10\textsuperscript{TH} HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

THEME:

RENEWING AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AS A LEVER FOR BUILDING A DEMOCRATIC, PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS AFRICA

COMMEMORATING THE 10\textsuperscript{TH} ANNIVERSARY OF THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

9-10 DECEMBER 2021
VIRTUAL
A. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The African Union’s transition from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) ushered in a new era of renaissance and a significant shift in the continent’s worldview. The 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration on Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance\(^1\), an important turning point in the Continent’s history, provided an opportunity for African leaders to reaffirm their commitment to the ideals of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance. Leaders committed to carrying forward development and integration by entrenching democratic governance, respect for human rights through promoting youth and women engagement in Africa to improve the State of Democratic Governance, Peace and Security and assure Africa’s rightful place in the world.

Cultural significance and integration are at the core of African Renaissance even before the first Cultural Congress of the African Union which was held under the theme ‘Culture, Integration and African Renaissance”. According to Prof Samba Buri Mboup, Culture refers in a substantive comprehensive way, the sum total of ideas, knowledge systems, institutional, scientific, technological and political knowledge. He continued to explain that culture and heritage have a significant part in the African Renaissance and is embossed in constitutionalism, democracy, peace, justice and African shared values.

Our Continent’s richest history is contained in the founding documents of the African Union’s Constitutive Act (2000). Even the genesis of Agenda 2063 was based on the realization by African Leaders that there is a need to refocus Africa’s agenda from freedom struggle to inclusive social and economic development, integration, democratic governance and peace and security amongst other issues. Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063 commits to creating an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage and shared values and ethics while Aspiration 3 and 4 further envision creating an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law” to build “a peaceful and secure Africa”. Beyond the conscious efforts that have been made to mainstream the culture of peace in the Union’s agenda, Member States have also expressed their commitments to change the narrative of the continent from a poor and conflict-ridden continent to one that is rich – rich in development, rich in culture and most importantly rich in peace.

History can testify, before the arrival of the first European settlers, some African empires had a sophisticated system of governance. The most famous example is that of Mande, Kouroukan Fouga,\(^2\) where its chieftaincy governance systems included equality, equity, the protection of human rights such as the right to life, the right to property, the right to work, etc. This Charter, ahead of its time, also provided for the emancipation of women with the obligation to involve them in decision-making, governance. Similarly, the Philosophy of Ubuntu - “I AM because YOU are, YOU are because I AM” also reverberates through concepts and ideas and to this day inspires equality, inclusion, tolerance and social cohesion. As a diverse continent, incorporating these best practices into African normative frameworks and practices is critical to create tolerance, manage diversity by highlighting African Shared Values potentially bringing together ethnically heterogeneous communities.

Attempting to connect our richest hours of history to the state of democratic governance and peace in the continent today is unthinkable. The year 2021 has witnessed a sharp reversal of democratic governance and peace and security in the Continent with coup d’etats making a comeback, active conflicts and civil wars ongoing despite the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. This year, the African Union theme allows us to look inwards for solutions to our persistent problems – it is time to look inwards into our African Shared Values, best practices, history, culture and heritage to build the Africa We Want.

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\(^1\) 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36205-doc-50th_anniversary_solemn_declaration_en.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36205-doc-50th_anniversary_solemn_declaration_en.pdf)

\(^2\) The Mande empire corresponds today to the present day Mali.
B. RATIONALE

The state of democratic governance and peace in Africa has seen an overall improvement in the past decades. After independence, African Nations have recorded noteworthy strides towards the promotion and protection of human rights, consolidation of democratic governance and the rule of law. Mushrooming of competitive and regular elections have been observed with multi-party politics and citizen participation reaching the ultimate high. The African Governance Report (2018), which is an exercise of the African Governance Platform led by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) established the same fact – the State of Governance in Africa has seen an upwards trajectory in the African Union (AU) and the Member States.

So far, the AU achieved fundamental gains in renewing Africa’s Renaissance by creating a rich body of progressive normative, legal frameworks and jurisprudence on Democratic Governance, Human rights, Peace and Security referred to as the African Union Shared Values instruments. The African Union Shared values as norms, principles and practices that have been developed to promote Africa’s democratic governance, human rights, peace and security ultimately contributing to the development of the continent. More specifically, the AU Shared Values instruments include but are not limited to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, The African Charter of Democracy, Elections and Governance, African Charter of Human and People’s Rights, The Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, African Youth Carter, Maputo protocol and many others.

The African Shared Values were further given prominence through putting place a Pan-African Architecture on governance as a framework for dialogue between Stakeholders during the 16th Ordinary Session of the Heads of States under the theme ‘Towards Greater Unity and Integration through Shared Values.’ The forgoing established the African Governance Architecture (AGA). The AGA fulcrums itself in a multifaceted governance framework and AU institutions to play its coordination role among the Members of the African Governance Platform [1]. It would be amiss not to mention the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) which is the framework that compliments the AGA in creating a peaceful, prosperous Africa. Through the AU reforms, both frameworks had gained significant attention and as a result, the secretarial arm of the two frameworks have come together to create an AGA-APSA.

Despite the gains, Africa has miles to go in taking its rightful place in the world. The time is now for our Member States to make way for African-owned and African-led solutions in a constantly changing democratic governance and peace landscape. This can be achieved by ushering in a renewed African Renaissance that expounds on our rich history of democratic governance and peace through cultural consciousness. In the words of Amical Cabral, “cultural consciousness has significantly contributed to the integration of African shared values to research, publications, policy influence and strategies on democratic governance and reconciliation to create an integrated and prosperous Africa.”

In the realisation of the significant importance of Arts, Culture and Heritage in establishing the bedrock for a renewed Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance, the 33rd African Union Heads of State and Government assembly declared the theme of 2021 as “Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the African We Want”. Through different activities and initiatives within the context of the theme of the year, the AU aims to rally various segments of the African society as well as citizens including youth, women and media to reinvigorate the importance of African shared values, culture and heritage to find indigenous solutions for an improved State of Democratic Governance and Peace characterized by agility, strength, resilience, equality, equity, inclusion and social cohesion.

In light of this, the African Union organs and institutions that form the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat on behalf of the Platform (AGP) is convening the 10th High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance focusing on the theme: ‘Renewing African Renaissance as a Lever for Building a Democratic, Peaceful and Prosperous Africa’ scheduled to take place virtually and/or hybrid from 9-10 December 2021.
This High-Level Dialogue takes special prominence this year as it is a celebration of 10 years of creating a safe space for open and frank conversations to take place. The HLD had pioneered discussions and set trends by creating a platform for dialogue on issues of democratic governance, human rights, peace and security in Africa among different stakeholders.

C. THEMATIC FOCUS OF THE 10TH HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

The Dialogue will focus on the below thematic areas which are crafted to provide an opportunity for discussions on reinvigorating Africa’s Renaissance by giving prominence to history and experiences of extraordinary achievements, drawing lessons, crafting solutions, building on successes and paving a pathway way for the future.

1. LOOKING BACK AT A DECADE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA – This thematic area will assess the dynamics of democratic governance and peace that are speedily shifting and how we are further from the goal post than ever before. This thematic area is coined to assess the State of Democratic Governance and peace in Africa for the past decade. Furthermore, the session will identify best practices by drawing lessons from best practices through tapping into the richest part of our history, culture and heritage. Furthermore, discussions will assess the state of democratic governance and peace in Africa for the past decade. Speakers will reflect on the past decade of successes and challenges to draw a parallel with current dynamics. Discussions will address tough questions, go back to the drawing board, identify where we went wrong and formulate a new era of conversations that can redefine democratic governance and usher in a renewed commitment to an African Renaissance.

2. AU SHARED VALUES INSTRUMENTS ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE – This thematic area will provide an opportunity to explore the normative and legal framework of the African Union specifically focusing on the AU Shared Values instruments on Human Rights, Democracy, Governance and Human Rights. The session will go into controversial conversations of expectation vs reality on ratification and implementation and reporting of instruments, identify challenges and proffer solutions for the AU and Member States.

3. POSITIONING CULTURE TO USHER A RENEWED AFRICAN RENAISSANCE – This thematic area will assess the contribution of the creative arts in reinvigorating Africa’s Renaissance and renewal. Experts, advocates and industry players will have a chance to discuss the role of the creative industry in promoting a democratic and peaceful Africa.

4. THE NEXT 10 YEARS OF MEGATRENDS FOR THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE: This thematic area will provide space for discussants to prognosticate the salient issues that will need to be on the radar for the next 10 years of conversation and action. Speakers will illuminate and set megatrends for a conversation that will potentially bring about a renewed sense of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance.

5. AFRICA TALKS: This intergenerational conversation is intended to showcase exceptional Africans to share their experiences and inspire change in their communities contributing to the Africa We want. In this session stories of young Africans that have made immense contributions to their communities through their leadership resilience and power will be featured.

6. INTERLUDE: Interludes between sessions will be provided through creative means by sharing inspiring and relevant performances of culture, music, art and videos that are meant to inspire participants.

7. GRAPHIC RECORDING: A live graphic recording artist will record the discussions of the meeting in drawing.
D. GOAL AND OBJECTIVE
The overall goal of the 10th High-Level Dialogue is to assess, identify and explore normative, structural enablers to achieve sustainable peace and development in Africa. Specifically, the Dialogue will provide a platform to share evidence-based knowledge and analysis as well as exchange comparable lessons and experiences in democratic governance, peace and security while also developing policy recommendations to address challenges.

E. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE
The specific objectives of the High-Level Dialogue are to:

a) To assess the State of Governance, peace and security by identifying progress that has been made with regards to Pan Africanism and African Renaissance, and to identify key hindrances and solutions;

b) Bring African Shared Values to the limelight to assess the progress that has been made in their implementation, identify gaps and find solutions for improved ratification, implementation and monitoring of African Union Shared Values instruments;

c) To identify the positioning of culture and creative arts as a lever to usher in a renewed Pan-African Renaissance for the promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance;

d) Setting the trends for the next 10 years in light of thematic focuses and flagships for trendsetting, early research, early policy decision and early action.

e) Proffer policy recommendations and practice proposals as well as appropriate measures that will build on existing work done on governance peace and security in Africa.

F. EXPECTED OUTCOME
It is expected that the 10th High-Level Dialogue will meaningfully contribute towards the realisation of Aspiration 5, 3 and 4 of Agenda 2063. The Dialogue will also identify specific roles of the AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities and non-state actors towards ushering in a renewed African Renaissance as a lever for creating the desired state of democratic governance, peace and security in Africa.

a) Stage set on the current state of Governance, peace and security to clear the pathway for identifying challenges and tracking progress;

b) Inclusive solutions for improved ratification, implementation and monitoring of African Union Shared Values instruments identified;

c) Renewed commitment for promoting arts and culture realized; and

d) Trends of discussions for the next 10 years identified;

G. EXPECTED OUTPUTS
The Dialogue shall produce the following outputs;

a) One (1) Policy Brief focusing on discussion of the dialogue for policy recommendations;

b) One (1) Proceedings Report that will be disseminated widely through traditional and new media;

c) Press Releases;

d) Social Media posts; Twitter, Facebook, YouTube

H. ABOUT THE 10TH HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE
The 10th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance is convened under the auspices of the African Governance Platform (AGP) and will serve as a forum for reflection. This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the High-Level Dialogue. The High-Level dialogue provides a space for policy discussions to happen annually on issues of democratic governance, human rights and peace among different stakeholders within and outside of the African Union. Given that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Dialogue, thematic discussions will essentially take stock of developments on the state of governance, democracy and peace on the continent, highlight the gains made, address the
challenges and explore the next steps. Particularly, discussions will focus on creating a renewed African Renaissance by critically examining the historical context, changing the democratic governance landscape of the region, and highlighting the normative and legal framework of AU’s democratic governance, peace and security agenda.

The Dialogue is therefore intended to provide a frank, open and inclusive space for policymakers, the private sector, think tanks, academia and practitioners to interrogate policy and practice imperatives that build the cornerstone for a peaceful and prosperous Africa. In addition, the Dialogue will focus specifically on appropriate democratic governance actions and recommendations that shall guide state and non-state interventions at national, regional, continental levels.

In this vein, the High-Level Dialogue will be preceded by the Continental youth consultation and a Gender Pre-forum. Outcomes and resolutions from these consultations will systemically dovetail into the discussions at the HLD and eventually form parts of the outcomes.

I. METHODOLOGY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 10th HLD will be held virtually and/or hybrid. The dialogue and discussions will be conducted through several interactive strategies including TV-Style moderated Panel Discussions, conversations with high profile individuals, marketplace interactions and plenary forums. The Panel discussions will be designed to ensure an intergenerational exchange as well as ensure a mix of policy and practitioners’ perspectives in the conversations.

Also, the High-Level Dialogue will include robust social media engagement and other innovative means to spur debate before and during the Dialogue, engage the virtual audience in the deliberations, and disseminate the outcomes of the Dialogue.

J. DOCUMENTATION AND WORKING LANGUAGES

Considering the 10th High-Level Dialogue will be held virtually the documentation for the Dialogue will be shared electronically. All High-Level Dialogue documents and news updates will be available on the www.au.int/aga, @AUC_DPA @AGA_Platform @_AfricanUnion and on Hashtags #DGTrends

The Meeting will be conducted in the 4 AU Languages - Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese. Simultaneous interpretations will be provided in all 4 languages while documentation will be provided in French and English only.

In addition, SIGN LANGUAGE interpretation will be provided for the entire dialogue.

K. THE AFRICAN GOVERNANCE PLATFORM

Established in 2012, the African Governance Architecture (AGA) was created as a framework for dialogue between various stakeholders mandated to promote and strengthen democratic governance in Africa as articulated in the various African Union Shared Values instruments. Its establishment was premised on the dire need to enhance the impact of various AU and RECs interventions in addressing governance deficits on the continent. The Secretariat is hosted by the Department of Political Affairs Peace and Security (PAPS) as the Bureau of the African Governance Architecture Platform.

The African Governance Platform is the institutional and interactive mechanism of the AGA. It is mandated to operationalize and coordinate programmes and initiatives related to democracy, elections, constitutionalism, rule of law, public service and administration, decentralisation, anti-corruption, human rights and transitional justice. The Platform is composed of nineteen (19) AU Organs, Institutions and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). In this regard, the Platform has a responsibility of enhancing the capacity of its stakeholders to support the Member States in promoting democratic governance. The
Platform comprises eleven (11) AU Organs and institutions with a Human Rights, Democracy and Governance mandate as well as the eight (8) RECs.³

The ongoing AU Reform implementation processes have recognized the importance of the African Governance Architecture and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and have brought the operational arms of the architectures together by creating the AGA-APSA Secretariats. The implementation of the AU Reforms is still ongoing.

L. PARTICIPATION

The key stakeholders that will be part of the High-Level Dialogue include the following:

i. Sitting and Former Heads of State and Government of AU Members;
ii. AU organs and institutions;
iii. Regional Economic Communities;
iv. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including Youth networks and Women’s organizations;
v. Development Partners and Agencies
vi. Private Sector (Multinationals/ Local);
vii. Philanthropy Organisations and Individuals;
viii. Artists, Culture and Heritage Organizations, Private Sector
ix. UN agencies and other International and continental financial institutions (e.g. AfDB, IMF, World Bank)
x. Media; and
xi. Academic, think tanks and Research Institutions.

M. PARTNERSHIP

The 10th High-Level Dialogue is a flagship initiative of the African Governance Platform created to foster dialogue among stakeholders. It will be jointly convened by the Department of Political Affairs Peace and Security of African Union Commission as the Secretariat of the AGA-APSA and the bureau of the African Governance Platform (AGP).

N. CONTACT DETAILS

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