AU, RECs/RMs, EU and ECOSOCC, Agree to Strengthen Coordination and the Implementation of the APSA

The Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the African Union (AU) Commission, in collaboration with the African Union Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), organised a roundtable discussion to strengthen coordination and coherence between the AU Commission, the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), as part of efforts to fine-tune and ensure the effective and joint implementation of programmes within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

The discussions brought together representatives from the AU Commission, ECOSOCC, the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), the East African Standby Force (EASF), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the North African Regional Capacity (NARC) on Peace and Security. It was held from the 11th to the 12th of October 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

During the opening ceremony, Mr Josephat Barugahare, on behalf of the AU Director for Conflict Management, Alhaji Dr. Sarjoh Bah, called for increased AU-RECs/RMs-CSOs partnership centred on the comparative advantages of the institutions to ensure complementarity between the stakeholders in addressing the structural governance and security challenges in member states and urged for open discussions in refining and implementing the future phases of the APSA. This message was amplified by the representatives of the COMESA, SADC and ECOSOCC, who underlined the contributions of the EU-APSA IV Support Programme to peace, security and stability in Africa while recognising opportunities to scale up the overall implementation of the APSA through enhanced cooperation, particularly in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin and the Horn of Africa, where the programme is being primarily implemented.

The discussions focused on three strategic objectives, namely the conflict cycle management with emphasis on early warning systems and the African Standby Force, effective coordination and partnership at all levels within the APSA, including with CSOs and engagement with and the inclusiveness of youth and children in the APSA programming. The participants agreed to broaden the scope of work of the APSA, considered strategies and capacities for coordination and impact on the ground and decided to continue to work closely in averting relapse while protecting lives and livelihoods in post-conflict settings. They also highlighted the need to reinforce and interconnect early warning systems while calling on decision-makers to sustain momentum in ensuring early response and capacity building.

Additionally, delegates underscored the imperative of mainstreaming the agendas and normative frameworks on youth, women and children in effectively implementing the APSA through enhanced coordination. They also called for strengthening the relationship and linkages between the AU, RECs/RMs and Member States in operationalising the African Standby Force (ASF) through capabilities generation. They urged for a strategic review of the ASF to ensure it maintains relevancy and
effectiveness. During the two days, the delegates agreed on the imperative of joint programming in future phases as they reflected on the achievements, challenges and lessons learnt in implementing the APSA programmes and highlighted, among others, the need to develop databases of experts and CSOs to support the APSA initiatives.

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