![AGA African Governance Architecture]

9TH HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

THEME: *"SILENCING THE GUNS THROUGH BUILDING RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE"*

VIRTUAL

10TH AND 11TH DECEMBER 2020

OUTCOME STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION:

The African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat on behalf of the AGA Platform and the Department for Political Affairs organized the 9th High Level Dialogue with a view to providing a collaborative, open and inclusive space to leverage and foster meaningful deliberations that contribute towards creating a different culture of democratic governance and building sustainable peace in Africa. The 9th High Level Dialogue was preceded by two broad-based consultations on the same theme. First was the Gender Pre-Forum which took place on 19-20 November 2020 and the second was the Continental Youth Consultation which was convened on 26-27 November 2020 as part of the initiatives of the theme of the year "*Silencing the Guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa's Development".*

The theme for 2020 9th High Level Dialogue was **"Silencing the Guns through Building Resilient Democracies and Accountable Governance"** and was organized by the AGA Secretariat. The main goal of the 9th high level dialogue was to create a safe and open space for reflections on the state of democratic governance in Africa that contribute towards silencing the guns in Africa.

The meeting brought together high level representatives from the five regions of African continent with focus and experience on governance, security and conflict prevention. Other participants include key relevant government and diplomatic officials and institutions across the continent, African Governance Architecture Platform Members; African Union (AU) organs and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), GIZ, rrepresentatives of the African National Human Rights Institutions, members of the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of the United Nations agencies including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other development partners, eminent African personalities including representatives of the Civil Society, Non-Governmental Organizations, academia, media and think tanks.

The dialogue identified challenges, opportunities and initiatives that can revitalize governance in Africa and create environment for silencing the guns. During the consultation, key issues and far reaching resolutions were observed by the participants. This Outcome Statement summarizes the key emerging issues, observations and recommendations made at the 9th high level dialogue.

GENERAL TRENDS:

- Considering the trend of conflict across the continent and noted that violent conflicts are still raging across Africa. From the Sahel to the Chad Basin, to the Horn of Africa, the continent is experience violent conflict in the form of terrorism. There are emerging violent conflicts taking the form of war as is being experienced between Morocco and Saharawi, there is also war in Ethiopia.

- Reiterated that in 2020 alone, conflict and violence has triggered 4.8 million displacements in Africa and Middle East a million more than what was recorded in the first half of 2019 this was reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

- Recognized that African democracies are facing severe tests as the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates inequality and deeps pre-existing fractures. The pandemic has delayed peace processes and could even exacerbate the situation.

- Observed that there is high demand for democracy which is met with poor supply. Africa's people, especially the continent's youth, are demanding change, respect for human rights, and strong democratic governance.

- Recognizes trust is key in creating resilience of our democratic systems, the trust should be between leaders (political elites) and the grassroots communities. There is a significant gap in terms of confidence and trust.

- Recognizes the impact of conflict on the continent and noted that the past seven years has seen rise in civil unrest across Sub-Saharan Africa which will have adverse impact on the economy, GDP and adversely affect the gains made on the continent.

- Also noted the adverse economic effects posed by COVID-19 that can possibly lead to a decline in governments revenue by about 78 billion dollars in 2020 and about 73 billion dollars in 2021. This expected to adversely affect the poverty index pushing more citizens below the poverty lines.

- Welcomes the developments of AfCFTA and its success and calls for more awareness to be done on the project along with its linkage with governance and peace and security in the continent.

- Reiterated along with AfCFTA the Protocol on Freedom of Movement to be pushed as trade cannot take place when populations are not able to move freely across the continent. This Protocol is a critical part of the AfCFTA protocols.

- Emphasized on the importance of the implementation of AU normative and institutional frameworks on Democracy, Governance, Peace and Security with regards to Silencing the Guns. During the High Level deliberations, discussions averred that the continent has made progress on instituting normative frameworks and institutional mechanisms to promote good governance as well as peace and stability.

- Acknowledged the achievements of the creation of strong institutions. Countries have been witnessed to have been investing in building stronger democratic institutions and governance structures that have created conducive conditions for development. However, there is still room for improvement, but challenges still exist in form of pockets of armed conflicts across the continent with growing new threats to stability and good governance.

- Recalled the Lusaka Roadmap which outlines how peace can be achieved and noted that the Roadmap outlines a number of issues that focuses on the fundamentality of deepening democracy in achieving peace and security in Africa.

- Recognized The APRM is important for Africa's democracy, peace and security as it also has the potential to serve as an early warning system.

CHALLENGES

- Considered the challenges of Silencing the Guns in Africa and decried that guns are still heard blazing in Africa largely because of governance deficits across African countries. The conflict across Africa is associated with factors such as power and governance; land and natural resources; service delivery; security and injustice.

- Underlined that governments must ensure that situations do not deteriorate to the point where violence becomes the only option. There should be intersectional national dialogues happening in member states at all times to ensure situations do not escalate to conflict or unrests.

- Highlighted on the rise of Populism which have been very concerning – populism feeds on vague democratic features and lack of legitimacy presented by immature democracies that fail to deliver for the people. This is also exasperated by corruption and the widening gap between the haves and the have notes creating elites that capture democracy and governance for their own benefit.

- Called for opening up of civic spaces, by noting that human rights defenders are being arrested and detained, corruption remains rife, our security sectors are way too involved in politics, and we still practice the politics of marginalization, or '**othering**'.

- Underlined the importance of opening up the space for women's representation, meaningful participation remains questionable. Gender-based violence also continues to increase across the continent.

- Cautioned on the Illegal arms proliferation problem in Africa and called for all concerted efforts for action.

- Cautioned against high unemployment and youth bulge and called for adequate investments on the matter.

- Appreciated on the fact that people also live with memories of conflict which we never take time to address and that we will need to address our history but open up the concept of freedom.

- Specified on the need to address nationhood deficit which goes against groups and communities; address issues of exclusion at a large scale that disenfranchises citizens from all democratic processes and break the social contract and trust between citizens and governments pushing for the creation off groups that target access state resources through illegal means.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Call for a recognition of the Digital governance space which is is opening up, promoting more innovation and transformation with the appropriate caution. These include for

instance, knowing who we are giving our rights to, especially when it has to do with security, and governments using digitalization to control people and information.

- Recognizes the progress made towards opportunities that were made for the opening up of spaces for women participation in governance and conflict prevention. For instance, there the establishment of FEMWISE to mobilize women to be deployed in mediation mechanisms, the African Women's Network which is also galvanizing the synergy of women leaders on Agenda 2063 and the launching of the Platform for Women in Leadership by the Political Affairs Department together with the UNDP.

- Recognize that the future is also an opportunity. We are likely to know, based on data points we have now project likely scenarios of what the democratic, peace and security sphere will likely to bring. We have the information on hand. As a continent, there is still time to get our act together and do something about Africa's peace and security scenario. It is possible to prevent conflicts from ever happening by putting in place the proper democratic governance mechanisms. Our future is not written and it is a significant opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following far-reaching recommendations were made by the participants to address the above emerging issues:

MEMBER STATES

- AU Member States must shoulder their responsibility of eliminating governance deficits through the full implementation of AU instruments on human rights instruments, as well regional and continental frameworks related to democracy, governance and the rule of law, to election management and constitutionalism. The same goes for regional, continental and international instruments on illicit arms and illicit financial flows.

- Member States should see to the full functioning of services for the application of the law on their territory by ensuring the present of public institutions in all parts of their countries. By so doing, their peripheral zones will be less vulnerable.

- As African governments seek to recover from the pandemic in a way that accelerates the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, greater investment is needed to expand the reach and to improve the quality of public services, including social protection, healthcare, education, water and sanitation. This requires bold national leadership coupled with effective and adequate financial support from the international community and international finance institutions.

- Governments must work to strengthen social contracts, increase trust, people must be free to choose their leaders and their choices must be respected, leaders must uphold the normative standards for democratic transitions, defend human rights and ensure good governance. Building effective institutions and independent justice sectors must be seen as a priority. The AU Charter of Governance, Elections and Democracy (ACDEG) is a solid document that can help guard against democratic reversals.

- Member States must deepen democracy by entrenching the shared values that we have agreed on in both continental and state processes. At continental level, we have formulated economic processes such as the AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area), peace and security processes, it is important that both at national and continental

levels, there should be policy cohesion, processes to entrench these values and the measurement of these values on an ongoing basis.

- As African countries strive to include technology in our public administration, Member States must ensure that these technologies reflect democratic principles. This entails taking into account open access, and transparency in terms of communicating the features of a particular technology.

AFRICAN UNION AND RECS

- Early Action: AU is positioned to conduct evidence-based analysis that support early warning, what is needed currently is early action which will be supported by the evidence -based analysis.

- AU must support member states to implement AU protocols ratified by member states. There is also need to strengthen national financing capacities especially in low-income countries because prevention is a long-term project and must be matched with sustainable resources.

- AU must identify and impose consequences on the elite capture of state resources and instruments. There are instruments for institutions such as the Pan African Parliament and the African Court of Justice that have not been ratified by all African nations. We therefore need to push for their ratification. Sanction is also required when elites capture the political process, there needs to be recognition of that capture and sanction.

- We must review of standards for legitimacy. When elections are being captured, and when governance or economic resources are being captured, we need standards that recognize this phenomenon of capture. The AU in collaboration with RECshas electoral observation guidelines, there is an AU Charter for Combatting elections, which need to be updated to deal with new concerns.

WOMEN AND YOUTH LED ORGANIZATIONS

- Exclusion of women and youth in democratic governance was emphasized during the Gender Pre-Forum and Youth Consultations. Thus, there is an urgent need for youth and women to galvanize and mobilize for inclusion of women and youth governance and leadership roles.

- Recognizing the AWLN - the joint AU-UN African Women's Leaders Network which now has 25 national chapters across Africa, there is need to strengthen women's political and economic empowerment. All AU youth engagement in democratic governance and peace and security. There is also need to continue to strengthen capacity building on peace education.

CSOs AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- CSOs and international organizations should work with governments to find concrete ways to bring women and youth into governance, political and economic process, build their capacities whether in building peace, ensuring accountability, or driving a shift to greener economies.

- CSOs and international organizations should work with governments to deepen citizens' engagement through a two-way strategy involving enlightenment of the citizenry on

government programmes while at the same time making demands of the masses known to government through advocacy.

- CSOs and international organizations should work with the AU to go beyond early warning to early action by providing evidence on how perceived risks of conflict can be mitigated.