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AU AND UN JOIN EFFORTS TOWARDS DEVELOPING AN AFRICAN HUMAN SECURITY INDEX



While the idea of human security has been spreading globally and locally, albeit unevenly, few studies have analytically examined and responded to contextual threats for people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented analysis and exploring basic security questions. In addition, globally few tools exist that comprehensively measure human security while none have an African context and specificity. Therefore, the proposed African Human Security Index (AHSI) is an attempt to provide a holistic assessment of human security through the seven dimensions of economic security, food security, health security environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. It also directly responds to both Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda on the centrality of human security as an enabler and precondition for sustainable and inclusive development.

Against this backdrop, The Bureau of the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division (GPSPD) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in partnership with the Human Security Unit of the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), United Nations Office to the

African Union (UNOAU) and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) organised an experts' consultative meeting. The main objective is to provide an overview of the principles of the human security approach and elaborate on the use of human security as a tool for developing effective policies and programmes for achieving Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

The specific objectives of the consultative meeting are:

1. Probe human security concepts, practices, and methodologies;
2. Explore the humanitarian, development, and peace triple-nexus; and
3. Develop the set of recommendations that will form the way forward on the efforts of developing a methodology:
 - a) apply this methodology in two or three pilot countries and;
 - b) use the experience to design a template for developing an Africa-wide human security index.

The consultative meeting provides a useful platform for receiving feedback from experts on the suitability of the proposed conceptual design and methodology of the index taking into account data availability across African Union Member States.

The two day consultative workshop takes place from 5-6 March 2020. During the workshop the following sessions will take place:

1. The Human Security Discourse;
2. Human Security Practices;
3. Human Security in the African Context;
4. AHSI Design, methodology & data comparability;
5. Indices: Variety in Kind;
6. Synergy between Early Warning and Human Security Approaches; and
7. Developing AHSI work plan.

In his opening statement H.E. Amb. Quartey Thomas Kwesi, the Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, applauded the combined and coordinated efforts by the AU and UN meant for the benefit and growth of the continent. "I am delighted to note that this meeting demonstrates our determination to closely work together to design and develop the first ever African Human Security Index" underlined Amb. Kwesi.

Amb. Quartey Thomas Kwesi noted that "The Concept of Human security was introduced two and half decades in the UN General Assembly. We recognize and appreciate efforts of countries like Japan, have taken with the support of the United Nations towards operationalizing the concept." He further added " Indeed, threats that confront people's lives on daily basis are the critical starting point of the human security approach; it is therefore critical that our discussions today foster and assert the UNDP 1994 Human Development 'people centred' approach".

The Deputy Chairperson of the AUC emphasized the readiness of the African union to work with the experts and partners to help in the development of an African Human security Index, specific to the context of the African countries and the challenges they

face in the current global and regional setting. “It will further strengthen peace and advance progress towards implementation of the Agenda 2063 and UN SGDs 2030, while supporting efforts to effectively silencing the guns on the continent, to ensure prosperity of the African people”, concluded Amb. Quartey Thomas Kwesi.

Mr. Yukio Takasu, the UN Special Adviser on Human Security, applauded the continued engagement between the two institutions to strengthen the statistical systems for effective collection, collation and analysis of data. Mr. Yukio Takasu underlined that “AU has defined the human security as “The security of the individual in terms of satisfaction of his/her basic needs. It is also includes the creation of social, economic, political, environmental and cultural conditions necessary for the survival and dignity of the individual, the protection of and respect for human rights, good governance and the guarantee for each individual of opportunities and choices for his/her full development”.

Mrs Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Director, GPSPD, UNECA highlighted that the proposed AHSI is an attempt to provide a holistic assessment of human security through its seven dimensions of (1) economic security; (2) food security (3) health security; (4) environmental security (5) personal security; (6) community security; and (7) political security. She further added that AHSI is directly responds to both Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda on the centrality of human security as an enabler and precondition for sustainable and inclusive development. “The ASHI is expected to guide member States on policy formulation and support monitoring of human security at different tiers throughout the African continent”, concluded Mrs Thokozile Ruzvidzo.

Mr. Gerald Mitchell, Deputy Head of Office and Director of Political Affairs, UNOAU, draw the attention of the participants to the role of human security indicators in the field of conflict early warning, along with the mainstreaming of human rights indicators into the same systems. “To this end, I draw your attention to the important work of the AU Continental Early Warning System and the coordination work ongoing between the experts of the Continental Early Warning System and the experts working on the early warning systems of the RECs/RMs. The integration of human rights and human security into the Continental Early Warning System can crucially assist with the key priority, not only of the UN Secretary General, but also of the African Union, namely: to prevent conflict”, underscored Mr. Gerald Mitchell .

The Workshop brought together participants with expertise in different areas of human security. The discussions during the consultative meeting will be structured around issues of “designing and developing the methodology African Human Security Index.” A position paper and technical note will anchor the discussions of the meeting. The emphasis of the consultative process will be to reach a consensus on determining a suitable methodology to design, develop, and select pilot countries. It will also spearhead the creation of a coalition around promoting and advocating the human security agenda in Africa.

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