ASWAN FORUM

The Aswan Conclusions on Re-envisioning Global Governance for Peace and Development

Fourth Edition
Cairo, July 2024

PEACE. PROGRESS. PROSPERITY.

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On 2 and 3 July 2024, Egypt hosted the fourth edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development in Africa, titled "Africa in a Changing World: Re-Envisioning Global Governance for Peace and Development". The Forum provided a platform for rich exchange and deliberations for African leaders from government, international and regional organizations, the private sector, think tanks, and civil society, together with partners, to advance African perspectives on re-envisioning global governance for peace and development in anticipation of the Summit of the Future.

The fourth edition of the Aswan Forum took place at a time of great turbulence and polarization, with conflicts on the rise - some of which have far-reaching and detrimental effects felt not only in Africa, but also on a global scale. The Forum brought together a wide range of key stakeholders and highlighted a number of impactful ways forward to surmount the challenges the continent faces and identified opportunities for the advancement of the peace, security, and development (PSD) nexus in Africa.

The Forum also provided a platform for policymakers to engage in difficult but necessary conversations on the future of the African continent and the imperative to promote Africa's role on the global stage. Accordingly, and building on the conclusions of the first, second, and third editions of the Aswan Forum, the fourth edition put forward innovative and tangible recommendations to reform multilateralism and global governance frameworks, with a view to assert Africa's much-needed voice in these critical spheres.

The conclusions below capture the key outcomes reached during the fourth edition of the Aswan Forum, as a result of extensive and strategic deliberations over two days in Cairo. The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA), as the Secretariat of the Aswan Forum, takes forward the implementation of the conclusions through targeted deliverables that materialize through capacity building, research, and policy engagement, in collaboration with a broad range of partners within the scope of the Aswan Cycle, and feed into preparations of the Forum's forthcoming editions.

1. Reform Multilateralism, Global Governance Frameworks, including International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

It is of paramount importance to elevate African views in addressing issues of global justice, equity, and double standards. The retreat from multilateralism stems from the erroneous perception that global solutions do not align with national agendas. This view must change. Leaders' recognition of the pivotal role global solutions can play in addressing global challenges is needed to address issues that are cross-cutting and cross-dimensional, impacting the entire international community. Cooperation should thus be rebuilt on the basis of mutual respect and reciprocity. The voices of African leaders on the future of peace, security, and development must be amplified, particularly in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future. With that in mind, African governments, the African Union (AU), and Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and their international partners are invited to:

1.1 Transform the multilateral decision-making system to be more just, representative, and equitable - Leaders should leverage the opportunity to elevate African voices in the Summit of the Future and address the inequity in representation in the international system. Leaders should utilize Chapter V "Transforming global governance" of the Pact for the Future to transform the decision-making process at the UN with a view towards empowering and enhancing the role of organs such as the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC);

1.2 Develop a plan of action for the future - Equally important to the Pact for the Future, is a plan of action for the future, which identifies concrete actions to implement commitments and mobilizes the necessary resources to translate them into reality on the ground, with adequate monitoring and follow-up mechanisms;

1.3 Amplify and unify African voices on re-envisioning global governance, including through advancing a common African position(s) (CAP) on key issues that have direct bearing on the continent's peace

and development - CAPs play a vital role in consolidating African views on issues of major global consequence, including the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration on Security Council Reform and the CAP on the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR). Moving forward, similar positions should be developed and adopted, including towards the 2025 United Nations (UN) PBAR;

1.4 Advance Africa's Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want", which serves as a guiding compass for African states' aspirations for the future, and accordingly it should be referenced as a core guiding framework for interventions across the continent;

1.5 Reorient global strategies and frameworks in support of African regional and national development frameworks and priorities - IFIs and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) should also ensure that their strategies in conflict-affected settings are attuned to national development strategies. The strategies adopted by these organizations must not operate in isolation of developing countries' national development strategies and frameworks, and should instead adopt tailored and integrated approaches in line with developing countries' existing frameworks;

1.6 Link the reform of the global financial architecture with the reform of the peacebuilding architecture - Transforming global governance and reforms of the global financial architecture should be better positioned to address African needs and priorities in relation to post-conflict reconstruction and development. IFIs and MDBs should scale up their resources and operational capacities to be able to deploy high risk finance and operate in fragile and context-affected contexts;

1.7 Place respect for international law, in particular international humanitarian law (IHL), at the heart of reinvigorating multilateralism and the maintenance of international peace and security - Failure to uphold IHL has caused unparalleled human suffering in armed conflict situations and questions the effectiveness of multilateralism. For multilateralism to work, there should be respect for the norms that govern the relations among members of the international system, particularly those pertaining to reducing human suffering and protecting essential infrastructure during conflict;

1.8 Integrate women's perspectives and leverage their leadership in support of inclusive and responsive multilateral institutions - For multilateralism to deliver on its promise, there is an urgent need to emphasize women's perspectives and leverage their leadership in ongoing multilateral reforms with the view of rendering multilateral institutions more inclusive and better able to respond effectively to differentiated needs ushered by today's global challenges.

2. Re-energize the Global Prevention and Sustaining Peace Agenda

The urgency to shift from symptomatic approaches to proactive and structural efforts that aim at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict continues to underpin the global prevention and peacebuilding agenda, guided by the conceptual leap put forward by the Silencing the Guns Initiative and the Sustaining Peace Twin Resolutions. The escalation of violence across the globe and the emergence of old and new conflicts have laid bare the gaps in implementing the principles underscored by the 'sustaining peace' shift, namely addressing the root causes of conflict and reinforcing the structures and institutions of peace. The New Agenda for Peace and the African Union's revised Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Policy, and the upcoming PBAR represent a renewed commitment to repositioning the global prevention and sustaining peace agenda. Nonetheless, to seize the window of opportunity made possible by such developments, member states, the AU, the UN, and international partners are invited to:

2.1 Strengthen focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the work of the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council - The mounting tensions and violence worldwide reiterate the need to anchor the maintenance of peace and security in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, including through enhancing the working relationship between peace and security apparatuses and peacebuilding bodies;

2.2 Empower the PBC to fulfill its advisory role to the Security Council and General Assembly as well as its convening and bridging roles - As the continent most affected by conflict, Africa has a major stake in strengthening prevention and peacebuilding structures, particularly in relation to empowering the PBC and enhancing its relationship with the Security Council. African countries also have a direct interest in unlocking the full convening potential of the PBC, with the view of promoting coherence and mobilizing key actors, including IFIs, in support of nationally-led prevention strategies;

2.3 Strengthen the AU's Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSPF) and mechanisms to enhance the prevention and mitigation of potential conflicts by operationalizing existing tools on the continent - This includes the Conflict Sensitivity Vulnerability Risk Assessment and the Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy, which are taken forward through joint efforts by the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the AU Commission, the African Peer Review Mechanism and the RECs/RMs, as well as the AU's Inter-Regional Knowledge Exchange (I-RECKE) on early warning and conflict prevention;

2.4 Scale-up and diversify peacebuilding funding and devise innovative financing mechanisms and solutions - The growing gap between peacebuilding needs and available funds for peacebuilding activities requires a 'quantum leap' in peacebuilding financing that assessed and voluntary contributions alone are unable to fill. Towards that end, the UN and AU should leverage their convening platform to meaningfully engage key peacebuilding actors, including IFIs, MDBs, and the private sector. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) should also devise flexible funding schemes to enable access by key African peacebuilding stakeholders, in particular the newly established AU Center for PCRD;

2.5 Refocus prevention and peacebuilding activities on field impact and results and strengthen national and local ownership - While process design is crucial to the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding initiatives, such efforts should be results- and impact-orientated, taking into account the complexity and multi-linearity of peacebuilding endeavors. Ownership, both on the national and local levels, is fundamental to ensure the success and sustainability of peacebuilding interventions;

2.6 Put state-building at the heart of the peacebuilding strategies - Building effective, inclusive, and responsive state institutions in Africa is key to enhancing national ownership and leadership of peacebuilding efforts, as well as addressing root causes of conflicts. In addition, viable and inclusive national institutions are fundamental for building long-lasting peace and stability. Moreover, participatory approaches involving local communities, including women and youth, are pivotal for effective peacebuilding;

2.7 Re-invigorate the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda as an agenda for prevention and sustaining peace - The uptake in conflicts worldwide and their devastating impacts on women underline the urgency of advancing the transformative vision of the WPS Agenda for conflict prevention and sustaining peace. With the 2025 PBAR coinciding with the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, there is an urgent need to further leverage the potential of the WPS Agenda in addressing the root causes of conflict and laying the foundations of long-term peace;

2.8 Align UN peacebuilding and prevention activities with continental, regional and national frameworks - The uptake in prevention and peacebuilding strategies developed and adopted by African countries and regional bodies, particularly the recently revised AU PCRD Policy, reiterates Africa's ownership and leadership of its peacebuilding agenda. Such frameworks should serve as the blueprint for the UN's peacebuilding engagements in Africa, where the UN should leverage its competitive advantage in advancing the operationalization of these frameworks. The AU-UN partnership in this regard should also harness the synergies between prevention and peacebuilding strategies and development agendas, particularly Agenda 2063;

2.9 Enhance coordination between African prevention actors in support of a networked prevention architecture - Prioritizing prevention in Africa has been underscored as a cost-effective investment in sustainable peace. While there have been welcome steps in developing prevention strategies across the continent, prevention efforts continue to be fragmented with limited coordination between the several prevention mechanisms in place. With conflicts becoming more regional in their nature and manifestation, there should be enhanced coordination and coherence between prevention actors, with the view of a networked prevention architecture that is able to anticipate and avert transnational conflicts;

2.10 Promote impactful African leadership in PCRD through recognition and support of African-owned innovative solutions and responses to the continent's most pressing challenges - This is exemplified by initiatives such as the Aswan Forum Award for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, which helps bridge the gap between policy and practice.

3. Advance Holistic Approaches to Promote the Peace, Security and Development (PSD) Nexus

It is widely recognized that siloed interventions by humanitarian, development, and peace actors lead to ineffective outcomes. Integrated approaches across the nexus are required to effectively address the root causes of conflict and fragility and thus effectively promote sustainable peace and development. In view of this, African governments, the AU, and RECs/RMs and their international partners are invited to implement the following recommendations:

3.1 De-mystify and desensitize the concept of the triple nexus - There are different approaches to applying the triple nexus, which requires coherent conceptualization of its rationale and what it aims to achieve, robust programming, and operationalization conducive to meeting the needs of the African continent;

3.2 Promote nationally and locally-owned operationalization of the triple nexus - National and local actors are uniquely positioned to overcome the challenges posed by siloed

approaches as they possess deep knowledge of the socio-cultural context, community dynamics, and specific national and local needs. Their proximity to the affected populations enables more pertinent and successful responses, and promotes sustainability of interventions;

3.3 Anchor humanitarian interventions in long-term development outcomes - African countries have long voiced concerns over humanitarian interventions' focus on achievement of short-term stability rather than focusing on addressing root causes of conflict in the longer-term, thereby creating cycles of dependency and preventing progress towards sustainable development. Accordingly, humanitarian actors are encouraged to anchor their interventions in long-term local and national development plans while empowering local and national actors;

3.4 Adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address the interlinkages between conflict, fragility and mobility - With Africa experiencing an unprecedented scale of protracted forced displacement, concerted and coordinated efforts and interventions among relevant local and national actors are required to provide nationally-owned comprehensive, inclusive, and durable, recovery and development plans;

3.5 Create more flexible regional and international funding mechanisms that promote collaboration across the nexus actors, mitigate competition between them, and empower local and national actors - This entails coordinating programming and funding streams to better link peace and development outcomes, and integrating joint analyses and collective success indicators. It also entails the provision of appropriate resourcing to empower local and national authorities for cost-effective coordination across the pillars of the nexus;

3.6 Promote the role of trade and investment in unlocking Africa's economic potential and in advancing sustainable peace and development - This includes leveraging existing initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), to support countries transitioning out of fragility and conflict, as well as enhancing the contribution of private sector financing to peace and development efforts;

3.7 Enhance African countries' approaches in addressing climate impacts on livelihoods through development-climate responses focused on securing sustainable livelihoods.

4. Advance the Common African Position (CAP) on Climate Change, Peace and Security

Africa is at the forefront of the confluence of the adverse impacts of climate change with fragility, conflict, and instability. Efforts to adapt to climate change are hindered by ongoing conflicts, increasing livelihood insecurity, and climate-induced displacement. In addition, climate finance has fallen short of what is needed, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings, further straining sustainable climate adaptation in those regions. Addressing the effects of climate change on peace and security requires concerted efforts to overcome silos in implementation, programming, and funding, which are grounded in the principles of context specificity and national ownership. In this regard, several strides were taken to address the impacts of climate change on peace and security in Africa on the global and regional fronts, such as the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) Presidency initiative Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace (CRSP). On the continental level, developing the Common African Position on Climate Change, Peace, and Security serves as a critical step towards consolidating African efforts aiming to advance a unified climate, peace, and security agenda on the continent, and ensuring that African needs and priorities on global platforms such as the COP are leveraged. In view of this and in anticipation of COP29, African governments, the AU, RECs/RMs and their international partners are invited to take forward the following recommendations:

4.1 Align climate and peacebuilding responses in Africa with the needs and priorities of African governments to advance climate resilience - This includes prioritizing supporting national governments in the development of National Adaptation Plans, advancing integration strategies that foster the inclusion of displacement-affected communities (host and displaced), and an economically viable just energy transition;

4.2 Place the need to de-risk climate finance mechanisms in Africa at the forefront of global discussions on climate change issues, particularly the importance of unlocking sustainable adaptation financing for sustaining peace in fragile and conflict-affected settings;

4.3 Bridge the gap between policy and implementation through investing in informed policies related to climate programming for sustaining peace, and means of supporting endogenous capacity building in developing countries, including through establishing Centers of Excellence on Climate Resilience, with specific focus on adaptation strategies and prevention, such as the African Center of Excellence for Resilience and Adaptation hosted by Egypt in Cairo, in collaboration with the AU Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD);

4.4 Strengthen partnerships and coordination between climate, peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian actors and utilize the CAP as an informed framework that ensures effective coordination between the AU, regional stakeholders, national governments, the UN, and partners;

4.5 Adopt a holistic approach that addresses the interlinkages between climate change and human mobility in conflict affected settings, with a view to better inform the design and implementation of policies as well as interventions that tackle climate-induced displacement in Africa;

4.6 Leverage Africa's voice in climate negotiations on climate finance and loss and damage mechanisms to ensure that the African common vision is fully-reflected, in particular, the focus on securing sustainable livelihoods in Africa;

4.7 Utilize the existing arrangements related to climate change losses and damages like the Santiago Network and the fund for responding to loss and damage to promote Africa's vision and Africa owned initiatives like the Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace and the Africa Adaptation Initiative.

5. Re-envision the Future of Peace Operations in Africa

Amid escalating violent and protracted conflicts in Africa, there is an urgent need for strengthening peace operations on the continent, and their contribution to advancing political solutions, including through focused, prioritized, sequenced, achievable and appropriately-resourced mandates, with exit strategies and transitions, based on clear benchmarks, that are nationally owned and regionally/internationally supported, as part of a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace. It is also crucial to improve support to AU Peace Support Operations, including through UNSCR 2719 (2023) and beyond, while ensuring their contribution to addressing the root causes, drivers, and enablers of conflict and terrorism. In this regard, African governments, the UN, the AU, RECs/RMs and their international partners are therefore invited to commit to the following recommendations:

5.1 Enhance strategic coherence between host countries and peace operations, and strengthen capabilities of African troop and police contributing countries (T/PCCs) through the use of advanced technology and logistical tools;

5.2 Increase the contribution of peace operations to peacebuilding and PCRD, including through building strong state institutions, which is fundamental to the success of future peace operations and to laying the foundation for long term and sustainable peace;

5.3 Operationalize and revitalize African conflict prevention and management tools of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and African Governance Architecture (AGA), in parallel to supporting AU-Peace Support Operations, including through the implementation of UNSCR 2719 and beyond;

5.4 Advance UN-AU partnership through improving joint level of preparedness between both organizations, as well as alignment between the UNSC and AU PSC, while advancing African leadership in peace operations in Africa. In addition, advance African priorities in the implementation of UNSCR 2719 to ensure sustainable, adequate, and predictable funding of AU-led peace support operations;

5.5 Ensuring relevance and coherence of new forms of peace operations to be deployed within different theaters, including UN multidimensional peacekeeping missions, regional security arrangements, and counter-insurgency missions;

5.6 Achieve greater harmonization of training doctrines of different T/PCCs, including through the support of AU Training Centers of Excellence and Training Institutions (TCEs and TIs);

5.7 Enhance the capacities of peace operations personnel in understanding the impact of climate-related risks - Considering that peace operations are mostly deployed in countries highly vulnerable to climate impacts, it is important to build the capacities of their personnel to integrate climate-related considerations into their analysis, planning, and programming to ensure the sustainability of conflict resolution and sustaining peace efforts;

5.8 Encourage further study of "the Future of Peace Operations in Africa", in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future and the 2025 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference to identify lessons learned and good practices from past peace operations, in order to shape future adaptive, nimble, and fit-for-purpose approaches and interventions that effectively address the specific context and challenges of a conflict or post-conflict environment.

6. Harness Youth's Role in Scaling Up Innovative Solutions through Education to Build Peace

Africa has the youngest and fastest-growing population, with 75% of its population under the age of 35, and will represent 42% of the global youth population by 2030. Through investing in education, youth can play a transformative role in promoting a culture of peace and achieving sustainable peace and development across the continent, in line with Agenda 2063, and the AU's 2024 theme of the year on "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century". Now more than ever, we need to shift the narrative from one perceiving African youth as victims and agents of conflict, to one that puts a spotlight

on their role as active champions of peace and resilience. In this regard, African governments, the AU, RECs/RMs, as well as their international partners, are encouraged to:

6.1 Invest in building the capacities and skills of youth in relevant peace and security areas, including conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding to play an active role in advocating for peace and stability;

6.2 Advance holistic and youth-centered education processes and develop context-specific and conflict-sensitive approaches that promote peace education and digital literacy, and enhance access of technology for youth's benefit, particularly those living in vulnerable situations, including refugees and persons with disabilities;

6.3 Amplify diverse youth priorities and perspectives to advance whole-of-government and whole-of-society responses towards achieving peace, resilience and development;

6.4 Strengthen the role of community leaders, including youth-peace actors, young peacebuilders and climate champions to raise awareness and influence their peers in promoting a culture of peace, understanding, and cooperation, as well as combating disinformation and hate speech;

6.5 Foster a conducive learning environment for the reintegration of youth formerly associated with armed groups to enhance their well-being in their societies;

6.6 Harness the potential of youth in fostering peace education as an important contribution towards advancing international peace and security.

7. Revitalize Partnerships for Sustainable Peace and Development

The interconnectedness of challenges in Africa calls for rethinking effective partnership modalities to advance more coordinated responses across the continent. In this context, there is a need to align partnerships with national priorities and strategies as a key catalyst to reinvigorate and expand informed, integrated, and sustainable responses.

There is a growing need to move beyond policymaking, implementation, and financing silos, as well as broaden the landscape of engaged stakeholders beyond the realms of humanitarian, development, and political actors to also include local communities, civil society organizations and the private sector. This ensures attuning to the national priorities and that responses are effective, sustainable, and economically viable. Accordingly, Africa and its international and regional partners should:

7.1 Scale up bilateral, regional, multilateral, and public-private partnerships in response to the rapidly-shifting peace and security landscape and growing national needs and priorities in Africa;

7.2 Advance win-win partnership models between Africa and its partners, anchored in principles of equality, reciprocity, respect, and mutual benefits - There is a growing momentum in Africa to ensure that partnerships are responsive to the continent's current needs and circumstances, and that they are equally beneficial for both partners and African countries and their populations;

7.3 Incentivize the private sector to contribute more significantly to the realization of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development - Further efforts and incentives are needed to scale up the contribution of the private sector in Africa to achieve sustainable peace and development and address the impact of climate change, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile settings. Harnessing the contribution of the private sector requires concerted public and private efforts as well as partnerships;
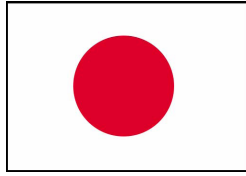
7.4 Rethink the effectiveness of sanctions vis-a-vis the imperative of sustained engagement - There is a need to assess the extent to which existing sanctions mechanisms have actually yielded desired outcomes in Africa and to examine ways to limit unforeseen impacts on populations;

7.5 Create a platform for South-South cooperation and partnership on peace and development - Countries across the developing world have accumulated a wealth of experiences in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and PCRD.

Sharing such experiences and lessons learned in a focused and dedicated setting can enhance mutual learning, strengthen capacities, and help improve effectiveness of responses. Such a platform can facilitate regular exchanges, and collaborative projects, ensuring a continuous and dynamic flow of knowledge and best practices, in support of more resilient and sustainable pathways to peace and development across the Global South.

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