b. "The Peace and Security Council shall, in consultation with Regional Mechanisms, promote initiatives aimed at anticipating and preventing conflicts and, in circumstances where conflicts have occurred, peace-making and peace-building functions".¹⁵
- c. "The Chairperson of the Commission shall take the necessary measures, where appropriate, to ensure the full involvement of Regional Mechanisms in the establishment and effective functioning of the Early Warning System and the African Standby Force."¹⁶ Progress at the regional level is most advanced in the case of ECOWAS and IGAD, while SADC and ECCAS are intending to operationalize their plans.

12. The information gathered through the CEWS will be used "timeously to advise the Peace and Security Council on potential conflicts and threats to peace and security in Africa and recommend the best course of action. The Chairperson of the Commission shall also use this information for the execution of the responsibilities and functions entrusted to him/her under the present Protocol [on the Peace and Security Council]."¹⁷

¹¹ Art 12(3)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See in this regard, *ibid*, Article 16 (1). As regards practical modalities of collaboration, Article 16 (4) postulates that 'in order to ensure close harmonization and coordination and facilitate regular exchange of information, the Chairperson of the Commission shall convene periodic meetings, but at least once a year, with the Chief Executives and/or the officials in charge of peace and security within the Regional Mechanisms'. Furthermore, Article 16 (8) says that 'in order to strengthen coordination and cooperation, the Commission shall establish liaison offices to the Regional Mechanisms. The Regional Mechanisms shall be encouraged to establish liaison offices to the Commission.'

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Article 12 (2, a, b).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Article 16 (2)

¹⁶ *Ibid*, Article 16 (5)

¹⁷ Art 12(5)

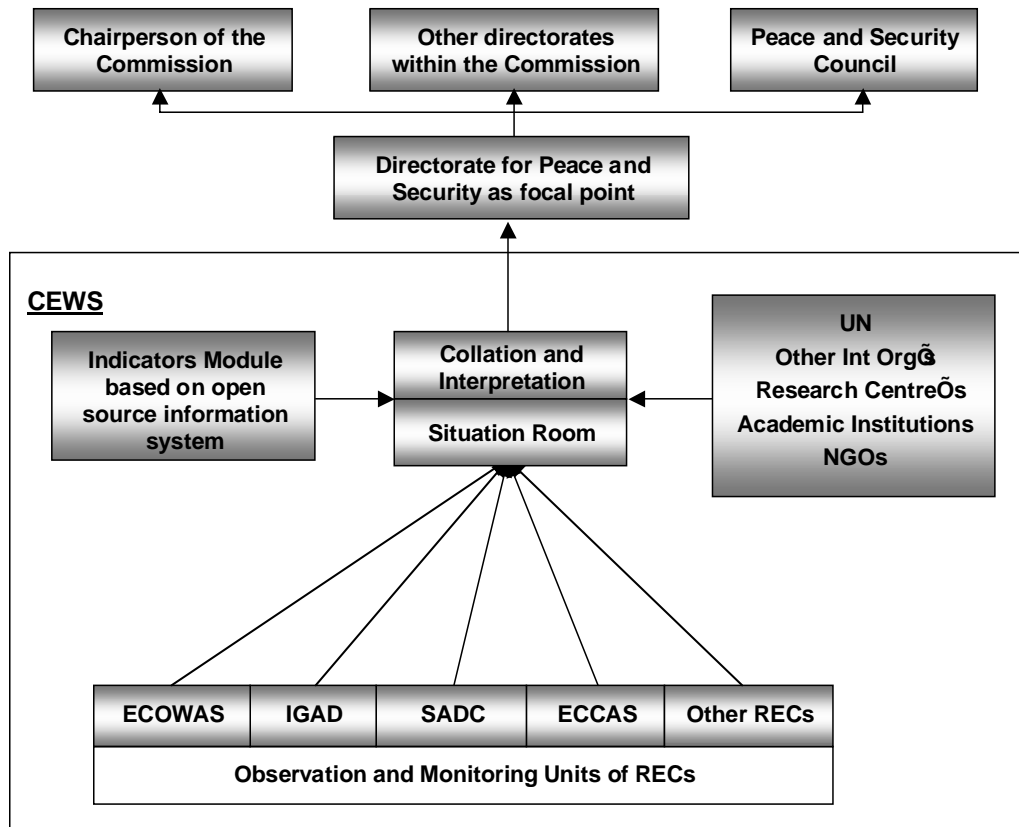


Figure 2: Schematic representation of the CEWS

13. The structure proposed within the PSC for the CEWS can be presented graphically as reflected in Figure 2.

14. Although the Protocol requires that meetings of the PSC are to be closed,¹⁸ the PSC may decide to hold open meetings during which “civil society organizations involved and/or interested in a conflict or a situation under consideration by the Peace and Security Council may be invited to participate, without the right to vote, in the discussion relating to that conflict or situation”.¹⁹ The PSC may also hold informal ‘consultations’ with civil society organizations “as may be needed for the discharge of its responsibilities.”²⁰

¹⁸ Art 8(9)

¹⁹ Art 8(10))

²⁰ Art 8(11).

IV CRITICAL ISSUES

15. During the July 2003 Summit meeting of the AU in Maputo, Heads of State mandated the Commission of the Union to take the necessary steps for the establishment of the CEWS in anticipation of the entry into force of the PSC Protocol later that year. To this end, the Commission organized an expert workshop in Addis Ababa in October 2003 to “brainstorm on the practical modalities and steps, drawing lessons from existing regional and international experiences on the establishment and functioning of an early warning system.”²¹ Despite coming up with a number of pertinent recommendations, early warning at the AU remains the domain of two professional staff and six interns working within the situation room.

16. As part of the recent review of the vision and mission of the African Union, the Commission is currently engaged in consultations to propose changes to the structure as approved during the Maputo Summit.

17. The Commission of the AU faces the following key decisions in operationalizing the commitment reflected in the PSC on the establishment of the CEWS:

- a. The current practice within the AU is to combine the work of desk officers on specific areas/countries and the provision of information/analysis. This paper strongly urges a clear separation between information collation/analysis/interpretation and preventive action – although there should be constant interaction between these two functions. This is also international best practice. **The CEWS should be a separate unit within the Commission tasked with understanding, interpreting and providing analysis and policy options. Members of the CEWS should not be engaged in executing AU policy although advice on policy options is an integral task of early warning.** This being said, the CEWS should be located in close proximity to the Departments of Peace & Security and Politics.
- b. Many issues may threaten stability, including crime, natural disasters, acts of terrorism, disputed elections, poor governance, refugees movements, human rights abuses, competition over natural and other resource, and the like. Early warning touches upon literally every aspect of the work of the eight departments within the Commission of the African Union.²² The CEWS is

²¹ African Union, Report of the Workshop on the Establishment of the AU Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), 30-31st October 2003, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

²² Good governance and conflict prevention are two sides of the same coin – a linkage recognized by the OAU in the introductory paragraphs of the Cairo Declaration of 1995: “We recognize and resolve that democracy, good governance, peace, security, stability and justice are among the most essential factors in African socio-economic development. Without democracy and peace, development is not possible; and, without development,

therefore a facility that should serve the entire Commission, but probably most cogently the Divisions dealing with Peace/Security and Politics. Two options therefore present themselves. The first is to attach the CEWS to the office of the Chairperson. However, since the Peace and Security Council is ultimately seized with peace and security matters, and that the secretariat for the Council is located within the Peace and Security Division, this paper proposes that **the Division of Peace and Security serve as the focal point for the CEWS within the Commission of the AU.**²³ This is reflected in Figure 2 above.

- c. The point of departure of this paper is that the situation room is a common gathering place for discussions, meetings and briefings, complete with up to date maps and other graphical displays of information. This paper departs from the view that **the situation room is an integral part of the CEWS** but that this is not where 'analysis' occurs. Hence Figure 2 makes a distinction between the situation room and the process of collation and interpretation.
- d. As the AU moves ahead with the operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF) and becomes even more deeply engaged with peacemaking and peacebuilding, the requirement for an operations room that is staffed after hours by on-duty staff able to refer urgent messages and information to key members of the Commission, becomes ever more relevant. This paper proposes that **the CEWS situation room and the after-hours communication unit of the Commission be combined or co-located.** Care should, however, be exercised, that the administrative functions of the operations room not dominate the information-exchange atmosphere of the situation room.
- e. In today's interconnected and globalized world there is very little that cannot be obtained through open sources – provided the researcher knows where to obtain his/her information, understands his/her domain, has the opportunity to undertake field research and engage in the public discourse on issues under consideration. The biggest danger for any analysis unit is being locked into a particular system of information feed. **The CEWS unit should therefore obtain its information and be able to test its analysis from a variety of sources, both governmental and otherwise.** This

peace is not durable.” Relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development: the Cairo Agenda for Action, AHG/Res.236 (XXXI), par 10, Assembly of Heads of State and Government, 31st Ordinary Session, 26-28 June 1995, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

²³ In terms of organisation, Article 10 (4) of the Protocol stipulates that the Commissioner in charge of Peace and Security will be responsible for the affairs of the PSC and that the Commission shall assist and provide support to the PSC with human and material resources. Furthermore, a Peace and Security Council Secretariat 'shall be established within the Directorate dealing with conflict prevention, management and resolution'.

paper does not, therefore, take the view that the CEWS is a closed, government-to-government system, dependent at the continental level on information provided only by member states of from RECS. Obviously the output of the CEWS is for the Commission and specific reports/information may be restricted in circulation even within the Commission.

- f. Many commercial proposals have been made to the OAU and the AU over the years towards the use of cutting edge technology. The Protocol also refers to an 'indicators module'. Developing such a module is potentially a complex technical undertaking and extremely expensive. There is no absence of information, and much practical experience would indicate that the CEWS should avoid the establishment of more than a rudimentary database of its own, but rather subscribe to one or two selected existing databases and news services. Hence even the electronic clipping service currently provided by interns could be sourced out. **The primary resource for the provision of policy analysis within the CEWS should be a team of highly qualified and competent analysts, each an expert in his/her field. The AU should adopt any one of a number of off-the-shelf existing 'indicators modules' for violent conflict** and should not invest in the development of a complex new/tailor made system. It needs to be borne in mind that the primary purpose of the indicators module is to find an objective set of indicators that trigger warning reports to the Chairperson and/or the PSC.

V PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF THE CEWS

18. The structure of the CEWS, approved by the Maputo Summit, consists of 3 professional staff (one P3 and two P2s), a secretary and six interns (total of 10 staff). The latter largely engage in the provision of an electronic clipping service and serve to staff the situation room after hours. The AU will not succeed in translating its obligations on early warning into practice if it does not provide for sufficient senior and capable staff. In particular the head of the CEWS should be a senior analyst/diplomat with the stature of director or deputy director to enable him/her to adequately represent and present independent analysis that may be controversial.

19. As far early warning and conflict analysis methodologies are concerned, the ideal staff composition should be inter-disciplinary. In order to adequately perform its mission, the CEWS must harness the skills provided by analysts with different profiles. This document proposes a structure orientated to serve and work towards the five regions of the AU given the requirements in Article 16 of the PSC Protocol. For each region it proposes the eventual creation of positions of one military, political and socio-economic/humanitarian analyst (ie 3 for each of the five regions) as an adequate and multi-disciplinary team for the undertaking of early warning activities. The political analyst should head up the regional section.

20. The final staffing structure proposed in this document implies a total number of 21 staff members: the head; a deputy head, 2 secretaries, 2 clerks and 15 analysts, five of whom (the political analysts) serve as the head of the five regions. Based on these assumptions, the AU would require fairly modest means to establish its own early warning system, less than US\$1 million to establish (if building costs are excluded) and roughly US\$1 million to run on an annual basis.

21. The proposed staffing table is therefore as follows (priority positions indicated in bold italics)

Description	Quantity	Remarks
Head of CEWS	One	D1 or P5
Secretary	One	
Deputy Head of CEWS	One	
Secretary	One	
Clerk	One	
Clerk	One	
Regional Coordinators/Political Analyst	Five	West, Eastern, Southern, Central and North Africa
Analysts for West, East and Central Africa	Six	
Analysts for Southern and North Africa	Four	
Total for First Phase	14	
Total for Second Phase	7	
Total Staff	21	

22. It is proposed that this composition be **phased in** over a period of time with the immediate priority being the establishment of the units for West, the Horn and Central Africa and one analyst each for Northern and Southern Africa only. Phase One would therefore require 14 staff as apposed to the current staff of the situation room of 9, although the staffing composition proposed in this paper implies more senior appointments than is currently the case.

23. The remaining staff of the units for North and Southern Africa could be appointed during **a second phase**. The structure of the CEWS is presented in Figure 3.

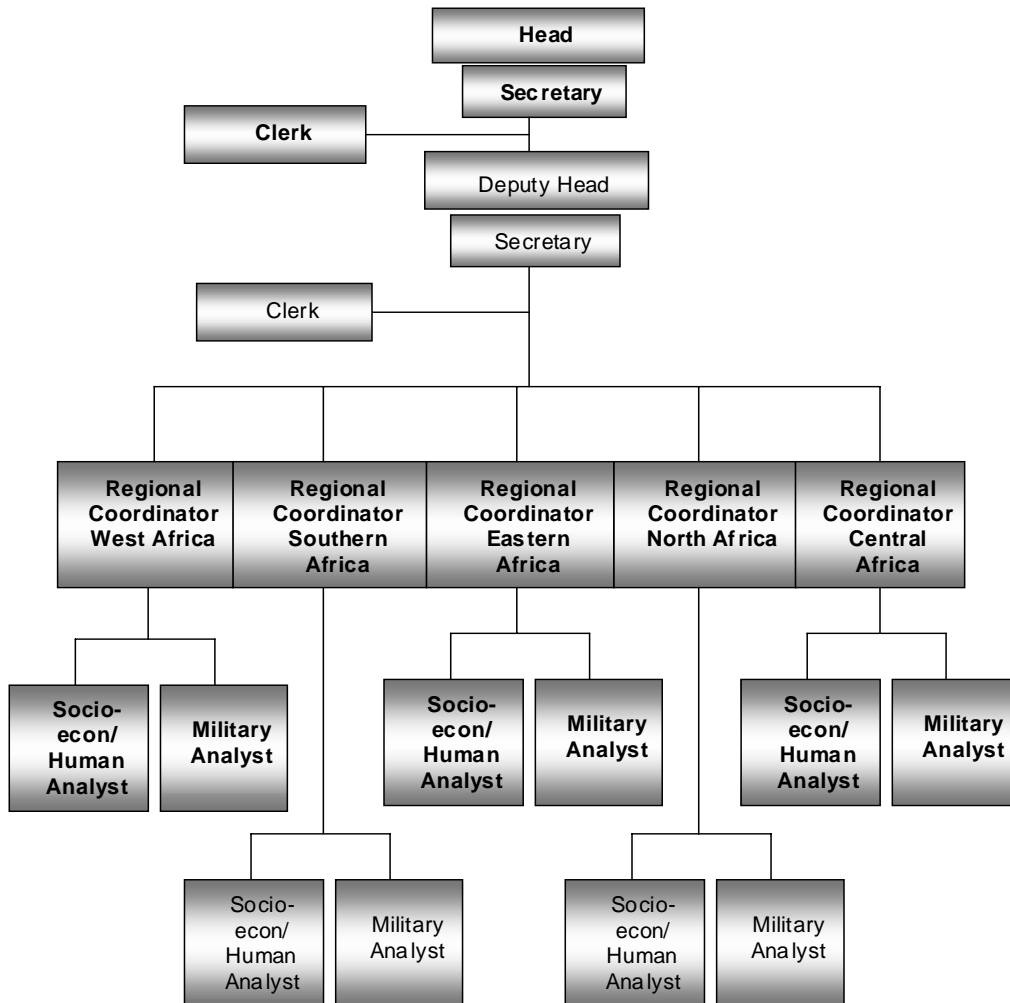


Figure 3: Structure of the CEWS

VI CONCLUSION

24. The proposals made in this non-paper are based on several years of collaboration with the African Union and an early warning system that has been operational at the ISS since 1996.