



CONFLICT TRENDS

SPECIAL EDITION, 2020



**SILENCING
THE GUNS**



**PLANT TREES
NOT BOMBS**



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EDITORIAL

BY VASU GOUNDEN

If there was ever a moment in the history of humanity that calls for the deepening of dialogue across different nations, generations, and cultures about a world that we want to see, the year 2020 is that moment. Instead of allowing the disruptions created by the emergence and spread of COVID-19 to weaken our collective resolve to find creative solutions to the challenges we commonly face, we ought to be inspired by the creativity, the innovations, and the resilience that ordinary people across the world have attempted to create.

The disruptions caused by COVID-19 present all of us with stark choices, which include whether we adapt to a 'new normal', or wait it out with the hope that we will return to the way things were. As governments across the world initiated various measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, citizens were presented with a choice to either accept their fate that things will never be the same, or to play their part in seeking new and innovative ways to re-imagine and re-invent a 'new world'. I am certain that most of us have seen, and will continue to see, many efforts at resilience and innovation by ordinary citizens.

In a year that was so important to peace activists, both on the continent and globally, due to, the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations (UN), as well as the implementation of the African Union Master Roadmap (AUMR) for Silencing the Guns in Africa by the year 2020, the plans to celebrate these achievements, and properly review the path taken by Africa to silence the guns, were interrupted. However, as history has shown in so many ways, human beings have, and must, adapt. There are many practical and tangible signs that we are indeed adapting. Many important conversations have taken place globally, assisted by technological advancements, about the world and the UN that we wish to see in the next 75 years. In the case of Africa, constrained as we may have been, we have seen inordinate conversations about the path the continent still has to traverse towards Silencing the Guns. These conversations have indeed enabled different actors in Africa, from governments, civil society, and inter-governmental organisations, to take stock of how we have lived up to the commitment of the OAU/AU 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration not to 'bequeath the

burden of conflict to the next generation'. Equally, these conversations have also revealed the necessity to stay on course due to the myriad of complex conflicts that we still have to grapple with.

As an institution, a year ago ACCORD set out to play its part in contributing to the call not to 'bequeath this burden on the next generation' by, inter alia, convening a series of Inter-Generational Dialogues (IGDs) in Africa. Through the IGDs the youth of Africa had the space to voice their concerns about the daily hardships that they are experiencing, while simultaneously expressing their aspirations about a future that they not only want to see, but which they are also willing to play a part in creating. What we have heard in these conversations, and seen in the demonstrable innovations of young Africans, about how the continent should be transformed for the better, must not be ignored by the present generation of leaders.

ACCORD has also played its part in contributing to, and shaping a UN that we want to see 75 years from today, through the global IGDs. In these conversations, young people were also given the space to place their demands on the table about what needs to be done to rid the world of the scourge of conflict, poverty, inequality and all the other ills that have frustrated human progress. In the course of engaging in these dialogues, both in Africa and across the world, we forged many important strategic partnerships, which served as a reminder that collectively we can find creative and constructive solutions to the challenges facing humanity. If anything, the global community has a responsibility not to allow the crises we face today, and their long-term impact, to divide us and weaken our resolve. It is only through unified action across the world that we can find solutions. As various decision-makers across the world forge ahead with finding these solutions, they ought to place an emphasis on answering the call from young people to be effectively engaged, and to strengthening multilateralism instead of unilateral action. 🙏

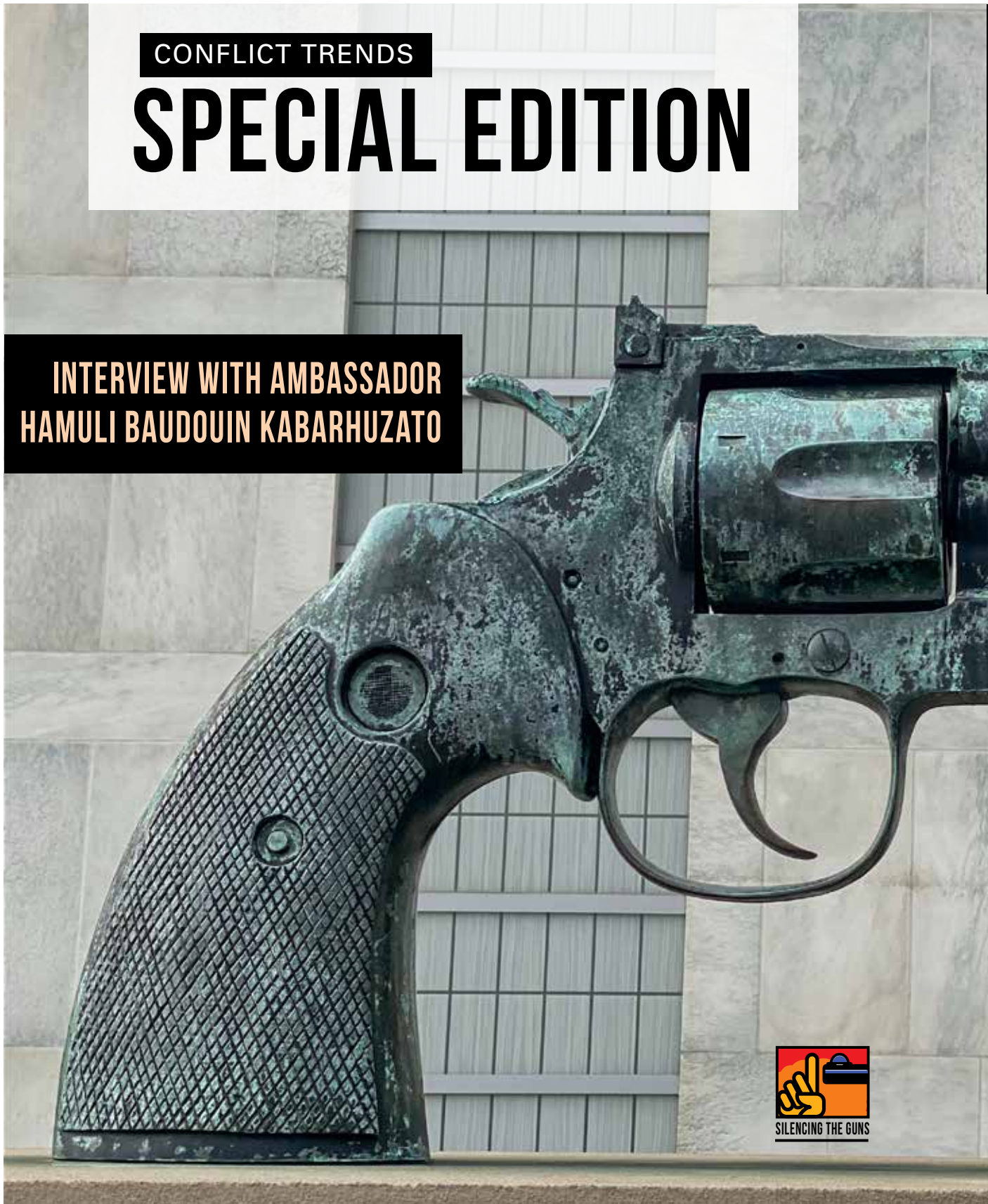
Vasu Gounden is the Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD.



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SPECIAL EDITION

INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR
HAMULI BAUDOIN KABARHUZATO



SILENCING THE GUNS

**THE AU, RECS/RMS AND UN: LEVERAGING THE TRIANGULAR
PARTNERSHIP TO SILENCE THE GUNS IN AFRICA**

**WHAT KIND OF LEADERSHIP DOES THE VISION OF
“SILENCING THE GUNS” REQUIRE?**

**HOW A STRONG AU—UN PARTNERSHIP CAN SUSTAIN THE
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**THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM
AND SILENCING THE GUNS IN AFRICA**



SILENCING THE GUNS REQUIRES A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH

BY **AMBASSADOR RAMTANE LAMAMRA, THE AFRICAN UNION HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR SILENCING THE GUNS IN AFRICA**



The African Union Heads of State and Government had marked the year 2020 with the theme “Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development”. As a flagship project of Agenda 2063, Silencing the Guns by 2020 was adopted in 2013 during the Organisation of African Unity/African Union 50th Commemorative Anniversary Summit of African Heads of State. The vision of the 2013 Solemn Declaration was to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality for all our people and to rid the continent of wars and civil conflicts.

To translate the vision of the 2013 Solemn Declaration into action, the Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns by Year 2020 (AUMR) was adopted by the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council in 2016. The AUMR was to be executed by the AU Commission in collaboration with key stakeholders, including regional economic communities; economic, social and cultural communities; organs of the AU; the United Nations (UN) and civil society organisations.

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Speaking to this endeavour, the 33rd AU Ordinary Summit took stock of achievements and challenges encountered in implementing this flagship project of Silencing the Guns by 2020. It further sought to devise a more robust action plan, informed by the Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism of the AUMR, for a peaceful and prosperous Africa. Conflicts have robbed Africa of over US\$100 billion since the end of the Cold War in 1991. The

continent has unfortunately witnessed some of the world’s biggest fatalities, food and humanitarian crises and the erosion of social cohesion, coupled with the total breakdown of economies and decimation of the environmental and political landscape. It is worrisome to see countries such as South Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Mali and

Libya continuing to witness persistent levels of armed conflict, and the decolonisation conflict in Western Sahara is remaining unresolved for so long.

The threat posed by COVID-19 has considerably slowed the momentum of the silencing the guns agenda and has



abruptly added to the existing challenges, slowing down the attainment of peace and development:

- first, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed high levels of stigmatisation and discrimination that have manifested through the negative responses of communities when someone has tested positive;
- the second element is that COVID-19 has affected trust between citizens and institutions;
- third, COVID-19 has had an impact on livelihoods and economies;
- fourth, the pandemic has resulted in an increase in domestic and gender-based violence across Africa and the world;
- the fifth is that criminal-related incidents have been increasing;
- sixth is the political unrest and violence; and
- lastly are cross-border and interstate tensions.

Sadly, it is also a well-known fact that women and girls are disproportionately the most vulnerable to and affected by conflict. They are subjected to trafficking and sexual violence, mainly used as weapons of war by political militias, unidentified armed groups and, in some cases, state forces.

They suffer from trauma, sexually transmitted diseases, stigmatisation and, at times, unwanted pregnancies. Young women and girls are sexually exploited in highly militarised environments with limited social support systems, compounded by patriarchy and a lack of services.

Undoubtedly, women are the fabric of community resilience and livelihoods, and so are also the main agents for response and recovery from the pandemic towards promoting and rebuilding peace at the community level. This is why initiatives such as the AU's Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) are incredibly important, especially given the COVID-19 context and the limited scope and opportunity for multilateral and other external interventions. FemWise members and other women peacebuilders are playing critical roles in early warning, crisis response and post-conflict interventions at the local level – many of which have contributed to effective conflict prevention, management and resolution. However, these gains are also met with a multiplicity of challenges, including physical threats to the security of female peacebuilders. Therefore, the complexity of these overlapping challenges makes it evident that silencing the guns in

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Africa requires a multi-pronged, multi-sectoral effort that aims to address in a holistic manner the closely interlinked issues of peace, security, development, governance, human rights and humanitarian response. A holistic approach is also central to the realisation of one African market through the African Continental Free Trade Area, the flagship development initiative on the continent. In this spirit, African leaders have taken concrete steps towards addressing the scourge of conflicts on the continent and, in the more immediate sense, the serious threat posed by the COVID-19 crisis and its ramifications.

I wish to highlight the Commission's commitment to amplifying the roles and voices of women in various peace efforts on the continent. I also wish to applaud efforts and commend the valuable contributions of women of Africa towards the peace and development of our beautiful continent.

As part of the activities and virtual meetings organised by the AU's Peace and Security Department this year in line with the AU theme, we have placed Women and Youth at the centre of our discussions. This has culminated in various recommendations and observations on the strengthening and empowerment of

women's role in the context of COVID-19. Our intention is to further accelerate our collective efforts to end wars in Africa, while expressing concern that terrorists and armed groups have failed to heed the calls of the AU and UN leadership for a global ceasefire.

The Commission would benefit from various stakeholders, especially women organisations and networks, providing vital data and voices that reflect the actual situations and studies of the gendered

impact of conflicts in Africa. This would contribute to strengthening our policy responses. We also call on our partners to support initiatives that work towards empowering and amplifying women's and girls' agency in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, advocacy and social cohesion. 🇳🇬



This is an edited version of a statement delivered by Ambassador Lamamra at the 36th Civil Society Pre-summit Consultative Meeting of Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development, 12 October 2020.



WE WILL NOT SILENCE THE GUNS WITHOUT WOMEN

BINETA DIOP

“ In 2020, the world commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. In Africa, we also mark the Year for Silencing the Guns in Africa and the end of the first African

Women’s Decade on Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2010–2020). Yet, despite all these milestones and efforts, one unfortunate truth remains: women continue to bear the brunt of conflict and are not at the table when decisions are taken in peace negotiations and reconstruction processes.

This reality has been further exacerbated by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens the progress made over the years towards gender equality. It has also shown, as in many previous crises, that women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected, hence stressing the need for a strong women, peace and security (WPS) agenda in response to societal threats.

It is from this perspective that the Office of the Special Envoy (OSE) of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission on Women, Peace and Security virtually convened the first Africa Forum on Women, Peace and Security, from 10 to 12 November 2020.

In 2020, the world commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325

The Forum brought together representatives of member states, women peacebuilders, youth peace ambassadors, women peacekeepers, women refugees, media and centres of excellence on WPS, with the aim to federate efforts to accelerate actions for peace. These actions are located in the broader agenda for peace and security in Africa and its clarion call to “silence the guns by 2020” – the guiding theme that represents the overarching aspirations of the AU’s Agenda 2063.

Participants called for the Forum to take place annually to provide a regular space to reimagine and re-strategise our efforts to achieve the goals set forth in the WPS agenda, as well as the larger aspiration of silencing the guns in Africa. Moreover, it accords us an essential opportunity to bring together all key actors of the WPS agenda in Africa to review the critical role

played by women in peacebuilding at all levels, and to define strategies to achieve equal participation and responsibilities in shaping the future of our continent.

During the three-day Forum, participants incorporated deliberations of pre-Forum consultations and the SheLeadsPeace campaign and examined key thematic issues of the WPS agenda; sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs); women in peacekeeping; women in preventive diplomacy and mediation; the role of



the youth in peacebuilding; the role of the media in advancing WPS; capacity building and funding the WPS agenda; and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 as a threat to the security of women and girls. Some of the key issues brought about in the deliberations follow.

Women and girls continue to be subjected to SGBV, in times of conflict as well as in times of peace.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, SGBV was its own crisis. Globally, one in three women experience SGBV¹ and unfortunately, in times of crisis – as we have seen with the COVID-19 pandemic – instances of SGBV rise. To adequately address SGBV, one of the recommendations put forth during the Forum was to prioritise robust legal frameworks that are backed by adequate budgets to ensure that they are implemented properly.² Moreover, investigation capacities for SGBV, especially related to the collection of forensic evidence, must be prioritised by ensuring that there is a capability and capacity to collect, collate and store forensic evidence.³

While saluting progress made in monitoring and reporting, with the adoption of the Continental Results Framework (CRF) and the report by the Chairperson of the Commission on the implementation of the WPS agenda in Africa, stakeholders stressed that, 20 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and nine subsequent WPS-related Security Council resolutions, as well as 30 national action plans in Africa and numerous other policy commitments, the numbers show very little progress in the role of women mediators, negotiators and signatories in peace processes. According to UN Women, between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators and 6% of signatories in major peace processes worldwide.⁴ Therefore, one recommendation put forth to ensure that we achieve women’s meaningful inclusion in preventive diplomacy and mediation is to redesign the peace table, so that it is owned and led by women.⁵


Similarly, 2020 is also the fifth anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 2250 – the first youth, peace and security resolution. Over the past five years, there have been increased efforts to include youth participation in

peace processes, but there is still a lot of work to be done. One recommendation of the Forum is to increase youth participation in peacebuilding, and to support grassroots youth activism through institutional support and resources.⁶

At the conclusion of the Forum, it was clear that securing women and girls is a *sine qua non* to Africa’s

resilience and transformation. Going forward, the Forum will be imperative in ensuring we achieve the goals set forth in Agenda 2063 to silence the guns in Africa, while ensuring that women play a leadership role at decision-making tables. The Forum called for a more robust involvement of African leaders, requesting a peace summit – led by women with the support and participation of heads of state and

Therefore, one recommendation put forth to ensure that we achieve women’s meaningful inclusion in preventive diplomacy and mediation is to redesign the peace table, so that it is owned and led by women

government – to ink in stronger support to women leadership in building sustainable peace on the continent. Indeed, one thing is certain: silencing the guns in Africa will not be achieved if we leave women out. 



Bineta Diop is the AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, and founder and chairperson of the board of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS).

Endnotes

- 1 United Nations Population Fund (n.d.) ‘Gender-based Violence’, Available at: <<https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence>> [Accessed 29 November 2020].
- 2 Van Wyk, André (2020a) ‘Africa: Progress and Challenges to Women Peace and Security Agenda Brought to Light – Part 1’, *AllAfrica*, Available at: <<https://allafrica.com/stories/202011160471.html>> [Accessed 29 November 2020].
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 UN Women (2019) ‘Facts and Figures: Women, Peace and Security’, Available at: <<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>> [Accessed 29 November 2020].
- 5 Van Wyk, André (2020b) ‘Africa: Progress and Challenges to Women Peace and Security Agenda Brought to Light – Part 2’, *AllAfrica*, Available at: <<https://allafrica.com/stories/202011160472.html>> [Accessed 29 November 2020].
- 6 Van Wyk, André (2020a) op. cit.



THE AFRICAN UNION, REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES AND REGIONAL MECHANISMS AND UNITED NATIONS: LEVERAGING THE TRIANGULAR PARTNERSHIP TO SILENCE THE GUNS IN AFRICA¹

ALHAJI SARJOH BAH



UNMISS PHOTO

South Sudan's president, Salva Kiir (right) and his former deputy president, Riek Machar (left) shake hands in agreement of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan at the 33rd Extraordinary Summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (12 September 2018).

Introduction

The triangular partnership between the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and the United Nations (UN) has evolved significantly in the past two decades, leading to

the emergence of a division of labour of sorts between these entities – albeit with some challenges relating to the interpretation of norms and implementation of agreed frameworks. The partnership is underpinned by the twin principles of subsidiarity and complementarity.²



At the conclusion of their deliberations during the 21st Ordinary Summit of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, African leaders adopted the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (January 2013).

Although the RECs/RMs are not uniform entities, it is well established that neither the AU nor the UN can undertake a successful peacemaking venture without the active involvement of the dominant REC/RM in a particular sub-region. For example, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) pivotal role in the mediation efforts that led to the signing of the Revitalised-Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) is the most recent demonstration of this trend.³ Similar examples exist in West, Central and southern Africa, where the RECs/RMs in these sub-regions continue to serve as anchors for security and stability.

Background

The 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), in May 1963, was an occasion to reflect on the accomplishment of the OAU and to chart a new path for the continent. At the conclusion of their deliberations during the 21st Ordinary Summit of

the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, African leaders adopted the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration in which they committed to achieving a conflict-free Africa and, more critically, "...not to bequeath the burden of

conflict to the next generation of Africans and undertake to end all wars in Africa by 2020."⁴ In furtherance of the Solemn Declaration, a retreat of the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) in Lusaka, Zambia, developed an AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020 (AUMR), which was

subsequently endorsed by the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union.⁵ The AUMR has five categories: political, economic, social, environmental and legal. Moreover, it identifies a number of challenges or scourges, ranging from the persistence of political denials in situations of brewing or potential crises and deficits in respect for human rights to the illicit flow of weapons that are fuelling conflicts on the continent. The AUMR also enunciates the practical steps, modalities

THE AUMR HAS FIVE CATEGORIES: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND LEGAL



Both the Solemn Declaration and the AUMR emphasised the need to strengthen Africa’s voice in the international system through improved cooperation between the AU, RECs, UN and other multilateral institutions.

for mobilising action, focal points/implementers, time frame and sources of funding for the achievement of the objective set out in the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration.

Both the Solemn Declaration and the AUMR emphasised the need to strengthen Africa’s voice in the international system through improved cooperation between the AU, RECs, UN and other multilateral institutions. It is in this context that this article reflects on how the partnership between the AU and RECs/RMs at one level, and that between the AU and UN – a two-tier cooperation model – can be leveraged to foster Africa’s efforts at silencing the guns. The article is divided into four sections: normative convergence, conflict prevention and management, peace support operations, and peacebuilding/stabilisation.

1. Normative Convergence

The proactive engagement of the OAU (which transitioned into the AU in 2002) and the RECs/RMs as key actors in the 1990s signalled a growing determination by African states to take charge of peace, security and stability on the

continent. The current posture of the AU and RECs/RMs can be attributed to two key post-Cold War developments. First, the removal of the superpower overlay exposed the deep political, security and socio-economic fault lines that had been suppressed due to competition by the superpowers. Second was the indifference of the international community to the violent conflicts that engulfed parts of the continent in the early 1990s – most notably, the genocide in Rwanda, the implosion of the countries of the Mano River Basin, the collapse of Somalia and the conflicts in the Great Lakes region. These experiences triggered a normative shift in Africa’s international relations. The shift from *non-interference* in the internal affairs of member states to *non-indifference* has resulted in the development of robust norms that are anchored on the principle of shared values. The Constitutive Act of the AU and the respective legal instruments of the RECs provide for the setting up of decision-making organs and implementation mechanisms on peace and security. The establishment of the AUPSC in 2004 is the most notable development in this

respect. At the sub-regional level, individual RECs/RMs have established similar decision-making organs.

It should be noted that the establishment of the peace and security architectures of the AU and RECs/RMs is consistent with Article 52(1) of the UN Charter, which provides for the “existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action...”⁶ However, the normative shift in Africa conflicts with certain parts of the UN Charter, given that the AU can intervene in a country in situations involving serious crimes. For instance, Article 4(h and j) of the Constitutive Act provides for intervention including the use of force in situations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, without necessarily waiting for the authorisation of the UN Security Council (UNSC).⁷ This provision contradicts Article 53(1) of the UN Charter, which states that “no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the Security Council...”⁸ Given the deadlocked nature of the UNSC due to competition between its veto-wielding members, among

other things, strict adherence to Article 53(1) could hamper efforts by the AU and RECs/RMs to silence the guns because their efforts could be stymied by discord between the five permanent members of the UNSC.⁹ This therefore calls for a flexible application of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and leveraging of the principle of subsidiarity to avoid obstructing the actions of the AU and RECs/RMs in situations where the UNSC is deadlocked.

Subsidiarity and Complementarity

Indeed, the imperative for subsidiarity and complementarity was not lost on the two African Secretaries-General of the UN in the post-Cold War era, Boutros Boutros Ghali and Kofi Annan. They strongly advocated for the flexible application of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter to optimise the synergy between the UN and the emerging actors on the continent. For its part, the leadership of the AU Commission, starting with then-chairperson Alpha Omar Konare, took decisive steps in defining the AU–UN partnership with a view to strengthening the capacities of the AU and, by extension, the RECs/RMs as first respondents. The signing of the Enhancing UN-AU

UN PHOTO/EVAN SCHNEIDER



Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (right) meets with Kofi Annan, Secretary-General designate, who was recommended unanimously by the Members of the Security Council. United Nations, New York (16 December 1996)

Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-year Capacity Building Programme for the AU by Chairperson Konare and then-Secretary-General Annan, in November 2006, was the first important step in laying the foundation for the relationship. This was followed by several reports on partnerships between the AU and UN on peace and security, which culminated in the current Joint African Union–United Nations Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.¹⁰ These efforts were informed by the imperative to harness the comparative strengths of the UN, AU and, by extension, the RECs/RMs. In other words, the evolving agreements over the past two decades have moved the AU-RECs/RMs and UN closer to an effective application of subsidiarity and complementarity for a more enhanced multilateral peacemaking system, in Africa.

At another level, the ongoing process of defining a division of labour between the AU and the RECs/RMs, as part of the overall institutional reform of the AU, is a crucial development that would impact the nature and scope of the triangular partnership. In November 2018, the Executive Council of the AU “mandated the AU Commission in collaboration with the RECs/RMs, AU organs, relevant continental organisations, to develop a proposal on an effective division of labour among the AU, the RECs/RMs, the Member States, and other continental institutions, in line with the principle of subsidiarity...”¹¹ This matter was subsequently discussed during the First Mid-Year Coordination Meeting of the AU and the RECs/RMs, held in Niamey, Niger, in July 2019. The declaration of the coordination meeting called on the AU Commission, in collaboration with the member states, RECs/RMs, AU organs and regional mechanisms, to “operationalize the framework on an effective division of labour”.¹² Under the envisaged system, the AU would devolve some of its key peace and security responsibilities to the RECs/RMs.

This undoubtedly has raised critical questions for the triangular partnership, especially that between the AU and the RECs/RMs. For instance, how would the division of labour between the AU and RECs affect the pre-eminence of the PSC on continental security matters? What mechanisms should be put in place to regulate the relationship between the AU and RECs/RMs? What safeguard measures should be instituted to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity is not used by the RECs/RMs to exclude the AU in situations where the REC in question is hamstrung due to political or other considerations? How would this affect the AU’s relationship with the UN? Although these questions are not addressed in this article, it is critical to ensure that

the partnership between the AU and the RECs/RMs is anchored on mutually agreed principles and well-defined coordination structures, especially between the PSC and similar structures at the level of the RECs/RMs. Doing so would contribute to optimising complementarity and coherence. Moreover, the arrangement between the AU and RECs/RMs should be reflected in the AU’s relationship with the UN to allow for a seamless application of a two-tiered system of subsidiarity, with the UN at the apex. The establishment of an interlocking system for the application of the principle of subsidiarity between the three entities would enhance efforts to silence the guns by minimising competition, scaling up cooperation and ensuring the prudent management of political capital and other resources.

2. Conflict Prevention and Management

There is consensus among the AU, RECs/RMs and UN on the imperative to invest in conflict prevention to avoid the high costs associated with violent conflict. Consequently, conflict prevention is at the heart of the strategies, policies,

programmes and activities of the various entities involved in the triangular partnership. In fact, preventing conflict and sustaining peace is the first priority in the joint framework; the two other priorities being responding to conflict and addressing root causes. The AU and RECs/RMs have instituted various mechanisms to detect, prevent and manage conflicts. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) are the two main instruments at the continental level, with complementing structures at the sub-regional level.

While the triangular partnership has registered some positive results since the signing of the framework agreement in April 2017, it has also encountered some challenges.

The partnership between the AU, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the UN during the peace talks in Khartoum, Sudan, between the Government of the Central African Republic (CAR) and the armed groups, is perhaps the most successful joint undertaking since the signing of the framework agreement. The mediation process that culminated in the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, on 5 February 2019, was led by AU and ECCAS, whilst the UN provided logistics and other backstopping support. The three entities are now fully engaged in supporting implementation of the various pillars of the agreement, ranging from national reconciliation, transitional justice to the establishment of

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PARTNERSHIP**

the mixed military units. The partnership between the AU, ECCAS and UN during the CAR peace talks in Khartoum represents a near-perfect application of the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity, and such coordinated interventions would contribute to enhancing peace consolidation efforts in the country. The challenge now is how to ensure that this triangular relationship is leveraged to support the implementation of the agreement so that when the guns are silenced in CAR, they do not rebound, as in the past. In other words, avoiding a relapse should be a priority for all external actors, including the AU, ECCAS and the UN.

Unlike the CAR experience, in Libya, cooperation between the AU, UN and other actors has been suboptimal. This situation dates back to 2011, when the AU and UN failed to agree on how to respond to the crisis that had gripped Libya. Despite a series of meetings between the two organisations and conciliatory pronouncements by their leadership, the partnership remains fractious. The perceived marginal role of the AU in finding solutions to the Libyan crisis, which has exacerbated the security challenges in the Sahel, demonstrates that the application of the subsidiarity principle is problematic in situations

where the P5 and other global powers have conflicting interests. Agreeing on a workable cooperation formula in this particular instance has remained elusive, for a couple of reasons. First, Africa and the P5 have been unsuccessful in reconciling their differences following the outbreak of the crisis in 2011. Second, the internationalisation of the conflict has weakened the chances of a multilateral approach to resolving it. Growing competition between international powers continue to exacerbate the crisis, further complicating peace efforts.

3. Peace Support Operations

Despite the challenges for the partnership in Libya, notable progress has been made on peace support operations. Interestingly, the UNSC and AUPSC have found common ground in this area, especially the AU–UN Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The two councils have demonstrated creativity and flexibility in the management of these two missions. The use of assessed contributions for the provision of logistics support to AMISOM is the most prominent demonstration of what can be achieved when the councils are in harmony. However, even in this instance, there are some tensions regarding the division of labour between



UN PHOTO/HERNÉ SEREPIO

Zambian peacekeepers from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) patrol areas in North-East of the Central African Republic. Their daily missions include the protection of civilians, support for the peace process and the protection of United Nations personnel and property (05 February 2020).



Planners discuss proposed exercise objectives during the Unified Focus 2017 initial planning event (IPE), Douala, Cameroon. The UF17 IPE brought partner nation planners together for the first time to discuss and begin shaping the inaugural Unified Focus exercise designed to enhance and enable Lake Chad Basin Commission nations to support the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) counter-Boko Haram operations (October 2016).

the UN, AU and IGAD in terms of the political process in Somalia. There is a perception by some that the AU should concentrate on the implementation of its peace support mandate, leaving the political track to the UN. Attempts to limit the AU's role in the political process have created some friction between the two organisations. Efforts should be made to harmonise the two positions, as decoupling the military and the political process would undermine stabilisation efforts, given that peace support operations are not an end in themselves but a means to an end. The planned transition in Somalia, including the drawdown of AMISOM, presents a unique opportunity to leverage the partnership between the AU, IGAD and UN to consolidate the gains in Somalia. Sustaining peace in Somalia is central to silencing the guns in the Horn of Africa.

In Darfur, consultations are ongoing as part of the drawdown of UNAMID to agree on a workable formula for the post-UNAMID engagements. At the heart of the deliberations is whether the hybrid principle that shaped UNAMID should be retained in the new configuration. Whilst the AU favours such an arrangement, the UN is not enthusiastic about it. As was the case with the government

of former president Omar al-Bashir, which insisted on the hybrid mission, the position of the transitional Government of Sudan would determine the form of the AU-UN engagement in Darfur.

How the transitions from peacekeeping/enforcement to peacebuilding in these countries are handled will determine the success and sustainability of peace in those theatres.

Despite the progress in the partnership between the AU and UN in Somalia and Darfur, how to respond to the challenges posed by terrorist and jihadi groups remain unresolved. Fundamentally, the challenge is the doctrinal gap relating to high-intensity operations. While the AU and RECs/RMs have demonstrated the will and capacity to undertake robust peace enforcement and counter-insurgency operations, the UN is unable to undertake similar missions due to doctrinal constraints. The emergence of ad hoc military coalitions – such as the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram and the G5 Sahel Joint Force – are major consequences of this challenge. Even within UN missions, the establishment of units with more robust mandates –

such the Force Intervention Brigade within the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and proposals for similar structures in the UN Integrated Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) – demonstrate the urgency of tackling the doctrinal gap. The imperative to close this gap is informed by the growing need for more robust engagements against terrorist groups with no identifiable political agendas, thereby complicating any political engagements. While the ad hoc coalitions such as the MNJTF have proven to be effective, funding and logistics support – especially for the G5 Sahel Joint Force – remains a big challenge. To address this, the AU needs to intensify consultations with the UN and other key actors – most notably, the United States of America (USA) – on the use of the UN-assessed contribution for AU-led and UN-authorized missions. Efforts should also be made to consolidate the multidimensional capacities – notably, military, police and civilian – through the African Standby Force (ASF), which have been developed by the AU and the RECs/RMs over the past decade and a half.

4. Peacebuilding and Stabilisation

Managing transitions from peacekeeping to medium and long-term stabilisation is critical to silencing the guns and sustaining peace. Unfortunately, peacebuilding remains the single most important gap in the partnership between the AU, RECs/RMs and the UN. A close reading of the Joint Framework Agreement reveals this important lacuna in the partnership. While the AU has proactively engaged

with RECs/RMs such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to develop a comprehensive strategy for a holistic revitalisation of the areas affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin, implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region¹³ has been slow. At least three critical lessons can be drawn from the process of developing the stabilisation strategy. First is that the principle of subsidiarity was complied with, as the AU allowed the LCBC to lead the process. In doing so, the LCBC mobilised the political support of its members, thereby enhancing national ownership of the process. Second, the AU complemented the efforts of the LCBC with political and technical support, both of which were indispensable to the process. Finally, the strong partnership between the AU and LCBC strengthened their leadership role of the process, among other things by ensuring that the interventions of UN agencies and other stakeholders was in sync with the priorities identified by the two organisations. This goes to show that the AU's partnership with the UN will be bolstered when the AU works closely with the RECs/RMs. In other words, the AU-RECs/RMs partnership is a force multiplier in the triangular cooperation framework.

How the AU, RECs/RMs and the UN system manages to generate the required financial and technical resources for the implementation of the stabilisation strategy will determine how soon the guns will be silenced in the Lake Chad Basin. Similar efforts are required for the transitions in Somalia, the CAR, South Sudan, the Great Lakes



U.S. ARMY AFRICA PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. TIFFANY DENAULT

British Lt. Col. Joe Edkins, Eastern Africa Standby Force U.K. military and technical advisor, discusses strategic planning with command post exercise participants at the Tanzanian Peacekeeping Training Centre in Dar es Salaam, (July 2016).



and Sahel regions. The development of comprehensive strategies, and generating the required resources for implementation, will be a critical step towards silencing the guns. At a global level, the 2020 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture presents a unique opportunity for Africa to articulate its peacebuilding priorities, which should be at the centre of its partnership with the UN system.

Conclusion

It is evident that the triangular partnership has yielded mixed results but holds a lot of potential for resolving some of the existing and emerging challenges on the continent. The strength of the partnership will be optimised if it is approached from a two-tiered lens: the partnership between the AU and the RECs on the one hand, and between the AU, RECs/RMs and the UN on the other. This will ensure that the AU and RECs/RMs maintain ownership and leadership of Africa's peace and security agenda. Lessons from across the world have shown that homegrown peacebuilding and stabilisation initiatives are more resilient than externally driven ones. Consequently, efforts to silence the guns will be largely contingent on Africa's commitment of the requisite political, financial and human resources for medium- to long-term stabilisation efforts. The UN, with its global mandate, should act in a complementary manner to the AU and RECs/RMs. The two-tiered cooperation model advanced in this article will foster the objectives of silencing the guns, thereby achieving an important pillar of Agenda 2063. 🌱

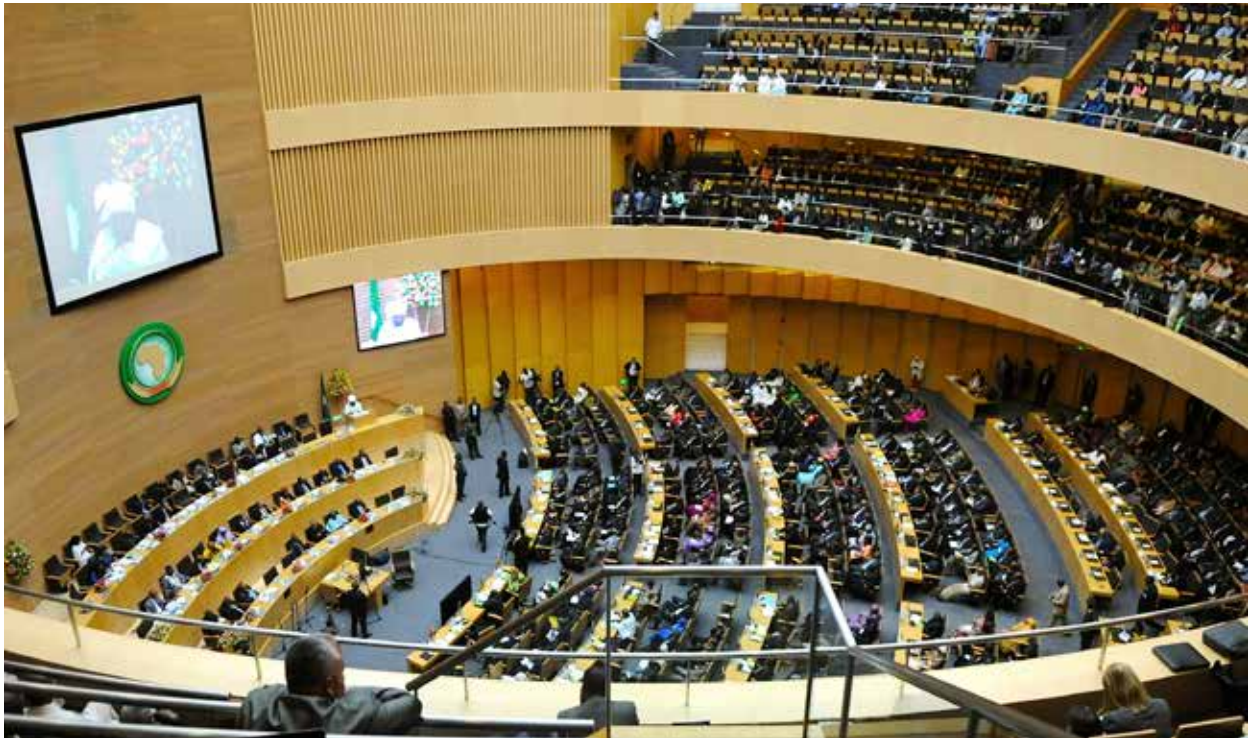
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Endnotes

- 1 The views expressed here are those of the author only, and not the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN or the AU Commission. I completed this article at the height of the outbreak of the coronavirus, when we were in lockdown in New York City and the number of cases was increasing globally. The coronavirus reinforced our level of interconnectedness, and the imperative for partnerships and multilateralism. As we went to press, even the most powerful countries in the world were struggling to provide adequate, timely and effective responses to the pandemic. As I observed the response of the US government with its complex governance system, from my residence in New Rochelle, the epicentre of the virus in the US during the months of April, May and June, my conviction about the need for strong partnerships underpinned by the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity was reinforced.
- 2 Subsidiarity in this context is understood as the delegation of responsibility based on the competencies, flexibility and capacities of the actors involved, whilst complementarity is the pooling of political and material resources for the accomplishment of a given objective.
- 3 The R-ARCSS was signed on 12 September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, paving the way for the establishment of a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGONU).

After several missed deadlines, the TGONU was finally inaugurated on 22 February 2020. The AU and UN played critical backstopping and other support roles to IGAD. For its part, the AU, through the Peace and Security Council, provided the necessary political cover for IGAD, whilst the UN kept the peace in South Sudan through its peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). An online version of the R-ARCSS is available at: <<https://www.dropbox.com/s/6dn3477q3f5472d/R-ARCSS.2018-i.pdf?dl=0>>

- 4 See: 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration Adopted by the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, 26 May 2013. Available at: <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36205-doc-50th_anniversary_solemn_declaration_en.pdf> [Accessed 18 March 2020]
- 5 See: African Union (2016) *Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020*. Lusaka, Zambia, 9 November. Available at: <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38304-doc-1_au_roadmap_silencing_guns_2020_pdf_en.pdf> See also: Decision of the Assembly/AU/Dec.630 (XXVIII), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 30–31 January 2017. Available at: <https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/32520-sc19553_e_original_-_assembly_decisions_621-641_-_xxviii.pdf> [Accessed 06 March 2020]
- 6 See: Charter of the United Nations, 1945. Available at: <<https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/>> [Accessed 19 March 2020]
- 7 See: Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2002. Available at: <https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf> [Accessed 18 March 2020]
- 8 See: Charter of the United Nations, 1945. Op. Cit.
- 9 The failure of the UNSC to agree on a statement on COVID-19 and the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, even when New York, the seat of the UN Headquarters, became the epicentre of the pandemic was a graphic illustration of the crippling dynamics that have come to characterise the Council.
- 10 See: *Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Partnership between the African Union and the United Nations on Peace and Security: Towards Greater Strategic and Political Convergence in January 2012*. Available at: <<http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-rpt-au-un-partnership-ny-23-09-2013.pdf>>; *Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations: Strengthening the Partnership Between the United Nations and the African Union on Issues of Peace and Security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union, 2016*. Available at: <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1302475?ln=en>>. The Joint Framework Agreement was signed by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, on 19 April 2017. [Accessed 29 March 2020]
- 11 See: Decision Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.1(XI), November 2018. Available at: <https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/36425-ext_assembly_dec_1-4xi_e.pdf> [Accessed 24 March 2020]
- 12 Niamey Declaration of the First Mid-Year Coordination Meeting between the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on the Pursuit of the African Integration Agenda, MYCM/Decl.1(I), 8 July 2019. Available at: <<https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/african-union/2968-first-mid-year-coordination-meeting-between-the-au-recs-and-the-regional-mechanisms-declaration-july-2019/file.html>> [Accessed 24 March 2020]
- 13 The strategy was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the LCBC in August 2018 and was endorsed by the AU PSC in December 2018. The strategy was developed with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the German government through GIZ and the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNAOU).



On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/African Union (AU) in 2013, African leaders solemnly declared “not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans” and “to end all wars in Africa by 2020”.

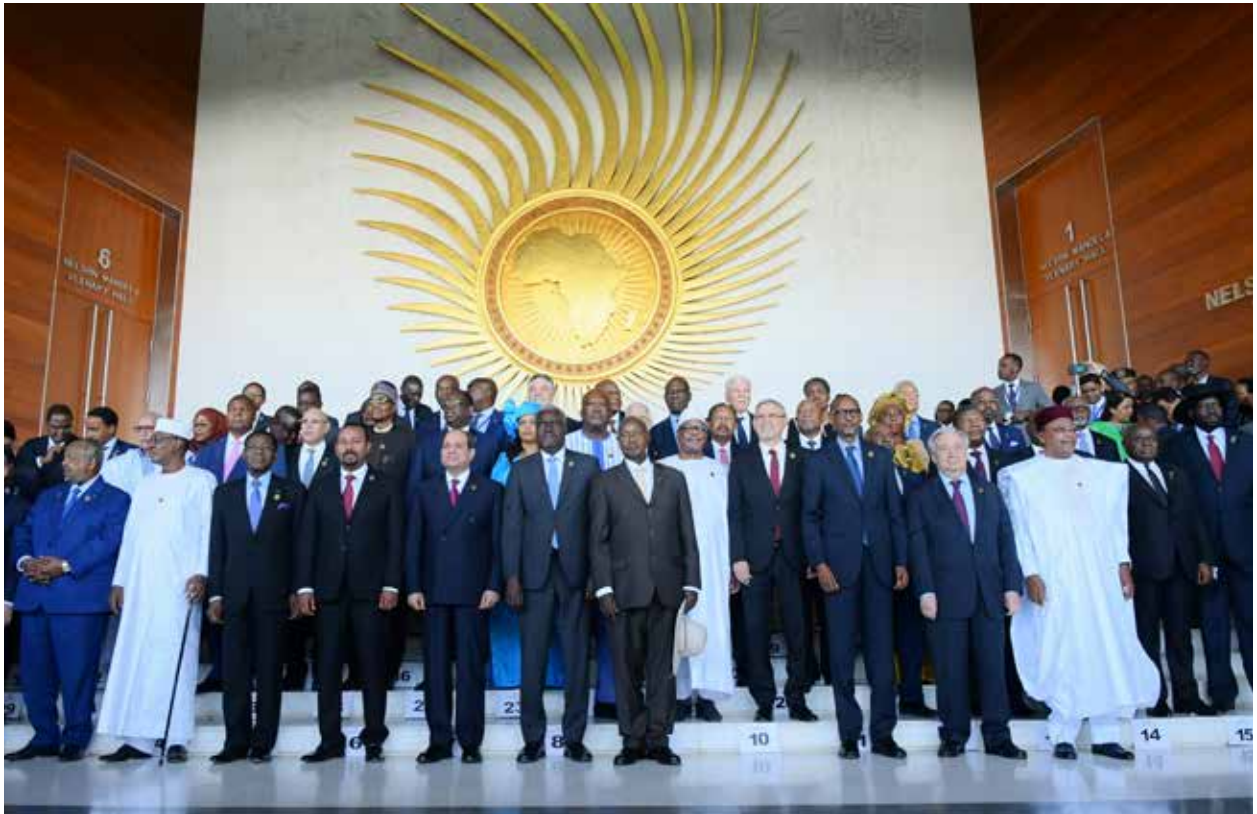
WHAT KIND OF LEADERSHIP DOES THE VISION OF “SILENCING THE GUNS” REQUIRE?

YOUSSEF MAHMOUD

Introduction

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/African Union (AU) in 2013, African leaders solemnly declared “not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans” and “to end all wars in Africa by 2020”.¹ The AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want,² adopted two years later under the aspirational goal of an “integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens”, reaffirmed

that “all guns will be silent by 2020”, meaning that Africa “shall be free from armed conflict, terrorism, extremism, intolerance and gender-based violence, which are major threats to human security, peace and development”. The AU Agenda 2063 rightly recognised that good governance, democracy, social inclusion, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law are the “necessary pre-conditions for a peaceful and conflict free continent”. The framers of this document were keenly



A group photo of participants of the 33rd African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, held under the banner of “Silencing the Guns, Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development (9 February 2020).

aware – as many others are – that without addressing the pervasive, internal democratic, governance and development deficits at the root of much of the violence on the continent, sustainable peace would, at best, be elusive.³

Sadly, nearly absent from these and other documents – including the 2016 master roadmap of practical steps to silence the guns⁴ – is the word “leadership”. The few times that transformational leadership is mentioned in Agenda 2063, it tends to refer to actions of individual political leaders, without reference to how it should be developed or exercised.

At the last AU Summit (9–10 February 2020), held under the banner of “Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development”, some refreshing leadership moments were on display. The highlight was the acceptance statement of President Cyril Ramaphosa

of South Africa⁵ as the new AU chairperson for 2020. The statement articulated a clear, compelling and forward-looking agenda for change. Noteworthy were the two extraordinary summits the president planned to convene back to back in May 2020 to make advances on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and on the bedeviling conundrum of silencing the guns. Equally noteworthy were the actions he announced to achieve greater women’s political and economic empowerment and to unleash the leadership potential and contributions of Africa’s digital natives – the youth.

Leadership is not just about the leaders

Although political leaders bear the primary responsibility for shepherding the silencing of the guns’ vision towards its desired ends, they cannot do it alone. Leadership for peace is not the preserve of governments or of

THE HIGHLIGHT WAS THE ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA OF SOUTH AFRICA AS THE NEW AU CHAIRPERSON FOR 2020



Focusing solely on the causes of conflict and its consequences would produce only “half the peace” or a highly reversible “negative peace”, requiring often robust or militarised efforts to maintain it.

individuals in formal positions of authority, divorced from the actions of the people who also exercise leadership outside the formal realm.

So then, what kind of leadership are we talking about? How should such leadership be understood, framed and exercised if it is to have a path-breaking influence on silencing the guns and taming the causes that drive people to use them? How can the energy of the critical mass of Africa’s 21st century change agents and trailblazers,⁶ who are fiercely and fearlessly leading throughout the continent, be further harnessed and nurtured? Specifically, what additional policies and initiatives can be realistically envisaged at the national and continental levels to unlock the transformative potential of these agents and of the change agenda announced at the February 2020 summit?

This article will attempt to provide elements of a response to these questions, with only some references to the rich and varied literature on leadership⁷ and the powerful assumptions that have long made us believe that leadership is only about the leader. In a world increasingly changing from below, the anachronism of such a view is glaringly evident. We live in a time where followers and

context have become a far bigger part of the conversation than the leaders themselves, with technology ceaselessly disrupting the long-standing patterns of dominance and the traditional deference to authority.

Leadership for silencing the guns *and* sustaining peace

Before addressing the first question, it is important to put to rest any lingering illusion that only if the guns are silenced, sustainable peace will reign. While violent conflicts remain one of the biggest challenges facing Africa, these conflicts have not started just because arms have been available. Peace scientists who have studied the factors associated with sustainably peaceful societies have shown that addressing the underlying drivers and accelerators of violence, while necessary, are insufficient to restore and foster peace for the long haul.⁸ These efforts need to be complemented by the equally important endeavour of uncovering and strengthening the resilient capacities that enable societies to manage conflict non-violently, remain peaceful and even prosper.

Sustainable peace, they contend, has a greater chance to materialise if peacebuilders, policymakers and practitioners build on what people know and what they have achieved.



PHOTO BY THOMAS CRISTOFOLETTI FOR USAID

Male and female millennial, high-tech farmers on the continent are unlocking the power of sustainable agriculture as a job creation engine for youth, while at the same time helping Africa meet its future food security needs.

Focusing solely on the causes of conflict⁹ and its consequences would produce only “half the peace”¹⁰ or a highly reversible “negative peace”, requiring often robust or militarised efforts to maintain it.¹¹

In light of the foregoing and for the purpose of this article, I define leadership for silencing the guns *and* sustaining peace¹² as the processes that create and nurture an empowering environment which unleashes the positive energy and leadership potential of people at all levels of society towards a worthy goal they helped to formulate. This entails, among other actions, the creation of participatory and inclusive mechanisms that allow citizens – in particular, women and youth – to articulate challenges to their human dignity and to actively participate in designing innovative and sustainable solutions to those challenges, building on what they have already achieved out of necessity or opportunity.

In defining leadership as a process, I draw upon recent developments of leadership research¹³ that emphasise practices and interactions which enable leadership to emerge from any level of society in response to a common predicament.¹⁴ This definition does not delegitimise person- or position-based leadership. But given that leadership, as mentioned above, does not reside in a

person, the role of the individual leader is to unleash the ambitions and aspirations of others who serve the interests and needs of the wider society. In this regard, attuned leadership based on the African humanism of *ubuntu*,¹⁵ if properly harnessed, may serve as a guide.¹⁶

So, what kind of actions can be contemplated at the national and continental levels under this process-driven, umbrella framework that could contribute to silencing the guns and sustaining peace?

At the National Level

National governments can use legislative tools to amplify existing pockets of leadership in the governance and economic spheres. Some African countries have already taken valuable steps that can be emulated over the coming years.

One possible next step would be for as many African countries as possible to have their legislatures pass a startup act, following the examples of Tunisia¹⁷ and, most recently, Senegal¹⁸, with the aim of promoting innovation and entrepreneurship and enabling local startups to overcome constraints and thrive. I am amazed, for example, by the growing number of male and female millennial, high-tech farmers on the continent,¹⁹ who are



The high youth unemployment in Africa has left many young people hopeless, idle and vulnerable to crime and radicalisation.

unlocking the power of sustainable agriculture as a job creation engine for youth, while at the same time helping Africa meet its future food security needs²⁰ and making a profit.

What does this have to do with silencing the guns and sustaining peace, one might ask? Think of the armies of unemployed young people who wreak vengeance on societies they believe have turned their backs on them. This is more evident in rich African countries that seem bent on manufacturing poverty, compelling marginalised and frustrated populations who lost faith in their governments to trust nothing but the guns.²¹

Leadership, in this instance, means harnessing what already exists, and creating the financial and legal incentives that would enable African small and medium enterprises to push the frontiers of digitalisation and innovation and attract commercial investors²² so they can

grow and prosper – and, in turn, contribute to “silencing unemployment”.²³ Passing startup legislation is a good starting point for scaling up impact.²⁴ It might even help get

Africa a step closer to the vision of a startup continent.²⁵

Another area that could benefit from a process leadership approach at the national level is the promotion of peace as a public good, as an explicit, deliberate policy objective, deserving attention at the highest levels of government and commanding the necessary infrastructure and resources.²⁶

Such an endeavour could take the form of a governmental entity, such as a ministry or a department of peace, whose primary mission would be to create and promote a culture of peace and enlarge the “toolbox” of resources at the disposal of governments for dealing with both internal and external conflicts without resorting to the use of force. This could include mapping

PASSING STARTUP LEGISLATION IS A GOOD STARTING POINT FOR SCALING UP IMPACT

the local capacities for peace, creating a supportive environment for local civil society organisations engaged in peacebuilding and peacemaking, and promoting intercommunity and cross-border economic incentives for peace. The mission would vary, of course, depending on the context. For countries coming out of conflict that have found their path to peace through an internationally or regionally brokered agreement or a national covenant, such a ministry would also be entrusted with overseeing the implementation of such an agreement. And if this proposition sounds like a fool’s errand, one should take a look at South Sudan and its Ministry of Peace Building, a structure tasked with the implementation of key elements of the revitalised South Sudan Peace Agreement signed in September 2018.²⁷ In October 2018, Ethiopia established its own Ministry of Peace.²⁸ Such structures while may not always fulfil expectations, as the case of the ongoing strife in Ethiopia painfully demonstrates, their establishment should nonetheless be strongly encouraged. This would be consistent with the 2016 UN General Assembly declaration on the right to peace, calling

on states to guarantee “freedom from fear and want as a means to build peace within and between states”,²⁹ The creation of ministries of peace would also be in line with the campaign of a Global Alliance, supported by Costa Rica (which has its own ministry of justice and peace),³⁰ calling for the establishment of governmental ministries and departments of peace all around the world.

At the Continental Level

One of the hallmarks of process leadership is to challenge dominant paradigms and shift patterns of thinking, knowing and doing that tend to prescribe predetermined pathways of addressing challenges. One of these paradigms is the way we view the world – as a place with problems to be prevented or a place with opportunities to be seized. “Because problems are usually experienced as threats and instil fears, they tend to be prioritised over opportunities in human decision making”.³¹ Silencing the guns is neatly ensconced in the problem category. Our fixation with it prevents us from uncovering and appreciating what is going well in Africa, where peace in many nations is the



UN PHOTO BY VIOLANNE MARTIN

A. Amhimmid Mohamed Alamami, Commander of the Military College, Libyan Arab Armed Forces (left); Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General Stephanie Williams (third from right) and A. Ali Abushahma, Commander of the Field Operations Room, Government of National Accord attend the fourth round of the 5+5 Libyan Joint Military Commission, Palais des Nations, Geneva. (19 October 2020).



President Cyril Ramaphosa as the Chairperson of the African Union chairing a virtual meeting with Heads of State and Government of Countries neighbouring South Africa discussing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. (8 May 2020)

norm, not the exception. Such a fixation also tends to feed the negative narratives associated with the continent. The 2019 Global Peace Index³² and the Positive Peace Index of the same year³³ have shown quite a number of these nations performing relatively well on the peace continuum, outflanking some established democracies.³⁴

In light of the above observations, I propose the organising of an African symposium of peaceful nations in the margins of next year's ordinary AU summit or the one after, during which self-selected and invited participants from these nations and the region will be asked to share their country's trajectory to peace, and highlight both the formal and informal institutionalised national structures they have devised or leveraged to sustain it. Using the methodology of appreciative inquiry,³⁵ the ultimate aim of the event will be to learn from these societies' relative success in promoting

peace at home and abroad, and to identify the leadership, governance and development opportunities that the next generation of African leaders could seize upon to further strengthen peace on the continent.

The first and only time such a symposium has been organised at a global level was by the Peacebuilding Alliance in 2009 in Washington, DC, where 18 countries representing various regions in the world gathered for three days to share their peace stories and learn from each other. Botswana and Malawi were among these countries.³⁶

The proposed African symposium could be preceded by a series of regional workshops, using the same approach and aiming for the same objectives. The outcomes of these


workshops could feed into those of the symposium. Should the idea find favour, the conception and organisation of the workshops and the symposium could be entrusted to

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an independent African think tank such as ACCORD, with proven thought leadership and convening capabilities and expertise. Such events could help advance ACCORD's Global Peace initiative, which is designed to build bridges between peace, governance and development.³⁷

Concluding thoughts

At the time of writing (March 2020), humanity is facing an unprecedented crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic. It has spread fear and seems to have sucked the oxygen out of meaningful international cooperation, as each nation turns inwards to fend for itself and its people. If the virus continues its macabre advance unchecked, it will have a devastating impact on the vulnerable and impoverished populations living in or displaced by violent conflicts on the African continent, where social distancing to slow down the spread of the disease is a privilege only few can afford. And if urgent action is not taken to “silence the guns”, these populations, surviving in overcrowded camps, could become massive breeding grounds for the virus, overwhelming weak if not broken health systems and exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation. It is my hope that the roadmap announced by President Ramaphosa, the AU chairperson, and some of the actions proposed above will still be relevant and even implemented despite peace and security setbacks and the unprecedented disruptions and hardships imposed on the continent by the pandemic.

Nothing concentrates the mind more than a crisis. And it is in times of a global health crisis, in particular, that the mettle of leadership is forged. There is no shortage of such leadership, particularly among youth, on the African continent. It just needs to be harnessed in a timely and courageous manner for the causes of peace, while helping societies navigate the dark paths of the pandemic. 

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Group photo of members of the UN Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, before the 12th annual joint consultative meeting, United Nations, New York (19 July 2018).

HOW A STRONG AFRICAN UNION— UNITED NATIONS PARTNERSHIP CAN SUSTAIN THE SILENCING THE GUNS AGENDA BEYOND 2020

DANIEL FORTI AND PRIYAL SINGH

The strategic partnership between the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN), the two principal international organisations tasked with addressing peace and security challenges on the African continent, remains a priority for both organisations. The organisations and their member states have worked in tandem since the AU's creation in 2002 and the subsequent establishment of the AU's Peace and Security Council (AUPSC). During this time, the partnership has focused primarily on joint conflict resolution and crisis management efforts.

Over the past 15 years, the AU–UN partnership in peace and security has evolved significantly, both in breadth and depth.¹ Member states on the AUPSC and the UN Security Council (UNSC) convene annually, with the three rotating African members of the UNSC (the A3) playing an informal bridging role throughout the year. The AU Commission and UN Secretariat are spearheading the partnership's shift away from a collection of ad hoc engagements towards a more strategic and predictable relationship, increasingly based on mutual respect and the



UN PHOTO/ALBERT GONZALEZ FARFAN

Egyptian and Gambian peacekeepers raise the UN and African Union flags at the headquarters of the AU–UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in El Fasher, Sudan. (7 May 2012).

recognition of comparative advantages.² Beyond the AU and UN's frequent interactions on country-specific issues, cooperation has flourished across a diverse set of thematic priorities – from mediation support and the women, peace and security agenda to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes.

Nonetheless, the partnership faces obstacles to the full realisation of its shared goal of a conflict-free African continent. Debates over political primacy and institutional leadership narrow cooperation on the most sensitive files such as Libya or Cameroon. Unresolved questions concerning financial resources and burden-sharing in peacekeeping and counter-extremism efforts continue to linger. But despite these roadblocks, the prevailing international climate underscores the political, financial and operational reality that neither the AU nor the UN can prevent conflicts and manage crises on their own. In this

light, the silencing the guns (STG) agenda can be a catalyst for strengthening the partnership's long-term foundation, with positive consequences for both the AU's Agenda 2063 long-term development vision as well as the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

This article discusses AU–UN cooperation to date on the STG agenda and identifies priorities for the partnership to sustain this initiative beyond 2020. It argues that a strong AU–UN partnership is critical to consolidating political buy-in and overcoming policy gaps on the STG agenda, especially as they relate to collective conflict prevention and crisis management efforts. It also discusses how AU–UN efforts on these issues will need to evolve to effectively achieve the initiative's ambitious commitments and the overarching goals expressed within the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.³

Why the STG agenda matters for the AU-UN partnership

The STG agenda encapsulates many of the strategic priorities underpinning the AU-UN partnership in peace and security. It emerged from the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government with a commitment to “end all wars in Africa by 2020” in its 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration.⁴ This commitment has since been elaborated by the Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020 (the AUMR), endorsed by the AUPSC in late 2016.⁵ Through a holistic and integrated approach to peace, security and development, the STG agenda aims to, inter alia, address the root causes of conflict in Africa, strengthen the continent’s capacities for peace, and support the African Peace and Security Architecture’s (APSA) mechanisms for conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace support, and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD).

The AUMR, developed nearly three-and-a-half years after the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, serves as the STG agenda’s policy foundation. It articulates a comprehensive approach for pursuing peace, security and socio-economic development simultaneously as necessary steps to end all wars on the continent. The AUMR’s detailed “implementable steps” in the political,

governance, socio-economic, social, environmental and legal dimensions therefore ask AU member states to approach structural conflict prevention from a much broader perspective than approaches confined narrowly to the peace and security space.⁶ This multifaceted approach to conflict prevention also aligns strongly with the UN’s peacebuilding and sustaining peace agendas.⁷ Specific to the AU-UN partnership, the AUMR’s recommendations include more frequent dialogue between the AUPSC and the UNSC on conflict prevention, the appointment of A3 members as penholders and co-penholders in the UNSC, and the convening of preparatory meetings ahead of council-to-council consultations.

A robust STG agenda matters for the AU-UN partnership from both political and policy perspectives. African leadership in addressing collective peace and security efforts is imperative for the AU’s long-term credibility as a continental institution. But while the AUPSC and the AU Assembly have frequently endorsed the agenda and its goals, there is increasing pressure to demonstrate tangible progress as violence and instability continue to impact many countries.⁸ UN Secretary-General António Guterres has consistently lauded partnerships with regional organisations as essential for contemporary multilateralism, given that contemporary crises are



UN PHOTO/STUART PRICE

African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) combat engineers help grade and repair a road linking Afgooye, a town in Somalia’s Lower Shabelle region, with Mogadishu, the country’s capital (24 January 2013).



Jean-Yves Le Drian (front), Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France, confers with his delegation during the Security Council meeting on peace and security in Africa, with a focus on partnership to strengthen regional peace and security, United Nations, New York (26 September 2019).

interconnected with regional and international dynamics.⁹ Moreover, African peace and security issues continue to feature prominently on the UNSC agenda: in 2019, over 50% of Council meetings and 64% of its outcome documents concerned an issue on the continent.¹⁰ These challenges require a collective response, which the UN and AU are best placed to provide.

While the AU and UN have cooperated effectively on a range of conflict prevention and crisis management initiatives in recent years, the AUPSC and the UNSC – increasingly interdependent engines of the partnership – remain locked in a relationship that is fundamentally unequal in terms of powers, authority, resources and political status. Divergent political interests of their members, different mandates and working methods often limit their ability to reach agreement on the most sensitive files.¹¹ Thus, in spite of stated support for the STG agenda, entrenched political hurdles inhibit more meaningful AU-UN cooperation.

Accordingly, one of the most significant challenges concerns exactly how member states can best translate

the STG political declaration into a comprehensive and implementable policy. While the AUMR is a positive step forward, it does not sequence priorities, or explain how particular interventions and processes will achieve the STG agenda's desired outcomes. The AUMR, therefore, is more valuable as a longer-term roadmap, on which the AU can build closer and more meaningful cooperation with the UN and other sub-regional multilateral actors.

AU-UN Cooperation to Date on the STG Agenda

Over the past two years, Addis Ababa and New York have accelerated momentum to implement various aspects of the STG agenda. This momentum reflects a balance between short-term interventions and longer-term policy processes to translate the agenda into concrete action. Effective implementation of the STG agenda's conflict prevention and crisis management commitments first requires collective buy-in from all AU member states, which can then be supplemented by the broader UN membership. In this light, the AUPSC is mandated to

guide AU member state engagement and provide annual implementation reports of the AUMR to the AU Assembly.¹²

While there have been efforts to achieve a more uniform approach towards conflict prevention and crisis management among all AU member states, divergent approaches have nonetheless posed a challenge to the overall process, especially in terms of monitoring and reporting on progress. Two issues in particular inform the different perspectives among member states. First, AU member states hold differing views regarding the extent to which the AU Commission should directly engage on specific peace and security initiatives – which impacts the extent to which it can engage on conflict prevention.¹³ Second, some AU member states have prioritised arms control, DDR and security sector reform (SSR) – practical steps towards silencing guns – that do not necessarily reflect the AUMR’s more holistic approach to conflict prevention.¹⁴

The A3 is the AU’s fulcrum for mobilising support for the STG agenda at the UN. These mobilising efforts began during the UNSC and the AUPSC July 2018 meeting and culminated in the unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 2457 in February 2019.¹⁵ Resolution 2457’s preambular paragraphs reflect the diverse political, governance, legal and socio-economic issues underpinning the AUMR.

But while the operative paragraphs encourage closer cooperation between the AU and UN on many issues where they already work together, they do not provide new or concrete commitments for the UNSC to support AU member states or the AUC on these political, governance, legal and socio-economic issues. UNSC members continue to debate how much of the resolution’s text constitutes “agreed language” that can be applied to specific country situations, or whether the resolution is solely applicable to thematic agenda items related to “peace and security in Africa” or “cooperation between the UN and the African Union”.¹⁶ These efforts demonstrate that political support for the STG agenda does exist, but there is still healthy debate over the AUMR and its conflict prevention agenda. Former and current A3 members will likely sustain international engagement on the STG agenda, with two planned high-level interventions already scheduled for 2020: Equatorial Guinea (which presided over the UNSC when Resolution 2457 was adopted) is scheduled to host a ministerial-level PSC discussion on the AUMR in March 2020, and South Africa (a current A3 member) is planning to use its 2020 chairship of the AU to convene an extraordinary AU Summit on the STG agenda in May.

At the institutional level, AU–UN cooperation on the STG agenda and on broader conflict prevention efforts

UN PHOTO/SKINDER DEBEBE



The Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 2457 (2019), reaffirming its support for Vision 2020 to Silence the Guns in Africa, United Nations, New York (27 February 2019).



The UN formed a system-wide task force on the STG agenda, chaired by the assistant secretary-general for Africa Bintou Keita, to coordinate support to the agenda across 29 departments and agencies.

are comparatively stronger than similar engagements among their member states. The two organisations engage frequently through established partnership mechanisms between senior leadership and between desk officers.¹⁷ Beyond formal partnership structures, day-to-day collaboration routinely occurs throughout many substantive divisions in both headquarters and throughout different field and mission settings. While various institutional and interpersonal dynamics sometimes constrain this cooperation, the commitment and impetus for joint AU and UN engagement is valuable.¹⁸

These commitments have helped the organisations rapidly scale up collaborative efforts to support the STG agenda. Multiple AU entities play a role in advancing the STG agenda: the AU Commission chairperson appointed a high representative for the STG agenda in October 2017, and established a technical secretariat housed in the chairperson’s office (which has since moved to the Commission’s Peace and Security Department). Numerous other departments and initiatives by the peace and security commissioner, through his appointment of special envoys, have also undertaken initiatives that fall under the STG banner.

Furthermore, within the AU, this institutional diversity reflects the broad range of tasks within the AUMR and the comparative advantages different entities have: for example, the AU youth envoy’s engagements have sought to not only ensure a prominent youth focus within STG activities, but also to sensitise the agenda among African citizens.¹⁹ On the other hand, the multitude of AU Commission focal points and activities convened under the banner of the STG agenda have contributed to a lack of clear institutional ownership, with multiple corresponding lines for monitoring and reporting on progress.

UN support to the STG agenda accelerated after the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2457, which requested the UN secretary-general to provide updates on “implementation measures towards enhancing the support of the United Nations and its agencies to the African Union in the implementation of Vision 2020 to Silence the Guns in Africa”.²⁰ To meet these demands, the UN formed a system-wide task force on the STG agenda, chaired by the assistant secretary-general for Africa in the departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA/DPO), to coordinate support to the agenda across 29 departments and agencies.²¹ The task force set out to identify clear priorities divided according to peace and



Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), addresses the Security Council meeting on Silencing the Guns in Africa through cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organisations in maintaining international peace and security. (27 February 2019).

security, socio-economic and advocacy issues. In terms of conflict prevention and crisis management, many of the UN's initiatives in support of the STG agenda align with pre-existing areas of AU–UN cooperation, including mediation support, technical assistance on DDR and civilian protection.²² As the task force is only one year old, many of its initial activities are pre-planned activities or in the early stages, but this has also given the UN some leeway to explore initiatives that prioritise a more holistic approach to conflict prevention and AU engagement, as evidenced by new initiatives on youth dialogue and on unarmed civilian protection.²³

Opportunities for the AU–UN partnership to sustain the STG agenda beyond 2020

While the AU, UN and their member states are mobilising quickly around the December 2020 milestone, it is clear that these efforts will need to continue well beyond 2020 to get closer to the aspiration of a conflict-free continent. The structural transformation required across many countries to achieve these goals should be measured in decades, not years. Building societies characterised by democratic governance, resilient institutions and inclusive

socio-economic development are not merely technical processes; they require sustained political movements and visionary leadership to navigate the inherent, complex trade-offs associated with such monumental changes.²⁴ This is why it is imperative that the AU and UN use the political momentum around this initiative to strengthen their collaboration on conflict prevention and anchor the STG agenda into their future work. Four clear steps can help guide their efforts.

First, as AU–UN interactions often take place in headquarters or across peace operations missions, there is scope for these two institutions to enhance their collaboration in non-peacekeeping or non-peace operation settings.²⁵ A significant portion of prevention-related work is undertaken in countries not yet undergoing political crises or systematic violence and where the UN and the AU do not maintain peace operations or liaison offices. Enhanced collaboration between UN country teams and AU officials – including through more frequent information and analysis sharing, joint messaging by principals and aligned programming activities – can amplify prevention and post-conflict recovery efforts in countries where peace operations are not active.



Second, as an unofficial bridge between the UNSC and the AUPSC, the A3 should continue to champion the STG agenda and provide regular updates of efforts to implement AUMR provisions that will continue beyond 2020. Advocating for more systematic references to Resolution 2457 in Council meetings and outcome documents can encourage more frequent reflection on the commitments contained in the said resolution. Building on the October 2018 Arria-formula discussion about the STG agenda, the A3 can use other tools and processes within the UNSC to focus on the initiative, and on conflict prevention more broadly. The UNSC's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa (for which an A3 member is always chairperson) has the mandate to discuss prevention-focused issues in addition to AU-UN relations. A3 members can also capitalise on the increasingly frequent consultations between the UNSC and the UN's Peacebuilding Commission (and between the AUPSC and the Peacebuilding Commission)

**DIVERSIFYING
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to provide inputs to the UNSC more concretely on issues related to “conflict prevention, political dialogue, national reconciliation, democratic governance and human rights”.²⁶

Third, closer programmatic collaboration on emerging prevention priorities represents opportunities for the UN to align its focuses closer to the AU. For example, incorporating regional issues and cross-border dynamics into existing analysis and programming can better prepare the partners to engage in any given situation. Local infrastructures for peace – formal and informal mechanisms that communities use to reduce tensions and build cohesion – can provide valuable complements to conventional conflict prevention and resolution efforts.²⁷ The STG agenda's holistic approach to prevention aligns strongly with consensus on preventing violent extremism and terrorism, requiring inclusive societies, accountable and impartial security institutions, and a clear understanding of the nexus between local issues and international factors.²⁸

Finally, ongoing reforms and policy reviews at the AU and UN should provide space for more coherence on long-term

prevention priorities. The AUC reforms, the creation of a new APSA implementation plan and an emerging review of the AU's PCRD policies offer clear avenues to integrate the STG agenda's priorities within existing structures. Similarly, the 2020 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture presents an opportunity for African member states to advocate for a more coherent and systematic AU-UN partnership across a range of peacebuilding efforts.²⁹

Conclusion

Sustaining momentum on the STG agenda beyond this year requires the AU and UN to work closely in translating the AUMR's ambitious goals into more coherent political leadership and policy action. While the agenda covers many diverse areas, more systematic AU-UN cooperation on conflict prevention efforts (from both country-specific and thematic perspectives) represents a concrete way to amplify the partnership. Diversifying how the two organisations engage one another can help the partnership grow even stronger. But political commitment to conflict prevention among member states is a necessary first step on the journey to building peaceful societies. AU member states and the AU Commission face high expectations to achieve their long-term goals of silencing the guns. But given the increasingly global political, security and economic dynamics underpinning conflicts on the continent, a strong partnership with the UN is imperative for working towards a conflict-free Africa. 

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THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM AND SILENCING THE GUNS IN AFRICA

EDDY MALOKA

AL JAZEERA ENGLISH



Africa still has battlefields in the Great Lakes region, and the menace of terrorism remains a challenge over vast swathes of land in North, East and West Africa.

Seven years ago, the African Union (AU) set the target of silencing the guns in Africa by 2020. We are already within the target year, but there are no signs that conflict is about to retreat completely from our continent. Instead, Africa still has battlefields in the Great Lakes region, and the menace of terrorism remains a challenge over vast swathes of land in East Africa, North Africa and West Africa. In some African countries, we have seen tempers running high in the streets, among other things due to disputes over elections and the Constitution. All these experiences, as well as ongoing flames in countries such as Libya, are a call to action to find an African solution to these African problems.

This is one of the primary challenges that South Africa inherited this year when the country assumed the chairship of the AU – whose theme, rightly so, is focused on this elusive goal of silencing the guns. The questions are not how we got here – because we know the causes of our conflicts – but rather, what are the lessons to learn? Why is it so difficult to silence the guns?

First, with the advantage of hindsight, the 2020 deadline was clearly ambitious, mainly because it was not based on evidence or scientifically determined. Rather, it was largely declaratory and political, made in the heat of the moment during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/AU in 2013.



U.S. ARMY AFRICA PHOTO BY SGT WILLIAM GORE

Senegalese soldiers undergo crowd control training to ensure the ability to conduct peace support operations throughout Western Africa (June 2014).

However, the rationale remains correct to this day, as the heads of state and government pledged in *The 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration* “not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans and undertake to end all wars in Africa by 2020”.¹ Therefore, moving forward from 2020 and beyond, whatever future target we set for this noble goal should be informed by a scientific reading of the reality on the ground. It must be realistic and achievable, lest we demoralise ourselves and think we are failing when, in fact, the problem is in our methodology and long-term perspective.

Second, we have not given adequate attention to the root causes of our conflicts, although this was the intention in the *Solemn Declaration*. Among the envisaged actions towards 2020, the *Solemn Declaration* stated that we should “address the root causes of conflicts including economic and social disparities... Eradicate recurrent and address emerging sources of conflict” and “push forward the agenda of conflict prevention”.² Among other things, it goes without saying that efforts to silence the guns should go beyond the slogan and create opportunities to boost the capacity of African institutions considerably to pre-empt conflicts in a more comprehensive and timely manner, rather than in a reactive conflict resolution approach.

These efforts must also strengthen the continental conflict prevention ecosystem and increase our collective capacities to warn early and listen early, too.

Even though the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is as close as ever to reaching its full operationalisation phase, evidence continues to show that Africa’s conflict resolution activities have tended to concentrate primarily on mediation, peace support operations (PSOs) and interventions. The deployment of PSOs in countries where conflict is ongoing is an indication of the challenges faced by actors to listen early and engage timeously, or at all. While the work of the PSOs can make significant impact on the ground – for instance, such as paving the way for elections – the reality is that such missions are too costly, too time consuming and take too long to produce results. PSOs do not necessarily provide a lasting solution to conflicts, given the multiplicity and complexity of the issues and actors involved in the conflict, but rather serve to de-escalate the conflict. In addition, the unpredictability of funding available for such operations threatens their existence, which is often shrouded in uncertainty.

In recent years, we have seen conflicts within the continent arising from factors that relate to structural

vulnerabilities, such as competition over access to, use and illegal extraction of natural resources; social unrest resulting from poor and unaccountable governance; the prevalence of illicit small arms and light weapons; religious radicalisation; electoral disputes and more. These factors test the existing capacities to effectively prevent the impact of conflicts on national cohesion, rule of law, justice, and peace and security at large, among other things. The customary peacemaking approach of the APSA, therefore, must adapt and transcend the habitual data collection/analysis (Conflict Early Warning System/CEWS), mediation (the Panel of the Wise, the Pan-African Network of the Wise/PanWise, the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation/FemWise-Africa) and PSO interventions. The scope of the AU's interventions should be broadened equally to include systematically structural conflict prevention that addresses the long-term root causes of potential violent conflict. Therefore, a two-pronged approach is needed, based on prevention and early action on the one hand and, on the other, the customary route of mediation and peacemaking. This will substantially lower the costs of intervention. The 2016 AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020 (AUMR), developed by the Peace and Security Council (PSC), is anchored on this twin approach, but thus far, its implementation has been one-dimensional. The launch of the AU's 2015 Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSCPF)² was a step in the right direction, even though countries are adhering to it very timidly.

Accordingly, the AU's decision to position the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a tool for conflict prevention is a great opportunity to fill these gaps. The APRM's mandate allows it to contribute to silencing the guns in Africa as it works to promote the AU's ideals and shared values of democratic governance and inclusive development. It does this by encouraging all member states to collaborate and voluntarily participate in the home-grown, credible, rigorous, independent and self-driven peer review process and the implementation of its recommendations. The primary purpose of the APRM, therefore, is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through the sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice.

The APRM's 22 country review reports are known for having pointed systematically at the fragilities of member states with great accuracy. As more of the APRM member states undergo the country review process, this will generate an incomparable repository of data to expand the capacity of Africa to rely on home-grown knowledge that is critical to crafting African solutions to African problems more resolutely. Furthermore, the APRM country evaluations have demonstrated that successful structural prevention should take into consideration deeper societal



Weapons retrieved from rebels by the UN's mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in coordination with the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) shortly before they're destroyed, in Goma, North Kivu (26 October 2012).

conditions. APRM indicators are beginning to point out that the next generation of conflicts is set to be related to governance, and will include aspects such as political succession to the country's high office; the terms of office of incumbents; the peaceful transfer of power to an opponent after an election; disputes within political parties that spill over into broader society; the quantity, quality and outcome of elections; and inclusion, participation and diversity management vis-à-vis access to the state.

In terms of the work done by the APRM thus far, it is encouraging that its current membership has reached 40 countries as of February 2020. Among the latest countries to have joined the APRM during the recently concluded APR Forum of Heads of States, in February 2020, are Seychelles and Zimbabwe. The APRM is actively working towards reaching universal accession by 2023, which is a very realistic target, given the positive feedback already received from the remaining 15 countries. Equally encouraging is the growing confidence displayed by member states towards the peer review process itself, which continues to



African Union Commission chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma addresses the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Forum. (30 January 2014).

increase both quantitatively and qualitatively. For instance, in 2019 alone, the APRM conducted the following reviews: Egypt, which underwent its second-generation review; four targeted reviews undertaken for Djibouti (on fiscal decentralisation); Namibia (on youth unemployment); and two reports on Zambia (one on the contribution of mineral resources to the national economy, and a second on the contribution of tourism to the national economy). Lastly, several reviews are in the pipeline for 2020, including in Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda.

Furthermore, efforts to silence the guns in Africa will be significantly enhanced through greater collaboration across the various early warning systems and frameworks in Africa. For its part, the APRM launched a workshop series under the theme of “Silencing the guns and positioning the APRM as an early warning tool for conflict prevention”. The first workshop was held in February 2020 in Abuja, Nigeria, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Savannah Centre for

Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD), and specifically discussed linking the APRM country reports to early warning systems and conflict prevention. This resulted in the elaboration of the APRM Framework on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention, which outlines the existing gaps in the various early warning systems throughout Africa and the opportunities for collaboration between actors and mechanisms working specifically in the area of early warning, and identifies a niche and a role for the APRM, and local-based conflict prevention structures for a sustainable conflict prevention environment. This effort added to the growing collaboration between the PSC and the APRM, confirmed through the Communiqué of the 914th Meeting of the PSC, held on 5 March 2020. Among others, this underscored the need to synergise efforts and share experiences emanating from the APRM review processes to enhance efforts towards preventive diplomacy in Africa.⁴

In conclusion, our dependent model for eradicating conflicts in Africa is clearly not sustainable. The operationalisation of the AU’s Peace Fund is an important achievement in this regard, but more must still be done to capitalise it from Africa’s own resources. Peacemaking and peacekeeping are not cheap enterprises, and Africa must redouble its efforts to raise its own resources. We cannot muster and effectively manage the geopolitical interests of non-African actors involved in conflicts on our continent if we are in the game empty-handed. If we want to continue to find African solutions to African problems, we must do more to find and deploy African resources. 🇸🇩

Professor Eddy Maloka is Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). He writes in his personal capacity.

Endnotes

- 1 See: African Union (2013) ‘The 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration’, Available at: <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36205-doc-50th_anniversary_solemn_declaration_en.pdf> [Accessed 27 February 2020].
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 See: African Union (n.d.) ‘Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework: Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessments (CSVRA), and Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies (CSVMS)’, Available at: <<http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/01-cscpf-booklet-updated-final.pdf>> [Accessed 27 February 2020].
- 4 See: African Union Peace and Security Council (n.d.) ‘Communiqué of the 914th Meeting of the PSC, 5 March 2020, on the Reports by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as Well as the Steps Taken to Position the APRM as an Early Warning Tool for Conflict Prevention’, Available at: <<http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-914th-meeting-of-the-psc-5-march-2020-on-the-reports-by-the-peer-review-mechanism-apmr-as-well-as-the-steps-taken-to-position-the-aprm-as-an-early-warning-tool-for-conflict-prevention>>. [Accessed 6 March 2020].

CONFLICT TRENDS INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR HAMULI BAUDOIN KABARHUZATO



KWEZI MNGQIBISA

Kwezi Mngqibisa (KM): Ambassador Hamuli, tell us about the state of play relevant to the initiative of Silencing The Guns in the Central Africa region.

Amb Hamuli: Since the adoption of the initiative by the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has made efforts to implement a strategic roadmap that includes control of illicit small arms flows in Central Africa, increased efforts to combat violence and its structural causes, capacity improvement of its early warning mechanism, and promotion of AU and international legal instruments to be ratified and implemented by member states.

Concerning small arms and light weapons at regional level, the Kinshasa Convention on Small Arms entered into force on 8 March 2017, and a regional plan of action was subsequently adopted by member countries. At national levels, ECCAS has encouraged member countries to set up or strengthen national commissions and

implement actions in this sector with active participation of civil society organisations (CSOs).

Concerning structural causes of violence, ECCAS has improved its efforts to reduce violence related to political transitions. In that case, its electoral unit has been reorganised to be deployed in countries where serious threats of election violence exist. It has also organised training sessions and deployed election observers in countries such as the Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Cameroon, including even opening up permanent offices in the first two countries in order to follow up on issues relating to political transitions.

Currently, ECCAS is engaged in an elaborate process to set up the Council of Elders of Central Africa to strengthen its mediation and good offices capacity. It remains determined to fast-track all its conflict prevention mechanisms, including its programmes on combating terrorism and piracy.

KM: How does this reality fit in with the broad institutional reforms undertaken by ECCAS?

Amb Hamuli: The reform of ECCAS is intended to improve efficiency of the organisation on the stability front, as well as on the economic level, by ensuring that the treaty and other legal documents are updated and aligned to AU developments, so that the institutions are harmonised to provide better service delivery and that the financial and management mechanisms are modernised.

To reach these objectives, ECCAS revised its Protocol on the Council of Peace in Central Africa (COPAX). The aim was to make sure that its organs really fit within the broad institutional architecture laid down within the treaty, and that the Council of Elders, as a conflict prevention mechanism, is taken care of in the peace architecture of the community. New institutions that developed recently, such as maritime security strategy and the police cooperation mechanism, had to be included as well. The issues of personnel and funding were also examined, and decisions would be taken by heads of states.

KM: What is the ambition and progress on setting up the Council of Elders, in relation to member countries and the AU?

Amb Hamuli: The ambition is to strengthen ECCAS's capacity to respond timely to prevent violent crisis in the Central Africa region. This is a region that has been seriously damaged by wars and violent conflicts. Serious crimes of war, crimes against humanity and genocide have been perpetrated more here than in any other regional economic community (REC). Some protracted conflicts still threaten the stability of some countries; therefore, it is not too late to set up the Council of Elders as a political and diplomatic mechanism for intervention before crises are out of control.



U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Sonny Lorrinus

New institutions that developed recently, such as maritime security strategy and the police cooperation mechanism.

As far as the progress of setting up the Council of Elders is concerned, consultations with 10 out of 11 ECCAS member countries have been completed. These consultations took place between September 2019 and February 2020 and were carried out by an ECCAS-ACCORD partnership team. Most of the country experts we met with have expressed an urgent need to deploy a flexible team of eminent elders to intervene in countries to prevent violence. It is therefore ECCAS's determination to finalise the necessary legal and policy documents for their submission to the ministers and to the heads of state and government. The United Nations (UN) and AU are supportive of this process.

KM: How will the Council of Elders work in relation to decision-making, planning, coordination, resourcing and implementing mediation intervention?

Amb Hamuli: In the revised treaty, the Council of Elders is a consultative mechanism. When there is a need for urgent political intervention, if deployed, it shall provide recommendations to be considered by the ECCAS Commission decision-making organs. As to issues of organisation and functioning, there are diverging suggestions from member countries, which shall be submitted to a regional member countries experts' meeting for consensus.

Concerning resourcing, there is a common understanding that the Council of Elders should have access to sustainable financial resources, which must allow the urgent action that their mandate requires. Should they be established in the form of a fund or an annual budget? This is still to be decided. But access to financial resources



hdpiccar

The Central Africa region has been seriously damaged by wars and violent conflicts.



Women's organisations are well organised in the region and have been working on conflict prevention and management for years.

should not depend on the decision of a single donor, nor should it be subject to external and unclear objectives.

As for implementing mediation interventions, the Council of Elders shall require the support of a team of technical experts to facilitate preparation and implementation on the ground. A clear intervention methodology shall be defined in the operations manual, and details shall be provided concerning the nature of the crisis and the problem-solving process, including facilitating agreement implementation.

KM: What views, lessons and practices have emerged in the country consultations and engagements with the AU and other RECS on how best to operationalise the Council of Elders?

Amb Hamuli: Many divergent positions have emerged from the member countries' consultations on different questions. Although all member countries agree to speed up the establishment process, there are issues on which there is a need for common ground. Some of them are:

Composition: There seems to be a common understanding that all member countries should be represented in the Council of Elders, and that it should be composed of eminent personalities, both men and women, in equal number. But some countries strongly recommend that it should be a small team, because of financial and operational constraints. They suggest that each country should choose its delegate freely from a profile criterion which, among other things, stresses gender balance.

Mode of selection: Some countries suggest that the chairperson of the ECCAS Commission should have the power to choose a shortlist generated by Member States based on an agreed criteria. Others think that each country

should set up an internal selection process, because of the special diplomatic privileges that will be given to them. These positions need to be reconciled as well.

Duration of mandate: Some countries set a principle that the Commission chairperson should be in a position to change the composition of the Council during his tenure, and therefore the mandate could not be more than three years, renewable. Others suggest five years non-renewable, arguing that institutional instability is conducive to weakness, and that the region needs stable references.

Legal status and financial advantages: Some think the eminent personalities should have diplomatic rank during their mandate. As such, they should be offered a regular payment in their country or at the regional level. Since the Council will work as an organ, even if its mandate is consultative, it should be assumed that it will be implementing an ECCAS programme of action and therefore this requires an annual budget. However, others think it would be wise to avoid high running costs – for example, that any payment of fees should occur only when there is a deployment mission in a particular country. As we said earlier, national experts will propose consensual positions to be submitted to decision-making organs.

Some lessons and practices that have also emerged: First, some countries have developed internal mechanisms for conflict prevention and dialogue. After past dramatic internal civil conflicts, and national peace dialogues recommended institutions such as national peace and reconciliation commissions, national dialogue commissions, human right commissions, the ombudsman offices, etc., these institutions have a lot of experience that a regional Council could draw upon. Second, to encourage regional ownership of the Council, some countries offered to train its members in their universities where conflict prevention courses and research have been introduced in the curricula. And some governments could even directly fund these trainings, if asked to. Third, CSOs and women's organisations are well organised in the region and have been working on conflict prevention and management for years. They have tremendous experience and knowledge of their respective country's processes and would make a valuable contribution to the work of the Council. Finally, collaboration with the AU and other RECs was highly recommended, not only because they already have experience in this regard, but because some ECCAS member countries belong to other RECS; therefore, coordination and collaboration are crucial for success in this case. 📌

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CONFLICT TRENDS
SPECIAL EDITION



PLANT TREES NOT BOMBS

**WE STAND AT A VERY UNCERTAIN
FUTURE FOR HUMANITY**

SPEECH BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS ON THE OCCASION OF THE GLOBAL PEACE “PLANT TREES NOT BOMBS” CAMPAIGN LAUNCH



“ It is indeed my great pleasure and honour to stand alongside Mama Graça Machel, Chair of Global Peace and a global peace activist, to launch the “Plant Trees Not Bombs” campaign. I am quite certain that the question on the top of most of your minds is why the launch of a peace campaign by the Minister of

Defence and Military Veterans?

For centuries, while the role of the military has been to protect a nation and her citizens from external threats, it is also true that the role of the military establishment has in many of the conflicts afflicting the world, inflicted untold pain and misery on the lives of millions

of people. In South Africa, the survival of the apartheid regime was very much dependent on the support of the military establishment. In fact, during those dark days, the military was very much the brains trust of the apartheid state. However, since the advent of democracy in 1994, our democratic government has spent an enormous amount of time in transforming our military establishment from one which was a warmonger to one which is now a peacekeeper, with respect for the country’s constitution

and international law. On 18 March 1995, in this very same city, on receiving ACCORD’s Africa Peace Award, one of the founding fathers of our democracy, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, said: “Never again shall South Africa be the fountainhead of conflict in the region and further afield. Never again shall our country be the source of armaments used to suppress communities and to wage aggressive wars against neighbours. Never again shall we spend our people’s resources to develop weapons of mass destruction.”

During that turbulent period, Tata Madiba and his fledgling democratic government recognised that the repositioning of our military establishment and other security agencies held the keys

to ensuring peace and stability in our democracy. I am therefore happy to report that our military establishment has walked the talk from being a “fountainhead of conflict” to one which is making a significant contribution towards securing peace and stability in our continent. In fact, we rank amongst the top troop-contributing countries on UN missions, making peace and, when necessary, enforcing it! Today, the world is confronted with a new threat, namely climate change. Climate change threatens our way of

**NEVER AGAIN SHALL WE SPEND
OUR PEOPLE’S RESOURCES
TO DEVELOP WEAPONS OF
MASS DESTRUCTION**



The Minister of Defence and Military Veterans of South Africa and high-level officials at the planting of the first tree of the "Plant Trees, Not Bombs" Campaign, Durban (14 November 2019).

life but more importantly, tomorrow it threatens the very existence of future generations. Whilst talk of climate change may sound like a far distant phenomena, we see and experience it daily. It is against this background that we have committed to use our weapons of war to go to war on this new threat of climate change. We need to use all our creative talents and all our resources to fight climate change. The fight against climate change requires the discipline, skills and technology that the military is renowned for. Ours is defence and development, hence we are also involved in major developments in support of our people – such as the major undertaking we have in the Vaal river system – where we have undertaken major repairs of infrastructure and pollution prevention. Our engineers have been hard at work since October 2018. I should also use the opportunity to remind us that even early on in our democracy we realised the importance of the environment, and we dedicated a section of the 1996 White Paper on Defence to environmental matters. But we went beyond that and established an environmental unit within the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), whose members are in our midst. It is for these reasons that I agreed, without hesitation, to commit our military to this campaign in the fight against climate change.

Today, as we lower the tree from our military helicopter, we are illustrating to our citizenry and the world the versatility of the military... it can also give life! Who can forget the assistance of the SANDF to Mozambique during the floods in the year 2000, and the delivery of baby Rosita in a tree with the help of the SAAF helicopter? As we gather here today, we are reopening a chapter in the role of the military... a chapter that changes the narrative from planting bombs to planting trees... from inflicting death to giving life.

I will confer with the Military Command Council of the SANDF, led by the Chief: SANDF, General Solly Shoke. I will urge them to plant one million trees, and to enjoin other defence forces to do the same. Militaries in Afghanistan, Thailand, Britain, Sri Lanka, to mention but a few, have taken up the challenge and already made strides. I want to also use this opportunity to extend a hand of partnership to my counterpart ministers of defence across the world. I will call on them to join the South African National Defence Force, Global Peace and all its partners to plant 75 million trees by September 2020. This will be to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

Mr Under-Secretary-General, Fabrizio Hochschild, please inform His Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, that by our conduct today, we signal our full support for our multilateral global order and our resolve to strengthen it. It also comes at a time when we are members of the United Nations Security Council until 2021, which we chaired during October 2019.



Ashraf Hendricks

The South African Defence Force assisted Mozambique during the floods of 2000.

Mama Graça, let me congratulate you and the leadership of Global Peace for this innovative campaign. Let me also thank the leadership of this City of eThekweni and the KZN province for embracing this campaign. I also thank the leadership of the United Cities and Local Government for integrating this campaign launch in its programme. Cities and local government are the lifeblood of our nations, and I call on all our mayors across the world to embrace the campaign to plant trees and breathe life into our social spaces. 🌳



Excerpts from the speech by the South African Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, on the occasion of the Global Peace "Plant Trees Not Bombs" Campaign Launch, ICC, Durban, 14 November 2019. The full text of the speech is available at: <<http://www.dod.mil.za/media/media2019/MODMV%20TREES%20NOT%20BOMBS%20ACCORD%20DBN%2014112019%20ICC%20EVENT.pdf>>



STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED NATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY- GENERAL AT THE LAUNCH OF THE “PLANT TREES NOT BOMBS” CAMPAIGN

“ ... This is a wonderful campaign. Planting trees and highlighting this as the alternative to conflict is a very dignified and appropriate way to mark the 75th anniversary of an organisation that is struggling today – not the least bit because of its mandate to uphold peace and security and to further the social justice and human rights and to promote sustainable development. The planting of trees in this moment could not be more critical: trees are a weapon, a weapon against climate change. Trees capture carbon and convert it into something that is healthy for the planet.

**MOST OF THE TREES WE SEE
AROUND US CAME INTO THE WORLD
BEFORE WE EXISTED AND MANY
OF THEM WILL LIVE ON AFTER US**

But trees also are a very important reminder: trees are the oldest living beings on this planet. Most of the trees we see around us came into the world before we existed and many of them will live on after us. So, they remind us of the future, and in so many of our politics and so much of our commercial activity we forget our obligations to the future. We forget that we are not owners of this planet, but its caretakers. The planting of trees connects us to the next generation, it

connects us to the generation after that. It represents our commitment to leave behind as much as we inherited. So I hope as part of our marking of the 75th anniversary – an anniversary where the world needs to recommit to international cooperation, to recommit to working together to uphold peace and security. We will try and amplify this campaign and do our outmost to start with 75 million trees but hopefully reach 750 million. 🌳

”





WE STAND AT A VERY UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR HUMANITY

KUMI NAIDOO



WESLEY FESTER

In several countries the army is out on the streets enforcing soft and hard curfews.

If the global coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic has shown us anything, it is that there is no them and us. The virus does not discriminate, and nature does not negotiate. That lethal combination does not bode well for our species. Currently, all indications point to the fact that millions of people across the world will be infected and that hundreds of thousands, if not millions, more will die. Families, villages, towns and cities will forever be changed. We are already faced with the stark and unsettling reality of rolling global lockdowns for almost half the world's population. That schools, universities, shops, factories and offices could be closed down overnight has shaken us. Our very lives have been paused and, in some cases, entirely destroyed. Millions

of people across the world are suddenly jobless and unable to make financial commitments to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table. In several countries, the army is out on the streets, enforcing soft and hard curfews. There is a palpable sense that the world has come undone. The ball of wool is unravelling right before our eyes as governments scramble to implement some form of universal basic income grant; previously reluctant employers are suddenly adopting work-from-home as the default option.

In the late 1950s, environmentalist and author Rachel Carson published her research into the production and widespread use of synthetic pesticides in the United States of America (USA). Her book, titled *Silent Spring*, brought environmental concerns into the media and



The Amazon rainforest – which plays a vital role in balancing the world’s climate and helping fight global warming – is also suffering as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Deforestation increased by 55% in the first four months of 2020 compared with the same period last year, as people have taken advantage of the crisis to carry out illegal clearances.

eventually the minds of the American public. It also brought a low-level media war with the public relations agencies of the chemical companies, but Carson fought on courageously and in the end, her work “spurred a reversal in the United States’ national pesticide policy, led to a nationwide ban on DDT for agricultural uses, and helped to inspire an environmental movement that led to the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency”.¹

Thus, the environment as an issue was firmly on the radar of the average middle-class American. Almost a decade later, as he left public office, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned of the growing power of what he referred to as the “military-industrial complex” and its deepening influence on all of society. He highlighted that academic research was becoming less about knowledge and more about money and serving the capitalist and military class in society. He further warned us to “avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage.”² When we look around the world in 2020, it is patent that no one has listened to Eisenhower.

We have consistently been using more than our fair share of natural resources, evidenced by Earth Overshoot Day³ drawing closer every year since measurements started in the 1970s. We have not only mortgaged the material assets of our grandchildren, we have shorted the futures on those mortgages and pre-sold them mountains of debt that they will never be able to repay. We have plundered centuries-old rainforests for wood and planted miles of monoculture palm oil plantations. We have drag-netted the seabeds and dumped islands of plastic in the Pacific. We have taken genetically modified organism (GMO)-based commercial farming to the level where we have drained every last nutrient from the soil. We have created so much industrial pollution that we can barely breathe in the major cities of the world. We have hunted and poached whole species to extinction and given our public water resources away to corporations to bottle in single-use plastic and sell back to us for a private profit. We have done a sterling job of not just ignoring Eisenhower’s warnings, but appear to have gone and done the opposite for each warning we were gifted.

The coronavirus has shown us very clearly that the biggest dangers we face are deeply related to the choices we make as human beings and how we choose to treat each other. Planting a tree instead of dropping a bomb is



one such choice, and I applaud ACCORD and its partners for the Plant Trees Not Bombs campaign to plant more trees. Our collective human security depends on a cool planet, with clean air and minimal desertification. Planting more trees will address all those needs and add shade cover, ensure greater water security and less topsoil run-off, and add a positive aesthetic dimension to our lives that is not just sorely needed but is actually essential for our mental well-being.⁴

Planting trees, however useful and powerful a gesture that it is, is only one among many other steps required to stem the downward environmental slide we are now on. We also need to challenge ourselves and our governments to move from focusing on the narrow military-based approach of national security to a deeper, wider and more long-term view of human security. We often miss the links between how we live and what this means for environmental destruction. It is difficult to see these connections when we are standing in the supermarket deciding on which brand

OUR COLLECTIVE HUMAN SECURITY DEPENDS ON A COOL PLANET, WITH CLEAN AIR AND MINIMAL DESERTIFICATION

of crisps to choose or shopping online for a new couch. So, what is the connection between that new flat-pack table someone is about to buy on Amazon and disappearing forest cover in the Congo? A 2018 study published by the Royal Geographic Society makes that connection evident: “These findings suggest that US demand for furniture encourages Chinese economic actors to harvest timber from Congo Basin forests. Our results help to illuminate the complex environmental and economic drivers surrounding trade and deforestation and can help inform consumers about more sustainable ways to purchase wood products from one of the world’s preeminent biodiversity hotspots.”⁵

So, the seemingly innocent act of a person in San Francisco buying a new kitchen table is suddenly not so innocent. A table might have been just US\$199 with delivery, but its real cost is much higher. And the flat-pack table has cost a generation of Congolese children the right to clean water, it has robbed them of the



PHOTO BY AXEL FASSI/OIC/FOR

A Sapelli tree being cut into planks near Imbolo, Democratic Republic of the Congo (June 2018).



As more and more people get infected, medical staff have to endure long hours, intensifying conditions, and the fear of contracting the virus themselves.

opportunity to wander along a forest path and sit in the cool shade of giant trees. It has robbed them of their very heritage and birthright. The coronavirus outbreak has sharpened the contradictions and fragilities of the capitalist system, exploiting the poor – who have no choice but to work in essential services jobs and sacrificing their lives for a 3% (or some other arbitrary number) growth rate of the economy. We now also see the essential people who are carrying the world's economies – and it is not chief executive officers (CEOs) and vice presidents. It is the working class – the doctors, nurses, truck drivers and waste collectors.

Humanity can view this opportunity that the coronavirus outbreak has given us to not fall back into old ways of being. We are regularly reminded that things cannot go back to normal – because normal was broken; normal was not working for everyone; normal was steadily denuding the planet of its ability to continue to sustain us. Normal was actually dysfunctional. The new normal is about both micro-consumerist changes as well as fundamental changes to all our economic systems, from the top all the way down. We need to be honest with ourselves about what is important to our well-being and what constitutes a good or rich life, well beyond mere dollars and cents.⁶


We have an opportunity to inspire subversion by creating and supporting mutual aid societies and supporting worker strikes, housing and tenant movements and local food security initiatives. We are at the point where we can build a decentralised, citizen-owned future⁷ envisioned in the Kilimanjaro Declaration – not just in Africa, but the whole world over. We face an existential crisis brought on by climate change. The mind-boggling growth in CO² emissions, the warming planet evidenced by melting polar caps, widespread natural habitat destruction, species extinction, deepening droughts and terrifying levels of micro-plastics in our water resources are all too much to process.

Instead of the knowledge of what is happening spurring us into action to radically alter our ways of living and consumption; we have collectively become even more lethargic. Instead of organising protests and demanding that water rights are not signed away to transnational corporations, we have opted to “Netflix and chill”. While we may feel powerless, we must be wary of seeing climate change as yet another stand-alone “issue” or something for the environmentalists to deal with. The only issue right now is our burning planet. If we fail to act, we will face the extinction of our species.



We need to rethink and redefine what security means in the world today. There are indeed glimmers of hope for the future in the responses to the global coronavirus outbreak. Such hope is found in the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women and its executive director, Khara Jabola-Carolus, who has rapidly co-developed and released a feminist economic recovery for COVID-19.⁸ The recovery plan takes a sober, timely and refreshing view that rather than rush to rebuild the status quo of inequality, we should encourage a deep structural transition to an economy that better values the work we know is essential in sustaining us. We should also address the crises in healthcare, social, ecological and economic policies laid bare by the pandemic. Economist Nassim Nicholas Taleb has proposed that a "antifragile country would encourage the distribution of power among smaller, more local, experimental, and self-sufficient entities – in short, build a system that could survive random stresses, rather than break under any particular one".⁹

Both Jabola-Carolus and Taleb are advocating for radical restructuring of the USA and global economy. Such hopeful flickers of light in a post-COVID-19 economic rebuilding are echoed by United Cities and Local Governments' (UCLG) recently released Decalogue for the post-COVID-19 era, declaring: "It is essential to ensure that the measures that need to be taken to address climate change carry on in the post COVID-19 world."¹⁰ The UCLG Decalogue notes that economic recovery or restarting cannot come at the cost of the environment and makes reference to a bold global green deal. Emilia Saiz, secretary general of UCLG, echoes the human-centred approach of the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women, talking about cutting down on emissions by adopting more remote work options that crucially contribute to more sustainable mobility models and reconcile work and personal life.

We have a window of opportunity – crystallised by the coronavirus outbreak – in which to act to restore the balance of how we utilise and consume the natural resources of the planet. If we want to ensure not just the survival of the planet but the survival of our very species, we must be as creative, bold and courageous as we can be. Take heart, though, if all the courage you can muster right now is to plant a tree – then that's one of the simplest ways to make the future better, for all of us. 

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CONFLICT TRENDS

SPECIAL EDITION

**GLOBAL HEALTH:
A PRESSING FOREIGN POLICY
ISSUE OF OUR TIME**

**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19
ON PEACE OPERATIONS
IN AFRICA**



GLOBAL HEALTH: A PRESSING FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE OF OUR TIME

AYANDA NTSALUBA



Photo by John Liston.

A black fluorescent light shows where bodily fluid containing Ebola virus landed on a care team's personal protective equipment. The Ebola virus is transmitted through the bodily fluids of infected patients.

Recognition of the nexus between foreign policy and public health is not new; it has found episodic expression that tended to dissipate, only to re-emerge with time. This has been the case because traditional notions of advancing national interests through foreign policy have tended to be anchored around the fields of trade and defence, with health seen as part of so-called "low politics". This has tended to underplay the foreign

policy dimensions of health. Nevertheless, there have also been a number of global initiatives focusing on the intersection between politics and health, because health outcomes are not solely a function of health systems. There are so many other factors at play, which may be social or political determinants that arise from actions within states or globally. With globalisation, the impact of transnational actors – be it states, transnational



INVESTOR PLACE

A flurry of red hearts in recognition of World Aids Day (December 2017).

corporations (TNCs) or civil society – and their actions, in turn, are driven by and founded on global social norms, which tend to reflect and perpetuate existing power relations. The impact on health can both be positive or negative; deliberate or a side effect. There is a need for more transparency in acknowledging these as much, as there is a need for more transparency in recognising public health as a foreign policy issue.

In the 19th century, European countries attempted to deal with the spread of cholera plagues and yellow fever by negotiating international sanitary treaties. During the Cold War, health became one of the strategies for international competition. The then-Soviet Union, for example, approached the hosting of the Alma-Ata International Conference on Primary Health Care (1978) as an opportunity to demonstrate that socialism could accomplish what other political systems could not. In 1995, at its 48th session, the World Health Assembly (WHA) agreed to revise the 1969 International Health Regulations (IHR), due to the fact that the existing regulations had a narrow scope. There had been an emergence of new infectious agents, such as Ebola haemorrhagic fever in the

THE IMPACT ON HEALTH CAN BOTH BE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE; DELIBERATE OR A SIDE EFFECT

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (then Zaire). Also, there was a lack of a formal, internationally coordinated mechanism to prevent international spread. These efforts led to the adoption of the current IHR (2005)¹ which entered into force on 15 June 2007. It is instructive to note that the principles guiding the implementation of the 2005 IHR explicitly include “full respect for the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons” and are

“guided by the charter of the United Nations (UN) and the constitution of WHO”. A point of key concern, frequently raised in the application of the IHR, is that of ensuring that restrictions on travel and

trade during outbreaks are justified, and that they are not used as political instruments. These restrictions tend to bring more financial harm to affected states and, if inappropriately applied, act as a disincentive to accurate reporting.

Towards the end of the 20th century, the HIV/Aids pandemic, biological terrorism, the probability of an influenza pandemic, tension between health and trade objectives in international negotiations, the tobacco pandemic and the health consequences of conflict and humanitarian crises all served once again to propel



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (second from left), flanked by Jonas Gahr Store (left), Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway; Bernard Kouchner (second from right), Minister for Foreign Affairs of France; and Nkosazana Zuma-Dlamini (right), Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, addresses the launch of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative, United Nations, New York (27 September 2006).

health high up the agenda of the system of international relations and foreign policy.

It is against this backdrop that the ministers of foreign affairs of Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa and Thailand, under their Global Health and Foreign Policy Initiative (FPGHI) – launched in September 2006 in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly – converged in Oslo on 20 March 2007 and issued a ministerial declaration under the same title: “Global Health: A Pressing Foreign Policy Issue of our Time”.² The ministers asserted that “in today’s era of globalization and interdependence there is an urgent need to broaden the scope of foreign policy”³. They went further to argue that in spite of life and health being the most precious assets, “we believe that health is one of the most important yet still broadly neglected, long-term foreign policy issue of our time.”⁴ The ministers then committed to and invited others to join in a shared agenda for action, organised around three main themes of “capacity for global health security; facing threats to global health security and making globalization work for all”⁵. More

importantly, the ministers, whilst affirming the World Health Organization (WHO) Secretariat and the WHA as the main arenas for global health governance, committed to ensuring that health as a foreign policy issue received greater strategic focus on the international agenda. None of the components of the Oslo agenda were necessarily new, but as David P Fidler observed: “The iconic status the Oslo Declaration achieved thus reflects recognition of how the seven countries captured, in a unique and high-profile manner, the rise of health within foreign policy.”⁶

Whilst there may be varied views on the actual impact of the FPGHI as measured against its agenda for action agreed in Oslo, as well as on the concept of global health security, there is no denying that it helped shine the light on global health and foreign policy, primarily in the UN General Assembly. For instance, it advocated for health-related impact assessments in the examination of foreign policy initiatives. Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the FPGHI, which will further define its relevance in debates currently unfolding in the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19), is that it became a catalyst for a series of UN resolutions specifically focusing on the



What started as a health emergency in a city in a province in China has now become a global emergency, with no part of the globe immune to its reach.

interface between foreign policy and health. Prior to this initiative, even though the UN had passed resolutions on health issues such as malaria and HIV/Aids, these were never on the critical interface between foreign policy and health.

COVID-19 – the disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) – has once again raised the wider impact of public health emergencies. It has brought into sharper focus and magnified issues that have been gleaned from other public health emergencies before it, such as SARS and Ebola. Globalisation, with its attendant enhanced speed of travel and communication, has increased the overall

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interconnectedness of the global community. What started as a health emergency in a city in a province in China has now become a global emergency, with no part of the globe immune to its reach.

A number of features of this pandemic are worth noting, such as:

- It has overwhelmed even the most well-resourced systems in the world through specific characteristics of the virus, such as its high reproductive rate and the exponential nature of its growth. The speed of national responses has had to contend with the disruption of global supply chains as well as global competition for limited supplies.
- As a novel virus in humans, it demonstrates the extreme vulnerability of humanity and how we are interconnected to the other elements of our earth's ecosystem.
- The fact that in many countries, the pandemic is imported through travel, has now warranted national lockdowns with severe restrictions on domestic, regional and international travel, making humanity more insular. This has raised the issue of an appropriate balance between the rights and duties of citizens. Sometimes, this is presented as a false



The fact that in many countries, the pandemic is imported through travel, has now warranted national lockdowns with severe restrictions on domestic, regional and international travel.

dilemma of two systems: autocracy and democracy. In other instances, there has been a rise of national and ethnic chauvinism, as well as the fuelling of deeply ingrained prejudices, particularly across colour and race. Not only is there growing “othering” across national boundaries, but this is also bringing major faultlines to the surface – especially inequalities within states. Long-held social and religious norms are being reshaped, causing significant social and psychological dislocation. This is more so in the area of bereavement and grieving.

- The national lockdowns and disruption of travel and major global supply chains are leading to severe contractions in virtually all economies, threatening a global recession. This, in turn, is throwing millions out of employment, ravaging informal economies and

forcing many more millions who have no buffers to depend on to join the ever-growing army of the poor and destitute.

- In virtually every country affected, governments and policymakers are having to navigate the delicate balance between the imperative to save lives through containing the further spread of the virus and protecting livelihoods by preventing more damage to the economy, and its consequences.

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNT IN COUNTRIES THAT EXPERIENCED EARLIER WAVES OF THE PANDEMIC ARE BEING SHARED ACROSS THE GLOBE

- Even as global citizens and states grapple with the tensions that have been unleashed, there are important positives. Dealing with a new devastating disease is forcing the global scientific community to cooperate on an unprecedented scale. Experiences and lessons learnt in countries that experienced earlier waves of the pandemic are being shared across the globe. Daily, new information is emerging and being

shared to confront an enemy whose course we do not fully understand. Governments, the private sector, philanthropists and wider civil society are drawn into partnerships in a race against time. Multiple and multi-centre drug and vaccine trials are testimony to the significant scientific and technological advances of our times, and a timely reminder that technology and science are collective endeavours.

- The resilience of our existing structures of global governance is being tested. The WHO is having to defend its scientific independence against accusations of political partisanship. It is having to bear the brunt of a much wider contestation for global dominance between the United States of America (USA) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The USA – the largest contributor to the WHO – is withholding its US\$400 million annual contribution to this important global institution, essentially accusing it of protecting China. Right at the moment that all hands need to be on deck to contain a public health emergency, geopolitical and geostrategic tensions are surfacing. Meanwhile, fissures in the European project are re-emerging, just as it tries to pull itself together in the context of Brexit.

COVID-19 is reshaping the world. It is redefining the nature of globalisation and accelerating changes in the nature of work. There is no certainty about when the crisis will end; what is certain is that it will usher in a new world. Humanity may only be able to discern its broad contours, but the detail of this new world order is going to be an outcome of relentless contestation across a variety of fronts. Therefore, choices that will be made today will shape our tomorrow. In many countries, it has exposed the limitations of the structure of local economies and exercising of national sovereignty. This is leading to calls for devising strategies for import substitution; the development of local industries, especially in strategic sectors; and the growth of “buy local” movements, aimed at injecting life into national economies. What overall impact this will have on the international trading system remains to be seen.

What started as a public health emergency has had far wider ramifications. It has exposed our inability to protect the most vulnerable in our societies. It has exposed the dangerous characteristics of our international system – xenophobia, isolationism, global distrust and disunity. It has once again confirmed that in an interconnected world, we are only as strong as the weakest link in the chain. Viruses know no borders, and if there is any corner of the



Free cataract surgeries implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO) in cooperation with IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation in Somalia as part of its “Africa Cataract Campaign” (June 2012).



UN Secretary-General António Guterres holds a virtual press conference to release a report on the impact of his call for a global ceasefire during the COVID-19 outbreak. (03 April 2020).

planet where they can survive, then they will remain an ever-present threat to all of us. We can bury our heads in the sand and revert to conceptualising this in the narrowest of terms as simply a public health emergency. But we can also confront the economic dislocation it has caused; the threat it is posing, both to national and global stability and security; the political alliances it is both firming and revealing; and the heightened debates on what societies we want to build. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres observed, this is a “formidable test to the global promise to leave no one behind”⁷.

Yet, COVID-19 is affording us an opportunity to reshape our system of international relations by focusing on what would make us stronger – global solidarity underpinned by empathy and respect for human dignity. It invites us to build more resilient communities as the only sure safeguard to a collective future. It teaches us, once again, that we are all vulnerable to public health emergencies. We need inclusive economies, so we can be true to our promise to leave no one behind. Only then can the next public health emergency find us better prepared and more resilient. This requires political will and acts of real statesmanship. It also requires global socio-economic and solidarity movements founded on a genuine understanding of our interconnectedness, both in virtue and in our vulnerability. We need to invest more in reshaping and reimagining our institutions of global governance, enhance their capacities and relevance, and make them more representative. It forces

a reconceptualisation of the world we live in and how we interact as a global community of nations. It represents a challenge that is a pressing foreign policy issue of our times. 🌐

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THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PEACE OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

CEDRIC DE CONING

AMISOM PHOTO



AMISOM PHOTO

Kenyan soldiers serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) present plans to prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Dhobley, Lower Jubba region (25 April 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted peace operations. In the short term, activities have been reduced to the most critical, rotations have been frozen and most staff are working remotely. Most of the missions have adapted remarkably well. However, even more changes are likely in the medium term, when the global economic recession that is expected to follow in the

wake of the virus may force peace operations to contract drastically in size and scope.

The coronavirus has forced the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) to develop new adaptive contingency plans for their peace operations. Among others, these plans identify which activities need to be carried out, despite COVID-19, to meet mandated responsibilities.



Most civilian and uniformed headquarters staff are working from their homes or mission accommodation.

These typically include support to peace processes, patrols and activities related to stabilisation and the protection of civilians, convoy escorts and other forms of support to humanitarian assistance, force protection, protecting key infrastructure, and support to host state institutions and local authorities. These essential activities had to be adapted to minimise the risk of spreading the virus to both the people the UN is tasked to protect and to the peacekeepers themselves.¹

It is important not to associate essential activities only with military activities, such as armed escorts. Many of the activities that distinguish multidimensional peace operations from other international military operations include its civilian capacity to support political processes, to create conditions conducive for protection, to support the negotiation of local peace agreements, to observe and promote human rights and to support national, regional and local government capacities. Some of these civilian functions are still being carried out, but most of them are now done remotely. All of these activities have to be planned, financed, managed, coordinated, supported and assessed, and these functions are also carrying on.

Most civilian and uniformed headquarters staff are working from their homes or mission accommodation, and

approximately 10% of international civilian staff are now working from outside the mission area. This means that almost all of the planning and support work is now being done electronically, including via video-teleconferencing, and this has forced the AU and UN to adopt or speed up the implementation of digital approval and related processes. One of the unintended consequences is a loss of national staff input, which is critical in several areas, because many do not have internet connectivity at home. Missions are addressing this challenge by increasing mobile connectivity to their systems. These developments will modernise the way the AU and UN utilise technology and change some headquarters functions in the future.

Not everything can be done remotely, however. Negotiation over the phone can only take you so far. One of the great assets of field staff has been that they can get into a car, drive to a location, track down an important interlocutor and obtain important information or come to an agreement with them on what actions will be taken – for instance, to protect civilians. In some contexts, mounted patrols without social interaction do not have the same effect as dismounted patrols. It is thus impossible to expect that peace operations will have the same overall impact today than they had before the COVID-19 crisis.



South Sudanese government forces have put up checkpoints in several locations to reduce UN movements. These actions have also impacted on the approximately hundred and fifty thousand people sheltering in UN protection of civilian camps.

In the short term, peace operations also have to manage a number of other challenges. In some countries, there are fears, rumours and perhaps even active disinformation campaigns that foreign peacekeepers are responsible for spreading the virus. In South Sudan, for instance, government forces have put up checkpoints outside UN compounds in several locations to stop or reduce UN movements.² These actions have also impacted on the approximately 150 000 people sheltering in civilian camps under UN protection.³ The AU and UN have had to manage similar fears and rumour-mongering in Central African Republic (CAR),⁴ the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali and Somalia. Missions have to grapple with questions such as whether troops should wear masks to reassure the population, or whether wearing masks in

situations where that is not the norm among the population will only increase such fears and rumours. UN radio stations

MISSIONS HAVE TO GRAPPLE WITH QUESTIONS SUCH AS WHETHER TROOPS SHOULD WEAR MASKS TO REASSURE THE POPULATION, OR WHETHER WEARING MASKS IN SITUATIONS WHERE THAT IS NOT THE NORM AMONG THE POPULATION WILL ONLY INCREASE SUCH FEARS AND RUMOURS

such as Radio Guira in CAR, Radio Okapi in the DRC, Radio Mikado in Mali and Radio Miraya in South Sudan are helping to share accurate information about the coronavirus in local languages. Peace operations are increasing the reach of these stations by handing out solar and wind-up radios to remote local communities that do not have access to electricity or the internet.

One of the priority areas for AU and UN peace operations is supporting host authorities and communities. Quick impact

projects and programmatic funding have been repurposed to help local institutions and communities prepare for and cope with the virus. In CAR, the DRC and elsewhere,



Quick Impact Projects and programmatic funding have been repurposed to help local institutions and communities prepare for and cope with the virus. In the Central African Republic, the DRC and elsewhere, missions are scaling up support for local mask production by women's groups

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To reduce risk to host populations and peacekeepers alike, the AU and UN have frozen all rotations until 30 June 2020. Among the approximately 100 000 soldiers and police officers currently deployed, approximately 40% are due to be rotated home and to be replaced in the next few months. There will thus be significant demand in July and August on the available airlift capacity and logistical personnel. All new troops rotating in will go into 14 days of quarantine, which poses another logistical challenge. It also means they cannot be operational over this period, which increases the workload on the rest of the units.

The most severe disruption to AU and UN peacekeeping is likely to be caused by another side-effect of the COVID-19 crisis: a global economic recession. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has changed its forecast for 2020 from a 3.3% growth to a 3% contraction in the global economy.⁵ The United States, which is one of the countries most affected by the virus, is also the largest financial contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget. Many of the more than 120 countries that have contributed peacekeepers in the past – including big contributors such as Ethiopia, Rwanda,

Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Senegal⁶ – may also come under domestic pressure to reduce troop numbers for financial or coronavirus risk-related reasons.

In the medium term, the AU and UN may thus be faced with a situation 12 to 18 months from now where UN peacekeeping operations have significantly less capacity than they do today. It is unlikely that the risk to civilians in these situations will change significantly for the better in the short to medium term.⁷ The more likely scenario is that the effects of the coronavirus, coupled with other factors such as climate change, will increase instability and risk.⁸ The most critical risk is stalled political processes. The response to the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire – which has been echoed by the AU chairperson⁹ – has been mixed, and in some cases, fighting has increased. In others, COVID-19 is the new shared enemy that is creating new alliances. The burden on AU and UN peace operations will only increase. On the one hand, missions are under increasing pressure to improve the effectiveness of their operations,¹⁰ whilst on the other, they have to cope simultaneously with shrinking budgets and even more complex operational environments, further constrained by the coronavirus and climate change.



In the next few months, the UN's Fifth Committee will consider the peacekeeping budget for the next financial year.¹¹ Hopefully, the UN's member states will show the same agility that missions have demonstrated over the past couple of weeks, as missions will need flexibility as they continue to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances in the coming months.

Thus far, Africa, where the bulk of AU and UN peacekeepers are deployed, has been spared the brunt of the crisis, but this is likely to change in the medium term.¹² The AU and UN headquarters, and their respective peace operations, have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the way they have coped with and adapted to the crisis.¹³ Some of the new innovations and practices that have emerged in this process are specific to the virus, and will change over time in response to the severity of the risk the virus poses. Others are likely to be more lasting, including a more essential-scale approach to mandate implementation and a more adaptive approach to planning and mission management. The most dramatic change, however, is likely to be a significant reduction in funding and troops over the medium term as peace operations contract in lockstep with the global economy. 🌱

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