



CONCEPT NOTE

Strategic Planning Civil Society Engagements with the African Union (RECS/RMs, Special Envoys, High Representatives and AU Liaison Offices)

4th April 2023

BACKGROUND

Over the last 20 years the African Union (AU) has established itself as the principal continental policy maker on governance, peace, and security. In the last year, the AU has operationalized an institutional reform which has seen a merger of the former Peace and Security and Political Affairs (PSD, DPA) departments into the new Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) department.

The PAPS' mandate aims to contribute to the efforts of Member States and Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) towards the prevention, resolution and management of conflict and disruptive crises. RECs/RMs which are pillars of the African Economic Community, and originally established to foster economic integration in their regions, also have the mandate to promote peace and security on the continent.

In line with the principles of the Constitutive Act, the PAPS department is expected to promote peace and stability, good governance, democracy, and human rights as a foundation for security and development of the continent and its people. It has championed the flagship

project of Agenda 2063 and the Silencing the Guns in Africa Initiative which underscores the importance of simultaneous implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) as well as the importance of ensuring all relevant stakeholders commit themselves to the full implementation of the Road Map. Through these efforts, important progress has been made, as seen in the decline in the number of conflicts on the continent. However, Africa continues to see the eruption of new conflicts in parts of the continent, particularly the Sahel; the rise in unconstitutional changes of government (e.g. Mali, Chad and Guinea); and continued fragility of post conflict states such as Sudan, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), comprising African think-tanks, academic and research institutions, advocacy and Pan-African organizations, working on various dimensions of regional and continental peace and security issues, given their expertise and proximity to the populations impacted by conflicts, have been engaging and providing useful support to these efforts guided by the AU's recommendations of the Livingstone Formula and the Maseru Conclusions. However, there have been little systematized avenues for CSOs to engage the African Union and its regional mechanisms towards the creation of synergy and complementarity of efforts in the search for peace and security on the continent.

In this regard, CSOs within the African Union met for the first time with the PAPS Commissioner's team in February 2022 in Nairobi. This conversation led to a proposal for the institutionalization of a CSOs-PAPS convening once a year and the appointment of a CSO focal point within the PAPS department. These two requests were subsequently granted by the PAPS Commissioner during a virtual meeting with CSOs on 25 November 2022. As a result, a second annual strategic retreat between the PAPS Commissioner and Civil Society is taking place, as one of several avenues the PAPS department has opened up in the past year for engaging with Civil Society on a regular basis.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The CSOs-PAPS strategic retreat will, each year, aim to identify areas of collaboration and create alignment between CSOs and the AU PAPS department on their respective priority areas of work. This will enable participants to determine where CSOs can contribute to the AU PAPS department's efforts in addressing governance, peace and security challenges on the continent.

The gathering will also be an opportunity to create and reinforce synergies between the AU PAPS department, RECs, CSOs, and academia.

From this encounter, the following outcomes are expected:

1. Enhanced coordination and synergy among participating CSO actors to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize their collective contribution to the work of the AU.
2. Adopt a consolidated 2023 CSO priority action plan in support of the AU PAPS department.
3. Enhanced understanding of best practices for engaging the AU and RECs/RMs.

PARTICIPANTS

The following categories of participants will take part in the gathering:

- AU PAPS Department, represented by Commissioner Bankole Adeoye and his team
- Civil Society Organizations, Think Tanks, NGOs
- Academia

PLANNING AND RESOURCING

For this retreat, a small team of AU-Facing CSOs are co-coordinating to support this initiative. The following institutions constitute the small team: Amani Africa, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Humanity United, Institute for Justice and Reconciliations, Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Institute for Security Studies, Life and Peace Institute, The Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU). In order to satisfy internal reporting requirements, participating organizations may prepare individual internal planning documents (concepts notes, work plans, budget etc.) in addition to shared planning documents.

DATE: 4th April 2023

DURATION/MODALITY: One day, in-person seminar

LOCATION: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia