



THE 2019 ASWAN CONCLUSIONS ON SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

On 11-12 December 2019, the city of Aswan, Egypt, hosted the inaugural meeting of the “**Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development.**” Titled, “**An Agenda for Sustainable Peace, Security and Development in Africa,**” the meeting took place in the broader context of Africa assuming ownership of its peace and development agendas.

In this regard, the Forum highlighted that the nature and scope of the opportunities promising to transform the continent’s security and development landscape, and the challenges undermining these transformative developments, underscore the imperative of a “paradigm shift” from crisis management to sustainable peace and development, by means of a “peace-development continuum”. It also emphasized that the existing normative and legal frameworks at Africa’s disposal are adequate to advance this “paradigm shift”. **The primary challenge, however, lies in the operationalization of these frameworks.**

To achieve this transformation, the following measures need to be urgently considered and effected:

Conflict Prevention

Conflict prevention is a state responsibility. It requires political leadership and commitment. If owned by the state, conflict prevention becomes a sovereignty enhancer.

To prevent societies from descending into conflict, the prevention agenda must be integrated into national policies and efforts, with the sustainable development goals at the core of this approach. National development plans should be the basis of long-term investments in sustainable and inclusive development.

Conflict prevention requires a whole of government approach, one that leverages the complementary mandates, resources and expertise of humanitarian, development and peace and security actors, at both the central and local levels of governance. It also requires a whole of society approach that builds on local pillars of peace and resilience. The AU preventative engagements must primarily aim at addressing the structural drivers of conflict and crises.

In addition to the above, African countries are invited to:

- 1. make use of the suite of instruments that the AU Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework makes available, including the Country Structural Vulnerability Assessments (CSVRA) and the Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies (CSVMSs), that help in identifying and addressing root causes and structural drivers of conflict and violence;*
- 2. ensure that relevant AU structures are working together to achieve collective outcomes and capacitated to offer technical assistance upon request from the countries concerned.*

African Peace Support Operations

African-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs) should be part of a broader political engagement where the role of military operations is to contain violence and generate stability, so that political solutions can

be pursued and reinforced by long-term post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts. *In this connection, African countries and the AU are encouraged to:*

- 1. continue to adapt the AU's PSO doctrine, as well as the African Standby Force (ASF) concept, to better reflect the kind of operations that the AU and Regional Economic Communities/Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) have undertaken over the past decade, and are likely to undertake in the future;*
- 2. continue to pursue predictable financing of African peace support operations mandated by the UN Security Council under Chapter VIII of the Charter;*
- 3. ensure that African positions, guided by the "Cairo Roadmap on Enhancing the Performance of Peacekeeping Operations from Mandate to Exit," are duly integrated in the implementation of the UN reform initiative, Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), including advancing the UN-AU partnership , especially on the operational level.*

Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development

The operationalization of the AU PCRD Policy should aim at prioritizing human and institutional capacity development, reconciliation, reintegration and generation of livelihood opportunities based on context-specific, nationally led and locally consulted, needs assessments. To this end, there is a need for the early operationalization of the AU Centre for Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development (AUC-PCRD). *The Centre should:*

- 1. enable AU engagement in vulnerability and needs analysis and assessments leading to more informed and tailored PCRD programme design and implementation;*
- 2. pilot engagement in a specific sub-region in order to demonstrate its potential added value and comparative advantage;*
- 3. help the AU and RECs/RMs draw upon the new and innovative approach to programming and financing of peacebuilding and PCRD activities by institutional development actors, such as the World Bank's FCV Strategy, the African Development Bank's (AfDB) Transition Support Facility (TSF) and the UNDP's emerging focus on "enhancing national prevention and recovery capacities for resilient societies;"*
- 4. ensure that women and youth empowerment is mainstreamed in planning and program design and implementation.*

Women Empowerment

The AU should support Member States in their efforts to advance the comprehensive and meaningful implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. The recently launched Continental Results Framework (CRF) offers an important tool to achieve that. *In this regard, the African Union should:*

- 1. support African countries, especially those emerging from conflict, to develop, adopt and implement National Action Plans (NAPs) and to consider the context-specific application of the monitoring tools offered by the CRF, with specific focus on the WPS pillars of participation and relief and recovery;*

2. *leverage the unique position of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), to go beyond its current focus on mediation, with the aim of enhancing its efforts in advancing the broader agenda of conflict prevention and sustaining peace.*

Preventing and Resolving Situations of Forced Displacement

Forced displacement can no longer be seen merely as a humanitarian issue, but also as a developmental and a peace and security challenge, for which there are no stand-alone humanitarian solutions, rather a continuum of humanitarian, developmental and peace and security responses. As “durable solutions” (return, local integration, and resettlement) remain elusive for many of Africa’s forcibly displaced, a paradigm shift from crisis management towards prevention and resolving situations of forced displacement is imperative. To advance this paradigm shift from delivering aid to ending need, ***African countries and the AU are encouraged to:***

1. *integrate the question of forced displacement in national development plans, while ensuring that host communities and the forcibly displaced are effectively engaged and consulted in program design and implementation;*
2. *accelerate the ratification, domestication and implementation of existing African normative frameworks;*
3. *operationalize the African Humanitarian Architecture (AHA), in a manner that is complementary to, and reinforcing of, the ongoing AU reform efforts, while avoiding the creation of unnecessary structures. In particular, this should include establishing synergies between the African Humanitarian Architecture and the elaborate operational and structural prevention toolbox developed by the APSA, including, most notably, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Structural Conflict Prevention Framework, and the AU Border Program;*
4. *ensure that the creation and modalities of funding of the African Humanitarian Agency is complementary to similar organs of the AU, including most notably the African Peace Fund;*
5. *address issues related to forced displacement in comprehensive peace agreements, including preventing and reducing social tensions, extending state authority (while avoiding excessively securitized approaches), and preventing relapse to conflict to ensure safe, voluntary and dignified return for Africa's forcibly displaced.*

Managing Journeys Out of Extremism and Building Post-Terrorism Governance Orders

African states have achieved military gains against terrorist groups. The challenge ahead is to sustain peace and development in a manner that ensures inclusivity. The elaborate AU normative and legal infrastructure for countering terrorism and handling individuals formerly associated with terrorist groups offers a solid framework for viable collective efforts in this area. However, and in situations where terrorists have controlled territories and exercised governance, states are faced with the challenge of introducing an alternative governance model that replaces terrorist local orders. ***To address this challenge, there is a need to enable the AU to forge regional and international partnerships that focus on enabling concerned African states to:***

- 1. complement counterterrorism measures with preventative efforts that aim at addressing the root causes and structural drivers of radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism, and meeting sustainable peace and development goals;*
- 2. extend the presence and authority of the State to affected areas and communities through peacebuilding and long-term development efforts, while forging a new social contract between the state and society and establishing viable, inclusive and legitimate governance structures;*
- 3. operationalize, as relevant and in accordance with national laws and international and regional obligations, AU guidance that promote the implementation of Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (SPRR) approaches;*
- 4. foster a positive community environment for reintegration that meets the needs of both, the reintegrated individuals and the host communities so as to prevent recidivism and the return of individuals to the conditions that drove them into extremism in the first place.*

The Future of AU Partnerships

The ongoing reform efforts at the AU offer a unique opportunity for strategic reflection and organizational renewal. Coupled with the ongoing reforms at the UN, there is also an unmatched opportunity to advance a stronger partnership between the two organizations. *To this end, these partnerships should:*

- 1. strive to be impact-driven, with greater emphasis on coherent planning and operational complementarity at the country level, as well advancing operational level partnerships, so as to ensure mutual understanding of the opportunities and challenges for collaboration in a specific context;*
- 2. allow the AU to act jointly or coherently with the UN and other partners to achieve common peace and development objectives in Africa, and in a manner that leverages the comparative advantage of all parties to the partnership, as well as clustering their respective efforts;*
- 3. expand their focus beyond traditional security and crisis management response; and enhance the sustaining peace lens within existing cooperation frameworks;*
- 4. recognize and addresses the mismatch in institutional capacities and work systematically and sustainably in bridging capacity gaps.*
