

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**1067TH VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL,  
THURSDAY, 03 MARCH 2022, AT 10:00 A.M., ADDIS ABABA TIME**

**Ms. Chido Mpemba, African Union Youth Envoy**

**Your Excellency Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the African Union  
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security;**

**Your Excellency Ambassador Ambassador Professor Mafa Sejanamane,  
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the African  
Union (AU) and Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of  
the AU for March 2022;**

**Your Excellency Ambassador Cessouma Minata Samate, AU  
Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social  
Development;**

**Distinguished Representatives of the United Nations Office to the  
African Union;**

**Your Excellencies Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives and  
Members of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU);**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**Our Partners;**

**Distinguished Participants;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

1. It is an honour and a privilege to take the floor and address the 1067th Virtual Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, my first address of the PSC since appointment as the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Youth.

2. First, allow me to acknowledge that despite the challenges of unemployment, corruption, and political violence, many African youth have found constructive avenues to promote peace, effective governance, and reform.
3. Second, Africa remains the world's youngest continent and by 2050, one in three young people will live in the south of the Sahara. This raises the question of how youth can meaningfully and constructively engage in their countries, advocating for reforms and improved security.

In reference to empirical evidence, research by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies shows an increasing number of African countries that are currently engulfed in major armed conflicts, while others face varying forms of violence and political instability that undermine the social fabric of our societies.

4. These conflicts impede development and economic growth, placing further strain on the ability of African youth to obtain jobs. Yet, African youth remain engaged in various activities aimed at resolving conflicts and building greater social cohesion.
5. These efforts have created opportunities for harnessing the talent and creativity of African youth, channelled them to rebuild social ties, encourage dialogue, and facilitate healing and reconciliation.

Your excellencies,

Allow me to refer to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country that has faced decades of conflict and political instability. Contrary to tradition, young people are now at the forefront of efforts to mend social ties through including musicians and poets, among other artists to creatively express themselves, which subsequently provides the basis for discourse.

6. The above-mentioned efforts hold prospects to foster mutual trust and an attitude of coexistence among young people from different backgrounds. Implementing such youth-led initiatives also opens the space for greater dialogue about the youth's role in consolidating peace.

Another example is South Sudan where young people are using sports to build peace and mutual trust among warring tribes engaged in cattle rustling. Through the Wrestling for Peace Initiative, South Sudan Wrestling Entertainment— a local organization founded and led by young South Sudanese—is using the indigenous sport of wrestling to promote peaceful coexistence across South Sudan's many tribes.

Again in Nigeria, where ethnic and religious violence has embroiled parts of Africa's most populous country, young people are working hard to promote peace through cultural exchanges and interfaith events. The objective is to encourage religious tolerance and counter ethnic polarization by providing mutual understanding.

Your excellencies and distinguished participants,

Young people's efforts towards peacebuilding extend beyond our continent's borders. In Europe, the Young African Diaspora are frontrunner, organizing support, evacuation plans and advocacy for young Africans facing discrimination trying to cross the border from Ukraine to Safety, owing to Russia's invasion, which the African Union's communique denounced.

7. In light of the examples shared, it is evident that young people already have the capacity to meaningfully participate in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding. It is therefore prudent, that the Commission and memberstates affirmatively support these efforts.

Moreover, these initiatives are implemented despite the enormous challenges our continent faces, young people across Africa are finding avenues to circumvent limitations and create peaceful communities.

The creativity and diversity of initiatives young Africans have engaged in to promote peace building and good governance demonstrates the capacity of youth for innovation and problem-solving.

Overall,

I believe that national action plans for youth, peace and security are essential for African Union (AU) member states to achieve the goal of silencing the Guns. This development requires a synergy with key normative frameworks, particularly, the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security. They are also a tool to bolster maximum youth inclusion and participation in peace processes.

8. As such, continental, regional, and national institutions should play a vital role in supporting African youth to become effective and impactful peace builders, as this cannot be the responsibility of just one organisation or institution.
9. Ladies and gentlemen, reality is, the whole world is confronted by the challenge of building a long-lasting peace. To achieve this, peace building must provide space for a diverse set of actors, including young people, who constitute a large part of our population and are targeted by militant groups.

Now more than ever, as violence continues to increase around the globe, young people's contributions to peace processes have attracted growing attention from peacemakers, institutions, and agencies.

As the African Union Youth Envoy appointed in the Office of the Chairperson to represent the voices of young across the 55 member states, I reiterate my commitment to ensuring the inclusion of youth in governance structures, including when it comes to peace and security.

Without taking more of your time, Your Excellencies,

I join the PSC to officially welcome the second cohort of African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs), who were selected following a competitive process in November 2021 and endorsed by the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Heads of State and Government in February 2022.

The second cohort of AYAPs is made up of five young people representing the five regions of the AU, whom I have the honour to introduce. The new AYAPs, selected to serve a two-year mandate from February 2022 to February 2024. Are:

Mr. Christian Achaleke from Cameroon (Central Africa),

Ms. Diana Chando from Tanzania (East Africa),

Ms. Kholoud Boughari from Tunisia (North Africa),

Ms. Cynthia Chigwenya from Zimbabwe (Southern Africa) and Mohamed Kunta from Sierra Leone (West Africa).

My office commits to joining hands with ambassadors appointed by the Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Division of the African Union to achieve the Africa We Want, ensuring that Africa achieves Aspiration 4 of Agenda 2063 which aspires for “ **A peaceful and secure Africa**” through mechanisms that promote a dialogue-centred approach to conflict prevention and resolution of conflicts and establishing of a culture of peace and tolerance.

**On this last note, I thank you.**