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**12th HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA:
TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS**

THEME:

DELIVERING PEACE DIVIDENDS THROUGH THE AFCFTA IMPLEMENTATION

CONCEPT NOTE

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
05 - 06 OCTOBER 2023**

A. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Africa is endowed with natural resources, but it's most pivotal source of development is its people. Africans indeed are the ones bringing the Continent's Aspirations which is Agenda 2063¹ to fruition. A fruitful Africa that is of good governance, democratic, respectful of human rights, peaceful, strong, united, and an influential global player. In that vein, African Leaders prioritized the need to boost inter-trade to reduce its vulnerability and improve trade and economic performance with a vision of making Africa a global powerhouse. Against that backdrop, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) was born and received a historic number of ratifications in its short life span entering into force on **30th May 2019**².

Africa has around **1,119 million hectares**³ of arable land which is nearly **40%** of the Continent's total land area, and a human capital of approximately **60%**⁴ averaging below 35 years of age. African youth is its greatest asset and force for pulling the Continent out of abject poverty. However, the Continent's massive dependence on imports and concentration primary commodities as exports create vulnerabilities to external actors and events like the Covid-19 Pandemic, vaccine apartheid, climate change, and the war in Europe, reminding Africans and their Leaders that self-reliance is key to socioeconomic growth and prosperity.

Dubbed as the largest free trade area in the world, the AfCFTA is set up to eliminate trade barriers and boost trade among Member States with the aim to advance trade in value-added production across all service sectors of the African Economy, contribute to establishing regional value chains and enable investment and job creation, fostering industrialization, scientific and human capital development, thus enhancing the competitiveness of Africa and Africans. It is expected that when it reaches its full operationalization it can lift more than **30 million** people out of extreme poverty and boost inter-Africa trade up to a whopping **US \$450 Billion**⁴ by 2035.

However, the Continent still faces its dim realities: lack of good governance, challenges to peace, security, and stability, impunity, human rights violations, and disregard for Rule of Law and justice, leading the Continent down a destructive path. In acknowledgement of these interlinkages, the prevailing need to contribute to the 2023 AU theme of the year which is "**Acceleration of the AfCFTA Implementation**"⁵ and to further explore its linkage with democratic governance, peace, and security - the African Governance Platform (AGP) as a custodian of the High-level Dialogue (HLD) has dedicated this year's theme to "**DELIVERING PEACE DIVIDENDS THROUGH AFCFTA IMPLEMENTATION.**"

The 12th HLD will be preceded by Youth and Gender pre-forums focused conversations with the outcomes dovetailing into the main outcome of the HLD.

B. THEMATIC FOCUS OF THE 12TH HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

The following Sub-thematic areas will guide discussions on addressing some of the challenges, historical, legal, and normative contexts. The deep dive on sub thematic areas will provide a platform for stakeholders to share their experiences, draw lessons, craft solutions, and a pathway for implementation.

- 1. KEYNOTE ADDRESS: SETTING THE SCENE - UNPACKING THE NEXUS BETWEEN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, PEACE, AND SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT** – Under this thematic session, the speakers will have an open discussion on the nexus between Democratic Governance, Peace and

¹Agenda 2063, accessed on 13 June 2023, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf

² Entered into force on 30th May 2019 and launched on **July 2019** at the **12th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Niamey, Niger**, after a record number of 24 MS deposit their instruments of ratification at record time, and currently, 54 out of 55 Member States have signed the AfCFTA agreement with 44 Member States depositing their instrument of ratification – signifying the enthusiasm of Member States.

³ Agricultural land in Africa 2010-2019. (2023, March 7). Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1287280/agricultural-land-in-africa/#:~:text=Africa%20had%20around%201%2C119%20million,minimal%20fluctuations%20in%20the%20continent.>
In-Text Citation: (Agricultural Land in Africa 2010-2019, 2023)

⁴ Roca, & Schultes. (n.d.). AFRICA'S YOUTH: ACTION NEEDED NOW TO SUPPORT THE CONTINENT'S GREATEST ASSET. Mo.Ibrahim.Foundation . Retrieved August 12, 2020, from <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-08/international-youth-day-research-brief.pdf>
In-Text Citation: (Roca & Schultes, n.d.)

⁵ Theme of The Year 2023: "Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation" | African Union. (n.d.). accessed 15 June 2023, <https://au.int/en/theme/2023/acceleration-of-afcfta-implementation>

Security, and Development as enablers for building the Africa we Want. The session also aims to look at the implications of conflict instability and poor governance in the effective implementation of the AfCFTA.

2. **CATALYZING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND THE AFCFTA FOR PEACE DIVIDENDS** - This thematic area will provide an opportunity to explore the ACDEG and other normative and legal frameworks of the AU specifically focusing on the implementation of the AfCFTA, through which the agenda of good governance, peace and security could be advanced.
3. **LEARNING FROM RECS: CAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS BE A PANACEA FOR PEACE?** - This session will reflect on the role that Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as the building blocks of the AU can simultaneously play in conflict prevention and accelerating the implementation of regional free trade and integration agreements as a sub-set of the AfCFTA.
4. **INTER-SECTORAL APPROACH TO DELIVER AS ONE:** This session will engage in discussions that will focus on an integrated approach to deliver and succeed as one. Discussants from the free movement of persons, security Sector experts that focus on cross-border crimes, public health experts, Universities and Think Tanks will also weigh in to identify ways of working and delivering peace dividends.

C. GOAL

The overall goal of the 12th HLD is to assess, identify and explore normative, structural enablers to achieve democratic governance, peace, and security in Africa. Specifically, the Dialogue will focus on the AfCFTA and democratic governance and explore its linkages to deliver peace dividends.

D. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

The specific objectives of the HLD are to:

- a) Increase the understanding of the normative and institutional frameworks in the implementation of the AfCFTA as well as the Continental and Regional priorities in accelerating its implementation.
- b) Create a space for RECs to share their experience of integration and peace;
- c) Provide a platform for a transversal approach to deliver, integration, free trade, peace, and security as one;
- d) Provide a platform for African citizens specifically youth and women to share their perspectives and experiences on the nexus between the AfCFTA and peace/conflict; and
- e) Contribute ideas towards curating and proffering solutions for consideration in the roadmap for a peaceful, integrated, influential Africa.

E. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The Dialogue shall produce the following outputs:

- a) One (1) Policy Brief focusing on discussions of the Dialogue for policy recommendations;
- b) One (1) Proceedings Report that will be disseminated on our website;
- c) Media Advisory, Press Releases; and Social Media posts, Facebook post.

F. METHODOLOGY

The convening of the 12th HLD will use a combination of methodologies to facilitate deliberation. Discussions will be conducted through several interactive strategies including, conversation with high-profile individuals through plenary forums. The Panel Discussions will be designed to ensure an intergenerational exchange as well as ensure a mix of policy and practitioner perspectives in the conversations.

Also, the HLD will include robust social media engagement, live tweeting (x) and other innovative means to spur debate before and during the Dialogue in real time.

G. DOCUMENTATION AND WORKING LANGUAGES

The documentation for the Dialogue will be shared electronically. All HLD documents and news updates will be available on www.au.int/aga.

To involve more people in this conversation, the discussion will be live tweeted on the @AUC-PAPS @AGA_Platform twitter handle and the Hashtag #DGTrends may be used to join the conversation online.

The Meeting will be conducted in the 4 AU Languages – **Arabic, English, French and Portuguese**. Simultaneous interpretations will be provided in all 5 languages while documentation will be provided in English and French.

H. THE AFRICAN GOVERNANCE PLATFORM

Established in 2012, the 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 AU 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 DPAPS as the Bureau of the AGP.

The AGP is the institutional and interactive mechanism of the AGA. The Platform is composed of nineteen (19) AU Organs, Institution and 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) RECs⁶. Critical stakeholders that have been taking part through observing are the Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democracy, and Governance (HRDG), Regional Mechanisms, Special Envoys for youth and women, and AU Offices outside **AUC Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**.

The current Chair of the Platform is the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) also known as 'The Banjul Commission' and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is the Vice-Chair. The AGA-APSA Secretariat was set up to serve the AGP and facilitate coordination and synergies among the Platform Members.

I. ABOUT THE HLD

The HLD is a flagship initiative of the AGP which is convened under the auspices of the Platform and is created to foster dialogue among stakeholders and will serve as a forum for reflection on different thematic issues. The HLD provides a space for policy discussions to happen annually on issues of democratic governance, human rights, and peace among other different stakeholders within and outside of the AU.

This year, the AGP through the AGA-APSA Secretariat will implement the 12th edition of the HLD. The HLD is a critical interface between the AGP and stakeholders is 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, and continental levels.

⁶ The 11 Organs are as follows: The AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC); AUC; African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR); the African Court on Human and People's Rights (AfCHPR); Pan-African Parliament (PAP); African Peer-Review Mechanism (APRM); AU Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC); The Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC); African Committee on Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC); AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL); AU Development Agency (AUDA). The RECs are namely: Eastern African Community (EAC); Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); Southern African Development Community (SADC); Arab Maghreb Union (UMA); and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

In this vein, the HLD will be preceded by the Youth and Gender Pre-Forum. Outcomes and resolutions from these Forums will systematically dovetail into the discussions at the HLD and eventually form parts of the outcome.

J. PARTICIPATION

The key stakeholders that will be part of the HLD include the following:

- i. Sitting and Former Heads of State and Government of AU Members;
- ii. AU Organs and Institutions;
- iii. RECs;
- iv. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including Youth networks and Women's organizations;
- v. Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia as the of the 12th HLD;
- vi. Representatives of the PRC Sub-Committee on HRDG, Representatives of the PSC and other Member States;
- vii. Development Partners and Agencies;
- viii. Private Sector (Multinationals/Local);
- ix. Philanthropy Organizations and Individuals;
- x. UN Agencies and other International and Continental financial institutions (e.g. AfDB, IMF, World Bank);
- xi. Media; and
- xii. Academia, think tanks, and Research Institutions.

K. PARTNERSHIP

The 12th HLD is a flagship initiative of the AGP created to foster dialogue among stakeholders. The AGA-APSA Secretariat will be leading the implementation with the host country – The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia with the support from the Bureau of the AGP, and development partners.

L. CONTACT DETAILS

Amb. Salah Hammad

Ag. Head
AGA-APSA Secretariat
Governance and Conflict Prevention Directorate
Department of Political Affairs, Peace, and Security
African Union Commission
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Email: HammadS@africa-union.org

Ms. Makda Mikre Tessema

Senior Democracy and Governance Expert
AGA-APSA Secretariat
Governance and Conflict Prevention Directorate
Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security
African Union Commission
Email: MakdaM@africa-union.org