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## **Main successes of the AU in Peace and Security, challenges and mitigation measures in place**

*AU Peace and Security: the foundation for the Continent's continued progress and socio-economic transformation*

During the 50th Anniversary of the Organization of African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU) in May 2013, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted a landmark declaration. They vowed that Africa would not bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation and made a commitment to end violent conflict on the continent by 2020. This was translated into the AU initiative: Silencing the Guns by 2020.

In fulfillment of this, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), at its 648th meeting held on 16 January 2017, considered the Draft African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020. The roadmap guides the fulfillment of this mandate through focusing on initiatives and practical steps for 'Silencing the guns by 2020'. Council further decides to submit the Master Roadmap to the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government during its 28th Ordinary Session to be held from 30 to 31 January 2017, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for endorsement.

With continued AU engagement with Member States on conflict prevention, management, resolution and post conflict reconstruction and development as well as peace-building initiatives, progress is being made in the signing and implementation of peace agreements between countries not at peace, or those emerging from decades of conflict and instability. The human and economic costs of these conflicts had adverse national and cross-border consequences: Increased numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons; the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and many more.

In response, and in line with the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC Protocol), the AU assumed political responsibility to address these challenges and developed its African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Over the last decade, the extent of violent conflict on the continent has reduced, despite the emergence of new security threats.

The Commission has recently published the APSA Roadmap 2016 – 2020, a strategic document, which builds on the achievements and challenges resulting from the implementation of the previous APSA Roadmaps (2011-2013). The Roadmap manifests the continued determination to ensure further progress, and paves the way for future collaboration between the AU, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to effectively address security issues and contribute to a more peaceful Africa.

Even though the key components of APSA are now more or less fully operational and the number of violent conflicts has been significantly reduced in the past few years, a number of countries still remain trapped in a vicious cycle of violent conflict and its deadly consequences.

With a view to realizing the goal of a conflict-free Africa, the discussion during the Summit will focus on conflict and crisis situations in Africa namely, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Somalia, Sahel/Mali, South Sudan, Burundi, Guinea Bissau, Libya among others.

A continued strong engagement in support of implementation of peace agreements in Member States emerging from conflict and the fight against terrorism, will remain the priorities for the AU. Somalia could be sighted as an example that has made significant progress against Al Shabaab with support from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). On its part, AMISOM continues to provide guidance on capacity building, and sensitisation of communities on countering violent extremism, as part of its comprehensive strategy for reviving policing activities in Somalia.

In the context of conflict prevention, the AU and its sub-regional organizations have developed significant institutional capacity over the past decade to undertake early warning analysis and conflict prevention. In this regard, the AU has built up an impressive toolbox for prevention and peacemaking. These include the Continental Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise, Special Envoys, and ad hoc mediation panels, often comprised of sitting and former Heads of State. The AU also has experience in deploying liaison offices and "special political missions" in countries at risk of, or emerging from, conflict. The Commission has focused on operational conflict prevention with regular Horizon Scanning briefings provided to the AUPSC on potential threats and emerging peace and security challenges on the continent; production of early warning reports and the conduct of preventive diplomacy missions in Member States at risk of conflict. The Commission has also continued to provide technical assistance to Member States in the establishment and strengthening of national infrastructures for peace, including early warning systems and Situation Rooms.

In the context of post-conflict reconstruction and support of countries, the Commission deploys mission to assess the priority needs of the country in need. These include identification of joint activities in support of implementation of peace agreements in Member States emerging from conflict; conducting needs assessment missions; consolidating and scaling up security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and

reintegration initiatives; technical and operational support to control the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and sustained collaboration with RECs/RMs and civil society organizations. The engagements have also been geared towards developing and implementing Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Peace Strengthening Projects (PSPs) in areas of deployment of AU Peace Support Operations, and through the AU Liaison Offices. Furthermore, the AU took a number of initiatives to prevent the post-electoral situation from degenerating into a generalized crisis through the deployment of observers.

The AU Commission also provides strategic, political, technical, and planning support to operations authorized by the Peace and Security Council and carried out by regional coalitions of Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), or Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RMs). Such support includes: The Regional Cooperation Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) and the operation against Boko Haram undertaken by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin- the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

It is important to highlight the critical nature of the partnerships the AU has developed within the framework of APSA. The European Union (EU), United Nations (UN) and bilateral partners have all played a key role. There has been significant innovation and creative problem solving, which has been pivotal in meeting the continent's peace and security challenges.

## **Challenges**

Post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) and peacebuilding are some of the most important challenges facing African countries emerging from conflicts. As the African Union continues to make progress in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, the imperative for comprehensive and integrated actions and plans for the recovery, reconstruction and development of societies recovering from conflicts becomes paramount.

The major challenge facing the African Union is the lack of funds. The financing challenges the AU is faced with has important unintended consequences. High levels of donor dependency have weakened ownership in this critical area of the AU's mandate and led to strategic drift, as the AU Commission increasingly focused on externally financed activities.

There is general agreement that the current financing arrangements for peace support operations are neither reliable nor predictable, especially in the context of high-tempo combat operations. While partners have demonstrated much flexibility and innovation, there is consensus that the current financing arrangements are unsustainable.

## **Mitigation**

Financing peace and security in Africa on a sustainable basis is not only an African priority but a global strategic imperative, given the complex and interconnected nature of threats to international peace and security today.

The African Union and its Member States are already taking the lead in confronting challenges which other institutions are not able to address. With an AU Peace Fund fit for purpose, the Continent, together with its partners, will establish a foundation for creating a more responsive international peace and security architecture. The July 2016 AU Assembly Decisions on the Peace Fund are a powerful demonstration of the determination and commitment of the AU and its members to assume primary responsibility to fund the Organization's peace activities. This provides the opportunity to build new partnerships with traditional and emerging partners, International Organizations, the private sector and civil society, and to pool our strengths in order to meet the emerging global threats. The complexity of the issues, ranging from funding, to crafting new partnerships with the UN, cannot be underestimated and will demand political will and a paradigm shift. A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. It is now time to take that step.