Silencing the guns in Africa

Africa’s remaining conflict hotspots

Interview: Bience Gawanas, UN Special Adviser on Africa

Partnerships: Creating opportunities for youth
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Cover photo: The “Non-Violence” (or “Knotted Gun”) sculpture at the UN Plaza.  AR/Yun Shi

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2020 is election season across Africa

By Franck Kuwonu

Voters across the continent will be heading to the ballot box this coming year to choose their leaders in presidential, parliamentary and local elections starting with the Comoros in January and ending with Ghana in December.

Comorians will be electing a new 33-member national assembly following presidential elections in 2019 while Ghanaians will select their parliamentarians and president on 7 December.

In Chad and Mauritius, electoral commissions have yet to decide on exact dates, but absent unexpected delays, the polls should go ahead as legally mandated. In Seychelles, the electoral body will decide in August when the presidential election will be held later in the year.

Overall, the polls are expected to be peaceful and free. Yet, for different reasons, some countries like Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali and Somalia are ones to watch.

In Ethiopia, elections of members of the House of People’s Representatives and of regional State Councils will be held in a new political environment ushered in by the youthful Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s reforms. Having won the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for ending a two-decade conflict with neighbouring Eritrea, observers will be eager to learn to what extent Mr Abiy’s changes are taking hold and how much domestic support he has earned since the award was announced.

Polls in Somalia will be the first in 50 years. Voters will elect the president and their representatives through direct ballots - the last universal suffrage polls having been held in 1969. Previous presidential elections held in 2009, 2012 and 2017 involved a system of thousands of clan delegates voting for parliamentary representatives, who in turn elected the president. Election preparations are currently underway, including the drafting of electoral laws, though security remains a concern throughout the country.

Togolese will go to the polls in April to cast their ballots for president with the possibility of a run-off should no candidate garner more than 50% of the votes. The polls will be the

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In 2013 African Union (AU) member state representatives gathered at its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where the Organisation of African Unity was established in 1963, to celebrate the body’s 50th anniversary.

Amid the pomp and ceremony, the leaders sat down to reflect and tackle the tough questions: What progress have we made towards the achieving of the objectives set by the AU and looking forward, what is our proposed vision for Africa for the next 50 years? Furthermore, what is the biggest challenge to realizing the aspirations of our people?

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, then African Union Commission chairperson, had visited various countries collecting views from governments, civil society and the diaspora, on what they felt was the most pressing issue facing Africa, one the AU should deal with.

Most agreed that conflict remains one of the biggest challenges facing Africa. The AU also sees conflict as one of the biggest impediments to the implementation of Agenda 2063. Of course, there were other challenges facing the continent, including poverty, inequality, unemployment, climate change, illegal financial flows, corruption, etc, yet conflict tops the list.

“Before leaving Addis Ababa, the AU leaders resolved not to pass the burden of conflict to future generations, so they adopted “Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020” as one of the flagship projects of the wider developmental blueprint Agenda 2063,” Ms. Aïssatou Hayatou, the AU “Silencing the Guns” operations manager, told Africa Renewal.

She added: “The objective was to achieve peace to allow for development across Africa.”

The initiative was intended to achieve a conflict-free Africa, prevent genocide, make peace a reality for all and
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and civil society.

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small arms and armed violence issues for
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Who has the guns in Africa?

80% of all small arms in Africa are in the
hands of civilians, according to the Small
Arms Survey (SAS), an independent
Geneva-based research centre which gen-
rates evidence-based, impartial, and pol-
cy-relevant knowledge and analysis on
small arms and armed violence issues for
governments, policy-makers, researchers,
and civil society.

Civilians, including rebel groups
and militias, hold more than 40 million
small arms and light weapons, while
government-related entities hold fewer than
11 million, according to the 2019 SAS and
African Union study, Weapons Compass:
Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flows in Africa.

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Notable progress has
been made in preventing,
managing and resolving
conflicts in Africa but a
number of African countries
still remain trapped in a
vicious cycle of violent
conflict and its deadly
consequences.

Mr. Ramtane Lamamra,
the African Union’s High
Representative for
“Silencing the Guns” in Africa

Where do the guns come from?

Most of the weapons in Africa are imported.
Official military expenditure in Africa
stood at around $40.2 billion in 2018, with
North Africa spending $22.2 billion and
sub-Saharan Africa $18.8 billion, according
to the ISS.

The top arms suppliers to Africa between
2014 and 2018 were Russia,
China, Ukraine, Germany and France, and
the largest recipients were Egypt,
Algeria and Morocco, according to a study by
the Stockholm International Peace

Research Institute (SIPRI), an inde-
pendent international institute dedicated
to research into conflict, armaments, arms
control and disarmament. The SIPRI Arms
Transfers Database provides information
on all international transfers of major arms
(including sales, gifts and production under
license) to states, international organiza-
tions and non-state groups.

Twenty-two African countries also
manuacture various kinds of small arms
and light weapons. Homemade artisanal
weapons production is also prevalent on
the continent, with those weapons reported
to be fueling criminality in some countries.

While African countries can control
the purchase of legal arms, it is difficult
to track the illegal trafficking and flows
on the continent. Porous borders and long
coastlines also enable traffickers to smug-
gle small arms between countries. There
are also concerns about how well national
arms stocks are managed to ensure that
the weapons do not end up in the wrong hands.

For me, I see silencing
the guns in two ways.
It’s the physical dropping
of the guns, which is very
important. But I believe
that we must also focus on
development, let us invest
in our people to be able to
silence the guns.

Ms. Bience Gawanas
UN Under-Secretary General
and Special Adviser on Africa

Moving forward

To accelerate action, the AU is launching
in early 2020 a continent-wide campaign
on “Silencing the Guns” to mobilise all
stakeholders to prioritize efforts on peace
and effective socio-economic develop-
ment. Challenges that lead people to
violent conflicts, including poverty, histo-
rical injustices, inequality, unemployment,
climate change, illegal financial flows, and
corruption should be addressed too for
the guns to be silenced.
Ms. Aïssatou Hayatou is the ‘Silencing the Guns in Africa’ Operations Manager at the African Union Commission (AUC). The AU’s campaign on “Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020” aims to achieve a conflict-free Africa, prevent genocide, make peace a reality for all and rid the continent of wars, violent conflicts, human rights violations, and humanitarian disasters. In an interview with Africa Renewal's Zipporah Musau, Ms. Hayatou provided details about the campaign and what it will take to silence the guns in Africa once and for all.

**Africa Renewal: What is this campaign about?**

**Ms. Aïssatou Hayatou**: The campaign aims to promote prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. “Silencing the Guns” is a slogan of a project that targets silencing all illegal weapons in Africa. We have an amnesty month in September 2020 where those with illegally-acquired guns can hand them in to the authorities without penalty.

**When will it be launched?**

It will be launched in early 2020 in Addis Ababa during the AU Summit, which has the theme “Silencing the Guns”.

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**Who is the target?**

The campaign targets member states because the primary responsibility of providing peace and security and the overall protection of citizens lies with governments. We are also putting an emphasis on the youth. It is their future at stake.

**Where are the guns?**

Mostly in the areas in conflict: the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, Central African region, eastern Congo, the Horn of Africa, Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. This does not mean that the countries that are at peace should not do anything. Prevention is key. All illegally-acquired light weapons used in crime,

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**Silencing the Guns: International, Continental and Regional Policies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDG Goal 16.4</th>
<th>Significantly Reduce Illicit Financial and Arms Flows by 2030</th>
<th>Agenda 2063 Silencing the guns by 2020 A Peaceful and Secure Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AU Bamako Declaration</td>
<td>African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of SALW</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RECSA Nairobi Protocol</td>
<td>Prevention, Control and Reduction of SALW in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCAS Kinshasa Convention</td>
<td>Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons Ammunition, Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly</td>
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The landmark Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), regulating the international trade in conventional arms – from small arms to battle tanks, combat aircraft and warships – entered into force on 24 December 2014.

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Source: Institute for Peace and Security Studies
urban violence and cattle rustling need to be silenced too. Silencing the Guns calls upon all countries to invest in peace.

**What next after the guns are handed in?**
Disarming alone is not enough. We need to find solutions so that the communities in conflict can co-exist.

**How can guns be silenced in Africa once and for all?**
We need to address the root causes of the problem. To build peace, we need to create inclusive multi-sectoral programmes that will address the economic, social and environmental causes of the challenge. About 600 million young people in Africa are unemployed, uneducated or in insecure employment. We need to invest in economic development in order to stop our youth from taking up arms.

**What challenges do you foresee?**
The biggest challenge would be the national uptake of the campaign by member states. Governments taking ownership of silencing the guns and actually developing national plans. Political will and leadership should be at the top level. The AU and UN can come in and support countries. We also need to mobilise resources to support all these activities.

**What are some of the initiatives on the ground?**
Member states, civil society, the private sector, the UN and other international and local NGOs are doing a fantastic job on the ground providing basic counsel, assisting the affected communities and supporting reconciliation. A lot is happening on the continent - we have success stories of combatants disarming and terrorists being demobilised. AU troops are deployed in Somalia, Central African Republic, Darfur, and the Lake Chad Basin. We have community projects on reconciliation and peace-building.

**What is the role of women in all this?**
It is African women who are leading in the search for peace in Africa. One of the key partners in silencing the guns is women because of the significant role they play. However, at peace negotiating tables and in the media their impact is not highlighted. The amount of mediation these women do between one village and another is amazing! Africa must learn that you don’t win the game with half the team on the field and what happens to one gender affects the other. Women are the ones who will drive Africa’s prosperity. This is great coming at the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

**How is the UN helping to achieve a conflict-free Africa?**
The cooperation between the AU and the UN is working well. The UN has a comparative advantage as it is well-represented in Africa. All the UN agencies are on the ground to support the communities. We need to synergize and partner more at the national level.

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### UN support for Silencing the Guns in Africa

- In February 2019, the UN Security Council welcomed Africa’s campaign on “Silencing the Guns” and called for international support to achieve peace in every country.

- The council unanimously adopted a resolution to support initiatives aimed at finding “African solutions to African problems” while recognising that other countries can help accelerate progress.

- The council noted efforts by the AU and regional groups to create a conflict-free continent, but it also expressed concern over the “challenging security situation in parts of Africa.”

- It pointed to threats posed by terrorism, maritime piracy, tensions between farmers and herders, transnational-organised crime, and “the persistent violence perpetrated by insurgents, rebel, and armed groups.”

- The UN’s Political Affairs Under Secretary-General, Rosemary A. DiCarlo, during a discussion prior to the adoption of the resolution, said: “The UN and the AU share a common mission – to prevent conflict. In the last two years, the ability of both organisations to detect and defuse crises before they escalate has grown stronger, as has cooperation to help resolve conflict when it breaks out.”

- This partnership is bearing fruit in different countries, for example, in support of Somalia’s efforts to restore peace and stability, and on the push for peace in CAR.

- “In South Sudan, the signing of the revitalized peace accord facilitated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) with the support of the AU and the UN has sparked renewed hope, even as more needs to be done to definitively silence the guns and end abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence,” said Ms. DiCarlo.

- At the UN headquarters, Secretary-General António Guterres has set up a taskforce led by Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Bintou Keita, to coordinate all UN agencies to support the “Silencing the Guns” campaign.

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**Who else is involved?**
All AU member states, 57 other countries from across the globe, and the European Union as a major partner. At the continental level, the Regional Economic Communities are coordinating action. International and national organisations, civil society, youth, women, the diaspora – everyone is involved. The message is: peace is not a preserve of governments. We all have a role to play to achieve peace in Africa.
Despite efforts by various stakeholders to establish a peaceful Africa, armed conflicts continue in parts of the continent. The nature of violent conflicts in Africa has changed since before independence when they were mostly ideologically-driven guerilla warfare. Many of the current conflicts are driven by prospects of political power or financial gain, with armed groups fighting to acquire valuable mineral resources, assert their ideology or address grievances.

In its quest to “Silence the Guns” in Africa by 2020, which is its theme for the year, the African Union and other partners ought to focus on the main crisis spots currently: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Mali and Libya, where tens of thousands of people have been killed and millions more displaced.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The war in the DRC is one of Africa’s deadliest. More than five million people have been killed in the Congolese war, according to the news agency Reuters. It began in 1998 with the involvement of about 20 different armed groups who maraud the country’s vast jungles. Many of these groups fight each other, while others from neighbouring countries use the Congolese territory to launch attacks on their home countries. Others simply exploit the country’s mineral resources, including gold, platinum and coltan fueling the various conflicts further.

Among the several armed groups are the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda; the Allied Democratic Forces, a Ugandan rebel group based in the Rwenzori Mountains of eastern Congo; the Lord’s Resistance Army, another Ugandan rebel group based along the northern border; the National Forces of Liberation, a Burundian rebel group operating in South Kivu; and the Mai-Mai militias operating in the Kivu.

In the first half of 2019, about 732,000 new displacements were recorded, 718,000 associated with conflict and 14,000 associated with disasters, posing additional challenges for the new DRC government.

About 18,500 UN peacekeepers, including military and police personnel, provide security for civilians threatened by the armed groups and support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. The UN Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) also helps to strengthen institutions for reconciliation, law enforcement and justice, and the equitable management of natural resources. Furthermore, it is involved in disarmament, demobilisation and community violence reduction efforts.

South Sudan

After a brutal civil war, South Sudan declared its independence from Sudan in 2011. However, tensions persisted over natural resources, specifically access to the oil fields in newly-independent South. Matters have also been strained between the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement led by President Salva Kiir, and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement in Opposition led by Mr. Kiir’s former vice president Riek Machar.

Since civil war broke out in 2013, about 380,000 people are reported to have been killed and more than two million have been forced to flee their homes. A 2015 peace deal fell apart after clashes between government forces and rebels. A new “revitalized” peace agreement was signed in 2018 however progress is slow. A second deadline to form a unity government has passed with Mr Machar expressing concerns over some unresolved issues.

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was established in 2011 and consists of about 17,000 uniformed and civilian personnel. It works to support peace consolidation, assist in protecting civilians, create suitable conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, among other tasks. As part of its women, peace and security efforts, it is actively working to increase women’s participation in political processes.

Central African Republic

CAR has suffered more than six years of conflict. The initial trigger was the Séléka armed opposition entering the capital city Bangui in March 2013 in opposition to then-President François Bozizé and effectively seizing control of the country.

Security conditions deteriorated further in December when clashes erupted between various armed groups. This fighting persists and has been further complicated by the fragmentation and reforming of alliances.

In response, the UN Security Council
established the UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in April 2014. It was mandated to protect civilians, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and support national efforts to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate former combatants and armed elements.

In February 2019, the Government and 14 armed groups signed a peace agreement which has led to fewer direct clashes. The UN, the African Union and others are cooperating in support of the agreement to end violence against civilians, strengthen the extension of state authority and bring social and economic development to the country.

With approximately 14,000 peacekeepers, MINUSCA continues to support the implementation of the peace deal and its other mandated tasks. However, insecurity and attacks against civilians, humanitarians, and UN peacekeeping forces continue. More than 600,000 people are internally displaced, and thousands have been killed.

Libya
The ongoing conflict in Libya began in 2011 after the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi’s regime and centres mostly around the control of territory and oil fields.

Fighting has been between the House of Representatives’ (HoR) which came into office in 2014 and controls eastern and southern Libya and its Tripoli-based rival, the General National Congress (GNC). In December 2015, the warring parties signed the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), committing to a Government of National Accord (GNA). However, the GNA, which is recognised by the UN, continues to face opposition from within the HoR and GNC.

In April 2019, Khalifa Haftar, the head of the self-styled Libyan National Army, which controls much of the countryside, launched an attack on Tripoli. About 1,000 people were reported to have been killed in that attack and more than 128,000 displaced since the latest round of the conflict began in April. A UN arms embargo continues to be breached with both sides drawing on international support for weapons.

The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) was established in September 2011 to assist the country’s transitional authorities in their post-conflict efforts. This includes support to implementation of the LPA and future phases of the transition process.

Nigeria
The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria that began in 2009 has extended to neighbouring countries, including Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Currently led by Abubakar Shekau, the jihadist group’s initial objective was to confront what it perceived as the westernization of Nigerian culture. In 2015, Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIS, rebranding his organisation as the Islamic State in West Africa.

More than 30,000 people have been killed in Nigeria’s long-running conflict with Boko Haram. About two million people have fled their homes and another 22,000 are missing, believed to have been conscripted. In April 2014, the group abducted 276 girls from a school in Chibok, a village in Borno State, northeast Nigeria. A few managed to escape or be rescued. More than 112 girls remain missing.

A multinational joint task force of about 10,500 troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria is currently battling the insurgency.

Mali
In 2012, the Tuareg separatist rebels of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawa (MNLA) conquered northern Mali. Prior to this, a sizable number of Tuareg rebels had moved to Libya to join Muammar Gaddafi’s fighting forces. They returned with sophisticated weapons to join the 2012 attack on northern Mali after the fall of Gaddafi’s government.

Since then several other armed groups emerged or splintered off from existing ones with different interests related to self-determination and political and socio-economic grievances. The Malian government and two coalitions of these armed groups — the Plateforme and Coordination — signed the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in May 2015. However, fighting continues with armed Islamist groups attacking civilians, state counterterrorism actions, and intercommunal violence.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established in April 2013 to support political processes and bolster security in the country. The 15,000 uniformed and civilian personnel work to support the implementation of the peace agreement and reduce violence. They also protect civilians, support the re-establishment of state institutions and basic services, and support the cantonnement, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups. MINUSMA is one of

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In April 2019, the terrorist group ISIS claimed responsibility for their first attack in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which eight people were killed in North Kivu province.

This, along with recent attacks in Mozambique, represent a disturbing development in Africa’s struggle with violent extremism and terrorism that has previously been the province of countries such as Somalia, Nigeria, Mali and their neighbours who face both direct and spillover effects of violent groups such Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda.

With 60% of Africa’s population under 25 years of age, and recruitment efforts by extremist groups focused mainly on youth, it is critical to address the reasons that drive young people toward violent extremism.

“...It is important to acknowledge that the tendency toward violent extremism does not emerge in a vacuum. Socio-economic and political marginalization, and disaffection of youth on the African continent and around the world are catalysts for joining violent extremism.

Ms. Aya Chebbi
African Union’s Youth Envoy.”

In their 2017 study based on interviews with hundreds of voluntary recruits to Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, the United Nations Development Programme found that the journey to violent extremism is one marked by exclusion and marginalisation, lack of opportunities, and grievances with the state.

About 71% of those interviewed cited government action — the murder or arrest of a family member or friend — as the tipping point for joining a violent extremist group, indicating the limits of militarized counter-terrorism responses by governments.

The message is starting to get through. Organisations working on violent extremism, including such regional bodies as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Economic Community...
(iDove), for example, meets with youth activists who already have their established networks as allies. Since 2017, annual inter-continental youth forums have served as a platform for young people from Africa and Europe to come together with policymakers, artists, members of civil society and others to exchange ideas on preventing violent extremism. iDove also promotes intra and interfaith dialogue, and better understanding of the underlying reasons why young people join violent groups, and where they can seek help.

The Nigeria Youth 4 Peace Initiative, set up by young peacebuilders, works with hundreds of activists from West Africa to counter violent extremism in the region by engaging youth in campaigns, establishing peace clubs in schools and conducting resilience-building activities to counter recruitment messaging.

In East Africa, the Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network is addressing violent extremism through initiatives such as “A Legacy of Prevention” which is focused on closing knowledge gaps identified in preventing and countering violent extremism in the region.

But even as governments and local communities in different countries make gains against violent extremism, new challenges arise.

Africans are among the 40,000 foreign terrorist fighters from 110 countries that the UN estimates joined the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Some of these fighters are now returning home.

Other fighters and non-combatant women and children are trapped in third countries having fled previously-held extremist group strongholds. Some children were actively involved in the fighting. They will all require rehabilitation and reintegration into communities that may struggle to welcome them. Governments, organisations and communities working to prevent violent extremism will need to make sure that these young people who have returned receive the support they need to rebuild their lives.

If governments and organisations are serious about dealing with violent extremism, they must not forget the biggest reason why youth join violent extremist groups – namely, the lack of opportunities and search for a sense of belonging, self-worth and meaning.

Khalifa, in Kano, Nigeria.

Groups promoting peace:

Kenya: TT, a hip-hop artist in Kenya is using art and culture to promote peace and security through his initiative, Wacha Gun, Shika Mic (Drop the Gun and Grab the Mic), which encourages vulnerable youth living in high-risk areas to reject crime and drugs and promote peace.

Somalia: The Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre's slogan is "drop the gun, pick up the pen". It promotes alternative livelihoods for young ex-combatants and youth participation in political decision-making.

Uganda: The African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET) rehabilitates post-war communities and engages the youth to become peace agents. It provides space for perpetrators of violence to tell their stories and provides training and psycho-social support.
We must involve women in the peace process
They are the ones sustaining peace and nurturing society

BY LEYMAH GBOWEE

When we started our peace movement in Liberia in the heat of the civil war in 2003, we were called toothless bulldogs. But we proved that women’s active participation in a peace process can make a significant difference in the effectiveness and longevity of peace agreements. It all began with seven women before it became the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace — a mass movement of Christian and Muslim women committed to ending the war and achieving sustainable peace.

It is not that women are naturally more peaceful than men; rather they are committed participants in peace processes that affect the entire spectrum of a society. If a peace process is left in the hands of military men or warlords whose expertise is war, we shouldn’t be surprised if the result denies the needs of average citizens.

A peace process enables an examination of the impact of conflict on the entire community and creates a roadmap for addressing the social, political and economic causes of such a conflict. It is not a one-size-fits-all - what worked well in Liberia, for example, may not work in Rwanda. While lessons can be learned from each situation, the key inescapable point is that a peace process must be led by local actors, including women.

In April 2019, I had the opportunity to spend time with officials of women’s organisations in Cameroon. The women recounted horrific stories of rape, the hacking off of hands by armed groups and the abduction of young children for the purpose of turning them into killing machines. Their families faced malnutrition and other health challenges. In whole regions of the country, schools and businesses have been closed, as communities live in fear of armed attacks.

While these sufferings and human rights violations are going on, world leaders and the international community are struggling to find a solution to the Cameroon crisis. Well-intentioned as these efforts are, they err in sidelining women.

Cameroonian women understand the root causes of the conflict in their country and the dynamics that continue to fuel the crisis. The international community should assist in strengthening the solidarity between women in the anglophone and francophone regions of Cameroon, enhance their leadership capacity and help speed the momentum for peace.

In Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia and other parts of the world, we must ensure that women’s peace and democracy activism is rewarded not just with jobs and political leadership but also with the transformation of the lives of all women.

The value of what women do at the community level, without recognition, without funding, is incalculable. Women are the ones sustaining peace and nurturing society, yet most never get to attend high-profile events overseas, nor do they get adequate political representation. Political leaders and national strategic plans will come and go, but women’s commitment to building a better society for their children remains a constant.

If we are to Silence the Guns by 2020 as the African Union directs, African leaders must govern with integrity, foster development and tackle corruption. They must address injustices and impunity, particularly regarding sexual violence. The bodies of women, children and the vulnerable must not be exploited. Laws and traditions and cultural practices that devalue women and make them second-class citizens need to be expunged from the statute books. Women are not objects, they are persons.

We must cut back on the purchase of arms and munitions. Women will tell you that Africans need security, affordable healthcare, quality education, justice and all the things that dignify a human so that
they are not led by deprivation to fight. It is time to heed women’s wise counsel. This is an issue of leadership and political will.

**What peace means**

We need to reframe our notion of peace. Peace is not the absence of war; it is the full expression of human dignity. Peace is an environment in which human needs can be met. It means education for our children, health systems that function, a fair and unbiased justice system, food on the table in every home, an empowered, recognised, appreciated and fully compensated community of women and a lot more.

International organisations must trust women and listen to their guidance. Too often, funding for grassroots women’s groups is considered risky. Women’s groups may be expected to have a record of funding before new funding is allowed. That is like being denied a visa because you haven’t traveled before.

We need institutions that are willing to trust women. As important as it is to invite women to New York and Geneva for conferences, international organisations must support these women to stay on the frontlines of nation-building in their respective countries.

Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 for her work in leading a women’s peace movement that helped end the Liberian civil war in 2003.

Sahle-Work Zewde to the position of president of Ethiopia by members of the Federal Parliamentary Assembly in October 2018, making her the first woman to hold that office and Africa’s only female head of state in 2019, is a powerful statement and an inspiration to young women across the continent.

In the coming years, I hope to see African women push for their rights and civic roles. And I hope that Africans, especially the young, will begin to think about how to be an active part of the greatness of the African continent.

Liberian women marching through the streets of Monrovia agitating for peace.  

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*AFP via Getty Images/Pius U. Utomi*
Drying Lake Chad Basin gives rise to crisis

Food insecurity, conflicts, terrorism, displacement and climate change effects compound challenges

BY LEON USIGBE

Twenty-year-old Phoebe Musa remembers the day Boko Haram militants stormed her village of Gwoza in Borno State, north-east Nigeria, five years ago. They came in on horseback, motorbikes and screeching military vehicles and attacked everyone in sight. Amid bursts of gunshots, they set fire to dozens of homesteads.

The fighters then abducted Ms. Musa from her home, blindfolded her and dragged her deep into the nearby Sambisa forest, where she remained until she was rescued by Nigerian troops earlier this year.

“I was forcibly married to three terrorists at separate times that resulted in three children,” Ms. Musa told Africa Renewal during an interview at the Durumi camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja. With her lastborn child strapped on her back, she explained that her two older children had died of starvation in the bush.

Ms. Musa’s predicament represents the face of the worsening humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin. About 10 million people living there are in need of humanitarian assistance, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UN agency says that thousands of IDPs being sheltered in various camps in the region lack adequate accommodation, food, water and sanitation.

That Lake Chad, once one of Africa’s largest freshwater bodies and a source of livelihood for about 30 million, is vanishing fast is no longer breaking news. What is new is the unique and complex humanitarian crisis around the basin, which is among the most severe in the world.

“The widespread violence has left 10.7 million people across the Lake Chad region in need of emergency assistance. Most of these people were already contending with high poverty rates, poor provision of basic services like education and healthcare, and the devastating impact of climate change.

Now 2.3 million people across the region are displaced; over 5 million are struggling to access enough food to survive; and half a million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition,” said UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed during a high-level event on the humanitarian situation in the region.

Located in Northern Central Africa, Lake Chad borders four countries — Chad, Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. But the Lake Chad “Basin” that covers almost 8% of the continent, spreads over seven countries: Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Niger and Nigeria.

The water body has diminished by 90% since the 1960s due to overuse and climate change effects. Conflict between herders and farmers became common as livelihoods were lost. Families who relied on the lake started migrating to other areas in search of water.
Tackling the challenges

Governments of the affected countries are now battling on several fronts around Lake Chad. First, they are conducting a military offensive against the terrorists. A joint multinational task force made up of troops from Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, and Benin continues to launch military strikes against the terrorists.

Second, the governments want to end the violent conflict between herders and farmers over water and pasture.

Third, they are trying to find a lasting solution to the drying of the lake, which is exacerbating poverty in the region. An ambitious plan to restore the lake to its former glory involves a multibillion-dollar project that will channel water from the Ubangi River in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is 2,400 km from the lake. A feasibility was already underway in 2018.

The lake’s replenishment effort is being led by Nigeria’s president, Muhammadu Buhari, and supported by the eight countries that are members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the regional regulatory body of the basin’s water (Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Algeria, the Central African Republic, Libya, and Sudan).

President Buhari raised an alarm over the disappearing lake at an event in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly in September 2019.

“Lake Chad is shrinking while the population is exploding. It’s a challenging situation. With less land, less rainfall, these are very unique problems for the country,” said President Buhari.

The United Nations’ engagement in the Lake Chad Basin has taken the form of humanitarian assistance, development aid, human rights, justice and law enforcement, as well as preventing and countering terrorism, according to Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed.

In the last two years, the UN has co-hosted two back-to-back international donor conferences, the first in Oslo where donors pledged $672 million in emergency assistance, and the second in Berlin, where donors announced $2.17 billion, including $467 million in concessional loans, to support activities in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

Nigeria’s National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons, the lead agency charged with the welfare of IDPs, maintains that IDPs’ durable options are to return home or be settled in host communities.

Governments need to integrate the IDPs and refugees into mainstream society by “empowering them to start some business or farming so that they can take care of their families,” Daniel Soetan, national coordinator of Goodwill Ambassadors of Nigeria, an NGO involved in distributing relief materials to IDPs, told *Africa Renewal*.

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By the numbers

- **6.9 million** severely food insecure people
- **2.5 million** displaced people [second largest displacement crisis in the world]
- **1 million** returnees
- **75.7%** of IDPs are staying with host communities
- **515 000** children suffering from severe acute malnutrition
- Under five mortality rates in IDP locations **four times** the emergency threshold

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
**INTERVIEW**

**Address development issues in the Lake Chad Basin**
—Ambassador Mamman Nuhu, Lake Chad Basin Commission Executive Secretary

**On environmental challenges:** We are losing a lot of plant life and animals, including fish species. Farmers, herders and fishermen have lost their livelihoods. It’s a real crisis for us.

**On defeating Boko Haram:** We have made progress. Some territories have been recovered, and now Boko Haram is only in a few places around Lake Chad, but it still has capacity to cause harm. What we need to do as the Multinational Joint Task Force [MJTF], which we are already doing and seeing good results, is to have continuous military operations. Previously, we had operations for a limited period and then there was a lull. Troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin constitute the 10,500-strong MJTF.

**Progress on addressing humanitarian challenges:** The humanitarian challenges are still there. About 10.7 million people need humanitarian assistance. Another 2.4 million people are displaced and are yet to return to their hometowns and villages. We have made some progress. Some of the displaced people in neighbouring countries are returning voluntarily, and we are reintegrating them into their communities. A lot of reconstruction is going on—schools and marketplaces are being rebuilt, and civil authorities are gradually going back to the places that are safe.

**On the regional strategy:** We have a robust regional stabilisation strategy crafted in 2018 by the Lake Chad Basin Commission, with the assistance of the African Union and the UN Development Programme [UNDP]. It is an all-encompassing approach with nine pillars, including education and skills acquisition, socio-economic recovery, environmental sustainability, and empowerment and inclusion of women. These are the robust ways we will address some of the regional issues in a non-violent way. The regional stabilisation strategy has not yet fully come on stream. In 2019 a UNDP facility helped raise $60 million, which is what we are currently using to address some of the humanitarian challenges.

**On the African Union’s “Silencing the Guns by 2020” campaign:** It will take sustained pressure on Boko Haram, along with interventions that address the root causes of the problems in the Lake Chad Basin. For example, poverty and hunger are caused by drought and the shrinking of the lake. If we address the developmental issues, we will be able to silence the guns. Imagine: in the 1960s, the lake occupied 25,000 square kilometers; currently, it is 4,500 square kilometers. Over the same period, the population increased from 7 million to about 50 million.

**Final message:** The cordial relationship among countries of the Lake Chad region should continue. We also need the support of the international community so that we can mobilise the needed funding for these interventions. The countries of the region are not in a financial position to handle these huge projects on their own.

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**Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram–Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region**

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Source: Lake Chad Basin Commission

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**$12 billion**
Estimated cost

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**Ambassador Mamman Nuhu** is the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, which oversees natural resource use in the region. He is also Head of Mission of the Multinational Joint Task Force, which is made up of military units from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria and is tasked with ending the Boko Haram insurgency. He spoke with *Africa Renewal’s* Kingsley Ighobor about the situation on the ground.
Small arms fueling deadly communal violence

Local communities in search of lasting peace

BY FRANCK KUWONU

The Boko Haram insurgency, with its spillover into Cameroon, Chad and Niger, is the most reported-upon security crisis in Nigeria. Yet in 2018 conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria was six times deadlier than the Boko Haram crisis, according to the International Crisis Group.

Scarcely reported on are local and low-level disputes such as cattle rustling and competitions for resources between farmers and herdsmen. These disputes are being fueled by a proliferation of small arms and light weapons in remote and marginalised areas in Africa where government presence is generally light.

In 2019, for example, 160 people were killed by armed men in a Malian village close to the border with Burkina Faso in what local media described as the “worst ethnic bloodletting in living memory.”

The perpetrators are reported to have been from the hunting and farming Dogon group, while the victims were presumed to be Fulani, a nomadic ethnic group of cattle herdsmen. They have traditionally clashed over access to water and pasture.

This is just one example of the kind of communal conflicts happening in many countries in Africa, where increased availability of small arms has turned traditional rural conflicts into deadlier confrontations and fueled an increase in criminality in rural and urban centers.

“Since the 1990s, small arms—particularly AK-47 rifles—have become weapons of choice for cattle rustlers, replacing traditional and less deadly weapons,” the Institute of Security Studies, based in Pretoria, South Africa, observes.

According to the Small Arms Survey (SAS), an independent Geneva-based research center focused on reducing the illicit flow and impact of small arms and light weapons, more than 80% of small arms in Africa are held by civilians.

A 2019 SAS and African Union study, Weapons Compass: Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flows in Africa, estimated that civilians, including rebel groups and militias, hold more than 40 million small arms and weapons. Government-related entities hold fewer than 11 million.

Besides Nigeria, communal conflicts remain a concern in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda, among other countries. In most of the situations, the problem is compounded by a partial or total lack of security forces in areas of conflict. Even when present, these forces are usually outgunned.

After the “ethnic bloodletting” in Mali, a group of soldiers was chased away when they tried to take into custody one of the alleged perpetrators detained by the villagers. A video of the encounter was later posted on social media to embarrass security forces.

Community involvement in peace

Governments usually deploy extra security forces in affected areas and sometimes conduct military operations aimed at detaining militias and seizing their weapons. Disarmament and weapons buy-back programmes have been conducted in several countries, but any ensuing peace rarely lasts long.

In Nigeria, authorities are trying to go beyond police and military responses by involving the communities themselves in resolving conflicts. This year the government launched the 10-year National Livestock Transformation Plan to help end communal conflicts around land and pasture by making the sector more productive and sustainable including through modernizing livestock breeding and dairy production methods.

In the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali, where communal conflicts still occur despite government efforts and the presence of thousands of peacekeepers, the UN is working with local communities to help diffuse tensions through community violence reduction (CVR) and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes.

CVR and DDR have the same goals: ending violence and building peace. The UN Department of Peace Operations says community violence reduction is different from other efforts “in that it works directly with target communities to find solutions to causes of armed violence from within, and explicitly targets youth at risk of recruitment by armed groups in addition to ex-combatants.”

In CAR, the programme appears to be having an impact, although it is limited.

The UN Mission reported this November that two previously feuding communities in CAR, the Nièm and Yéléwa groups, now live in peace. As part of the CVR programme, members of both communities were given cattle and trained on improved livestock rearing methods. Two years after the launch of the programme, both communities are now able to generate revenue, expand their activities and rebuild their villages.
The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) was established in 2003 to enhance international support for Africa’s development and security through its advocacy and analytical work, and to assist the UN Secretary-General in improving coherence and coordination of the UN system’s support to Africa. Ms. Bience Gawanas was appointed Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa last year. She sat down with Africa Renewal’s Zipporah Musau to discuss her role and her priorities for 2020. Excerpts:

**Africa Renewal**: As the Special Adviser on Africa to the UN Secretary-General, what is your role?

**Bience Gawanas**: I see myself as the voice of Africa within the UN. My office, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, assists the Secretary-General in bringing greater coherence to the UN’s support to Africa’s development. We also support the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) programme, which is now transitioning to the African Union Development Agency (AUDA).

**What would you say are the three biggest challenges facing Africa today?**

I would rather talk about the opportunities in Africa. I want to create a positive narrative of Africa. However, we know that we still face challenges of conflicts, disease, poverty and hunger. That is why we must implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa’s Agenda 2063 (the AU’s blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa).

**What are the top three opportunities you see on the continent for 2020?**

There are various opportunities that can put Africa on a very different path. For me the greatest opportunity right now is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that came into effect a few months ago. Africa has the potential to be one of the biggest markets in the world. But we need to trade amongst ourselves as Africans.

The second opportunity is the “Silencing the Guns in Africa” initiative, one of the priority projects of the AU’s Agenda 2063. The AU’s theme for 2020 will be “Silencing the Guns,” and there will be a renewed campaign to accelerate the initiative.

Another area of opportunity for me is climate change. For the first time more people are getting involved and discussing climate change like never before. The reality is with us. The UN Climate Action Summit convened by the Secretary-General last September saw many countries join the climate action agenda. Young people across the African continent are saying, “The future is ours.”

**As you mentioned, the campaign to end conflicts in Africa kicks off in early January 2020, and it is also the theme of the African Union for the year. What is it about, and what is the UN’s role in it?**

I see it in two ways: one is the physical dropping of the guns and the other one is focusing on development, investing in our people. We have come a long way and have managed to silence the guns in many countries in Africa already, but there are still some remaining hot spots. I think we can get there. It is an opportunity to have youth and women as agents of change, not just as victims or as perpetrators of conflicts or wars. We have always been talking about child soldiers, about youth taking up arms. But there is a new narrative—that youth also want to be known as agents of peace, and therefore should be involved in the peace process on the continent.

The objective of the campaign is to ask, “What more do we need to do in order to achieve a complete silencing of guns in Africa?” The AU will be rolling out different activities to accelerate the achievement of that. At the UN, the Secretary-General has established a task force, which OSAA is part of, led by the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, Bintou Keita, to support the AU on the initiative.
A few months ago, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area came into effect. How will it benefit the continent?
First, by removing trade barriers for African products. There will be a higher flow of goods and services across our borders and a strengthening of our capacities to trade. There will be manufacturing industries, with greater emphasis on value addition, and economies of scale because Africa is a huge market. Jobs will be created. I also see it as an opportunity for small and medium-size enterprises, for women traders and not just the big businesses. This is the best thing that could ever happen to Africa.

What are your three top priorities as special adviser on Africa?
I was appointed to this office a year ago when the UN was going through major reforms in the peace and security pillar, development pillar, as well as in management. At the same time, the AU was also going through institutional reforms. So it is quite obvious that we had to reposition ourselves. My priority is to make sure that the office remains relevant, effective, efficient and impactful in our role and mandate. I am the first woman to occupy the position of special adviser on Africa, I see myself as a groundbreaker in the UN system, and therefore I must ensure that the concerns of women and youth are also my priorities.

What programmes will you prioritize in 2020?
We are mostly guided by what the African continent sees as its priorities, the synergy between the two agendas—the AU’s Agenda 2063 and the global Agenda 2030. The AU and the UN have signed two framework agreements: on partnership on peace and security and on partnership in implementation of the two agendas. Those will definitely remain priorities for us.

We will also publicize what the AU and member states are doing, that’s why the Africa Dialogue Series in May remains a very important platform for us. For example, this year the AU’s theme was “Towards Durable Solutions for Forcibly Displaced Persons in Africa,” and by focusing on it during the Africa Dialogue Series, we definitely put it on the UN agenda. That is why this year there were several discussions on that topic at the UN, including in the Security Council and elsewhere. We hope to achieve the same success with the “Silencing the Guns” theme in 2020.

What is it like to be an African female leader on the global stage?
I am very fortunate. I always look back to when, as a young woman, I was at the forefront of fighting for Namibia’s independence. I tell myself if we could fight for independence, surely we can also lead. This never was really an issue for me because I served my country in many positions as the first woman to do so. I moved from Namibia to the continental level, where I served as one of the first female commissioners in the AU Commission. Now I am here at the global level. It is really a privilege.

Are there any setbacks?
The challenge women face is the same everywhere when getting into a male-dominated structure that never had women before.

We have to basically rewrite the script and start with a new narrative that takes into account who we are as women. I’ve always said that the fact that women occupy leadership positions does not turn them into men. I bring my qualities and perspective as a woman to enrich the workplace. We should always be objective. I tell women, when you move up the ladder, don’t kick off the ladder. Hold on to that ladder so that other women can climb the same way you did.

What role can women in Africa play towards a better continent?
We should be asking what role women are already playing and what role they have played in the past. We would not be here without the contribution of women, that is for sure. What is it that women want for Africa? We want a world that recognises everyone first and foremost as a human being. I believe that by asking the right questions and making our contributions in the different fields that we occupy, we are creating a different society. We have come a long way. The resilience and strength of African women will make a difference.

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The numbers are astronomical: to make one pair of jeans, it takes close to 8,000 litres of water—the amount a person drinks over seven years. Even a simple cotton shirt requires close to 3,000 litres of water.

Within 10 uses, these jeans and shirts will be discarded for newer, trendier items, contributing to the 21 billion tons of textiles sent to landfills per year, according to the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

The fashion industry is the second-most-polluting industry—coming in right behind big oil—according to the UN. The fashion industry not only produces 10% of global carbon emissions, but also contributes 20% of waste water production.

“The industry consumes more energy than the aviation and shipping industries combined,” calculates the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. If production practices do not improve, the greenhouse gas emissions from the fashion industry are expected to rise by 50% by 2030. It is no wonder, then, that environmentalists are calling for a cleaner and more sustainable fashion industry.

Today’s “fast fashion” is largely to blame for the unsustainable state of the industry, say environmental activists. Fast fashion is inexpensive yet stylish, cheaply produced and soon discarded, replaced by newer styles.

Roberta Annan, a Ghanaian entrepreneur and founder of the African Fashion Fund, which supports
Africans and those in the diaspora to advance in global fashion, is also a UN Environment Programme Supporter for Creative Economy.

She advises African countries not to embrace fast fashion and sees investment opportunities in the creative industries.

“We don’t have to go towards fast fashion,” says Ms. Annan. “My focus has been to bring proper sustainable manufacturing and production processes to the continent because I feel Africa can position itself as the next hub when it comes to creative economy. We are in the position to do things differently; we can set a new pace. We can do things in a way that is more sustainable.”

African designers are making gains in this direction. Senegalese fashion house Tongoro sources materials from Africa and offers eco-conscious pieces to its client base, including those made from silk and linen. Tongoro has caught on with celebrities, including global music sensation Beyoncé, who has shared photos of herself wearing the label with her millions of social media followers. The brand has also been featured in various large-scale global publications, including *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Forbes*.

Tongoro’s founder, Sara Diouf, says she had local talent and sustainability in mind when starting the company. “I train Senegalese makers to produce quality goods matching international standards. Tailoring is such an important part of our culture here. My ultimate goal is to train local artisans to professionalise their craft,” says Ms. Diouf.

American actress Rosario Dawson, and US-based African fashion expert Abrima Erwiah have been promoting sustainable African and African-inspired clothing on Studio One Eighty Nine, their New York-based fashion brand’s e-commerce site.

The brand curates pieces from artisans who use natural styles of craftsmanship, sustainable dyes, and environmentally-friendly materials. It also promotes African talent.

“I am Ghanaian, Ivorian and American. When I travel home and visit my family in Ghana, and I see young girls that look just like me, I see myself. It is one reason that I think it is important that everyone gets a fair opportunity and why I hoped with Studio One Eighty Nine we could train others and empower them to be able to do the work themselves so that they can take control over their own futures and not rely on charity or someone else’s generosity,” says Ms. Erwiah.

Besides the efforts made by individual brands, the fashion industry needs to take larger steps towards sustainability. *Pulse of the Fashion Industry: 2019 Update*, produced by the Boston Consulting Group, the Global Fashion Agenda, and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, reports that the fashion industry is not moving fast enough in terms of sustainability to counterbalance the harmful impact of its rapid growth.

According to the report, by 2030 the global apparel and footwear industry will have grown by 81%, to 102 million tons, exerting an unprecedented strain on planetary resources.

So, what does a more sustainable apparel industry look like, and how do we get there?

We’re starting to see some early signs of an industry in transition. In 2018, fashion industry players and others launched the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action, aligned with the goals of the Paris climate change agreement, with a vision of how the industry can achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Signatories include global brands such as Adidas and H&M Group, along with companies such as global logistics giant Maersk.

Luxury fashion brands Gucci and Gabriela Hearst have announced that they will be making all operations, including those in its supply chain, carbon neutral.

Business models based on reuse, such as Gwynnie Bee and Rent the Runway are the beginnings of an industry that supports longevity instead of rapid consumption, by offering consumers the option to lease clothes.

This is only the beginning of the radical transformation required. Apparel companies will increasingly have to confront the elephant in the boardroom and decouple their business growth from resource use.

For people keen to take individual action on sustainable fashion, the UN’s Act Now climate change campaign says recycling, donating unwanted clothes, refashioning – or upcycling – them into blankets or other clothes, as well as shopping in vintage clothing shops could go a long way in slowing down fast fashion.

8,000 litres
of water used to make one pair of jeans — the amount of water a person drinks over seven years.

Kenya Airways introduced the highest number of new routes in 2018, including flights to Malindi, Mauritius and Mogadishu. The airline is also increasing capacity and frequency of flights to about a dozen other cities in Africa, including Cape Town, Zanzibar and Kigali.

The African Continental Free Trade Area came into effect in 2019, becoming the world’s largest free trade area by number of member states. By rewarding “intra-Africa connectivity,” AFRAA is encouraging its members to take advantage of it.

Kenya Airways’ award comes soon after the airline marked one year since it launched a non-stop flight from Nairobi to New York, cutting travel time between Africa and the US by at least seven hours. Now travellers no longer need to transit through European or Middle Eastern cities. The company announced that after just 12 months of operating the Nairobi–New York route, it has carried 100,000 travellers—a great success, it said.

Yet despite all these accolades, there is no denying that the airline, like many others in Africa, has gone through turbulent times. Surges in operating costs from ambitious expansion and rising fuel costs continue to eat into the airline’s profit. In the middle of this year, the airline posted a $740 million net loss after taxes in 2018, compared to a loss of $640 million for the period between April and December 2017. It has plans to re-nationalize and to explore public-private partnerships.

To some extent, the travails of the Kenyan carrier reflect the struggles faced in operating a profitable airline in Africa today.

High taxes, restricted market access, high operational costs—the cost of jet fuel runs 35% higher in Africa than in the rest of the world—are some of the challenges African airlines face, according to Abderahmane Berthe, Secretary General of AFRAA.
The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that African aviation supports $55.8bn in economic activity across the continent and has generated, directly or indirectly, 6.2 million jobs.

Africa represents 16% of the global population but accounts for only 3% of global air traffic, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). However, demand is slowly growing.

Over the last two years, it grew by an estimated 2%, a study by global air travel consultancy firm Sabre. Published in November 2019, the study also revealed that travellers are willing to spend up to 27% more on air travel if they can move around easily and freely.

So why are there still obstacles to tap into the growing number of passengers in Africa?

According to Christian Folly-Kossi, a Lomé-based aviation consultant and a former Secretary General of AFRAA, the reason lies in national ambition. Every country wants to have a national carrier at the same time. Aviation experts say.

So as passenger numbers grow, countries are relaunching their national carriers. Uganda is the latest to start operating a national company. Ghana and Zambia are making plans to relaunch theirs, while Senegal is trying for the third time in two decades to put its own in the air.

“Let me give you an example to buttress my point,” Mr Folly-Kossi said. “Professional boxers have known this for a long time: you can’t have a heavyweight compete against a featherweight. One of them will not make it out of the ring.” Smaller African airlines may be run out of business in their own countries by the bigger international carriers. This is why African air regulators are reluctant to liberalise their air spaces. Recent data on airline routes’ profitability in Africa appears to confirm Mr. Folly-Kossi’s misgivings.

According to OAG (originally the Official Aviation Guide), a UK-based air traffic analysis company, the most profitable air routes in Africa are operated by Emirates, which connect South Africa to Asia and Europe through Dubai.

South African Airways and TAAG Angola Airlines were the only African airlines operating any of the 10 most profitable African routes between April 2018 and May 2019. The most profitable intra-African route, between Johannesburg and Cape Town, is operated by South African Airways.

Yet South African Airways, just like Kenya Airways and Air Côte d’Ivoire, is struggling to stay afloat. Over the last two decades, the South African carrier has had to rely on massive bailouts by the government, estimated by local media to be to the tune of $1.96 billion.

Still, while IATA says that the continent can expect millions of passengers by 2036 and to grow the numbers by 5% annually over the next 20 years, more airlines in every African nation competing for the same routes would not solve the industry’s issues, aviation experts say.

Mr. Folly-Kossi advocates for airlines operating between regional hubs that smaller airlines would then feed. “In Europe, smaller countries such as Belgium, Switzerland and the Scandinavian nations understood as early as the 1980s and 1990s that their airlines would only survive if they operate around the concept of hub-and-spoke,” he said. This is a system of air transportation in which local airports offer air transportation to a central airport where long-distance flights are available.

For instance, Ethiopian Airlines partners with ASKY, a West and Central African regional carrier, to operate a West African hub out of Lomé, Togo, for its transatlantic flights to Brazil and New York and soon to Houston, Texas in the US. Similarly, Kenya Airways also plans to make Nairobi a major hub in East Africa around its regional expanded network.

If there could be five additional hubs, Mr. Folly-Kossi believes, it would unlock the African market for both short- and long-haul flights.

Waiting for the skies to open: The Yamoussoukro Decision

Thirty years ago, 44 African countries, under the Yamoussoukro Decision, agreed to liberalise air services on the continent by opening regional markets to transnational competition. This decision became binding by 2002. Its purpose was to give airlines commercial aviation rights to fly over and land in other countries in Africa and to eliminate limits to the frequency of flights on international routes.

Implementation has been slow and has faced some setbacks. But in 2018 a renewed push by the African Union raised hope with the launch of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), aimed at fully implementing the Yamoussoukro Decision. Passengers would get better services and better fares, while airlines would be able to offer better connectivity, spurring additional traffic and trade flows, if air travel was fully liberalised. 23 countries signed on to SAATM when it launched, by early 2019 the number had increased to 28. The new Africa Continental Free Trade Area is expected to expedite opening African skies.
UDA-NEPAD was created in Niamey, Niger, in July 2019, during the African Union summit. Its creation was one result of the AU reforms championed by Rwanda’s president, Paul Kagame, former chairperson of the AU. In an interview with *Africa Renewal*’s Kingsley Ighobor in New York Dr. Mayaki spoke on AUDA’s role in Africa’s development agenda and discussed regional integration and his agency’s plan to create a million jobs. These are excerpts:

**Africa Renewal:** What are the main differences between AUDA and NEPAD?

**Dr. Mayaki:** AUDA has a broader mandate. It is expected to address implementation challenges regarding decisions made by the African Union.

For example, we are now the African Union’s technical focal point with development partners such as China, India, the United States, the G20, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). This is very important in order to track implementation of agreements reached with these partners.

AUDA will also focus on resource mobilisation and the connections between sectors to avoid a siloed approach, which as you know is a key aspect of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, when we deliver in agriculture, we also look at water, energy, land, etc.

There is now a division of labour between the AU Commission, the Regional Economic Communities and AUDA in implementing the AU’s strategic frameworks at the national and regional levels.

**You have reiterated that regional bodies play a bigger role in Africa’s development. Are there often tensions between regional institutions and national governments?**

Your question is fundamental because regional integration will only progress if national governments—which manage regional bodies—implement regional decisions.

We see national governments push for regional development strategies. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for example, agriculture ministers meet regularly to discuss agricultural transformation in their region. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) meets regularly on a common strategy on energy.

The problem is how regional decisions essentially derived from continental frameworks are implemented country by
country. That’s where our role becomes important. We need to make sure that there is coherence between regional strategies and national plans.

Africa’s new free trade area, for example, is a continental initiative. Until June this year, Nigeria and Benin were holding out. How do you ensure that national governments implement AU projects?

One of the critical factors of success in regional integration is having everybody on board. If the consensus is strong—and that takes time to build—we can have strong agreements and start thinking about an implementation roadmap. The more buy-in you have in the design of a project, the less resistance you have during implementation.

Also, our budget is approved by AU member states. These programmes reflect member states’ priorities because it is their money, so, for example, if we have a programme in renewable energy in East Africa, it must be a priority in that region.

Given AUDA-NEPAD’s new development focus, what hopes do you have for regional integration on the continent?

The AU has really made great strides, particularly in the continental free trade area. It took time to be designed and to get everybody on board. We know the technical skills we need, and there is political determination to implement the agreement.

In the current global uncertainty, we need to increase trading within our regional markets; otherwise we won’t tackle our development challenges. Implementation will not be easy because of the high-levels of financing needed as well as the need to harmonize policies between states, but we are on the right path.

You have also advocated for a bottom-up approach to development. Doesn’t that contradict the objectives of the regional frameworks, which are top-down?

No, it cannot be top-down, because none of the frameworks will work if you do not empower the local communities.

For example, you know that access to electricity in Africa is very low—more than 60% of our rural population has no access to electricity. But agricultural productivity will not increase if the energy issue is not addressed. The best way to solve the energy problem is to have decentralized energy services at the local community level, managed by local communities. This is what I call bottom-up. You can have the big strategy, but in terms of implementation, in terms of innovation, it must come from the bottom.

“Colonialism was a system of illicit financial flows,” you said recently at an event at the UN headquarters. What do you mean by that?

Look at our infrastructure in pre-independence Africa, and even before. If it was a road, it was one linking a mine to a port. So, all the infrastructure projects, except in countries and places where colonizers were thinking of settling in a definitive manner, all other infrastructure projects were geared toward extraction, extraction, extraction! Extraction of minerals, extraction of agricultural produce, and so on.

The infrastructure of the colonial period still stands in most of Africa, albeit modernised. What should be done about that?

That’s why we created the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). It reverses that trend of extractive-based infrastructure by focusing on regional projects and transport corridors that ease movement and spur development. That way we boost intra-Africa trade.

You have announced a plan to create 1 million jobs. How will you achieve that?

The African Union member states wanted to be very concrete regarding the creation of a decent jobs agenda. They said we should have a quantifiable objective so that we are accountable. We said, “OK, let’s set a target of 1 million jobs over the next three years.” But as you know governments do not create jobs; the private sector creates jobs, and the private sector in Africa is dominated by small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The African Development Bank tells us that 60% of our SMEs have less than 20 employees and the other 40% have less than 10. So, if we assist 100,000 SMEs, we can achieve that agenda of 1 million jobs.

One of the critical factors of success in regional integration is having everybody on board. If the consensus is strong...we can have strong agreements and start thinking about an implementation roadmap.

Doesn’t Africa need more than 1 million new jobs?

Yes. Every year we need to create 20 million jobs. For the next three years, Africa needs to create 60 million jobs, but we can only target 1 million jobs for now. However, we want to harness best practices regarding SME creation, incubation centres, protection of intellectual property, financing of SMEs by national development banks, conducive environment, incentives, and others. We want these best practices to be replicated in all countries.

Given the lopsided strengths of African economies—with SMEs concentrated in more economically advanced countries—it appears poorer countries will benefit the least from this programme.

We target least developed countries. The money we get from the African Union is rarely used for projects in Egypt, South Africa or Nigeria. The aim of regional integration is to uplift the least developed countries, and this is the beauty of the African Union. Regional integration is fundamentally based on solidarity, and we know that solidarity is not only moral. It has an economic dimension that benefits everyone.
A decent job is an essential marker of a young person’s success. It provides financial security for his or her future family and contributes to the economic growth of their country. With more than half of Africa’s population under the age of 25, the need for decent jobs is enormous.

“In Africa, youth make up 37% of the working-age population, but 60% of that number is unemployed. The youth demographic is very large compared to the available opportunities in the market,” writes Obiageli Ezekwesili, former World Bank Vice President of the Africa division, in her article ‘Youth unemployment: Challenges & Opportunities in Economic Development’.

In Kenya, for example, a recent study by the UN Development Programme put the country’s unemployment rate at a staggering 39%, the highest in the region, compared to 24% in Tanzania and 18% in Uganda.

The demand for decent jobs is only expected to grow as the Africa Institute for Development Policy estimates that the continent will account for 29% of all people aged 15 to 24 by 2050.

Some organizations have taken on the youth employment challenge through innovative and broad-based public, private and civil society partnerships that have the potential to be more impactful than they could have aspired to working alone.

One example is the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), a partnership between the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and private sector representatives. Together they create opportunities for African youth by enhancing leadership skills, bolstering entrepreneurship, and connecting young African leaders with one another and innovative leaders in the private, civic, and public sectors. The programme has four regional leadership centres — in Accra, Ghana and Dakar, Senegal to cover West Africa, in Nairobi, Kenya to cover East Africa, and one near Pretoria in South Africa for the sub-region.

Betty Kariuki, YALI’s director of partnerships, believes that creating opportunities for youth is achievable if Africa can engage the triple helix of the three sectors — public, private and civil society — to work together.

She gives an example of the East Africa center which is working in partnership with the MasterCard Foundation and Deloitte East Africa Ltd, the implementing agent, to create training opportunities for African youth. The Southern African center is in partnership with the University of Southern Africa and Dow Chemical Company.
Partnerships: Creating opportunities for youth

employing youth from many geographic, opportunities cut across the continent, programme’s graduates are diverse, these opportunities for at least 50,000 youth engaged in the informal sector within eastern Africa between 2016-2020. So far, the 2jiajiri project has trained 23,000 young people in technical skills and financial literacy across the region.

The overall target is to support creation of jobs and wealth for at least 50,000 youth engaged in the informal sector within eastern Africa between 2016-2020. So far, the 2jiajiri project has trained 23,000 young people in technical skills and financial literacy across the region.

In Uganda

From the city of Masaka in the Buganda region of Uganda, 28-year-old Stephen Katende is the founder of Kisoboka Africa, an organisation that seeks financial inclusion for underserved communities in Uganda. He credits the training he received from YALI, which helped his organisation introduce business training for his community and created job opportunities for 10 other young people as trainers.

“YALI prepared me to face the business world. I was introduced to design-driven entrepreneurship where business is about solving problems, something that the organisation I founded required,” says Katende.

In Kenya

In Kenya, the African Management Services Company (AMSCO), a private sector organisation, collaborated with the Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) Foundation to co-create Business Development Services for the “2jiajiri programme” that provides unemployed and out-of-school youth with technical skills training opportunities to help them grow micro-enterprises.

2jiajiri stands for Tujiajiri — a Swahili word for ‘Lets employ ourselves’. The programme has a two-step approach. (1): Inception; vocational skills training and (2): Incubation, where participants receive financial support as well as business development services for their existing or new businesses for a period of 12 months.

The overall target is to support creation of jobs and wealth for at least 50,000 youth engaged in the informal sector within eastern Africa between 2016-2020. So far, the 2jiajiri project has trained 23,000 young people in technical skills and financial literacy across the region.

In Rwanda

In 2013, Rwanda launched Youth Connex, a youth empowerment partnership between the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Youth. It trains young people in entrepreneurship and development skills through boot camps, which have created about 1,000 permanent jobs and 2,700 temporary jobs for young people within three years.

UNDP is also planning to build partnerships with the private sector, civil society, national governments and with support from the Government of Denmark, to scale up the programme to other African countries.

“Attending Youth Connex gave me a business perspective by listening and learning from various presenters on how to start and grow a business,” says Pearl Umuhoro, 28, and the founder of Yummy and Fresh, a startup for healthy foods in the capital Kigali. Since launching her business, she has employed six permanent staff.

“I have grown this business through knowledge acquired by attending various entrepreneurship programmes, they have really helped me to think and act as an entrepreneur,” Ms. Umuhoro adds.

In West Africa

In West Africa, the Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) is the largest African entrepreneurship initiative and represents a $100 million commitment to identify and empower 10,000 African entrepreneurs over a 10-year period. Established in 2015 by Elumelu, a Nigerian entrepreneur and philanthropist, the foundation has provided 7,531 young entrepreneurs with non-returnable seed capital of $5,000 each thus far. The programme also provides access to mentors and business training.

The initiative has attracted many investors and like-minded partners for the various programmes it runs, including UNDP, France Development Agency (AFD) and the German Development Agency (GIZ).

“TEF has opened up doors of opportunity for me, beyond the seed capital I used to start my business. It has placed on me the responsibility of becoming an enabler of people (a solution provider),” writes Jiraji Kelvin Tersoo. Jiraji is the founder of Agritech Hub, Nigeria, an innovative space for developers, entrepreneurs and startups, to build a tech ecosystem for startups and developers.

Mr. Tersoo says the biggest lesson he has learnt as an entrepreneur is consistency and teamwork. “Teamwork makes the dream work,” he says.
When Julius Maada Bio, 55, assumed the presidency of Sierra Leone in April 2018, the country was on a slow but steady rebound following the 2014–2015 Ebola epidemic. Annual GDP growth stands at 4.8%. Buoyed by increased agricultural output and the resumption of iron ore production and export, Sierra Leone’s GDP growth should reach 5.4% in 2020, according to the World Bank.

Still, the 2019 UNDP Human Development Index, which ranks countries based on income, life expectancy, education and quality of life, among other indicators, placed Sierra Leone at 184 out of 189 countries. President Bio has acknowledged that there is much yet to be done.

Development strategy
At the centre of his development strategy, Mr. Bio told *Africa Renewal* in an interview, is investment in education, healthcare, empowering women and ending gender-based violence, and agriculture—aligning the strategy with the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the aspirations of the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

“My government has allocated 21% of the national budget to education,” Mr. Bio said, which is one of the highest such allocations in the world. “Pre-primary to secondary school education is now free, irrespective of gender, ability or ethnicity.”

In addition, he said his government provides “the students with core textbooks and other reading materials. We also provide free meals for student retention and for a balanced nutrition.”

Empowering women and girls
“We have expanded opportunities for girls by creating safe places in schools and by campaigning vigorously against early marriage and sexual and gender-based violence,” the president said.

“Girls who decide to study STEM [science, technology, engineering and math] subjects get automatic scholarships at university,” added Mr. Bio.

As the same time, he lamented that the current maternal mortality rate is “unacceptably high.”

Sierra Leone has one of the highest infant and maternal mortality ratios in the world: 857 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births and 140 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, according to the UN Population Fund, the UN’s reproductive health and rights agency.

The government provides free health care for pregnant women. “We are working on different interventions targeting teenagers and adults,” said Mr. Bio. “Pregnancy must not be a death sentence.”

As well, Mr. Bio is working to tackle gender-based violence in his country, vowing that perpetrators will find no hiding place.

The president declared rape and sexual violence a national emergency in February 2019 after police statistics showed cases of rape doubling in 2018. This was followed swiftly with a law.

“We just passed in Parliament an act [Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2019] that makes punishment for gender-based violence much stiffer than before.”

The act stipulates up to 15 years in jail for perpetrators, including people who use positions of influence to sexually abuse or harass others.

The Sierra Leonean government’s agricultural goals include livestock development and diversifying away from rice production to what it calls the three Cs: coffee, cashew-nuts and cocoa—all with the help of modern technologies. Rice is Sierra Leone’s staple food, cultivated by 85% of its farmers.

Nearly 50% of Africa’s population is under the age of 19. The president maintained that anxiety over the growing youth population vis-à-vis increased poverty, violent extremism and other threats can be addressed through social inclusion programmes, skills training and farming initiatives.
Black-eyed peas: A taste of Africa in the Americas

From akara to acarajé: Culinary traditions that bind Africa and its diaspora

BY FRANCK KUWONU

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It is a delicious dish popular in southern parts of the US, one with an inviting aroma and an interesting name. Hoppin’ John—made with black-eyed peas and rice, chopped onion, sliced bacon and salt—is a dish like no other.

Inspired by West African cuisine, Hoppin’ John, jambalaya, and feijoada are some of the dishes made from beans, meat and vegetables mixed with rice that are common among people of African descent in the Americas and around the world.

From West Africa’s shores to South America and the Caribbean—black-eyed peas (also known as cowpeas) have become a potent symbol of the cultural ties that still bind Africa and its diaspora. Cakes made of peeled and mashed peas deep-fried in palm oil are sold on the streets under many similar names on different continents. In Brazil they are called acajá, in Nigeria akara.

While black-eyed peas are also part of the diet of people living in places such as India and Myanmar, they’re mostly consumed in West African countries, particularly Benin, Guinea Nigeria and Senegal, as well as in the Caribbean, Brazil and the southern United States, which has long had a large African-American population. The peas are said to have been taken to the Caribbean and the Americas on slave ships.

Kangni Alem, a Togolese novelist and playwright, told Africa Renewal that he couldn’t believe it when he chanced upon women in Brazil selling acarajé on the street. He was visiting Bahia’s capital, Salvador, widely known as the “West African capital of South America,” while on a cultural escapade.

“For once, I thought I was in Lomé,” Mr. Alem said, not so much because of the makeup of the population but because “they were frying the bean cakes right there,” he marveled. He was so impressed that he later wrote about the encounter in his novel Les enfants du Brésil (The Children of Brazil).

“Poor man’s meat”

Black-eyed peas are part of the daily diet of millions of people in Africa. They are either boiled and eaten with rice or fried in tomatoes and onions and eaten with a combination of rice and fried plantains. They can also be ground into flour for porridge.

Called nièbé in parts of the Sahel, the black-eyed peas are dubbed “miracle peas,” or “poor man’s meat” in most of sub-Saharan Africa because of their high nutritive value and their ability to grow in harsh conditions.

According to the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the black-eyed pea grain “contain[s] 25% protein and several vitamins and minerals. It is resistant to drought, performs well in a wide variety of soils, and being a legume, replenishes low fertility soils when the roots are left to decay.”

While details on global consumption and trade remain scarce, Nigeria is the largest producer, importer and consumer of black-eyed peas in the world. A 2016 United States Agency for International Development study estimated that consumption is 18 kg per person in Nigeria, 9 kg per person in Ghana and 1.8 kg per person in Côte d’Ivoire.

African countries produced over 96% of the estimated annual harvest of 5.4 million tonnes of black-eyed peas during the same year, with Nigeria accounting for 61% of the continent’s share and 58% globally, according to IITA.

Different varieties of black-eyed peas have been developed by IITA as part of the institute’s research activities. Some have bigger seeds and high-yielding crops that mature faster; others have been engineered to resist pests. The organisation’s genebank holds the world’s largest and most diverse collection of black-eyed peas, with 15,122 unique samples from 88 countries.

In the US, at the Sweet Home Café in the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., a poster on the wall quotes American food and agricultural activist Natasha Bowens: “With roots in many countries across Africa and the complex impact of southern history, America’s black food culture and the stories it carries is vast and deep.”


In the museum and its café in the US capital and on the shores of Brazil, the enduring African influence on what is now considered local cuisine is undeniable.
he Yoruba people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, have survived for centuries on the African continent. Evidence points to a powerful Yoruba kingdom in the eighth century in Ile-Ife. They lived in well-structured urban centers organized around powerful city-states well before the arrival of the British colonizers.

With the onset of the Atlantic slave trade, Yoruba people from Nigeria and Benin were forcibly transported to America as slaves. Their religion expanded across many borders — to Trinidad, Cuba, Saint Lucia, Benin, Togo, Brazil, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, to name a few.

A new film Bigger than Africa captures the descendants of one of the largest empires in West Africa before colonization kept their traditions alive.

Toyin Ibrahim Adekeye, the Los Angeles filmmaker and director of the film Bigger than Africa traveled to six countries to examine contemporary practices of Yoruba culture. He pored over numerous videos and conducted face-to-face interviews with Africans and people of African descent steeped in Yoruba beliefs.

Rallying point

The film shows the Yorubas as among the last Africans to be captured and sent to the Americas and other places just before the slave trade came to an end.

“As a result, they were able to retain their culture, which became a rallying point for non-Yoruba freed slaves desperate to connect with their ancestors,” Mr. Adekeye told Africa Renewal at the screening of the documentary at UN Headquarters in New York. “They all gravitated toward the Yoruba culture. They became a community, one people in the diaspora.”

“To date,” he added, “the most pronounced African culture in the diaspora is Yoruba.”

Mr. Adekeye’s visit to Oyotunji Village in South Carolina in the United States triggered his interest in the production of Bigger than Africa. “Oyotunji” in Yoruba translates to “Oyo awakening.” His film, shot in six different countries (Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States), and featuring interviews from around the world, follows the journey of these Africans from West Africa to their final destinations.

Many Yoruba monuments dot the six countries he visited, but the greatest manifestation of the Yoruba culture is the language and religious worship of the deities—Shango, the “Orisha” of thunder and lightning, Babalu-Aye, orisha of the Earth, Kokou, a violent worrier orisha, Obatala, creator of human bodies, orisha of light, Oko, orisha of agriculture, Ogun, orisha who presides over iron, fire, hunting, politics and war, among others. These were common denominators he found in all these countries.

Other references to the Yoruba faith can be seen in Trinidad and Tobago, where a belief system known as Trinidad Orisha and its adherents, known as “Shango Baptists” can be seen. Yoruba Village in Port of Spain is dedicated to Robert Antoine, the pioneer of free Africans who came to Trinidad. In Bahia, Brazil, known as the Yoruba Capital of the Americas, the faith in Yoruba deities is over 500 years old.

Mr. Adekeye even saw evidence of Yoruba influence in Lemonade, the sixth studio album by American singer Beyoncé, who performed the title piece at the 2017 Grammy Awards ceremony with flowing water around her. She was a depiction of “Osun, the Yoruba goddess of fertility, beauty and water,” Mr. Adekeye said.

Beyoncé channeled “Osun, the beloved Yoruba goddess… known to display human attributes such as vanity and jealousy,” corroborates music critic, Jenni Avins, in a piece for Quartz, a US publication.

Another Yoruba deity is said to be profiled in a much-talked about Disney project, called Sade. It is said to reference the deity Yemoja, although Disney has pitched it as a fairy tale princess.

Evolution

Despite its remarkable resilience, some aspects of the Yoruba language show signs of foreign influences — both at home in Western Nigeria, in Benin and in Yoruba communities in the diaspora, Mr. Adekeye acknowledged. “The language is not exactly the same. Due to the influence of local dialects, pronunciations of certain words differ country to country.”

Screenings of Bigger than Africa, including one at the United Nations headquarters in New York in October, are met with great interest by the audience. It is also accomplishing the producer’s objective — that it should become a conduit for the African diaspora to connect with Africa.

“African diasporas are making efforts to visit Africa and participate in local festivals. We can help each other,” Mr. Adekeye said, adding: “Growing up in Africa, we
knew about slavery, but I think our knowledge stops at that point. We do not know what happened after the slave boats docked in the Americas, Cuba and the Caribbean. We need to fill the gaps.”

The UN General Assembly proclaimed 2015-2024 “The International Decade for People of African Descent” to recognise and promote the human rights of people of African descent.

In 2007 the UN declared 25 March of every year the “International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.”

The screening took place in the context of those initiatives.

Mr. Adekeye says the message in his documentary aligns with that of the UN. “Our goal is to foster unity, promote human rights and highlight the work of people of African descent.”

More projects are in the pipeline, he hinted. “There is a lot to document and highlight.”

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**2020 is election season across... from page 3**

first to be held since presidential term limits were restored in 2019.

Since Ghana’s transition to multiparty democracy in 1992 elections have generally been peaceful, and their results generally considered fair. This trend is expected to continue, amid the government’s recent claims to have nipped in the bud attempts at a coup by a group of civilians, and former and current military personnel.

In Burkina Faso, Burundi and Tanzania, voters will be called to choose their presidents first, then their national assemblymen and women later in the year. Burundians will elect a new president, as the incumbent is retiring.

In Burkina Faso and Mali, recurring violence in some areas, some of it deadly, is likely to affect the polls. Over the last few months, terrorist activity has increasingly targeted civilians and security forces, including peacekeepers in Mali. Given the circumstances, organising nationwide elections will be a challenge.

In Côte d’Ivoire things are not straightforward either. The country has remained stable since the hotly contested 2010 presidential poll that helped mark the end of a decade of armed conflict. Now Ivoirians look towards October polls, but the political coalition has progressively frayed, and old political fault lines have resurfaced.

Guineans are scheduled to choose a new assembly and president come October too. Parliamentary elections were postponed earlier this year given political tensions over plans to call a referendum on lifting constitutional term limits. Large demonstrations against the plan have been witnessed across the country, including in the capital Conakry. The heightening tension is likely to affect the upcoming polls.

**Elections timetable**

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<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>President, National Assembly (Dec 2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Legislative, Local</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>Senate late 2020 or early 2021</td>
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**Work in progress for Africa’s ... from page 9**

the UN’s most challenging operations and it has suffered significant casualties in recent years.

**Somalia**

The Somali civil war began in 1991 when the government of President Siad Barre was overthrown. Armed groups started competing for power. Without a central administration, Somalia became a failed state, with rival warlords and different groups controlling the capital Mogadishu and other southern parts of the country.

The Al-Shabaab militant group emerged as an offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union which controlled Mogadishu in 2006, while a transitional federal government was in exile in Kenya. Ethiopian forces routed the courts union, paving the way for the government in exile to return home. Al Shabaab carried out attacks against the government, prompting the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007.

In 2012, a new federal government was constituted. The same year Al-Shabaab declared allegiance to the militant group al-Qaeda. Fighting between armed Islamist groups and pro-government forces has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians and the displacement of over two million people. Despite gains against the group, Al-Shabaab insurgents continue to launch sporadic attacks against civilians and the government.

The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) provides policy advice to the Somali government and AMISOM on security sector reforms, disengaging combatants, rule of law, among other issues. Furthermore, UNSOM is helping build the Federal Government’s capacity to promote respect for human rights and women’s empowerment, promote child protection, and prevent conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.
Earlier this year, Peter Tabichi, a Catholic Franciscan brother from Kenya who gives away 80% of his salary to help the poor, won the annual $1 million Global Teacher Prize. Established in 2014 by the education-focused Varkey Foundation, the prize is presented to an exceptional teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession. Tabichi was selected from a list of 10 finalists from around the world. His achievements include more than half the students in his underprivileged school qualifying for college or university and doubling enrolment in three years. Tabichi was also declared the UN in Kenya Person of the Year. He spoke to Africa Renewal’s Zipporah Musau about his future plans. These are excerpts:

Africa Renewal: Can you give us a brief background about yourself?
Peter Tabichi: My name is Brother Peter Mokaya Tabichi. I am a maths and physics teacher at Keriko Secondary School in Nakuru [County], Kenya. I teach in a school that is under-resourced and without adequate facilities. It is quite challenging for us to teach in such an environment, but we try as much as possible to be creative.

I also mentor my students and help them unlock their potential.

What has brought you to New York?
As the Global Teacher Prize winner, I’m here on a special mission—to talk about the teaching profession. I am here to tell the world that teachers are very important people in the society and deserve recognition. The teacher prize is a great initiative in promoting the teaching profession. I’m also here to promote science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), especially in Africa.
Why are you rooting specifically for STEM?
I promote STEM because I believe it can empower the young generation, our students. STEM is a great way of unlocking the potential of Africa’s youth. It also equips them with other important skills such as communication, problem solving, teamwork and how to be creative and innovative. This way they will be able to solve some of the challenges we are facing in Africa today, such as climate change and food and water shortages. We don’t need others to come to Africa to solve our problems for us. We have the ideas and the power.

Every child has a unique talent, but sometimes they don’t realize their dreams because they are not given proper support or granted the opportunity. I believe STEM is one way of helping them discover their respective talents. But we also need ideas—an integrated approach—on how we should all support it.

What does this award mean to you?
It means a lot. The award is not just for me alone, it shows that what teachers do is really important in society, that teachers are doing great work which deserves recognition. At the same time, it shows that students also can achieve a lot. It is because of my students’ achievements that I was able to get this recognition.

I want to use this platform to inspire the poor in the community. Quality education is not just about academic knowledge. It’s also about character formation, creativity, communication skills and discovering the talents of young people. Regardless of where students come from, every single child has a gift and needs to be given opportunities. As teachers we need to be aware of that.

How do you plan to use the $1 million that you won?
I want to use this award to empower and inspire others, starting within my school, and then the local community where I teach and beyond. My school has no lab or granted the opportunity. I believe STEM is one way of helping them discover their respective talents. But we also need ideas—an integrated approach—on how we should all support it.

Global Teacher Prize winner 2019
Name: Peter Tabichi
Age: 38
Nationality: Kenyan
Years teaching: 12
School: Keriko Secondary School
Location: Remote area of Nakuru County in Kenya’s Rift Valley
Students from poor background: 95%
Distance to school for most of his students: 7 km
Student-teacher ratio: 58:1
Number of computers: 1

His achievements:
Expanded school’s science club
Uses ICT in 80% of his lessons
School enrolment has doubled to 400 in three years
Indiscipline cases fell from 30 per week to three
More than half of his students qualified to join university and college last year
Boosted girls’ achievement, they are now leading boys in all tests

What led you to become a teacher?
I come from a family of teachers. My father and some of my cousins are teachers. I was inspired to pursue teaching because I saw firsthand the important role played by teachers. My father, who is now retired, also inspired me in so many other aspects of life, ensuring that I grew up in a Christian setting with values such as honesty and integrity.

What, in your view, should African countries do to improve their education systems in Africa?
I believe every country should have a system that ensures quality education. For example, in my country, Kenya, the government is currently introducing a new competency-based education system to ensure that young people can become independent, productive, innovative and creative. Also, to learn life skills that will enable them to promote peace and unity in the society. I am so happy that this is happening in Kenya now, and feel it is an opportunity for us in Africa to promote that kind of system. We have a young generation that can achieve a lot and become famous in the future. These young Africans have the potential of becoming great scientists and engineers recognized globally.

What are your future plans?
Now that I have the platform, I really look forward to inspiring others—to promote what I believe is going to make us achieve our dreams, and to talk about the significant role teachers play in society. I want to promote peace and unity, not only in Kenya, but also in Africa and globally.

What is your message to other teachers?
I believe one of the best methods is to be creative and use technology—integrating ICT—in our teaching. Be a good listener because you are going to change the lives of so many young people. Teachers have a deep responsibility in the society, and they should be aware of that. Teaching is not only about incentives, but about commitment, passion and being able to go beyond the classroom.

What is your message to young people?
Every child has a talent, try to discover what your talent is. Young people should also learn teamwork, creativity and respect for one another.
Catherine Oshotse, a 27-year-old entrepreneur from Lagos, Nigeria, has the internet to thank for her growing business. Selling hair extensions and women’s handbags online to customers across Africa and abroad has grown her client base from 10 in 2015 to more than 1,000 currently. Of these, 70% are in Africa and 20% in the United Kingdom and the United States.

“You just go to my website and click on the item you want to buy. I receive an email that somebody has placed an order, then I deliver the package. Very easy!” Ms. Oshotse tells *Africa Renewal* in an interview.

Online shopping for goods and services is booming in Africa and it’s changing the very nature of many startups, especially among young entrepreneurs.

With the emergence of online technologies, Africa is joining the burgeoning world of digital economies. Estimates suggest about 264 e-commerce startups are operational across the continent, active in at least 23 countries. There’s significant potential to create new jobs — as many as 3 million by 2025. These jobs will be directly in online marketplaces, supporting services and spin-off economic activity.

Benefits will include opening markets to otherwise isolated rural communities and servicing Africa’s fast-growing consumer class. Young entrepreneurs are taking a keen interest in e-commerce because it entails reasonable start-up funding, offers revenue-generating prospects, and has an open door to all, in ways traditional workplaces may not. African e-commerce can be a force for sustainable development.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that Africa had at least 21 million online shoppers in 2017, 50% of which were in Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya. Although this is only a small portion of the African population which is over a billion, the number has been increasing by 18% annually since 2014, which is 6% higher than the world average.

Challenges and the opportunity in continental trade

Despite the growing popularity of e-commerce in Africa, the industry faces obstacles. The E-commerce Index 2018 by UNCTAD which measures an economy’s preparedness to support online shopping covers 151 world economies, including 44 African countries. Mauritius was ranked 55th, the highest among African countries. Nigeria and South Africa ranked 75 and 77 respectively. Nine of the last ten countries in the ranking are African.

Challenges include slow and expensive internet connectivity, inadequate infrastructure and weak delivery logistics. Consumer protections are weak or non-existent, affecting trust between the seller and the buyer.

While mobile payment is growing, cash-on-delivery remains popular in Africa, making cross-border e-commerce difficult. Also, policies are often not adapted to complex payment supply chains, meaning Africa’s merchants have fewer options to connect their local e-payments systems with services used by global customers.

Policy-makers also need to work to improve local and global payment system interoperability. This would help bolster Africa’s position as a global leader in mobile payments.

The new Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a gamechanger. Set to start trading in 2020, the AfCFTA aims to create the world’s largest trading bloc, with a market of 1.27 billion consumers, expected to reach 1.7 billion by 2030. Bridging the digital divide and creating an enabling environment would help entrepreneurs like Catherine Oshotse grow their clientele even further and offers vast opportunities for innovation.

The role e-commerce can play in realizing the AfCFTA is also critical. “E-commerce has the potential to lift intra-African trade from the current rate of 18% and to boost Africa’s share of global trade, currently estimated at less than 3%,” said Ajay Kumar Bramdeo, the African Union’s ambassador to the UN in Geneva, during e-Commerce week in Geneva in 2019.
E-commerce offers fresh opportunities for young traders

**Africa’s Critical Choices: a call for a Pan-African roadmap**

*Book by Ibrahim Assane Mayaki*

Many books on Africa’s development often paint a dystopian picture of a continent heading towards a cliff-edge. But in the recently-published *Africa’s Critical Choices: A Call for a Pan-African Roadmap*, Ibrahim Mayaki details the continent’s potentials, proffers solutions to seemingly intractable problems, and compels the reader to believe in the possibility of Africa’s greatness.

Mr. Mayaki is the CEO of the implementing arm of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) Agency, which is currently being transformed to African Union Development Agency (AUDA). Fittingly, the book opens with a preface by Olusegun Obasanjo, a former president of Nigeria and one of those who championed the creation of NEPAD in 2001.

Mr. Obasanjo praises Mr. Mayaki for sharing “the lessons of a 40-year multifaceted career” with intellectual and moral vigor.

In the book, Mayaki discusses financing, the youth bulge, migration, climate change, good governance, among other issues. A recurring theme is that Africa can and should resolve its challenges. He writes that those who look for solutions to Africa’s problems from other regions of the world “implicitly… weakens the continent’s ability to influence its own destiny and that of the world.”

On climate change, the author canvasses a unified African voice at the negotiation table, in addition to learning lessons from industrialised countries and adopting appropriate mitigation technologies. He advises countries negotiating the exploitation of physical capital (land, for example) and other natural resources to ensure the best legal protections.

Mr. Mayaki posits that Africa’s problem is not a lack of financial resources but the absence of appropriate development strategies. He recalls a meeting he attended at the NASDAQ stock exchange in New York at which he discovered that African pension funds were awash with some $1.5 trillion capitalisation.

Mr. Mayaki uses data skilfully in the book. He writes, for example, that, “For each dollar of aid to a developing country, there is an illicit outflow of $10,” underscoring that Africa’s development challenges are as much a domestic problem as they are the result of corrupt practices of foreign companies operating on the continent.

The book is steeped in the author’s pan-African beliefs; he even devotes a section to a discussion of: “The path to collective emancipation.” That path, he advocates, is regional integration, which he touts as “our most ambitious political innovation since... the 1950s,” following the wave of decolonisation.

While he is enthused by the African Continental Free Trade Area, which entered into force in May 2019, he urges Africa’s gradual integration into globalization. The reader may see this latter point as a recourse to protectionist policies. However, he states that currently, “Africa trades twice as much with Europe than it does with itself.”

While Mr. Mayaki often gives speeches promoting women’s empowerment, the book does not include any substantive discussions of how this can be achieved.

Mr. Mayaki has a doctorate in Administrative Sciences, was a former Prime Minister of Niger and a university professor. A leading African intellectual-cum-technocrat would be expected to be wordy, but the 125-page book is breezy and refreshingly digestible.

The book is a wakeup call to Africa to make critical choices, although, surprisingly, the author recommends it essentially for future leaders. Still, current policymakers, development experts, researchers and political leaders will find it fascinating...

— Kingsley Ighobor

**APPOINTMENTS**

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has appointed Damilola Ogunbiyi of Nigeria as his Special Representative for Sustainable Energy for All and Co-Chair of United Nations-Energy. The SG also welcomes the announcement by the Administrative Board of Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) that she has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SEforALL. Prior to this, she was the MD of Nigerian Rural Electrification Agency and has extensive experience in the energy sector. She succeeds Rachel Kyte of UK.

Adam Abdelmoula of Sudan and the United States has been appointed as Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, where he will also serve as the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNOSOM). Previously, Mr. Abdelmoula was the Director of the UN Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Divisions at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). He succeeds George Conway of Canada.
Africa is changing and so is Africa Renewal, with a new website, new features and a new commitment to supporting the partnership between Africa and the United Nations.

Africa Renewal Online. It’s a new Africa. It’s a new Africa Renewal.

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Now available on smartphones, tablets and eReaders.

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