African Union 2011 High Level Retreat

MAKING PEACE HAPPEN

STRENGTHENING POLITICAL GOVERNANCE FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFRICA

Concept Note

1. Introduction

From 26 – 28 August 2010, the African Union (AU) convened the first High Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa. The Retreat was held in Cairo, Egypt and concluded with the Cairo Call for Peace, which amongst other issues called for the institutionalisation of the initiative. The 2010 AU High Level Retreat was held by the AU in collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with the support of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) and the Cairo Regional Center for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA). The AU will convene its second High Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa from 4 - 5 September 2011, in Cairo. The overall theme of the 2011 AU High Level Retreat will be: "**Strengthening Political Governance for Peace, Security and Stability in Africa"**. The event will primarily provide an opportunity to respond to governance-related challenges to the peace and security landscape in Africa.

The theme of the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, held from 30 – 31 January 2011 was *'Towards Greater Unity and Integration through Shared Values'*. One of the outcomes was a call for the AU to ensure greater synergy between peace and security matters and issues around governance and democracy. When considering the broader political environment in many regions of Africa, failures and weaknesses in governance structures often coincide with, or result in, violent conflict. Improved political governance needs, therefore, to be recognised as a critical component of the broader enabling environment for peace, security and stability. Functioning democratic governance structures are vital, not only to assist in realising stability and security, but also to ensure meaningful and sustainable peace. Strengthening political governance essentially involves the effective use of political authority in

the management of national resources for social and economic development. It involves strengthening state institutions, decision-making processes, policy-making, information flows and the leadership responsible for allocating resources and power within society. Through their design and implementation, these components can escalate or de-escalate violent conflict: either further contributing to social tensions, under-development and disempowerment; or establishing inclusive patterns based on mediated interests and bringing about effective service delivery, development and empowerment.

By sharing experiences, challenges and possible solutions, it is hoped the Retreat will strengthen African peacemaking efforts in governance-related conflicts. The Retreat will recommend ways through which regional capacity can be supported to promote stronger governance and contribute to resolving these conflicts. It is also hoped that the Retreat will serve as a forum where practitioners and policy makers can bring forth their accumulated knowledge and discuss solutions to some intractable conflicts on the continent.

The 2011 Retreat will be convened by the AU in collaboration with the host country, Egypt, and with support from the HD Centre, the CCCPA, and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).

2. Background

The 2010 AU High Level Retreat was held during the Africa Year of Peace and Security and in support of the International Peace Day. The meeting was the first ever gathering of such a wide range of actors involved in peacemaking and mediation in Africa. Participants critically assessed peacemaking efforts in Africa and identified gaps in capacity as well as concrete steps which could be taken to strengthen ongoing peace processes. In addition, participants engaged with experts to discuss common thematic challenges such as unconstitutional changes of government; election-related violence; justice and reconciliation; disarmament and security; and natural resources. The 2010 Retreat also featured working groups tasked with analysing specific conflict situations such as Somalia and Sudan/Darfur, as well as conflicts in the Great Lakes Region, West Africa, Western Sahara and the Sahelian Belt. The aim was to formulate practical recommendations to strengthen peace efforts and the meeting resulted in a Call for Peace which was endorsed by all participants.

The 2011 AU High Level Retreat will build on the momentum created in 2010 and aims to capitalise on the successful co-operation between the AU and partners involved in carrying out the 2010 Retreat.

3. Objectives

More specifically, the Retreat will have the following objectives:

i. To review commonly applied parameters of governance.
ii. To examine the implications and consequences of poor governance to peace, security and stability.
iii. To identify opportunities for promoting and strengthening governance, peace and security.
iv. To identify and develop mechanisms and frameworks for addressing governance challenges.
v. To formulate policy recommendations that will strengthen governance on the continent.
vi. To enhance regional and international responses to governance-related conflicts.

4. Expected Outcomes

The Retreat will have the following outcomes:

i. Enhanced understanding of threats to peace and security on the continent and the role of governance in inducing or combating these.
ii. Increased cross-institutional sharing of experiences by promoting networking and co-ordination between organisations working on African conflicts.
iii. Increased support and political will for peace and security efforts on the continent and a review of the successful experiences of African peacemakers.

5. Timing, venue, and participation

The Retreat will take place from 4 - 5 September 2011 in Cairo, Egypt, at the invitation of the host country.

The Retreat will bring together approximately 150 participants including senior officials and special envoys/representatives of the AU (including the Peace and Security Council); representatives from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/Regional Mechanisms (RMs) for conflict prevention, management and resolution; representatives from the United Nations (UN) including representatives of the permanent members of the UN Security Council; representatives from the European Union (EU), the League of Arab States, the *International Organization of La Francophonie,* the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation as well as research institutes and think tanks; and experienced private mediators.

6. Sessions

All discussions will be subject to the Chatham House Rule to promote openness. Session formats will enable participants to exchange opinions as openly as possible, avoiding lengthy presentations and maximising time for practical discussions.

Session formats will include:

- Plenary sessions, which will enable high level speakers to discuss current political developments and challenges with participants.
- Parallel sessions to analyse experiences and strategies on significant conflicts and issues that generate conflict. These sessions will be led by eminent facilitators and, following an introduction from an expert speaker, the floor will be open for appointed discussants and participants to comment.

Drawing on a number of specific cases, the discussions will focus on the issues and challenges peacemakers have to cope with when working on governance-related crises. In developing the agenda, the HD Centre and ACCORD consulted with experienced practitioners and analysts from the AU and selected partners. The agenda includes sessions on the following topics:

Day One:

The Retreat will open with a welcome to participants and introductory remarks by eminent persons.

Political Governance in Africa

- *Political governance in Africa* (plenary session) – A general overview of governance and its implications for peace and security. This will set the stage for the remainder of the Retreat. The session will focus on opportunities and achievements in terms of promoting good governance and will draw attention to setbacks to good governance in Africa.
- *How to efficiently measure and monitor governance?* (plenary session) – An assessment of the contribution of indexes and mechanisms, such as the Mo Ibrahim Governance Index and the African Peer Review Mechanism, to measuring and monitoring governance.

The Role of Governance in Preventing Conflicts

- *New technologies and social media tools* (plenary session) – This session will assess how new technologies and social media have connected and mobilised society to identify and overcome governance-related challenges. It will also look at how governments, despite limited resources, can use and adapt new technologies for significantly improving governance and service delivery to their citizens.
- *Leadership and accountability* (parallel session 1) – This session will look at the potential for leadership to transform societies. It will discuss how leaders can be held accountable for their action and inaction, and how to inspire leaders to reform the public sector and ensure better governance.
- *The role of civil society* (parallel session 2) – This session will assess how significant actors in civil society and the press can support responsible governance.

- *The role of the private sector* (parallel session 3) – This session will examine how a vibrant private sector can contribute to promoting good governance.

Day Two:

The Uprisings in North Africa

- *The uprisings in North Africa* (high level plenary session) – This session will provide an opportunity to critically reflect on how the international community can support the transformation from autocratic to democratic societies. Looking at the recent popular uprisings in North Africa and the international responses, distinguished participants will discuss the challenges which remain and how they can be addressed.

Restoring Peace when Governance Breaks Down

- *Election-related conflicts* (parallel session 1) – This session will examine the phenomenon of election-related and political violence. It will aim to identify options to deal with, and resolve, these conflicts as well as to help re-establish the credibility of the democratic process.
- *Responding to constitutional crisis* (parallel session 2) – This session will examine recent cases of constitutional impasse and will identify options to address them. Participants will look at the factors that usually lead to political breakdown and discuss how constitutional institutions and processes can be strengthened to protect African states from coup d'états.
- *Transformation of security sectors* (parallel session 3) – This session will look at how a dysfunctional security sector can be effectively subjected to democratic control and how it can actively promote the rule of law and strengthen political governance.
- *Management of natural resources* (parallel session 4) – This session will focus on possible responses and solutions to situations where the mismanagement of natural resources has triggered, exacerbated or sustained violent conflict.

Inspire Change: Strengthening Political Governance

- *Strengthening political governance* (high level plenary session) – Prominent African figures will reflect on past experiences, challenges and prospects for good governance on the continent.

The Retreat will conclude with remarks from Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, Commisisoner, Peace and Security. He will reflect on the outcomes of the Retreat, the usefulness and applications of the Retreat's recommendations, as well as how to move ahead in drawing lessons from the discussions and applying best practice to conflicts on the African continent.