



AGA
African Governance Architecture



**GENDER PRE-FORUM TO THE 9TH HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON
DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE**

***THEME:
MAGNIFYING WOMEN'S ROLE IN CONFLICT PREVENTION
AND SILENCING THE GUNS***

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

**19-20 NOVEMBER 2020
VIRTUAL**

I. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

A complex moment in history, our world is overhauled by the novel COVID-19 affecting most aspects of life. As a continent on the verge of overcoming Ebola, Africa has witnessed its fair share of highly contagious diseases. After the COVID-19 pandemic's arrival was announced in Egypt on 14 February 2020, the infection and death toll have been exponentially increasing to this day.¹ Slowly but surely it is becoming apparent that addressing COVID-19 pandemic requires not only a health-focused intervention but an overall systems solution that is multidimensional addressing cultural, socio-economic and political aspects leaving no one behind more specifically women, girls and the vulnerable.

Coincidentally, the year 2020 marks an important year whereby the African Union (AU) has declared the year of “**Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development**” which was adopted by the 34th Ordinary Session held in Niamey, Niger in July 2019. The theme aims to consolidate efforts to achieve a conflict-free, integrated and prosperous Africa. Similarly, in 2013 during the 50th Anniversary of the solemn declaration and the golden jubilee celebration of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), African leaders expressed their ‘determination to achieve a conflict-free Africa by ending all wars by the year 2020’ and pledged not to ‘bequeath the burden of conflict to the next generation of Africans’. These pronouncements have also been mainstreamed on the continental plan - Agenda 2063 ensuring these aspirations are instilled on the aspirations of the union and its Member States. It is also noted that the establishment of African Governance Architecture (AGA)² and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)³ and the implementation of the AU Roadmap on Silencing the Guns, as well as the continental structural conflict prevention frameworks, are also manifestations of commitments towards a conflict-free Africa.

More specifically, African Union member states have also shown their commitment to mainstreaming gender equality with a plethora of legal and policy pronouncements. Regional frameworks such as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa – **Maputo Protocol** can be mentioned as significant normative frameworks. In addition, the African Governance Platform's Women Engagement Strategy, as well as the continental frameworks for M and E on the implementation of women and peace and security agenda with the appointment of the special envoy on women in peace and security and the institutionalization of FemWise, can be mentioned as nominal strides that have been made to promote gender equality and ensure women meaningful engagement. Aspiration 6⁴ of Agenda 2063 also wraps these normative frameworks into a continental developmental goal fitting perfectly into the UNSCR 1325 and the Sustainable Development Goals.⁵

Despite progress made towards ensuring a peaceful and secured continent, Africa remains rigged with violent conflicts making the aspiration of sustainable peace a mirage, leaving women and girls as victims. As the centrepiece and major driver of conflict, the lack of democratic governance has been reinforcing

¹ Find the latest COVID-19 updates here, <https://africacdc.org/>

² AGA – was established to give effect to the assembly decision on the Establishment of the Pan African Governance Architecture. The AGA was established as a platform for dialogue between the various stakeholders, who are mandated to promote and strengthen democratic governance in Africa in addition to translating the objectives of the legal and policy pronouncements in the AU shared values instruments.

³ APSA - is built around structures, objectives, principles and values, as well as decision-making processes relating to the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction and development in the continent.

⁴ Agenda 2063, Aspiration 6 calls for an Africa Whose Development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by African People, especially its Women and Youth, and caring for Children.

⁵ SDG, Goal 5 – Gender Equality.

the vicious cycle of conflict in the continent. Characterized by weak state institutions, corruption, marginalization, diversity management, lack of effective civic engagement, violation of the rule of law and constitution, human rights abuses, and democratic governance issues have been the fire underneath the boiling pot. To silence the guns effectively, a deep understanding of the underpinning reasons of conflict, an effective and systematic response with solutions focused on addressing structural root causes of conflict through a careful discernment of the structural drivers is essential.

Drivers of violent conflict largely encompass gender exclusion, inequality, poverty, discrimination, socio-economic vulnerability and more. Taking a deep dive into issues of disenfranchisement of the vulnerable particularly women as also a major driver of conflict - this year's Gender pre-forum will focus on the need to magnify women's roles in their contribution to democratic governance and silencing the drivers of violent conflict. It is high time to take it off the back burner and ensure adequate investments are made to break the cycle of conflict in Africa.

II. RATIONALE

The dividend of conflict is despair, inflicting everlasting suffering on humanity particularly the vulnerable, women, girls, children, the disabled and the elderly. At the bottom of the barrel, women bear the biggest burden of violent conflicts in Africa with women targeted to be used as weapons of war through rape, abductions, forced pregnancies and sexual slavery. Evidence has shown that women have also been systematically excluded from participation in or leading cultural, political, social and economic aspects of democratic governance. Women can bring about change and positive impact on conflict prevention. Women are not only victims but are incredible leaders, peacemakers, negotiators and mediators with capabilities in de-escalating violence and preventing conflict before it happens.

Gender equality and meaningful engagement of women is imperative in strengthening democratic governance which is central to achieving sustainable development and peace in Africa. Women need to take a central stage in decision making, institutional building and leadership which is crucial in bringing to the fore the capabilities of women to create and sustain everlasting peace in the continent. More specifically, women's role in breaking the cycle of conflict through highlighting their engagement in structural prevention of conflict, conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction will need to be streamlined as a significant contribution to silencing the guns on the continent.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been acknowledged on the continent and in the world in general that women face the heaviest burden when it comes to response – currently, women make up a large demographic of frontline workers addressing the spread of COVID-19.⁶ Women therefore face significant health risks not to mention as primary care providers of families, since they bear the added burden of caring for the sick. As for the unintended negative impact of the pandemic, it has been reported that Gender Based Violence considerably increased as families stayed indoors during lockdown measures. Despite women being weighed down by the pandemic, women's leadership have been significant in averting the pandemic in many parts of the world. One need not look any further than Women Leaders action towards the pandemic to see evidence of the positive impact of women in leadership. Looking at the current COVID-19 response data, women leaders around the world have succeeded in acting early and acting fast - containing the spread of the virus – case in point New Zealand, Germany, Denmark, Iceland.⁷

⁶ International Women's Media Foundation, 88% of COVID-19 front-line workers in the world are women.

⁷ Are female leaders more successful at managing the corona virus crisis, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/25/why-do-female-leaders-seem-to-be-more-successful-at-managing-the-coronavirus-crisis>

Reflecting back to our continent, we have miles to go in achieving women participation, equality or leadership. However, we also need to work on recognizing women's roles and their contribution to build effective and resilient democratic governance processes that ensure conflicts are prevented before they are conceived. It is to highlight these contributions made by women and ensure more investments are made for their meaningful engagement that the African Governance Architecture Secretariat on behalf of the African Governance Platform is organizing the Annual Gender Pre-forum to the 2020 9th High-Level Dialogue focusing on the theme "***Magnifying the role of women in conflict prevention to silencing the guns in Africa.***" The Gender Pre-forum is scheduled to take place virtually from **19-20 November 2020.**

III. GOAL

The main goal of the Gender Pre-forum is to provide a collaborative, open and inclusive space that will enable African women to engage in policy deliberations and recognize and amplify their contribution towards conflict prevention and building sustainable peace in Africa.

IV. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the gender pre-forum are to:

1. Create an understanding of normative and institutional frameworks relating to democratic governance, peace and security with a particular focus on women;
2. Share evidence-based knowledge, aggregate perspectives, experiences of women's contribution to conflict prevention and silencing the guns in the continent; and
3. Provide a platform for discussing new pathways for implementing and mainstreaming gender initiatives across the continent
4. Provide a platform for women to bring about their concrete strategies into the limelight and headline conversations towards silencing the guns in the context of COVID-19 in Africa.
5. Build and strengthen women's voices in contributing to peace and security governance agenda

V. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The following outcomes are envisaged from the discussions:

1. Enhanced understanding of the existing normative and institutional frameworks on women in governance, conflict prevention and peace and security;
2. Improved understanding of the role of women in regards to conflict prevention ultimately silencing the guns;
3. Increased knowledge and best practices on conflict prevention through building a culture of democratic governance that has women at the core with in the context of COVID -19;
4. Coordinated amplified voices of women on issues bothering on peace, security and governance in Africa.

VI. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The following outputs will be derived from the Gender pre-forum:

- A compilation of Africa Talks sessions/innovations;
- An outcome statement of the conversations;
- Proceedings report;
- Press Releases, Media Interviews and topical social media clips and sound bites will be provided; and
- Excerpts and snapshots from Social Media Engagement (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)

VII. THEMATIC AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. HORIZON SCANNING : State of play of Women in Conflict Prevention, Trends, Challenges and Opportunities:** This section will focus on the existing reality of women facing the burden of conflict. It will also assess the strengths of women and their contribution towards conflict prevention in their own communities. A keynote discussion will provide a state of play laying the foundation for further discussion.
Normative and Institutional Frameworks on Women and Conflict Prevention: The session will provide a horizon scanning of normative and institutional as well as legal frameworks on democratic governance and conflict prevention to address conflict. It will also address some of the challenges on the implementation of norms and standards and will engage speakers on solutions at the local, continental and global levels. Speakers can also provide their own experiences of existing programs at the continental and national level to tie in the importance in having a normative framework on the subject.
- 2. MAGNIFYING WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION in Conflict Prevention through Continental, Regional Grassroots work shared with participants.** This session will highlight the role of women in silencing the guns through their contribution to silence the root causes of conflict. Mainly the session will highlight the role women in prevention of conflicts in their communities, nation and beyond. The session magnifies the specific value women add to conflict prevention in an effort to advocate for more women to be engaged in addressing deficits of democratic governance in their communities, nation and the continent.
- 3. WAY FORWARD - Assessing Opportunities and Way forward - Forging new pathways for inclusion, engagement and participation of Women beyond 2020.** An important session that will contextualize the previous discussions on the challenges, opportunities and the contribution of women in conflict prevention. The session goes more specifically to seek out exciting ideas and opportunities that are out of the box solutions and recommendations for inclusion, engagement and participation of women in conflict prevention. This session will mainly focus on discussing the way forward and forge practical recommendations.
- 4. AFRICA TALKS - Showcasing women's contribution (especially young women) in Silencing the Guns:** On this session stories of women that have made immense contribution to their communities through their resilience and power will be featured.
- 5. INTERLUDE:** Interludes between sessions will be provided by sharing inspiring videos that will be made to inspire participants to remain connected.

VIII. ABOUT THE GENDER PRE-FORUM

The forum will be convened under the auspices of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Women Engagement Strategy (AGA-WES). The pre-forum will present an opportunity for women to discuss, highlight trends, opportunities, challenges and way forward on their contribution to the theme of the year. Moreover, the Pre-forum will provide a safe space to engage African women in policy deliberations and recognize and amplify their contribution towards conflict prevention and building sustainable peace in Africa.

In furtherance, the outcomes of the gender pre-forum will be part of the deliberations of the 9th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human rights and Governance exploring trends, challenges and prospect. The Gender pre-forum will also contribute to and complement policy discussions on the theme of the year by different AU Policy Organs and Departments.

IX. METHODOLOGY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the gender pre-forum has gone virtual. The convening will use a combination of methodologies to facilitate deliberations. Discussions will be conducted through several interactive strategies including

- Panel Discussions;
- Deep dive conversations with high-profile individuals and experts;
- Intergenerational conversations;
- Africa Talk's; and
- Plenary forums.

The Panel Discussions will be designed to ensure an intergenerational exchange as well as a mix of policy and practitioner's perspective in the conversations along with showcasing of practical initiatives. The gender pre-forum will feature opinion pieces in the media, interviews, robust social media engagement, informative threads on sessions and sound bites and other innovative means to spur debate during, before and after the virtual Gender pre-forum will be deployed to engage a larger audience in the deliberations, and disseminate the outcomes widely.

X. PARTICIPATION

Participants at the gender pre-forum will be identified through an online pre-registration process. Specifically, participants will be drawn from:

1. Gender focused organizations working on democracy, governance, peace and security issues in general and specific thematic areas under consideration during this gender pre-forum;
2. AU Member States, Including representatives of National Institutions, Agencies that focus on good governance, building the culture of democracy;
3. Selected Think Thanks and Academic Research institutions with experience on issues of democratic governance and peace and security;
4. Selected Media Practitioners;
5. Private Sector;
6. Representatives of the African Governance Platform Members;
7. International organisations, Development Partners and UN Agencies; and
8. Diaspora.

XI. DATES AND DETAILS

The gender pre-forum will be convened online from **19-20 November 2020**.

XII. DOCUMENTATION

The documentation for the Gender pre-forum will be shared electronically, while more information and updates will be available on:

- a) **Websites** – www.au.int/aga

- b) **Twitter Handles** – @AGA_Platform and AUC_DPA and @_AfricanUnion
- c) **Twitter Hashtags** – #DGTrends and #silencingtheguns

XIII. PARTNERSHIP, INSTITUTIONAL AND MANAGEMENT

The Gender pre-forum to the High-Level Dialogue is an institutionalized initiative of the African Governance Platform aimed at facilitating women participation in policy deliberations on democracy, governance and human rights. The Gender Preforum will be jointly convened by the Department of Peace and Security of the African Union Commission as the lead entity for the AU theme of the year, with support from the AGA Secretariat, WGDD and the Office of the Special Envoy on Women and Peace and Security.

XIV. WORKING LANGUAGES

The Meeting will be conducted in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese through simultaneous interpretation while working documents will be availed in English and French.

XV. CONTACT DETAILS

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