

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press release No:

Date: 5th Oct 2023

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



AU High Level Dialogue on democracy and governance explores trade as a bridge for peace.

The state of democratic governance and peace in Africa has an impact on the growth performance and development at the national, regional and continent levels. The 12th edition of the High-Level Dialogue on democracy, human rights, and governance in Africa has concluded providing a platform for various stakeholders to examine the megatrends on the security and socio-economic development landscape and proffering solutions to existing and emerging causes of governance, security and development deficits.

Convened under the theme “delivering peace dividends through the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade (AfCFTA), the two-day High-Level Dialogue was preceded by youth consultations and Gender pre-forum where participants engaged niche-specific discussions on avenues to advance the full and meaningful participation of women and youth in development and security matters.

In examining the historical context and changing the democratic governance and security landscape of the continent, the forum drew comparable lessons on how low levels of development are an underlying cause of insecurity and explored how trade, particularly with the implementation of AfCFTA, can reverse the trends and address security and governance challenges. Poor governance hinders investments as private and foreign investors do not find the environment conducive for sustainability and returns on investments.

In reflecting on the status of peace and stability on the continent and its impact on sustainable growth performance, Amb. Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner of Political Affairs and Peace and Security (PAPS) observed that the AfCFTA, once fully implemented, will be gamechanger for Africa, however adding that democracy, governance and security deficits continue to impede the speedy realization of the vision of an integrated, peaceful, and prosperous Africa. He called in the forum to reflect on the implications of unconstitutional changes of government, conflict, instability, transitional organized crimes, governance deficits, terrorism, flawed elections, and its effects on intra-African trade and make recommendations to sustainably address the existing and emerging challenges. "Let me reaffirm the entirety of the African Union will not tolerate unconstitutional changes of government and military coups as any form of government. We may have challenges in our governance systems but the best form of system that has been tested globally is democracy. Inclusion of women and youth is part of addressing the democratic regression as we work towards the attainment of democracy, good governance, constitutionalism, and human rights as a prerequisite for development for the Africa we want."

Hon. Rémy Ngoy Lumbu, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the current Chair of the African Governance Platform highlighted the relevance of the High-Level Dialogue and its pre-events on youth and gender, as an open and frank platform for citizen engagement on issues of critical importance to the African citizenry. He observed that despite of the progress made in addressing various governance challenges on the continent, more commitment to actions that address political instability, violence and violations of human rights, the rule of law and constitutionalism, and low socio-economic development, was required and underlined the need for enhanced synergy and collaboration. "These setbacks should therefore prompt us to reflect on our past and ongoing efforts and to find ways to strengthen our institutions that have been put in place to serve the people of Africa and especially those most affected with a view to adopting the means to overcome all challenges for a better future. The adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its entry into force marked a turning point in our collective approach and our joint efforts to consolidate the integration of the continent and achieve our aspiration for a united, prosperous, and integrated Africa, as stipulated in Agenda 2063. There is no peace without development and similarly, there is no development without peace."

Amb. Ayele Lire, the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the African Union observed that as member states seek to accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA, they are equally paying attention to other factors that drive trade and investments such as governance, peace, and security. He underscored the need to address regional security impediments that continue to erode democracy, governance, security, and development on the continent. "The importance of ensuring intra-Africa trade succeeds upholds that human rights, labour, and environment standards are observed. Our continental development blueprint Agenda 2063 adopts a holistic view of development, to that end, as much as it gives due attention to promoting development and trade, it accords due attention to security, democracy and governance, which shows that the underlying principles are predicated on the understanding that

increased trade leads to greater independence which in turn contributes to greater peace and security.”

Indicators of good governance can affect the economic growth of a country and region. H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn, Ethiopia's former Prime Minister underscored the need for a mindset shift calling for African renaissance. He observed that democracy, governance and security are the bedrock for the AfCFTA to succeed as a continental project noting that its implementation in only a few member states would not yield the impact and spirit of continental integration and development. He called for renewed commitment to implement the continental frameworks that advance the nexus between peace, security, and development to address the geopolitical challenges affecting the continent. “Our people have huge potential. One of the megatrends affecting our economic systems lately is climate change. We have uncertainties and havoc created by climate change such as floods, prolonged drought, and wildfires which can be changed through the engagement of the citizenry. For instance, in Ethiopia, the citizens volunteer free labour for 60 days a year to soil and water conservation programmes which have yielded massive positive changes. We have been awarded global awards due to the participation of the people. This demonstrates that even in trade or conflict situations, the participation and engagement of the people is important for them to lead the implementation of the peace pillars.” He called on the young generation to emulate best practices such as the economic models of Southeast Asia, contextualize them to local realities to address poverty and governance deficits.

The Outcome of the High-Level Dialogue informs key decisions in the work of the African Union. Learn more about the Dialogue [here](#).



For further information, please contact:

Doreen Apollos | Information and Communication Directorate | African Union Commission | Tel: +251 115 517 700 | E-mail: ApollosD@africa-union.org | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Ms Hagar Azzooz / Project Officer – AGA-APSA Secretariat, Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, Azzoozh@africa-union.org

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@africa-union.org
Web: au.int | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | **Follow Us:** [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)