THIRD AFRICAN UNION HIGH-LEVEL RETREAT OF
SPECIAL ENVOYS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON THE PROMOTION
OF PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFRICA

CAIRO, EGYPT, 5-6 NOVEMBER 2012

HL/Retreat/Decl. (III)

CAIRO DECLARATION

“Transforming the African Peace and Security Landscape in the Next Decade: Appraisal and Opportunities”
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1. The 3rd African Union (AU) High-Level Retreat of Special Envoys and Representatives on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa took place in Cairo, Egypt, from 5 to 6 November 2012, on the theme “Transforming the African Peace and Security Landscape in the Next Decade: Appraisal and Opportunities”.

2. Organised with the assistance of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and the Cairo Regional Center for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA), the Retreat brought together high-level officials and mediators from the AU, including the Chairperson of the Commission and the Commissioners for Peace and Security and Political Affairs, respectively, the Panel of the Wise, the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), the League of Arab States, the European Union (EU), La Francophonie, the United Nations (UN), African and international think tanks, civil society and individual experts. The opening session was marked by remarks made by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) for the month of November 2012, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, as well as by a keynote address by the Chairperson of the AU Commission.

3. The Retreat coincided with the 10th anniversary of the AU. As such, it provided an opportunity to concertedly and holistically review the achievements made so far in the area of peace, security and development in Africa and the challenges ahead. More specifically, the Retreat had the following objectives: (a) to reflect on the experiences of the AU in realizing its vision and goals since its establishment; (b) to examine current and emerging conflict trends and dynamics on the continent; (c) to review the approaches towards the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and related opportunities and challenges; (d) to review peacemaking, including mediation and conflict management efforts of the AU; and (e) to draw lessons from past AU peace support operations.

4. Taking place less than a year before the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU), in May 2013, the Retreat also provided a critical forum for the assessment of Africa’s journey towards unity, integration and prosperity since the establishment of the OAU, in May 1963.

5. The discussions took place both in plenary sessions (covering the assessment of AU peace efforts in the last decade, an overview of 21st century conflict dynamics and challenges, collaboration between the AU, RECs/RMs, the UN and other organisations, and response to peace and security threats, and the way forward) and in breakout sessions addressing governance challenges and state collapse, terrorism, secessionist movements, mediation, track II diplomacy and civil-military relations.

6. In this context, the participants reflected on the AU’s work since its inception and whether or not it has lived up to the vision and goals that informed its establishment; the combination of structural and proximate factors that account for the recurrence of violent conflict and crisis on the continent; the increasing prevalence of violence at sub-state level; ways and means of strengthening the APSA; modalities for moving from mitigation to conflict resolution and transformation; strategies for the creation of necessary preconditions for “structural” or “dynamic” stability, i.e. situations which enable legitimate actors at various levels of government to deal with rapid social change and a variety of interlinked political, economic and social challenges without resorting to violent means; the critical importance of governance and legitimate leadership; as well as the opportunities and challenges of partnerships with international actors.
7. In taking stock of the achievements made, the Retreat noted the progress made in the establishment of the APSA, with the PSC as its main pillar. It further noted the significant progress made in the operationalization of other APSA components, in particular the Panel of the Wise, the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), as well as the relationship with the RECs/RMs. Other achievements include the partnerships established with the United Nations and other international organisations and stakeholders, including the EU, La Francophonie, the Arab League and a number of bilateral partners. Additionally, necessary steps are being taken to operationalize the African Governance Architecture (AGA), which centres around the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance that was adopted in 2007 and entered into force effective in 2012.

8. The Retreat also noted the pro-activeness demonstrated by the AU and the RECs/RMs in managing crisis and conflict situations on the continent, through a combination of fact-finding missions, good offices and other forms of preventive diplomacy, as well as mediation, deployment of peace support operations and post-conflict reconstruction. It highlighted the progress made in addressing some of the most intractable conflicts on the continent, with the support of international partners, notably the UN. These achievements include Burundi, Sudan and South Sudan, Somalia.

9. Despite this progress, the objective of a conflict-free Africa and the vision that underpins it continue to elude millions of Africans, who continue to suffer from violence and abuses. The APSA is yet to be fully operationalized and all its components effectively integrated, while the relationship between the AU and the RECs is not yet as harmonious as provided for under the APSA. Besides, the funding of AU peace efforts is overwhelmingly provided by partners, and Africa’s contribution is far from matching the aspiration to leadership and ownership of efforts to make peace happen on the continent.

10. Furthermore, complex and daunting challenges continue to face the continent as demonstrated by the situations in northern Mali and the Sahel, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau and other parts of the continent. In addition, Africa is also confronted with challenges linked to terrorism, transnational organized crime, piracy, secessionist movements, and challenges of state-building, weak governance and corruption, election-related violence and conflicts, unconstitutional changes of Government, border disputes, as well as the increasing prevalence of violence occurring at the local level. These undermine human security on the continent and create conditions for continued instability and conflicts. The continent has also to address the demographic changes underway in Africa, as well as the impact of climate change.

11. Against this background, there is need for renewed and robust efforts by all relevant stakeholders under the leadership of the AU. The efforts to be undertaken should focus on the following:

(a) full implementation of the APSA and mobilisation of the required human and financial resources, as well as the full integration of all existing instruments in the peace and security domain. In this respect, the Retreat welcomes the recent creation of a network linking the AU Panel of the Wise and various similar structures at regional level (PANWISE);

(b) intensification of efforts towards the prevention of conflicts, in line with the letter and spirit of the PSC Protocol. While peacekeeping and peace enforcement should remain options to be implemented whenever the need arises, priority should be given to the prevention of conflicts both through the effective implementation of relevant AU instruments on governance, human rights and democracy and respect for diversity (structural prevention), as well as strengthening the capacity of the AU to more effectively deploy preventive diplomacy initiatives to address potential crises and avoid their escalation to full blown conflicts;
(c) more systematic efforts to meet the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction and development, in order to consolidate the gains made in resolving African conflicts. In this respect, the Retreat acknowledged the timeliness and relevance of the African Solidarity Initiative, whose aim is to mobilize resources from within the continent in support of African countries emerging from conflicts;

(d) streamlining the relationship between the AU and the RECs/RMs in line with the PSC Protocol and related Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 2008. In so doing, it is critical to ensure that RECs/RMs, as building blocks of the AU, strengthen continental unity under the overall coordination of the AU, and further regional integration, which is key to structural conflict prevention. The Retreat stressed that the celebration of the OAU’s Golden Jubilee provides unique opportunity to deepen the reflection on this issue and pave the way for concrete steps to be taken;

(e) strengthening the partnership with the rest of the international community, including the United Nations. In this respect, the Retreat welcomed the efforts being made to support regional initiatives in the context of Chapter VIII of UN Charter, including Security Council Resolution 2033 (2012);

(f) strengthening the role of civil society, including women groups, in the promotion of peace and security, in line with UN Resolution 1325 (2000), the relevant provisions of the PSC Protocol and other related instruments, as part of the overall efforts to increase African people’s participation in the affairs of the Union;

(g) including education for peace and leadership programmes, as well as AU’s policies and activities, in the school curricula, and active engagement of the youth; and

(h) mobilizing increased resources from within the continent to support the AU’s peace and security agenda, as a sine qua non for Africa’s leadership and ownership of peace efforts.

12. The participants recommended that the AU integrates the above recommendations in its strategic plan for the period 2014 – 2018. In addition, it is recommended that the AU, working with all concerned actors, international organisations, other partners, civil society and the academia, and based on progress made and challenges encountered, develop an AU agenda for peace for the next decade. Such an agenda should in particular promote coherence and interaction between the APSA and the AGA, and ensure that the latter is adequately strengthened.

13. The participants thanked the Government of Egypt for hosting the Retreat. They expressed appreciation to the AU, ACCORD and CCCPA for the arrangements made for the successful holding of the Retreat.