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INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
Tana Forum Secretariat

Tana High-Level Forum
on Security in Africa



A. Introduction

The 7th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa took place on the 21 and 22 April 2018, in the city of Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. More than 200 participants, comprising seven current and former heads of state and government, ministers, ambassadors, academics, heads of international organizations and regional economic communities, civil society and media representatives, gathered under the proverbial Baobab tree to discuss the theme: **Ownership of Africa's Peace and Security Provision: Financing and Reforming the African Union**. The Tana Forum has continued to cultivate a culture of frank and candid conversations on pertinent continental peace and security issues in an informal setting.



Key highlights:

- Attendance of new Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali. He pledged renewed support from the Ethiopian government to IPSS and the Tana Forum.
- Presence of Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission and custodian of the current reform.
- Presence of Hailemariam Desalegn, former Prime Minister of Ethiopia, who remarked that “you can continue to serve your country and Africa after leaving high office”.
- The annual Meles Zenawi Lecture on leadership in Africa was delivered by Samia Nkrumah, paid an emotional tribute to the legacy of the Pan-Africanist and former President of Egypt, the late Gamal Abdel Nasser.
- The position of Tana Forum Chairperson was handed over from President Olusegun Obasanjo to President John Dramani Mahama in a demonstration of how governance begins within our own institutions.
- The annual report on the State of Peace and Security in Africa highlighted five key trends in the African security landscape.
- Several well attended side events were held, included the Public Lecture at Bahir Dar University; the Roundtable on Human Security organized in collaboration with the Munich Security Conference and the AU Commission; and the Annual Book Launch presented a book on pastoralism in the Sahel and Horn of Africa.



Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of Ethiopia

“The fact is ownership has to be earned. We cannot claim ownership while we barely cover a quarter of our annual budget. Ownership, self-reliance and financial sustainability of the African Union and its peace and security architecture is a matter of great concern. It is also a matter of sovereignty and pride.”

~ **Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali**

During his **welcome address**, the newly appointed Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and host of the Tana Forum, H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, congratulated the Tana Forum Secretariat and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), his alma mater, for organizing the 7th Tana Forum. Acknowledging the relevance and timeliness of the 2018 theme, Dr. Abiy emphasized the need for an efficient, accountable and effective African Union that can deliver on continental promises, in addition to securing a sustainable financing mechanism for the organization. Citing the decision to implement the 0.2% levy and the adoption of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) as critical milestones, he also urged member states to capitalize on the current momentum of reform. Dr. Abiy recognized the crucial role of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in achieving peace at the continental level and urged all African Union (AU) member states to strive to create an inclusive and stable political system so citizens can enjoy peace and security.

“The truth of the matter, Excellences and distinguished participants, is that the AU needs a major rebooting; not just one aimed at right-sizing its bureaucracy but also to change the mind-sets of RECs, member states and their citizens towards the continental body.”

~ **Olusegun Obasanjo**

In keeping with the annual Tana Forum tradition, H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria and the outgoing Chair of the Tana Forum Board, presented the findings of the **State of Peace and Security in Africa 2018** report. He called to attention five key trends that dominated the African peace and security landscape in 2018, namely: i) long-drawn-out conflicts remain resilient in traditional forms or take on new and unexpected twists necessitating critical and sustained attention to post-conflict reconstruction and development; ii) episodes of riots and protests directed at incumbent governments across Africa have increased and intensified, indicating the related violence as manifestations of disputes over access to political and economic opportunities, as incumbent

administrations take extreme measures to remain in power; iii) although elections and political transitions have been fraught with tension, they have generally remained peaceful; iv) pre-existing local, sub-national or national tension and conflicts have contributed to new security threats, and their

transnational nature means they cannot be addressed with similar approaches; v) Africa's intergovernmental institutions like the AU and RECs are working in congruence with the United Nations (UN) and other global agencies to address threats to continental peace and security. Obasanjo also introduced one of the impediments to materializing the AU reforms as the politicization of institutions, manifested in the limited will of member states to cover the programme budget of the AU - in comparison to their contribution to the UN. Emphasizing that a major attitudinal and paradigm shift is required of member states, he also stressed that the AU would need to undertake a strategic overhaul towards becoming more relevant to member states.



Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission

"The establishment of peace and security in Africa cannot be dissociated from the international environment. There can only be peace in Africa if the multilateral system functions effectively on consensual and equitable bases."

~ **Moussa Faki Mahamat**

In his **keynote address**, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, acknowledged that the theme of the 7th edition of the Tana Forum is rooted deeply in Africa's political, institutional and economic awakening. Characterizing 'ownership' as the need for efficiency, innovation of responses, and sustainability of solutions locally sourced and fitting to the context of African problems, he also shared three concrete aspects of ownership that the AU takes into consideration:

1. African actors are at the forefront of efforts to promote peace and good governance on the continent;
2. Ownership implies demonstrating political courage to identify and acknowledge our challenges;
3. Through its own institutions, Africa must intellectually analyze the challenges of ownership and African solutions to African problems.

Mahamat also underlined that strong African institutions with the capacity to carry out their responsibilities are the building blocks of ownership. Commending the 20 countries already applying the 0.2% levy on eligible imports and 13 presently levying the tax towards the Peace Fund, he expressed that the transparent utilization of these contributions would be a reassuring mechanism, as would the collaboration between the AU and the RECs be a catalyst for streamlined responses.



Session I: AU Reform and its Implications for Peace and Security in Africa

B. Key takeaway messages

The various sessions of the 7th Tana Forum consisted of interactive conversations aimed at responding to critical questions emerging from the presentation of the State of Peace and Security in Africa by H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo as well as the keynote address by H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat. In addition, three sessions covered significant questions on AU reforms and its implications for peace and security in Africa, ownership and financing of peace and security in Africa, and the content and shape of the peace and security agenda in the post-reform era. They can be broadly summarized as follows:

- In the last century, Africa's big achievement was political independence. In this century, there is a need to achieve a unity of purpose in intent and action.
- The peace and security agenda must invest heavily in prevention efforts, much more than taking the costlier route because prevention is cheaper in human and fiscal costs.
- Ownership and partnership are two sides of the same coin; they are desirable, necessary and complementary in the pursuit of the agenda of African peace and security. However, such partnerships must be balanced, consistent and respectful.
- Africa should aspire more to own its issues and set the narratives/agenda. Finances are necessary but not sufficient to tackle Africa's myriad peace and security problems.
- The fact that member states fund an initiative is not sufficient to determine or confer ownership. Member states cannot also continue to exercise restraint in funding the AU on the basis of national constraints imposed by legal, legislative and administrative requirements.
- The success of the reform will be determined by how African citizens embrace it, own it, identify with it, and are ready to defend it. The AU reform agenda must recognize the agency, voice and inclusion of African citizens - including women, youth and the diaspora.

The following points recap the main outcomes of the 2018 Tana Forum:

Common understanding and narrative on concepts of self-reliance and ownership in addressing security challenges

1. Participants recognized the importance of self-reliance as a way to spearhead **localized solutions to African peace and security problems**, while also acknowledging the need for interdependence in a globalized world.
2. A common understanding of what self-reliance means emerged, in which **maintaining the dignity and capacity of Africans to develop innovative and contextualized ideas and solutions** to continental challenges was at the forefront. Additionally, self-reliance beyond the notion of financing military interventions and 'insecurities' was a common perspective that emerged among participants who championed for investments in strengthening good governance and prevention of conflicts.
3. Participants recognized that the hallmark of ownership is political will and leadership modelled through member states acting on the commitments they have made, i.e. **earning rather than claiming rights of ownership based on tangible actions** in order to reclaim continental sovereignty on decisions of peace and security. Participants also linked institutional legitimacy and claims of ownership in relation to the political will required to mobilize sufficient financial resources for AU operations.
4. Participants acknowledged that part of ownership entails AU member states **look internally rather than externalizing issues of ownership** and demonstrating the courage to acknowledge and take stock of difficulties and weaknesses towards charting new territories by making necessary but difficult decisions.
5. Participants gave primacy to the need for **strong institutions and the means to implement** the mandate and role of the AU as key to taking ownership.



Raheemat Momodu, Head of the ECOWAS Liaison Office to the AU

Inclusivity in the reforms process

6. A growing understanding emerged that **ownership should not only be viewed through the narrow lens of moving away from dependency on international partners** but spearheaded through inclusivity and ensuring that member states live up to the standards set by the AU, especially on human rights and electoral governance. These are seen as key issues that matter to citizens, therefore an AU that can be of service and relevance to its population through holding member states accountable in violating principles of democracy is a key aspect of reform.
7. The consensus among participants was reached on the reforms process not being known or understood by a majority of Africans, thus necessitating interventions to **ensure citizens of the continent are well informed and engaged as to how the AU reforms will translate in their daily lives**. The sustainability of reforms was also put into question in a context where the AU is not viewed as accessible to millions of Africans.
8. Participants acknowledged that the AU reforms will need to nurture inclusivity with a particular focus on **ensuring the active and engaged participation of African women**, including in key decision-making spaces. The AU should also pay heed to the AU's existing agenda on promoting gender equality.
9. As guardians of Africa's future, participants also recognized how critical it is to communicate clearly with African youth about the AU and the reforms, as well as the necessity to **integrate youth in key-decision making spaces**.



Meles Zenawi Lecture on the legacy of the late Gamal Abdel Nasser delivered by Samia Nkrumah, Founder and Director, Kwame Nkrumah Pan-African Centre, Ghana

Strengthening governance and accountability

10. Participants consider ownership to translate into reforms in which the AU becomes an accountable and efficient institution built on legitimacy. Relatedly, **investing in the requisite institutional capacity** is recognized as one of the major aims of reform.
11. In its reformed state, **the governance structure of the AU is expected to introduce fit-for-purpose, timely and flexible responses** to peace and security threats on the continent and push member states to act when they have pertinent early warning information at hand.
12. Additionally, participants expect that the role and importance of the AU lies in African citizens who expect the organizations to **hold accountable member states or leaders that undertake mass violation of rights**.



Session II: Ownership and Financing of Peace and Security in Africa

Partnerships

13. Ownership was explained as the AU reinventing itself to become more relevant to the RECs in addition to member states and citizens. The AU must identify and pursue an agenda where it has comparative advantage to the RECs to **guarantee there is no competition, redundancy of roles, and alienation of RECs**. It was also acknowledged that the effectiveness of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) rests on strong ties and cooperation between the AU and the RECs to avoid duplication of efforts.
14. The role of international partners in financing peace and security activities in Africa was accepted as key among participants. Highlighting the need for greater synergy with international partners, participants underscored that **ownership does not entail alienation from international partners**, but rather constructive engagement based on the recognition that Africans will be driving the agenda.

15. African leaders were also encouraged to **make morally courageous and necessary decisions on partnerships that are not worth making** with the international community and which compromise African's ability to steer the peace and security agenda that is of service to their citizens.

C. Conclusion



Handover of the Tana Forum Chairpersonship from Olusegun Obasanjo to John Dramani Mahama

The 7th Tana Forum concluded on 22 April 2018 with the handing over of the Chairpersonship from H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo to H.E. John Dramani Mahama, former President of Ghana, for a three-year term (renewable). Obasanjo's tenure, which began in 2012 with the creation of the Tana Forum, has seen the Forum grow to become one of the most relevant meetings on peace and security in Africa. The handover ceremony was led by former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, who thanked Obasanjo for his commitment and welcomed Mahama as an individual who possesses a "pedigree as a tested and committed pan-Africanist and respected statesman".

"With a very high sense of gratitude, I want to thank the Board and Secretariat of the Tana Forum for the opportunity to serve my (African) people," said Mahama in his acceptance speech. "The Tana Forum has grown from strength to strength, and has become the foremost think tank on peace and security in Africa." He praised the significance of traditional African knowledge systems as "rich repositories of science, technology and knowledge in general. In them you can find lessons in governance, strategy, inclusiveness, spirituality, accountability and leadership", and called for a "change in mind-set to own and promote our traditional African knowledge and also incorporate best practices from elsewhere in building our people and institutions".

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