



Tana High-Level Forum
on Security in Africa



Virtual Pre-Tana Youth Forum

Youth and Free Trade: Challenges and Opportunities (In Relation to Peace and Security)

27 August 2020

Concept Note

I. Introduction

The 9th Tana High-level Forum on Peace and Security in Africa takes place virtually in October 2020 under the theme **The AfCFTA: Revitalizing Pan Africanism for Sustainable Peace and Development in Africa** guides the Forum and surrounding events. With the view to provide a platform for young Africans to engage and mobilize on the Tana Forum theme and youth related issues, the Pre-Tana Youth Forum will take place on 27 August 2020 virtually in collaboration with the African Youth Commission, Youth Foundation for Development, Education & Leadership (YouthhubAfrica) and Youth to Youth.

II. Background

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) brings together 55 African economies, forming the world's largest trading area with a gross domestic product worth USD \$3.4 trillion and a population of more than one billion people. The ambitious objectives of the *AfCFTA* include facilitating intra-African trade; promoting regional value chains to foster the integration of the African continent into the global economy; boosting industrialization, competitiveness and innovation, ultimately contributing to Africa's economic development and social progress by eliminating tariffs and other related trade barriers.

The impact of this agreement is paramount in numerous ways. Countries can excel in the production of goods and services at their comparative advantage and export them to their neighbors and other countries in the continent. At the same time the agreement will allow them to bring-in (import) goods and services at relatively cheaper price and short amount of time. According to the AU, intra-African trade is one of the lowest in the world, it is close to 18%. But, after the implementation of the agreement it is believed to increase to 52% in 2022.

In addition, the AfCFTA is going to impact youth at large because more than 60 % of the people living in the continent are youth, being below the age of 35. Currently, as a result of the vicious spell that underdevelopment has casted up on the continent, large number of youths are desperate to make a living for themselves and for their families to the point of enlisting in

terrorist or extremist groups. One can take a look at how impoverishment can be used to manipulate youth into being members of terrorist groups, for example in Nigeria (Boko-Haram) and Somalia (Al-Shabbab).

So, AfCFTA is the long-awaited catapult to shoot Africa's economy in general, as a result it will lead to more job opportunities for the youth which are in desperate need of employment. Additionally, youths having new business ideas (entrepreneurs) will benefit from the new markets elsewhere. These are some of the main benefits or impacts of AfCFTA on youth.

In contrary, the AfCFTA might have its own disadvantages. As discussed earlier the main idea of this agreement is to allow people and goods to move freely across the continent. In doing so, various threats to peace and security of individuals, countries and the continent in general might also move freely like people and goods do. The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is currently one of the main challenges Africa is facing and it is playing a huge role to make conflicts protracted. Without the necessary controlling efforts and institutions in place the AfCFTA might exacerbate conflicts by inviting more youth and SALW into them.

Another possible peace and security challenge can be the issue of insurgency and violent extremism. As borders diminish and individuals frequently move easily across country boundaries, insurgency and violent extremism do the same for safe havens making it much harder to achieve peaceful and prosperous Africa (Agenda 2063); here youth are the main members of these extreme groups. Moreover, as people easily move across countries boundaries, it is highly likely to carry infectious diseases with them that can pose a threat on the peace and security of states of the continent.

So, it is imperative to say that, AfCFTA is a double-edged sword which is capable of striking both ways. Thus, this pre-forum will try to figure out the advantages and disadvantages of the AfCFTA with special emphasis on youth.

III. Objectives

The main objective of the pre-Tana Youth Forum is to facilitate frank and open dialogue among youth on their perception of the nexus between youth engagement, AfCFTA and peace and security. It equally aims at contributing to an ongoing effort to ensure that youth benefit from the AfCFTA which will have its own impact on the peace and security in the region.

In doing so it will achieve the following specific objectives;

- Unpack the AfCFTA and its meaning to meaningful participation of youth;
- Share evidence-based knowledge on AfCFTA in the light of peace, security, youth participation and experiences of youth entrepreneurship;
- Recognize challenges and acknowledge opportunities of the AfCFTA and
- Identify stakeholders and specific roles of state and non-state actors and way forwards.

IV. Format

The Pre-Tana Youth Forum will be a one-day virtual interactive Workshop taking place online. The format is mixed. Detailed presentations to enlarge the knowledge of the youth on AfCFTA and the linkages to peace and security as well as meaningful youth participation are given with Q&A. Besides, the knowledge gained will be applied during intensive working group (break-out) discussions. Interactive panel discussions will ensure the participation of the youth and their ideas as well as recommendations on the topic.

V. Participants

Around 25 to 30 participants are expected to join the Pre-Tana Youth Forum. Around one third of them are local participants. Representatives of youth-led groups and individuals with experience and expertise on free trade, youth, peace and security matters in Africa are targeted.

VI. Expected Outputs

The followings are expected outputs of the pre-Tana Youth Forum.

- ✓ An outcomes document to be shared with peace and security stakeholders as well as other related stakeholders;
- ✓ Video recordings to be shared on IPSS and Tana Forum social media;
- ✓ Coverage of the dialogue proceedings on IPSS and Tana Forum social media platforms;
- ✓ Virtual intergenerational dialogue on the theme;
- ✓ Sustainable and practical policy recommendations targeting stakeholders.

VII. Expected Outcomes

The followings are expected outcomes of the forum:-

- Contributing to the effort towards youth engagement in the AfCFTA ensuring the engagement of youth/youth groups working on peace, security and entrepreneurship and free trade in Africa;
- Encouragement of youth and youth organizations to draw upon the outcomes of their discussions and to share and circulate these insights among their wider networks;
- Dissemination of the outcomes of this event on the IPSS website, social media platforms and policy circles.