



Concept Note

Launch of the OSAA Knowledge Network

Venue: Zoom

Date: 29 June 2021

I. Background

The security, economic, social, environmental, political, humanitarian and human rights landscapes in African countries are complex webs intertwined with one another, constantly adding layers to the already complex dynamics in achieving sustainable peace and development. The United Nations General Assembly mandated the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) to address potential gaps stemming from the interdependent action of stakeholders in those areas and to initiate reports on critical issues affecting Africa.

In this regard, in December 2019, OSAA convened an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on *The Role of Advocacy and Research in Breaking the Silos: strengthening the nexus approach in Africa*, aiming to assess specific contributions that OSAA could do through its advocacy and advisory functions to leverage the interrelation between the different areas of action of the United Nations in order to identify and promote specific initiatives with a multiplying effect on Africa's development.

African academics can be key players in researching and proposing tailored, indigenous, practical, and country specific and evidence-based recommendations and inputs to policy makers. However, despite the amount of research that takes place on the African continent, by African scholars or those based at African institutions, a limited amount of it finds its way into the peer-reviewed literature let alone regional or global debate, which is the leading evidence base for policy and development practice and is the dominant source of literature for major global assessments.

Taking this into account, one of the recommendations stemming from the December 2019 EGM was for OSAA to develop a network of African researchers to work with the Office on implementing an African-focused research agenda. The recommendation proposed that the network be used as a platform to develop case studies and knowledge products on key issues related to the interrelation between the different aspects of development, with a view to generating and promoting ideas and perspectives on the nexus for UN and African policy makers.

In January 2021, OSAA adopted a strategic agenda that identifies six cluster areas that are deemed key for African countries to leapfrog toward sustainable development in view of their mutual interlinkages and multiplying impact: (1) financing for development; (2) sustainable development to deliver sustainable peace; (3) democracy, resilience and human capital; (4) science, technology and innovation; (5) industrialization, demographic dividend and the AfCFTA; (6) sustainable energy and climate change.

II. Objectives of the Network

The OSAA Knowledge Network will have two main goals:

Goal 1: In coordination with other relevant existing knowledge networks, enhance the state of knowledge about Africa by providing a platform for African scholars, practitioners and experts to present their views and proposals to national and international policymakers.

Goal 2: To build or contribute to Africa-centric communities of expertise on critical issues with a multiplying impact on Africa's development clustered around the six identified areas.

III. Objectives of the meeting

The network will be launched with a virtual meeting of a core team of participants representing different areas of expertise within the six abovementioned clusters.

The specific objectives of the meeting are to:

- Agree on the long and medium term goals, added value and expectations of the network;
- Adopt the Terms of Reference of the network, defining the roles and responsibilities of its members and their relationship with OSAA;
- Establish the first working groups of the network based on OSAA's strategic agenda,
- Develop a tentative agenda / plan of activities for each working group;
- Discuss potential future engagement with the broader research community;

IV. Format

The meeting will be an interactive dialogue organized on Tuesday, 29 June, from 9am to 11am (EST) in four different sessions:

- An opening session with institutional representatives.
- One plenary meeting, to lay out the broad objectives of the Network.
- Breakout sessions to further discuss on the Network's objectives and how to promote mutually beneficial cooperation.
- One plenary meeting to share the main conclusions and recommendations of the working groups and address outstanding questions.

V. Expected Outcome

The expected outcome of the meeting is a roadmap for the first months of work of the network, including Terms of Reference and a workplan/potential activities.

VI. Venue & Date

The meeting will take place virtually through Zoom on 29 June.