Fourth AU High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa
29-30 October 2013: Retreat

The AU 2013 Golden Jubilee Retreat:

50 Years of Peace-making in Africa: A Critical Retrospective of OAU/AU Peace-making

Draft Concept Note

“Our determination to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality for all our people, and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters, and violent conflicts, and to prevent genocide, We pledge not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans, and undertake to end all wars in Africa by 2020.”

50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, 26 May 2013
I. Introduction:

At the initiative of the African Union (AU), and within the framework of “The Year of Peace and Security” (YoPS), a High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa was launched in Cairo, Egypt, from 26 to 28 August 2010. The first ever forum of its kind, the Retreat brought together international mediators working on Africa and a wide range of actors involved in peacemaking.

Indeed, the 2010 Retreat was the first of a series of annual Retreats aimed at giving further impetus to efforts to bring to an end the scourge of armed conflicts and political crises in the African continent and to consolidate peace where it has been achieved. Furthermore, the 2010 Retreat was energized by the common commitment to “Make Peace Happen” throughout Africa – without delay. More specifically, participants coming from multilateral international organizations, regional organizations, African and international academics, researchers, Member State representatives among others, were motivated by the cry for peace emanating from African peoples across our continent and the pledge made in Tripoli, a year prior, by the continent’s leaders, to deal, once and for all, with the scourge of conflicts and violence.

The Second AU High-Level Retreat on “The Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa” took place in Cairo, Egypt, from 4 to 6 September 2011, on the theme “Strengthening Political Governance for Peace, Security and Stability in Africa”. The Retreat provided an opportunity for the exchange of expert views on (i) trends, challenges and prospects for political governance in Africa; (ii) the role of governance in preventing conflicts, including leadership and accountability, the role of public opinion and civil society and modalities through which the private sector can support good governance; and (iii) the restoration of peace when governance breaks down, with a focus on election-related conflicts, constitutional crises, security sector reform and management of natural resources. The Retreat also devoted a plenary session to the “Uprisings in North Africa – a new dawn for governance?”

The Third High-Level Retreat, which was organized on 5 to 6 November 2012 in Cairo, coincided with the 10th anniversary of the AU and thereby offered an opportunity for the organization to pause and reflect on the achievements made in the area of peace and security during its first decade, as well as to explore key emerging challenges requiring vigilance by the Union and its partners for a conflict-free continent. Furthermore, the Retreat provided a space to acknowledge the progress made since the inception of the AU and to reflect on challenges facing the continent, while facilitating the development of strategies to address these threats to peace and security. The timing of the Retreat, a year before the 50th anniversary of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2013, ensured that participants generated the momentum for reflective analysis of the history of the continent and its envisaged future direction. Moreover, the timing of the 2012 Retreat – which took place a year before current celebrations of the OAU’s 50th anniversary – further inspired participants to reflect on the history and future directions of our continent, as well as the role of the continental and regional organisations in efforts to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts, promote peace and development and rise to the aspirations of our citizens.

II. The African Union’s 2013 Golden Jubilee Retreat:

“50 Years of Peace-making in Africa: A Critical Retrospective of OAU/AU Peace-making”
The year 2013 marks a key moment in the life of the AU as the continental organisation reaches its 50th anniversary. The celebrations launched in May 2013 are dedicated to the theme of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. A key element of the AU Golden Jubilee celebrations is the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration which calls for greater emphasis on addressing the root causes of conflict, including economic and social inequalities, and the need for strengthening our efforts towards conflict prevention, peace-making, peace support, national reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction and development. Vital to these efforts, is the promotion of conflict transformation – which is geared towards ensuring meaningful and sustainable peace through the improvement of social, economic and political structures and improved structural stability and security. Understood in this way, conflict transformation becomes an imperative – indeed a core strategic paradigm with significant operational dimensions – in our efforts to engage, interact, support and nurture the long term, gradual and complex processes of transitioning from war to sustainable and meaningful peace.

The first decade of the AU’s existence has demonstrated a growing measure of activism by the organization in responding to conflict situations across Africa. At a time when conflict and crises situations on the continent test existing response paradigms to the limit, Africa and the International Community must strengthen their collaboration towards more innovative and sustainable solutions. With the Golden Jubilee spirit of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance in mind, as well as the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, this 50th year of the Union provides a good opportunity for the organization to project its approach to the management and resolution of African conflicts.

The African Union therefore proposes to convene the Fourth High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa under the overarching theme of “50 Years of Peace-making in Africa: A Critical Retrospective of OAU/AU Peace-making”, on 29 to 30 October 2013, in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, primarily as an opportunity to foster greater understanding among stakeholders of the dynamics of mediation and conflict transformation in Africa, to reflect on the “African Union Vision 2063” and the related peace and security priorities, allow for a critical reflection on peace and security challenges, trends and opportunities in achieving the 2063 vision as well as on the means required for a comprehensive operationalization of the peace and security-related priorities contained therein, specifically the operationalisation of all elements of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) as part of our goal of ending armed conflicts in Africa by the year 2020.

It is hoped that this Fourth Retreat will strengthen African conflict transformation efforts and recommend ways to support collaborative and preventive initiatives for addressing conflicts. It is also hoped that the Retreat will serve as a forum for practitioners, policy makers and opinion-formers to reflect upon exemplary peace-making initiatives that have improved the peace and security landscape of the continent in the last half century.

Objectives:

The Golden Jubilee High-Level Retreat will have the following specific objectives:

- To recognise and enable a reflection on some of the most significant African and specifically OAU/AU-led mediation processes (as well as associated forms of peace-making) of the past 50 years, with a view to capturing key lessons learned with relevance to current efforts and the
consolidation of the gains made in conflict prevention, management, resolution and peace-building in Africa;

➢ To provide a space for debate with outstanding African mediators and peacemakers with the aim of capturing lessons learned and good practices stemming from their personal experiences, legacies and contributions in mediation;

➢ To discuss and reflect on the parameters of conflict transformation and its relationship with mediation and other forms of peace-making, to enable the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to enhance their efforts in this domain;

➢ To discuss the philosophical, conceptual and practical dimensions of Pan-African paradigms in peace-making and mediation, and recommend ways in which African approaches to conflict resolution/transformation can be integrated in the AU’s Mediation Agenda;

➢ To reflect on the principle of subsidiarity, comparative advantage, and complementarity, using a series of examples of different approaches to mediation (AUHIP, High-Level Panel for Côte d’Ivoire; Panel of the Wise/PanWise; joint UN-AU mediations, International Contact Groups, community/traditional approaches to conflict resolution and peacemaking, etc.);

➢ To enable participants to discuss and share their views on the peace and security challenges, trends and opportunities in achieving the “African Union Vision 2063”, including a reflection on shared responsibilities and co-ordination between African and international organisations working on peace and security in achieving that vision;

➢ To provide a space for reflection on the priority peace and security areas outlined in the “AU 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration” of 26 May 2013 with a view to sketching an action oriented plan of action in support of these processes’ already existing implementation Roadmaps; and focusing on the present and future, we then can also come to grips with the place of Africa in the global economic and political set-up, which is vital to any understanding of the options, given the marginalization of Africa politically and economically, which has intensified in the past 11 years, to the point where efforts to improve governance have very little impact.

Expected Outcomes

The Retreat will have the following outcomes:

➢ Promote and define the Pan-African values that will underpin the African agenda over the next five decades; inspiring new generations of Pan-Africanists that will serve as the vanguard of this movement as well as a process of Pan-African socialization that will nourish and sustain this leadership.

➢ Establish a precise agenda and work plan for achieving the vision “to end of all wars in Africa by 2020,” as spelled out in the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration of 26 May 2013;

➢ Recognize and draw lessons from the legacies and contributions of all Africa’s Heroes and Heroines in Mediation, make recommendations to prepare for a new generation to assume leadership and responsibility in mediation and conflict prevention

➢ Contribute to the ongoing AU debate on addressing root causes of conflicts with a focus on human security and inclusive political cultures;

➢ Produce clearly defined recommendations on conflict prevention actions;

➢ Agree on shared responsibilities and co-ordination between organizations working on African conflicts in achieving the 2063 vision.

III. Gala Dinner: Award for Outstanding African Golden Jubilee Mediators, 30 October 2013
The Black Tie Gala Dinner (black tie and evening gown required) be organized on the last evening of the Retreat, to recognize the African mediators and pan African peacemakers who have contributed in one way or the other to peacemaking and mediation in the past fifty years.

The evening event will also include inspirational speeches by selected Mediators (across international institutions), performances by the AUC Choir, Orchestra SENECA, Bomou Mamadou NELLO and others.

IV. Participants

Organized in collaboration with the Government of Cote d’Ivoire, with the technical support of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the Africa Leadership Centre (ALC), the IPSS, the Retreat will bring together the leadership of the AU Commission and its Special Envoys and Representatives, members of the AU Panel of the Wise as well as representatives of the Pan African Network of the Wise (PanWise), the Advisory Council for the Year of Peace and Security in Africa, representatives of the Chair of the Union and the Chair of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) for the month of September, as well as several former African Heads of State. Also in attendance are expected senior representatives of the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), the United Nations Secretariat and Missions on the ground in Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), partner organizations, namely the League of Arab States, the European Union, the International Organisation of La Francophonie, Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, as well as representatives of civil society organizations, think tanks and resource persons.

Organizers:
The AU Retreat of Special Envoys and Mediators is organized by the African Union Commission and the in collaboration with the Government of Cote d’Ivoire, with the facilitation of the African center for the constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the African Leadership Center (ALC), and IPSS.