

AfriForum

29 September 2023

Written submissions to the Peacebuilding Commission's Ministerial Meeting

In our evolving world, it's clear that communities possess values, experiences and aspirations that deserve to be empowered and recognised. Communities require freedom to craft institutions that are rooted in their values. This autonomy empowers and shapes the envisioned future. AfriForum, with 314,000 members, is facilitating this by focusing on community-based solutions. AfriForum is the largest civil rights organisation in Africa and the Southern Hemisphere and believes that governments must reevaluate their roles towards the New Agenda for Peace.

Traditionally, governments have been perceived as the primary providers of services and institutions. However, in today's landscape, there's a compelling case for governments to pivot towards becoming facilitators of community-driven initiatives instead. This paradigm shift involves acknowledging that the government's primary function should be to create an environment where communities can flourish and control their destinies.

Community-based organisations (CBOs) are ingrained in their respective communities and possess an intimate understanding of local dynamics, needs, and cultures. They are equipped to identify and address issues of utmost importance to their communities. By empowering CBOs to shoulder responsibilities, governments can allocate their resources more efficiently. This reallocation of resources from government projects to community-driven initiatives can yield cost savings and improve outcomes.

These organisations foster social cohesion within communities while safeguarding diverse cultures. By promoting unity and cooperation among community members, they reduce the likelihood of conflicts and enhance resilience against external threats. CBOs prioritise inclusivity, ensuring that marginalised and vulnerable groups have a voice in decision-making processes. This inclusivity is vital for sustainable peace, as the exclusion of certain groups can lead to grievances and conflicts.

Peace and development are intertwined. CBOs address immediate conflict-related issues and work towards long-term development goals. They achieve this by improving education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, creating conditions conducive to peace. One characteristic of CBOs is their cultural sensitivity – crucial in implementing peace initiatives. They often serve as trustworthy mediators, setting them apart from government-backed initiatives.

Governments and states should pivot towards creating the necessary space for communities to develop their institutions. Governments should transition into a facilitator, empowering communities to enhance their self-reliance and emphasising the development of community initiatives as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, government projects. By encouraging CBOs to take on specific responsibilities governments can lighten their burden while empowering communities to thrive.

These responsibilities are:

- Empowering community-based solutions with a focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- Enabling communities to establish and manage their regional security architectures.
- Partnerships between the UN and other NGOs and CBOs to address peace and security regionally.
- Focus on prevention and preparedness in the need for sustainable financing for peacebuilding to build regional and local level prevention strategies.
- Creating legislation that provides more freedom for communities to manage their affairs, particularly on a local level through community institutions.
- Fostering mutual recognition between institutions to promote the rule of law and strengthen civil societies to ensure greater solidarity.

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