



**THE 12TH HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE, AND
HUMAN RIGHTS: TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS**

THEME:

DELIVERING PEACE DIVIDENDS THROUGH THE AfCFTA IMPLEMENTATION

NARRATIVE REPORT

**5 – 6 OCTOBER 2023
AFRICAN UNION HEADQUARTERS
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Africa is endowed with natural resources, but its most pivotal source of development is its people. The aspirations contained in Agenda 2063 can only be realized by Africans themselves. Our quest for a fruitful Africa that is of good governance, democratic, respectful of human rights, peaceful, strong, united, and an influential global player relies on the collective efforts of the continent's population.
2. African Leaders have prioritized efforts to boost inter-African trade and improve trade and economic performance with a vision of making Africa a global powerhouse. Against this backdrop, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) was birthed and received a historic number of ratifications in its short life span entering into force on 30 May 2019.
3. The effective implementation of the AfCFTA, however, cannot be a reality if the continent does not address the lack of good governance; challenges to peace, security and stability; impunity and human rights violations and disregard for Rule of Law and justice. As a contribution to the 2023 AU theme of the year on "Acceleration of the AfCFTA Implementation" and to further explore the linkage between the AfCFTA and democratic governance, peace, and security—the African Governance Platform (AGP) has dedicated the theme of the 12th HLD to "Delivering Peace Dividends Through AfCFTA Implementation."
4. The 12th HLD offered a platform for conversations on harnessing peace dividends through the implementation of the AfCFTA, focusing on the following sub-themes:
 - The Nexus Between Democratic Governance, Peace, Security and Development
 - Catalyzing Democratic Governance and the AfCFTA for Peace Dividends
 - Cross Regional Learning: Free Trade Agreements as a Panacea for Peace and Development
 - Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Deliver Peace Dividends.

II. ATTENDANCE

The key stakeholders that participated in the HLD included the following:

- i. Sitting and Former Heads of State and Government of AU Members;
- ii. AU Organs and Institutions;
- iii. Regional Economic Communities (RECs);
- iv. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including Youth networks and Women's organizations;
- v. Representatives of the PRC Subcommittee on HRDG, Representatives of the PSC and other Member States;
- vi. Development Partners and Agencies;
- vii. Private Sector (Multinationals/Local);
- viii. Philanthropic Organizations and Individuals;
- ix. UN Agencies and other International and Continental financial institutions (e.g., AfDB, IMF, World Bank);
- x. Academia, think tanks and Research Institutions.

III. OPENING CEREMONY: WELCOME STATEMENTS

Hagar Azooz, Head of AGA-APSA Secretariat introduced H. E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security for his welcome remarks.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security expressed a warm welcome to delegates and dignitaries present at the 12th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance in Africa, on behalf of the Chairperson of the AUC, H. E. Moussa Faki Mahamat. He noted that the 2023 theme of the High-Level Dialogue, "Delivering Peace Dividends Through the AfCFTA Implementation," was timely. The overarching goal for the 12th High-Level Dialogue, he added, is to assess, identify, and explore the enablers of democratic governance, peace, and security in Africa and to uncover the linkages between the AfCFTA and peace dividends.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye began by highlighting the significance of the African Union's Agenda 2063 in the collective determination of Africans to build a prosperous, democratic, and peaceful Africa. In view of this, he explained, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) emerged as a cornerstone of Africa's development aspirations. The AfCFTA, he added, is a monumental milestone which seeks to dismantle trade barriers and elevate economic growth by bolstering intra-African trade. Its potential to transform Africa into a global economic powerhouse, he stressed, is "nothing short of groundbreaking".

He informed delegates the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACDEG) and other AU frameworks that underpin good governance, peace, and security will be discussed during the 12th HLD. Specifically, panelists and delegates will explore how these normative and legal frameworks can be leveraged to advance the objectives of the AfCFTA while promoting democratic values and peace.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye highlighted that given the intricate relationship and nexus between democratic governance, peace, and security in the context of AfCFTA, it was important to consider peace and stability as the bedrock upon which sustainable development thrives. According to him, the AfCFTA is not merely an economic agreement but a testament to Africa's unity and shared vision, an affirmation of our conviction that by working together, we can overcome our collective challenges. He stressed that the AfCFTA holds the promise of not only economic prosperity but also the advancement of democratic values, human rights, and of peace. Against this backdrop, the 12th HLD offered an opportunity for reflections on the interconnectedness of conflict, instability, and governance deficits and their impact on the effective implementation of the AfCFTA.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye opined that the potential of the AfCFTA could be unlocked through the adoption of an integrated approach and the involvement of experts from various fields, including the free movement of persons, security, public health, academia, and think tanks, to identify synergies and collaborative pathways that can deliver peace dividends.

Regional economic communities (RECs), he explained, are instrumental in shaping the landscape of regional integration and ought to examine their role in preventing conflict and accelerating the implementation of regional free trade and integration agreements within the broader context of the AfCFTA. He also called for the recognition of the pivotal role of the African Governance Platform (AGP) in enhancing the capacity of its stakeholders to support Member States in promoting democratic governance. He informed delegates that the AGA-APSA Secretariat, hosted by the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (DPAPS), serves as the Bureau of the AGP, and together these institutions form a formidable framework for dialogue and collaboration in the pursuit of our shared goals.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye affirmed that the HLD is a catalyst for action and offers an opportunity to chart a course that leads to a peaceful, integrated, and influential Africa. He therefore urged delegates to explore innovative solutions, share experiences, and forge partnerships that will propel Africans towards the realization of a continent characterized by democracy, respect for human rights, and enduring peace.

Amb. Salah Hammad, Ag. Head of the AGA-APSA Secretariat thanked Amb. Bankole Adeoye for his welcome remarks. He conveyed the gratitude to dignitaries and delegates present for taking time off their busy schedules to participate in the 12th High-Level Dialogue organized by the AGA-APSA Secretariat which is hosted by the AU Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security.

Amb. Salah informed delegates that the African Governance Platform was established as the institutional framework of the AGA, composed of AU Organs, Institutions and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) with a formal mandate for the promotion and sustenance of democracy, governance and human rights in Africa. The Platform, he continued, implements the programmes of AGA while drawing inspiration and inputs from representatives of AU Organs, Institutions and RECs and a second circle of continental stakeholders in the private sector, development partners, civil society and the diaspora.

He expressed profound gratitude to partners who have provided support towards the organization of the 12th HLD, namely the Institute for Security Studies (ISS); International

IDEA; Training for Peace; Expertise France; the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Union and GIZ.

Hon. Remy Lumbu, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) and Chair of the African Governance Platform (AGP) was introduced by the moderator to present a goodwill statement. Hon. Remy Lumbu conveyed gratitude to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, represented by H.E. Mr. Demeke Mekonen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, for the hospitality extended to delegates since their arrival in Addis Ababa.

Hon. Remy Lumbu began his intervention by drawing delegates’ attention to the fact that the High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights was being held in Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the African Union for the first time, providing an excellent opportunity to bring citizens from across the continent to their home, the African Union. This year’s High-Level Dialogue, he noted, is an opportunity to contribute to the AU’s theme for the year, “Accelerating the implementation of AfCFTA”, and to explore the interdependent links between peace and security, and socio-economic development.

According to him, the 12th High-Level Dialogue and its pre-events on youth and gender, a flagship initiative of the African Governance Platform, lays the foundations for citizen engagement on issues of crucial importance to the African people and, above all, provided a safe space for open and frank conversations.

Hon. Remy Lumbu remarked that the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its entry into force by a decision of African Heads of State and Government marked a turning point in the continent’s collective approach and efforts to consolidate the continent’s integration and realize our aspiration for a united, prosperous and integrated Africa, as stipulated in Agenda 2063. He emphasized that although the AfCFTA has the potential to lift our continent out of poverty, its effective implementation is essential if we are to reap its rewards.

He deplored the fact that although some progress has been recorded in realizing our overriding aspiration, challenges facing our continent such as political instability, violence and violations of human rights, the rule of law and constitutionalism, and the lack of socio-economic development constantly demand our attention. These setbacks, he stressed, should prompt us to reflect on our past and ongoing efforts, and to find ways of strengthening our institutions, which were set up to serve the people of Africa.

Hon. Remy Lumbu reiterated that the solutions to Africa's problems lie within its borders. The realization of this fact, he stressed, should be an incentive for our collective commitment to building the Africa we want. He urged delegates to debate, challenge the status quo and push the boundaries and seek solutions to the emerging challenges the continent faces.

The moderator for the session, Hagar Azooz, Head of AGA-APSA Secretariat introduced **Ambassador Ayele Lire, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the AU and UNECA** for his welcome remarks. Amb. Ayele Lire started his intervention by expressing his appreciation to the AU Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security and the African Governance Architecture for organizing the High-Level Dialogue. He noted that the AfCFTA, as one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063, aims to boost intra-Africa trade and unleash the promising potential of the continent.

Amb. Ayele Lire stated that the focus on trade, democracy, governance and peace and security demonstrates that increased trade will lead to greater independence which in turn will contribute to greater peace and stability on the continent. The nexus between underdevelopment and human rights violations requires that the AU ought to uphold a multiple approach to the implementation of the AfCFTA. This calls for tackling the challenges linked to peace and security, including Unconstitutional Changes of Governments and terrorism in order to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the AfCFTA.

Against this backdrop, he urged the AU and its Member States to pool resources towards strengthening institutional mechanisms to address regional security, ensure increased ratification and domestication of human rights instruments and strengthen compliance

mechanisms. Intra Africa trade, he added, must be guided by the existing regional instruments on the protection of human rights, environmental protection, as well as the rights of women and children. In this regard, due diligence assessment is important to ensure that the guidelines and directives of AfCFTA are in line with existing regional and international human rights instruments.

He noted satisfactorily that the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, as a signatory of the AfCFTA, is undertaking numerous reforms that will enable the country to trade within the framework of the Agreement. Amb. Ayele Lire informed delegates that the country is working to address long-standing political, economic and social issues to ensure peace and respect for human rights. He reiterated Ethiopia's unwavering commitment to ensuring the full implementation of the AfCFTA and Agenda 20,263.

On that note, Amb. Ayele Lire declared the 12th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance officially opened.

IV. KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE NEXUS BETWEEN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, PEACE AND SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Keynote Speaker: **H. E. Hailemariam Desalegn, former Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.**

This session, moderated by H.E. Amb Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for PAPS, AUC was a discussion on the nexus between Democratic Governance, Peace and Security, and Development as enablers for building the Africa we Want. The session generated broad reflections on the AfCFTA and its linkages to security as well as the implications of conflict, instability and poor governance for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA.

Prior to inviting H. E. Hailemariam Desalegn to share his keynote address, Amb. Bankole set the stage by acknowledging the efforts and commitment of the Former Prime Minister of Ethiopia to the creation of free trade zones and transformation of socio-economic and political landscape in Ethiopia. He described H.E Hailemariam as a distinguished African with a wealth of experience in politics, governance and elections who can demonstrate that peace dividends can be achieved through the AfCFTA.

H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn began his statement by conveying his gratitude to Commissioner Bankole and the AU for the invitation as keynote speaker at the 12th HLD. He expressed his satisfaction with regards to the significant number of youth present at the Dialogue. H. E. Hailemariam Desalegn seized the opportunity to highlight two key trends that can bring about transformation and African Renaissance: the continent's demographic dividend and the role of women.

H. E. Hailemariam Desalegn noted that Africa will host 40% of young people globally by 2050. According to him, this presents a huge opportunity for the youth to ensure Africa's Renaissance. He warned that if young people follow the current trend of leadership in Africa, the continent will be unable to realize its aspirations. In view of this, he urged youth to break the current trend of bad governance, democratic deficit, sluggish economic growth and development.

He emphasized Africa's rich civilization and pioneering role in several sectors such engineering medicine, astronomy etc. Countries such as Ethiopia, Egypt, and Mali, he remarked, boast of unique heritage and civilization, which demonstrates Africa's non-negligible contribution to the global community.

With regards to the role of women, he informed delegates that statistics have revealed that the most enterprising women are in Africa. Women, he affirmed, are the backbone of economies of African countries and can play a major role in bringing about democratization and good governance in Africa.

Commenting on the AfCFTA, he described the Agreement as one of the landmark decisions of the leaders of the continent. He, however, expressed apprehension about the successful implementation of the AfCFTA due to the continent's history with other well-meaning programmes. Africa, he recounted, developed the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, also known as the Malabo Declaration whose implementation has taken 20 years. In view of this, he expressed concerns about the continent's ability to implement the AfCFTA in a way that it addresses the real problems, and the commitment of AU and Member States to facilitate the creation of a conducive political environment for the full implementation of the AfCFTA. Creating a conducive

environment, he explained, involves addressing illicit financial flows and corrupt practices, exclusion and marginalization in many parts of our countries which hinder the objectives of the Agreement.

H. E. Hailemariam Desalegn was of the view that democracy and good governance must be the bedrock for the implementation of the AfCFTA. He underlined the need for a strong governance system and frameworks that help to understand the nexus between democratic governance, peace, security and sustainable development, with the full commitment for the implementation of the AfCFTA. Democratic and good governance, he stressed, are existential issues without which we cannot have sustainable growth. According to him, even in countries in conflict or post conflict situations, the full participation of citizens and deep citizen activism to effect change.

He called on Africans to unite and speak with one voice in global settings, given the geopolitical situations that determine the continent's move towards accelerated economic growth and acceleration of peace and security provision. He further urged Development Partners to ensure that the continent takes full ownership of programmes, even when they design these programmes. He admitted that the continent needs support from the global community, but warned against the phenomenon of "Policy Rent" where donors give specific conditions as the basis for funding. "Africa should own its policy programmes and be committed to their implementation even when funding comes from outside the continent", he stressed.

Touching on the issue of UCGs, especially in West Africa, he noted that sanctions may not be the solution. According to him, it is essential to examine the root causes of UCGs, which for the most part stems from citizens' dissatisfaction. He emphasized that coups should be firmly condemned as military governments are unable to bring about change, good governance and democratization which the masses aspire to. He noted that aside military coups, there are also what can be described as "election coups" on the continent, as most elections in Africa do not meet democratic standards. Sharing his experience in leading African Union election observation missions, he observed that although the facts are laid out, the conclusions do not reflect the reality on the ground.

H. E. Hailemariam Desalegn concluded his statement by reiterating that the youth and women can contribute significantly in bringing about the needed transformation of the continent.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye thanked H.E. Hailemariam for the thought-provoking keynote address. He reiterated that there is no excuse for coups d'état in African countries, and that the AU has asserted that no military intervention will be tolerated. Citizens, he stated, can use judicial dispute mechanisms and other approaches to express dissatisfaction. He expressed the hope that the nexus between peace, security and sustainable development will enable the continent to realize Agenda 2063.

Plenary Discussion

The plenary session was an opportunity for all the delegates present to ask questions to H.E. Hailemariam. Several questions were asked with regards to the role youth can play in the political space; the reform of Africa's educational system; the relevance of democratic developmentalism and the role of the private sector in peace, development and security.

A female participant from Madagascar sought to know what youth can do if they are ready to serve their nations through taking part in leadership processes but are unable to do so due to age limits for such positions.

In response to the young lady's submission, H.E. Hailemariam highlighted that several opportunities exist for youth to engage in the political space. Youth ought to be strategically organized and selfless in order to earn their place in the political sphere. The youth of this generation, he emphasized, are in a better position to organize and transform the continent as they are widely connected to each other through technology and have the numbers.

Another participant noted the need to transform Africa's educational system, which lies at the heart of the continent's ability to make the leap. She explained for instance that the

rich history of the continent is not taught in schools. She asked whether efforts were being deployed to reform the educational system so that Africans can think much more critically, since for the most part, the educational system imparts knowledge but does not encourage critical thinking.

H.E. Hailemariam acknowledged that the education system in Africa has its own failures, as Africans have not fully grasped the adverse impacts of the political economy of slavery which has dehumanized the African population. To add insult to injury, he noted, most leaders in Africa have emulated the ways of the colonial masters through luxurious lifestyles at the expense of the citizenry's well-being. Reforming the education system and channeling much needed information through the media can play a major role in transforming the continent. He informed delegates about the ongoing establishment of the African School of Governance to train young people on the mindset for African renaissance.

Touching on the relevance of democratic developmentalism raised by Ambassador Ayo Olukanni, H.E. Hailemariam explained that democratic governance is key in addressing the numerous challenges facing the continent. He asserted that democratic developmentalism is needed to take into account the diverse views, aspirations and interests. In the African context, there can be no democracy without development considering that several countries on the continent have fledging and fragile economies.

Walter Kasempa, a youth from Zambia, noted that the AfCFTA is usually seen from the context of regional and national policy documents but not from a local governance point of view. In that regard, he sought to know how devolution can be part of Member States' implementation and domestication of the AfCFTA.

H.E Hailemariam responded that people at the grassroots have to be engaged. He emphasized the need to promote participation of the masses in democracy and development, as studies have demonstrated the benefits of decentralization.

Responding to a question raised by a participant on the role of the private sector in peace, development and security, H.E. Hailemariam affirmed that the private sector is an engine of growth. With the support of the government, he noted, the private sector can bring about change. He deplored the fact that some businesses in the private sector engage in dubious deals with government officials, engage in illicit financial flows, contribute to fraud in the tax system and other corrupt practices. In the current political economy in Africa, he stated, SMEs should be nurtured to contribute meaningfully to peace, development and security.

V. SESSION 1: CATALYZING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND THE AfCFTA FOR PEACE DIVIDENDS

This thematic area explored 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, Human Rights, Peace, and Security could be advanced.

Moderator: Ms. Lettie Tembo Longwe, Interim Director/Head of Tana Forum Secretariat, IPSS

Panelists:

- **Prof. Khabele Matlosa**, Former Director, Political Affairs, AUC; PhD Political Economy, University of the Western Cape
- **Mr. David Omozuafoh**, Governance Lead, RSCA, UNDP
- **Dr. Andrews Atta-Asamoah**, Head, Africa Peace and Security Governance, ISS

The moderator, Ms. Lettie Tembo Longwe began by addressing a question to Prof. Khabele Matlosa. She sought to know his views on the importance of mainstream human rights into the implementation of the AfCFTA, especially when it comes to free movement of people.

Prof. Khabele Matlosa noted first and foremost that confronting the challenges around the implementation of the AfCFTA requires frank and honest conversations. He centered

his response around three key points, namely the flagship projects of Agenda 2063; The interface between AfCFTA, free movement of persons and silencing the guns and the nexus between AfCFTA and free movement of persons.

Starting with the first point, he informed delegates that Agenda 2063, has 15 flagship projects out of which three are paramount for the conversation: AfCFTA; Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport, and Silencing the Guns in Africa. These three flagship projects, he emphasized, must be implemented simultaneously and not sequentially.

With regards to the interface between AfCFTA, free movement and silencing the guns, Prof. Khabele observed that the AfCFTA may not succeed without free movement of persons, and the need to address violent conflicts on the continent including UGCs. The current challenge, he highlighted, is that much more attention is being given to the AfCFTA, rather than to the free movement of persons and silencing the guns. He was of the view that all three should be given equal attention.

Speaking on the nexus between AfCFTA and free movement of persons, he began by noting that both flagship projects were launched in Kigali in 2018. Out of the 55 Member States (MS) of the AU, 47 have ratified the AfCFTA, whereas only four MS have ratified the Treaty on the Free Movement of Persons. Free trade, he declared, is a myth without the free movement of persons. Cross-Border trade in goods and services cannot succeed without free movement of business people and workers, which is a human right. The right of African people to move in Africa is not protected. Africa is a closed space for Africans but very open to those outside, due to visa restrictions and xenophobia.

On that note, Prof. Khabele Matlosa made the five recommendations to the African Union and its Member States. He called on AU Member States to ratify, domesticate and implement the protocol to the treaty establishing the Free Movement of Persons and ensure that its implementation is guided by the roadmap adopted by the AU. Second, he encouraged the AU to consider appointing a champion or envoy to drive the free movement of persons and the African Passport. Third, he urged AU MS to relax visa restrictions and work towards abolishing visas and expedite the process of issuing the

African passport to all Africans. Lastly, he called for special measures to facilitate the smooth cross-border movement of women and youth as the largest segment of Africa's population

Mr. David Omozuafoh, Governance Lead, RSCA, UNDP shared his assessment of AU normative and legal frameworks to leverage the implementation of the African Union charter and the AfCFTA, and measures that can tackle corruption for the smooth implementation of the AfCFTA.

Mr. David echoed the views of Prof Khabele with regards to the simultaneous implementation of some key instruments for the full implementation of the AfCFTA. He emphasized that the ACDEG, the AfCFTA, the African Union Convention on Combating and Preventing Corruption and the treaty Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in Africa are frameworks that are essential to the effective implementation of the AfCFTA.

Speaking on the significance of the ACDEG, he noted that the Charter is needed to create an environment conducive for businesses, political stability and peace, and the respect for human rights, where people can actualise their trade. He added that tools are needed to ensure transparency and accountability through the AU Convention on Combating Corruption.

He explained that despite the need for Member States to prioritize all four frameworks, there are huge discrepancies in their ratification: ACDEG has been ratified by 38 Member States; AfCFTA has been ratified by 44 Member States; 48 Member States have ratified the African Union Convention on Combating and Preventing Corruption and only four Member States have ratified the treaty on the free movement of persons and only three countries have ratified all four instruments. He made it clear that real integration will only be possible when all Member States ratify and implement these four treaties.

In his view, a key factor that may affect the implementation of the AfCFTA is corruption. This is contained in Chapter 9, specifically article 33 of ACDEG which addresses effective and efficient public sector management, promoting transparency in public finance management, preventing and combating corruption and related offences, and efficient management of public debt. According to him, corruption in trade in services and goods

will hinder the active participation of youth and women in AfCFTA and discourage investments.

He stressed that although efforts have been made to combat corruption, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) to combat corruptions, especially through the monitoring and implementation of the Convention on Combating and Preventing Corruption. The mandate of the AUABC, he emphasized, should go beyond an advisory role to fighting and exposing corruption. He recommended that technology be deployed in the implementation of AfCFTA to fast-track it and make it more inclusive and reduce corruption. He also called for awareness creation of the AfCFTA to ensure ownership and capacity building of key stakeholders who will deliver on the Agreement.

Dr. Andrews Atta-Asamoah, Head, Africa Peace and Security Governance, ISS was invited by the moderator to share his view on democratic governance, peace dividends and the role of AfCFTA. Dr. Andrews began by outlining the four key points on which his intervention will be hinged, namely the significance of the conversation on democratic governance, peace dividends and the role of AfCFTA; the lack of dividends in the space; the answers that the AfCFTA provides and how to catalyze AfCFTA and democratic governance.

He remarked that this conversation is timely in view of the democratic downslide characterized by the extent of constitutional manipulation; the return of coups, the third wave of coups; slow democratic growth and discontent among the population, resulting in protests and celebration of coups.

In view of this, he explained, there are unhappy citizens asking for more from their leaders and questioning the benefits of democracy, on the one hand. On the other hand, there are leaders who are unhappy by those concerns and find ways to stay in power by manipulating the Constitution. The outcome, he noted, is that other actors intervene through coups, although Africa's history has shown that these coups are not the solution.

Dr. Andrews Atta-Asamoah highlighted that the lack of democratic dividend is Africa's biggest threat to peace, political stability and the state-building project. This fact, he

added, is at the heart of the struggles with regards to silencing guns and the threats Africa faces. He emphasized that anytime leadership and states do not provide peace elements, it makes it easy for people to undermine the peace they have and experiment with other options.

In terms of the solutions the AfCFTA provides, he observed that it could inject close to USD 35 billion into Africa, and is the needed catalyst for industrialisation, for reducing the cost of living on the continent, accelerating manufacturing, etc. Taking into account the aforementioned benefits of the AfCFTA, he noted that the challenge lies in catalyzing democratic governance and the AfCFTA to have the much-awaited dividends

He concluded his interventions by making three key recommendations:

1. The need a new driving force, as Pan-Africanism is no longer delivering on its purpose. Africa needs a driving force to make African countries realize that their destiny and development is linked to that of other African countries. We need to look inward in Africa and promote intra-Africa trade.
2. ACDEG is not getting enough attention despite its progressive and innovative content. The Charter ought to become a continent-wide instrument with full ownership by African citizens. He added that some key factors such as protests and their evolution are not properly reflected in ACDEG. The AUC, he remarked, may need to appoint an ambassador to popularize ACDEG.
3. The role of CSOs and the private sector ought to be maximized in the democratic space.

Plenary Discussions

A participant asked about the lessons that could be drawn from a country like Rwanda which has ratified the AU Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. Mr. David Omozuafoh responded to this question by first emphasizing that Rwanda has championed free movement and the African passport. The country has played a key role in advancing free

movement, but also putting it into practice, which shows the need for commitment and implementation to show leadership.

In response to a participant's question about whether the cart is being placed before the horse when it comes to developing our protocols, specifically in the situation whereby ratification comes before the emphasis on political will, Mr. David Omozuafoh explained that the process of ratification is slow, which is why it's a good approach to start with ratification.

He noted that all stakeholders at the national level should be involved in the process of a country's ratification of a protocol. He informed delegates that in a bid to address the issues of implementation, the AU has set up a committee to tackle the challenges with regards to implementation of its treaties. In 2014, AU took a decision for Member States to establish national committees to monitor the ratification of treaties, and UNDP had the opportunity to support Mozambique and Kenya in this regard.

A participant sought to know the kind of education that will align with good governance on the continent. In response to the question, Dr. Andrews noted the need for three types of education, namely consensus on the term of the political class, as the future of the state depends on our collective approach; patriotism and Pan-Africanism

Session Conclusion

The session ended with concluding remarks from the panelists. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Andrews deplored the disconnect between policy and implementation. He urged the AU to encourage African countries to place the right people at the borders to tackle corruption. He also called for increased CSO engagement than state engagement to advance the free movement of persons at the national, regional and international level.

On his part, Prof. Khabele Matlosa called for leveraging the experience of RECs such as ECOWAS and EAC as they have made strides when it comes to free movement. He revealed that a major threat to the full implementation of the AfCFTA and free movement of persons is corruption. He added that data from Afrobarometer shows that the most

corrupt public officials across the continent are the police and custom officials, which requires the strengthening of our institutions to win the fight against corruption.

Mr. David Omozuafoh reiterated that corruption is a disincentive for investment, and has led to decay in infrastructure in several countries. He called for coordination among anti-corruption bodies to address ills such as illicit financial flows.

VI. SESSION 2: CROSS-REGIONAL LEARNING: CAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS BE A PANACEA FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT?

This session facilitated reflections 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 subset of the AfCFTA.

Moderator: **Abibata Tientega Barry**, Constitutionalism and Rule of Law Unit, AU

Panelists:

- **Mr. David Onen**, Principal Political Affairs Officer | EAC Headquarters
- **Chief Superintendent Shepherd Madhiko**, Programme Officer—SADC Representative
- **Ms. Maureen Achieng**, IGAD Permanent Representative to the AU and Vice Chair of AGP
- **Ms. Valentine Atonde**, ECOWAS Program Officer to the African Union

The moderator asked Mr. David Onen, Principal Political Affairs Officer, EAC Headquarters to share initiatives EAC is embarking upon that could contribute to peace. Mr. David Onen began by commending the AGA-APSA Secretariat for holding the Continental Youth Consultation and Gender-Preforum prior to the HLD. combines youth inclusion and women inclusion. He went on to share the priorities of EAC, namely governance deficits which lead to the exclusion; resource challenge and climate change.

The informed delegates about the efforts of the East African Community in deepening integration and opening the space for other regions to join so as to have a bigger market. The EAC, he added, strives to facilitate trade among communities, and focuses on the inclusion of youth in political and business leadership to build the capacity of young people. He noted that the EAC has a body called the East African Business Council which is the champion for the AfCFTA for East Africa that engages with governments and the private sector on AfCFTA to make it friendly.

He explained that in 2019, a scoping study was conducted to assess the engagement of youth in East Africa. The study revealed huge gaps in terms of youth inclusion, which pushed the EAC to strengthen engagement through the establishment of a Youth Advisory Committee to ensure the full participation of youth. The EAC, he continued, is implementing a market access programme targeting SMEs in the informal sector to formalize them and enable these businesses to gain the competitive edge to participate in the market.

When it comes to youth political leadership, he informed delegates that the EAC provides support for youth through training and has launched a fellowship programme for youth in September 2023 in business and leadership. He concluded by encouraging the effective inclusion of women and youth as a way to stem the tide of conflicts and create business opportunities.

On his part, **Chief Superintendent Shepherd Madhiko**, Programme Officer and SADC Representative shared reflections on the role of RECs in conflict prevention and in the implementation of the AfCFTA. He remarked that SADC acknowledges the nexus between trade, peace and security, and therefore operates on a 50-year strategic programme containing a peace, security and governance component. SADC is also fully aware that for peace to prevail, guns must be silenced. As such, SADC believes that the AfCFTA and silencing the guns in Africa are flagship programmes of the AU which should be implemented simultaneously.

Chief Superintendent Shepherd Madhiko further noted that SADC has taken steps to ensure a proper and conducive environment for trade in its member countries, mainly

through the promotion of peace. For instance, SADC sends election observers to ensure elections are carried out in a free and fair manner to avoid the eruption of violence.

He also informed delegates about the full commitment of SADC to the free movement of persons through the promotion of the unique visa for all Africa. “Visa should not be an impediment to Africans moving within the continent”, he affirmed.

Ms. Maureen Achieng, IGAD Permanent Representative to the AU and Vice Chair of AGP took the floor to respond to the moderator’s question which centered on whether the AfCFTA could be a panacea for trade and development in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development region and in Africa

Ms. Maureen Achieng remarked that IGAD is one of the few RECs to have domesticated the Protocol on free movement of persons. She noted that the AfCFTA, the Protocol on free movement of persons, the African passport and the implementation of agenda 2063 are initiatives that can bring about peace. She opined that collectively, these initiatives have the potential to facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA, unleash the economic potential of Africa and address the triggers to conflict.

She outlined three factors which are of critical importance to IGAD. First, she explained, it was clear that regions on the continent approach the implementation of the AfCFTA differently. The focus for IGAD is on infrastructure to ensure that women can trade with ease. Second, IGAD places emphasis on one stop border posts (OSBPs) as a means to ensure efficient trade, as border posts are difficult to construct and operationalise. Third, IGAD acknowledges that conflicts and security issues need to be addressed through trade, given the reality is that in situations of conflicts, groups come together and operate in their interests. She shared the example of Sudan, where the conflict generated new supply chains as the population came up with creative ways to access goods internally.

She touched on a priority project of IGAD, namely the Single African Air Transport Market which will ensure that businesses and people can move more easily. In conclusion, she called for a holistic approach to deliberations on the implementation of the AfCFTA, and urged African countries to strengthen security so as to avoid impediments to AfCFTA implementation.

Ms. Valentine Atonde, ECOWAS Program Officer to the African Union explained the various ways by which ECOWAS is contributing to the AfCFTA. She began by noting that the theme of the 12th HLD is aligned with the strategic objectives of ECOWAS for 2022 to 2026. These strategic objectives include the promotion of regional integration; inclusive and sustainable development; strengthening peace and security and good governance.

With regards to the efforts of ECOWAS to the AfCFTA, she informed delegates about the efforts deployed by ECOWAS to improve Electronic Certificates of Origin and the finalization of common external tariffs of ECOWAS. She added that ECOWAS is working towards the implementation of the interconnected system for managing transit goods and has adopted an e-commerce strategy which seeks to enable ECOWAS members to harness the benefits of e-commerce, to create new jobs and stimulate economic diversification. Besides these efforts, she added, ECOWAS also works closely with CSOs.

The moderator proceeded to ask Ms. Maureen her views on whether implementation of the AfCFTA roadmap constitutes a panacea for development and accessing peace and security dividend.

Ms. Maureen remarked that the implementation of the AfCFTA roadmap will not on its own bring about peace and security. Other aspects such as a more transformative approach that takes into account the aspirations enshrined in Agenda 2063 will be required. These aspirations must guide us, not only AfCFTA, as the continent has other challenges to resolve.

She reiterated the need for democracy and good governance, respect of human rights, and the creation of infrastructure to realize Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063, “An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children”.

Amb. Salvator Matata, COMESA Liaison Officer to the AU, took his turn to outline the initiatives of COMESA towards the promotion of peace, security and trade. He touched on six key points, namely, the history of COMESA; the nexus between peace, security, development and education; examples of trade promoting using the approach of

COMESA; the development by COMESA of the “Trading for Peace” and its impact, and finally the lessons to be drawn from COMESA’s experience.

Starting with the history of COMESA, Amb. Salvator Matata noted the existence of eight RECs which are the building block of the African Union. He recounted that in 1978, ECA proposed the creation of a regional economic community, which became COMESA. At that time, ECOWAS was the only REC which was operational. He explained that COMESA is composed of 21 countries, and although it was initially a preferential trade area, it transitioned to a common market. He added that during the establishment of COMESA in 1993, the region was faced with numerous conflicts. COMESA therefore saw the need to boost integration, and conducted a study to examine the root causes of those conflicts.

COMESA, he continued, launched a study funded by USAID and DFID which revealed that peace and security in the DRC and great lakes region, governance reforms, infrastructure development, digitalisation of agriculture could stabilize the region, have a transformative impact and make trade beneficial to security and development in the region.

Amb. Salvator Matata outlined a number of programmes developed by COMESA following the outcomes of the above-mentioned study:

1. The structural oriented early warning system called the Peace and Prosperity Index which combined peace, security and development focusing on GDP, peace, trade. This early warning enabled COMESA to deal with complex situations and benefited from the experience of IGAD and ECOWAS.
2. The “war economy,” which refers to the ways in which the economy generates war, and the war in turn helps others to benefit economically from the war, such as the situation in the DRC.
3. Mediation of natural resource-related conflict. COMESA developed a handbook on how to deal with conflicts generated due to natural resources.

4. “Trading for Peace” programme, which was developed on the premise that trade can contribute to peace because it is accepted that sustainable growth and stability of the world economy is based on trade architecture. Trade is an incentive to avoid war, and countries which are trading among themselves do not usually go into war. The trading for peace was developed in the great lakes region to get the youth busy and avoid conflict and to use trade as a peace-building instrument in the great lakes region. The positive impact of the programme was to use trade as a peace-building instrument as it developed trust at the border. The programme had a socio-economic impact, increased security cooperation at the border; transformed the conditions of women, reduced sexual violence, restored the rights of women traders.

In conclusion, he remarked that the Implementation of AfCFTA will lead to economic growth and reduction of poverty and respond to the root causes of conflict, adding that the governance of AfCFTA implementation must ensure the inclusion of women to be successful.

PLENARY SESSION:

Ambassador Oke shared some key points he considered important as part of the conversation. First, he urged African leaders to respect their engagements in order to ensure sustainable development and economic growth on the continent. Second, with regards to the relationship between RECs and African Union, there is the need for the same understanding of the notion of subsidiarity and complementarity.

A representative of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) took the floor to share some initiatives carried out by AMU towards the implementation of AfCFTA. He emphasized that infrastructure is a key factor in development. As such, AMU has carried out several flagship projects to prepare the ground for the implementation of the AfCFTA. These include: Railway transport linking Casablanca, Algiers and Tunisia for 80 years, with a distance of 2,350 kilometers, with efforts underway to ensure the rehabilitation and modernization of this railway system. When it comes to air transport, there are several

local and international airports, and all the big cities of the region are interconnected. These initiatives are meant to encourage countries to engage in trade among themselves and promote social, cultural and economic integration.

A participant from Uganda sought to know what RECs are doing to facilitate compensation for traders who lose their goods during conflict. Amb. Salvator Matata explained that the Trading for Peace programme was successful between DRC and Uganda, and Rwanda and DRC despite the conflicts. Although there was not outright compensation for traders, the model developed was to give a chance for small traders to transact up to USD 2,000 without paying taxes provided they go through the normal route.

A participant from SADC also shared his views on the question of compensation for traders. He informed delegates that economic restoration is an issue which SADC takes very seriously. He added that restorative justice aims to bring the traders back to the position they were prior to the conflict situation; some options are being explored to ensure that we assist traders to recover. Second, he made mention of the SADC free trade area where all tariffs are removed to ensure that traders are able to go back to business.

Another issue that was raised by a participant is the fact that RECs are not moving at the same speed with regards to the AfCFTA implementation. Also, some AU Member States belong to more than one REC, as is the situation with the DRC. Considering that each REC may have its implementation strategy, the participant sought to know what challenges this can create. Amb. Salvator Matata explained that indeed, some countries belong to more than one REC, as is also the case with Burundi. He noted that SADC, EAC and COMESA are developing a free trade area among themselves and in so doing, automatically harmonizing the tools in the management of the free trade area. He added that the RECs, together with the AfCFTA Secretariat, are developing the AfCFTA implementation Strategy for each REC.

Mr. Walter Kasempa from Zambia addressed a question to Maureen Achieng. He remarked that in spite of the extensive frameworks on migration in Africa, migration does not seem to be a priority. He asked if there could be harmonization of these frameworks to enable Member States focus on the implementation of a single instrument. Maureen

Achieng observed that indeed, although global policy frameworks on migration exist, Africa has come up with a migration policy framework for Africa which helps to distill some of the global commitment and contextualize them for the continent, although there is no direct connection with regards to the pace of implementation by African countries.

A participant took the floor to share some comments about the AfCFTA. He explained that the AfCFTA is not just about trading but supporting economic integration and supporting the realization of agenda 2063. This, he added, requires institutional synergies among AU agencies that have a role in the AfCFTA, such as the AUABC. He also noted the need for AU and its Member States to pay attention to minerals and minerals governance, as lapses in this area could contribute to UCGs. He informed delegates that the Africa Minerals Development Center is implementing the African Mining Vision, and called upon ECOWAS to consider developing a minerals strategy.

Mr. David Onen concluded the plenary session by noting that for MS to succeed on matters of foreign policy, there is a need for high levels of confidence and trust among themselves. He also urged youth to engage in advocacy for the collapse of borders in Africa.

VII. SESSION 3: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH TO DELIVER THE PEACE DIVIDENDS

This session was a platform for discussions on action-oriented approaches that focus on implementation involving all sectors including but not limited to State, CSOs, Private Sector, UN and AU institutions as well as women and youth.

Moderator: **Ms. Rakeb Abate**, Country Director, Ethiopia IFES

Panelists:

- **Ms Rita Amukhobu**, Health and Humanitarian Affairs, HHS (first)
- **Ms Jeniffer Ogbogu**, Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA)

- **Dr. Fonteh Akum**, Executive Director, ISS (third)
- **Dr. Leah Nasimiyu Barasa**, Head of Civilian Component EASF

Ms Rita Amukhobu, Health and Humanitarian Affairs, HHS, shared her views on the needed approach to the implementation of the AfCFTA to deliver peace dividends. The AfCFTA, she noted, provides an opportunity to realize an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, because it opens up economies, provides economies of scale that are useful for the development and prosperity of Africa.

However, she added, for business to flourish, for economies to grow, we need a peaceful and secure Africa. This implies that in trading of goods and services, especially across borders, we need and must take into account the movement of people across borders, because goods do not trade by themselves, and services are provided by people. Therefore, the centrality of people in the free trade area, in business and in economic growth and prosperity of Africa must be emphasized. She reiterated that as we provide the opportunity for the movement of goods and services, we also need to provide freedom of movement for people. According to her, it does not make economic sense to commit to free trade and not commit to the movement of traders, business owners, drivers, students and tourists.

Free movement of persons, she explained, provides a right for residence, right to exit, establishment of business, and provides an African passport to facilitate movement of people across borders in Africa and globally. In addition, the protocol of free movement provides the opportunity to close borders in cases of security and public health challenges.

She concluded by affirming that Africa has elaborate policies that provide for the movement of services and people, but most entities work in silos. She called for increased collaboration through a multi-stakeholder approach to bring all stakeholders together to synergize our efforts, harmonize our policies and enhance collective efforts in a healthy way.

She continued by urging for predictability in our actions, ensuring collaboration, being open and transparent to build trust among ourselves, and building our capacity to have the needed tools: material, financial and skills development capacity.

Ms. Jeniffer Ogbogu, CISSA spoke about the AfCFTA, security and movement of people. She was of the view that to achieve development, we need to facilitate trade. However, she added, we are faced with a trade versus security dilemma as MS are concerned about the security challenges. She remarked that although issues of border porosity, drug and human trafficking have been raised as threats to the AfCFTA, these need to be handled carefully to avoid hindering the implementation of the Agreement. Criminals and terrorists, she warned, can exploit part of the agreement to further advance their activities. In view of this, she stressed, CISSA has collaborated with security services on the continent to share information and to mitigate threats that will hinder the AfCFTA implementation.

Addressing the issue of security, Ms. Jennifer stated that there are existing instruments and entities within the AU. What is needed, she further noted, is collective action. She explained that because the AfCFTA is focused on cross-border movement and trade in Africa is driven largely through our borders and by road, cross-border communities are crucial in addressing the threats. She urged stakeholders to engage with border communities to develop solutions and strategies to mitigate threats. In addition, she emphasized that because the private sector will drive the AfCFTA, there is a need to engage with this sector to identify the issues and come up with solutions.

Ms. Jennifer remarked that even when trade is carried out online, there are cybercriminals who are able to cause harm. She therefore concluded that since threats will always exist, there is a need to anticipate, project, forecast and make informed decisions to mitigate the threats.

Dr. Fonteh Akum, Executive Director, ISS touched on key issues in terms of security that need to be addressed for the implementation of the AfCFTA, economies of peace and the intersections between the AfCFTA and peace dividends.

Dr. Fonteh called for situating the conversation around trade within productivity and exchange. He explained that productivity comes down to the basics of land, capital, labor and entrepreneurs as factors of production. However, on the continent, land is linked to tenure systems, governance systems and natural resources, a situation which feeds into potential volatility on the continent. He revealed that ISS research showed that for Africa to achieve its development dividend of Agenda 2063, the greatest development outcomes will be derived from the effective implementation of the AfCFTA. He however stressed that a number of issues will have to be addressed to transform this potential into reality.

First, Africa needs to address the fallacy that extractive economies will lead to economic and development outcomes. Whether it is extraction of African labor to serve other economies, or extraction of raw materials to serve other industries around the world, Africa cannot derive dividends from extraction alone.

The second fallacy that needs to be addressed, he noted, is the notion that peace dividends can be developed without infrastructure. Infrastructure investment must come from the continent in collaboration with development partners. Linked to this, he added, is the fact that cross-border trade is embedded in ways in which our countries are structured, as rural and urban communities. Rural communities which remain essentially agricultural and urban communities which are hybrid of agricultural, peri-urban and industrial points of production but also contain the service sector. Unfortunately, he stated, the service sector does not provide Africa with the industrial bases in order to transform our continent for exports.

Dr. Fonteh remarked that Africa can boost its export platforms by getting industries to come on the continent and invest here and then export. Investments are needed in human capital, science, technology, engineering and math, which will then be incorporated into our political space to create industries that will transform the continent and respond to youth unemployment, which is a key driver of unrest and object of urban protests.

He concluded by addressing the issue of partnerships. Specifically, he recommended that bridges should be built between the AU Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security and the Department of Trade and Industries. Second, bridges should also be

built between Africa and its diaspora communities to create spaces for intersections that link not just border regions to capital cities but capital cities to the diaspora as well. Third, we need to build bridges between different disciplines such as politics, technology and industry to avoid handling issues in silos.

Dr. Leah Nasimiyu Barasa, Head of Civilian Component Eastern Africa Standby Force took her turn to also share her views on the ways in which peace and security dividends can facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA. Dr. Leah began her intervention by informing delegates that in February 2023, she visited Mogadishu, Somalia which is fighting Al-Sabaab and noticed the high level of security. She observed that although the Eastern region of Africa is prone to terrorism, security challenges for citizens must be addressed to facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Dr. Leah was of the view that within the framework of the AfCFTA, collaboration and an integrated approach to security will lead to greater economic stability in our countries and help in conflict prevention. She affirmed that a multi-stakeholder approach to delivering action-oriented peace dividends through the AfCFTA holds the promise of transforming not only Africa's economic landscape, but also its social fabric.

She noted the need to develop local capacity and bring CSOs on board in such efforts. She informed delegates that the EASF has been working to develop local capacities through its Youth for Peace programme, and held the programme in a refugee camp in Burundi in September 2023 during which the youth were trained on peace and other aspects as citizens were displaced.

Dr. Leah placed emphasis on the need for social cohesion and development, as underdevelopment creates violence, drives indicators for social privileges, identity issues, and poor resource governance. As a result, the distribution of the dividends of resource governance does not trickle down to the rural areas, and the rural population is usually not aware of agreements made by the leadership in the capitals. She called for the involvement of youth and women during ceasefire negotiations, as they are mostly excluded due to cultural aspects.

Plenary Discussions

The moderator, Ms. Rakeb Abate thanked panelists for the useful insights shared on the topic of the session. With regards to the issue of the high rate of unemployment among the youth, she asked if suggestions could be made to enable youth to take advantage of the AfCFTA.

Dr. Fonteh Akum responded to the moderator's question by highlighting the need to recognize the role of youth in informal economies through connecting youth businesses to formal structures by changing the approach to access to capital; changing how we tax the informal sector in African countries, and ensuring that while being informal, youth businesses can develop the requisite skills to have organize business and become active participants in the economy.

A delegate sought to know from Ms. Jeniffer Ogbogu about the ways in which the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) ensures the implementation of recommendations contained in their reports by decision makers within the AUC and Member States. Ms. Jennifer Ogbogu noted that CISSA primarily intervenes through early warning, by giving Member States information about security threats. It then behooves on governments to take action, as CISSA is not mandated to take action on behalf of Member States.

A participant observed that most often, people living in border communities are afraid to share information about the activities of terrorist groups in their communities, and asked what could be done to remedy this situation.

Ms. Jennifer opined that people are unwilling to share such information due to distrust in the government and doubts about the government's ability to protect them. She gave the example of Nigeria, where CISSA engages people in areas where terrorists operate, and due to the trust these persons have in CISSA, they collaborate and give information about the location and activities of terrorists and that helps to mitigate security threats.

On his part, Dr. Fonteh remarked that the administrative capacity of some states on the continent to exercise full territorial capacity is questionable, due to several reasons. He noted that a key reason is that the provision of basic social services and security diminishes in most countries, the closer one gets to the rural areas. Second, the provision

of essential items such as identification cards is non-existent in rural areas, and people have to move out of rural areas to urban areas to get recognized as citizens of their countries. This situation, he stressed, poses fundamental challenges. Third, a lot of the rural economies are driven by the movement of animals which constitute their capital. As a result, they are compelled to join terrorist groups as a way of protecting themselves and to be able to move freely and protect their economic activities and their communities. There are therefore many gaps that ought to be filled in order to build the needed trust and to engage on issues of citizens and citizenry which are embedded in social contracts. He called for the engagement of state and communities in negotiating the provision of basic services in areas where state capacity is limited.

Walter Kasempa, a youth from Zambia addressed a question to Dr. Fonteh about ways of building strong institutions to ensure a multi-sectoral approach is relevant to the implementation of the AfCFTA. He also sought to know ways to build bridges to create peace dividends in view of ideological differences among AU Member States.

Dr. Fonteh began by noting that there are complex institutional structures in several African countries which include rules of engagement based on norms, national rules of engagement based on the constitution and rules of the land, we have partnerships and various protocols, and we incorporate international norms into our laws. In view of this, we need to think within and beyond institutions. He noted that the campaign to reform the international financial architecture is crucial for access to the kind of capital that the continent needs. We need energy transition in Africa; ensure that there is a transformation of raw materials on the continent. The African Development Bank, he explained, has revealed that if this happens, we will raise the GDP of African countries by at least 2 percentage points per annum.

Dr. Fonteh was hopeful about the continent's chances of getting closer to realizing the Aspirations in Agenda 2063 if governments in Africa are driven by consensus, autonomous, representative and accountable to people.

Ms. Maureen Achieng asked about what the AU can do, aside from the efforts it is already deploying, to make the fundamental shift that is needed to facilitate movements within

Africa. In response to this question, Ms. Rita called for a fundamental shift in strategy. She noted that the Protocol on free movement is not for the benefit of government officials or AU officials and representatives, as these persons enjoy diplomatic and service passports. Rather, it's for the African population in general, the traders whose movements are not facilitated, whereas they need it the most. She encouraged CSOs and the media to carry out advocacy on free movement. In conclusion, she noted the need for cooperation among security entities through the use of an integrated security mechanism that allows border systems to communicate with each other on security issues.

AFRICA TALKS

The Africa Talks was a conversation between Ms. Chido Mpemba, the AU Youth Envoy and Dr. Ndidi Ugomma Abanno, PAP Senior Committee Clerk.

Dr. Ndidi Ugomma Abanno: You were appointed as the AU Youth Envoy in November 2021, what has your tenure been like?

My tenure has been great, especially because I work with young people and get to learn as well. I went on a Listening Tour at the beginning of my tenure to understand the challenges that youth face so that I could represent them better. On the basis of the listening tour and due to the demand from MS and youth, a decision was made to continue holding the Listening Tours. Anytime I get the opportunity to sit down with young people, I appreciate the dynamism and resilience of youth.

Dr. Ndidi Ugomma Abanno: What opportunities has your office created for African youth?

As you know, we have the African Youth Charter which has been ratified by 44 AU Member States. Part of my work is to work with young people to advocate for the ratification of the Youth Charter. Also, I recently took part in the Specialized Technical Committee Meeting of the Ministers of Youth where we advocated that the Youth Charter be reviewed to reflect the current realities facing the African Youth. As an Office, I also think it's important to build the capacities of young people. Although we are advocating

for the Charter to be ratified and reviewed to meet the current realities, there are some articles that we can work on and contribute with young people.

There are therefore some initiatives that we work on with young people, one of them being an AU Youth Committee which we set up this year. This Committee is composed of youth from all parts of the continent working on various initiatives to tackle climate change, end global inequalities, etc. We also have the Youth Migration Programme that was recently launched with IOM looking at how we can include the voice of young people as we advocate for the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. We launched a Digital Schools Campaign currently active in nine African countries in partnership with Google. Through this campaign, we train young people on digital skills for the future of work as well as how they can utilize technology and innovation for trade. Currently, we have trained more than 500 young people with these digital skills as a way to empower young people.

Dr. Ndidi Ugomma Abanno: Are there other programmes that you have carried out, and what is the impact in transforming the lives of the youth? Are there programmes that have promoted youth involvement in trade?

My role as AU Envoy is to amplify the work that is being done within the work of the AU, and to advocate for the inclusion of young people's voices. We have been working closely with the AfCFTA Secretariat. In September 2023, we were in Lusaka for the AfCFTA Youth Symposium. This offered us the opportunity to engage with young people. The youth exhibited their products and services as a way to promote them. There was an opportunity to dialogue with policy-makers, including the AfCFTA Secretary-General where he made a commitment for the introduction of Deal Rooms in the next AfCFTA Youth Symposium so that young people can sit down with investors and pitch their business ideas and get funding to upscale their initiatives.

In addition to that, as you are aware, there were discussions this year on the Protocol on Women and Youth and we have consulted with youth to ensure that they have a role to play. Within the Office of the Youth Envoy, within the framework of the AfCFTA Youth Symposium that took place in Zambia, we were also focusing on free movement because we truly believe that trade starts with the people.

Dr. Ndidi Ugomma Abanno: You mentioned that you conducted a Listening Tour and met youth from various parts of the continent. What are some of the challenges that youth face and how can these be addressed by the AU and policy-makers?

A major challenge that young people are facing is access to funding. Funding is insufficient, and where it is available, youth work in competition rather than collaborating. This also means that young people can easily be exploited because opportunities are not enough. We need to come up with innovative ways to invest in youth people's businesses and also build their capacity so that they are not exploited. For instance, when we consider the banking sector, most of the time, we find that young people are considered "high risk" or not bankable, or not being able to access funding. We can mitigate this by combining the funding process with training for young people in financial literacy, mentor young people because they have the innovative ideas but if we don't work together with the private and public sector, policy-makers, then we won't have progress and development.

A practical example is when I did a Listening Tour in Kenya, I met with the Minister of Youth in Kenya. As you know, Kenya is a hub for technology and they are getting much investment in the startup and tech innovation space. The challenge they face, however, is that once startups start doing well and begin to progress, they are bought by their investors and are left with almost nothing. We therefore need to safeguard young people from situations such as these.

Dr. Ndidi Ugomma Abanno: Are there specific policy recommendations or areas where you believe further attention and action are needed to maximize the potential of the AfCFTA and deliver the peace dividend for African youth?

I think we need to do more in the area of quotas for young people. Let's also not forget the marginalized communities and the underprivileged who may not have access to technology and may not be privy to the conversations we have currently having. To address their challenges, we committed to youth engagement and community engagement and we had the opportunity to hear from young people and get solutions

from them. I think it is important to incorporate youth from marginalized communities in our policies and engagements.

Plenary Discussion

Following the conversation, Dr. Nidi Ugomma Abanno opened the floor and invited the audience to ask questions to Ms. Chido.

Question: Can you share some initiatives your office is working on when it comes to conflict prevention and the involvement of youth?

Ms. Chido Mpemba: There is an initiative of the AU within the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, which is the African Youth Peace Ambassadors with whom I have had the privilege to work closely. They represent the five regions of the continent and advocate for the domestication of the national action plans on youth, peace and security. In addition to that, last year during the retreat of the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, there was a decision to launch the Youth Wise Network. This Network, which is in the process of being operationalised, seeks to ensure that they get to build their capacity on conflict resolution and conflict prevention and mediation processes to make sure that youth are part of conflict prevention efforts.

Question: How does your office work with National Youth Councils in Member States?

Ms. Chido Mpemba: Last year, we hosted a consultation on Youth Peace and Security in Southern Africa, with the collaboration of the national youth councils in the regions. We also hosted a consultation with the Ministers of Youth in Southern Africa hosted in Zimbabwe. This was an opportunity for young people to also share their views on how they can have national action plans on youth, peace and security. In East Africa, early this year, there was a consultation held on peace and security in Bujumbura. The President of Burundi is a Youth Peace and Security Champion for the African Union, and was appointed in February 2023.

Question: Can you share some thoughts on how your office is creating global opportunities and platforms for young people?

Ms. Chido Mpemba: As much as we look for solutions in Africa, we deserve to be on the global decision-making table, we deserve to also contribute to the global agenda. Because if we observe some of the global challenges including climate change, these are challenges which affect Africa as well. It's therefore important that we include young people at the decision-making table. In view of this, we had an initiative to facilitate the participation of youth in COP 27 last year, and so my office launched a call for young people working on climate change and migration, and they became part of the delegation that went with us to COP 27. The youth had the opportunity to present the projects they are working on, and help them get support and funding to enable them to accelerate some of the initiatives they are working on. This was aimed at helping youth be on the global stage. In addition, in December 2022, there was the US-Africa Summit during which we hosted a consultation with young people in Africa and from the diaspora to understand their expectations. For the African youth in the Diaspora especially, we discussed how they can be incorporated in driving the youth agenda and the African agenda.

With regards to creating platforms, I previously highlighted our Listening Tour which is an opportunity for us to be with young people at the national level within their communities. We also launched the first ever AU Youth Town Hall in February 2023 on the sidelines of the AU Heads of States meeting with the Chairperson of the African Union, which was an opportunity to advocate for the ratification of the Youth Charter.

In conclusion, I also wish to encourage youth to create platforms at the country level and within their own communities to make a bigger impact.

VIII. PRESENTATION OF THE OUTCOME STATEMENT AND CLOSING CEREMONY

Ms. Makda Tessema from the AGA-APSA Secretariat presented the outcome statement of the 12th High-Level Dialogue.

The presentation of the outcome statement was followed by an invitation from **Amb. Salah Hammad**, Ag. Head of the AGA-APSA Secretariat to delegates for their recommendations on how the 12th HLD and its pre-events can be improved.

Amb. Salvator Matata made two recommendations. First, he remarked that since the AU theme for 2024 focuses on education, the 13th HLD could select a theme which addresses the challenges of education in Africa, particularly focusing on education as a transformative driver for development. Second, he suggested that the Dialogue should be held in an African country which is in dire need of improvement in its education system and which requires special attention in that regard.

Mr. Emmanuel Bensah began his intervention by commending the communications team for the amazing job done. He noted that prior to attending the Dialogue, he assumed that it was going to be available online as well but realized that it was not the case. He opined that many people would have loved to tune in online to listen to the conversations and gain some useful insights. In view of this, he recommended that for future dialogues, the AGA-APSA Secretariat could facilitate the availability of online platforms to enable people who are not physically present at the event to also benefit from the conversations.

Second, he noted the absence of a representative from the AfCFTA Secretariat at the Dialogue. According to him, it would have been impactful to have the presence of the AfCFTA Secretariat at the Dialogue. Furthermore, he suggested that all the members of the African Governance Architecture participate in the HLD for the Dialogue to be much more inclusive.

Amb. Ayo Olukanni recommended that members of the organized private sector be invited to the next HLD, since a large number of youths operate in the private sector.

Chitima called for the participation of the media from various African countries in the discussions so that the information shared at the HLD can be passed down to the communities. She also noted the need to ensure increased participation of filmmakers and creatives who have influence with the masses to participate in the discussions. Most people in the creative sector, she emphasized, are passionate about social issues and being actively involved in the conversations could make their work more meaningful.

A delegate from Angola recommended that for the next HLD, the AGA-APSA Secretariat could facilitate the inclusion of Portuguese-speaking panelists in the conversations to

enhance inclusion. He noted that Africa has five countries which have Portuguese as official language, representing more than 100 million people.

CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony was moderated by Amb. Salah Hammad. Closing remarks were made by the representatives and dignitaries:

- Representative of Gender, Moussa Soumahoro, Researcher, Institute for Security Studies
- Representative of Youth, Ms. Chido Kasempa, AU Youth Envoy
- H.E. Hon. Remy Lumbu, Chairperson of the African Governance Platform (AGP)
- H. E. Amb Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for PAPS

Moussa Soumahoro, Researcher, Institute for Security Studies expressed gratitude for the opportunity. He noted that the HLD was an opportunity to discuss the potential of the AfCFTA for youth and women, and the dividends it brings. He remarked that as part of this conversation, commutative justice should be included to ensure the success of the AfCFTA. Issues of gender equality, he added, also require significant attention and action. He revealed that the ISS recently published findings from an assessment of the AU with one of the conclusions being that Africa is a pacesetter with regards to the setting of norms, but struggles to ensure their implementation. He called for acknowledgement of the essential role of women and youth, and their capacity to take part in decision-making spaces.

Ms. Chido Kasempa, AU Youth Envoy began her intervention by thanking delegates for their full engagement throughout the Continental Youth Consultation and the Gender Preforum leading to the HLD. She congratulated the AGA-APSA Secretariat, AU Member States, youth organizations and all stakeholders that have deployed significant efforts for the success of the 12th HLD. She remarked that unwavering support for women and youth was made evident during the Dialogue.

The outcome statement of the High-Level Dialogue, she stated, is a mandate to execute and ensure we deliver peace through the AfCFTA. Furthermore, she noted, the nexus

between peace and development is critical, and the implementation of the AfCFTA could break the cycle of bad governance, instability and security challenges on the continent. With more than 60 percent of Africa being youth, harnessing the potential of young people in the AfCFTA could lift more 30 million people out of poverty and create increased levels of economic prosperity and stability.

Ms. Chido was of the view that the discussions and outcomes of the HLD require a sustained political will and commitment to facilitate the harmonization and integration of the AfCFTA in the national development plans of African countries. She opined that the domestication of the AfCFTA will break silos and enable the Agreement to become relatable to various groups, particularly to youth who can innovatively advance its objectives.

Ms. Chido informed delegates about the efforts deployed by her office in advocating for the ratification of the AU Youth Charter and urged all Member States to ratify the Charter. She recounted that during a meeting of the specialized technical committee this year, a request was presented for a decision for the Office of the Youth Envoy to be institutionalized to make sure that youth have a concrete voice.

From the outcomes of the Continental Youth Consultation and Gender Pre-forum, she stated, key aspects and concrete actions were made on delivering peace dividends through the AF, and these include:

- Ratification of the AfCFTA and its alignment with the development plans of African countries and extending the implementation momentum for the AfCFTA to other African nations that have not yet done so.
- Protecting young peoples' intellectual property rights and safeguarding their interests.
- Addressing the nexus between political factors, particularly UCGs and economic development, and prioritizing stable democratic governance as a precondition and a foundation for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA.

- Creating safe spaces that instill confidence in young women about their ability to participate in the development of their respective countries and the continent at large.

Ms. Chido urged all leaders and duty bearers present to listen to what young people and women have to say and create the conditions for youth to thrive. She called on all institutions and AU organs to forge partnerships given that the AfCFTA requires regional collaboration. She concluded her intervention by encouraging stakeholders to take into account the capacities and creative capabilities and innovation of youth.

Hon. Remy Lumbu, Chairperson of the African Governance Platform thanked delegates for their participation in the HLD. He observed that during the HLD and its pre-events, it was reiterated that to ensure the full and successful implementation of the AfCFTA, women and youth should not be left on the sidelines. He further emphasized that the implementation of the AfCFTA could be hindered by several challenges, including the fact that the AfCFTA could benefit multinational companies more than SMEs in Africa. Second, the tools for the operationalisation of AfCFTA are not functioning properly, particularly the protocol on the free movement of people in Africa and the African Passport. Third, he noted the need to do away with visas to enable Africans to move freely within the continent. He added that if the continent is unable to silence the guns and end systemic corruption, the AfCFTA cannot be fully implemented.

Hon. Remy Lumbu called for support of the private sector to increase intra-Africa trade, since the AfCFTA was developed to enable small cross-border businesses to operate freely and to ensure that services are available across our borders. He also encouraged AU Member States and African institutions to practice good governance. On behalf of AGA, he once more thanked all those who contributed to the event, particularly Amb. Bankole, Amb. Salah Hammad and all participants.

On his part, **H. E. Amb Bankole Adeoye**, Commissioner for PAPS highlighted key takeaways from the 12th HLD and its pre-events. First, he noted that the spirit of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance remains relevant. Second, the AfCFTA presents a unique opportunity as a landmark Agreement that needs to be activated by the youth

through effective governance and peace dividends. Third, peace dividends and nexus of good governance, peace, security and sustainable development cannot be harnessed without the inclusion of youth and women.

H. E. Amb. Bankole thanked H. E. Hailemariam, former Prime Minister of Ethiopia for his outstanding statement relating to the principles of democratic practice and the need for collective action. He informed delegates of ongoing efforts to rethink, revitalize and remodel the High-Level Dialogue to ensure that it's not just about statements but also actions. He thanked members of the AGA Platform and the Africa Peace and Security Architecture. It is important to ensure the mainstreaming of political governance in peace and security, since many crises arise from elections and lapses in the practice of democracy.

He informed delegates that they will all receive an electronic certificate of participation to encourage them to do more, and encouraged delegates to remain champions of the African Union. On that note, he declared the 12th HLD duly closed.

