



AFRICAN YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON THE NEW AGENDA FOR PEACE (NA4P)



THE REPORT



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Executive Summary

“ The regional consultations on the NA4P and the collated views of young people from across the region in this report seeks to take the New Agenda for Peace and its YPS dimension forward. Specifically, the insights and outcomes generated from these dialogues will be channeled into key international and regional platforms, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) during Switzerland’s presidency in October 2024 and the AU PSC Open Session on Youth, Peace, and Security as well as the AU PSC-mandated annual Bujumbura Continental Youth Dialogue.

In September 2018, the AU inaugurated the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa initiative aimed at discouraging youth from resorting to violence and enabling their meaningful involvement in peace and security. In November 2018, the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) institutionalized the YPS agenda through an annual open session dedicated to the theme. This session led to the establishment of various structures, including the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs), and urged Member States to create national action plans to facilitate youth involvement in peace efforts.

Globally, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) recognized the pivotal role of youth in peacebuilding with the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2250 in December 2015 and subsequently 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). This recognition was echoed in the UN Secretary-General’s ‘Our Common Agenda,’ released in September 2021, which positions youth at the forefront of global priorities. The New Agenda for Peace, produced by the Secretary-General in 2023 in pursuit of Our Common Agenda, seeks to address the root causes of conflict and enhance global security measures.

Progress in implementing the YPS agenda has been significant, particularly in Africa, where young peacebuilders have played a vital role in addressing the causes and resolution of conflict under the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda. It is important to understand the role of YPS in achieving the tenets of international norms and principles; in essence the nexus between YPS and (re)building trust in multilateralism.

It is within this context that the African Union Commission’s (AUC) Department for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), in partnership with the Embassy of Switzerland in Addis Ababa and Amani Africa Media and Research Services (Amani Africa), initiated a project to foster structured dialogue with African youth on the nexus between YPS and the New Agenda for Peace. Accordingly, regional dialogues were held between 31 July and 7 August 2024 across Central, East, North, South and West Africa. These dialogues provided a platform for young people to share their perspectives on the future of peace and security in Africa and globally. The regional consultations were followed by a three-day continental consultation to synthesize all the regional perspectives and proffer practical recommendations. The outcome of these discussions will contribute to the broader conversations around the implementation of the New Agenda for Peace, ensuring that youth voices are central to the global peace and security discourse.

Introduction

The consultations on the New Agenda for Peace (NA4P) are of paramount importance, particularly in light of the complex and rapidly evolving global and regional challenges that Africa faces. The NA4P emphasizes the necessity for a more robust, adaptable approach to peace and security, making these consultations a crucial platform for engaging Africa's youth, who are recognized as key actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As rightly observed by the UNSG, the youth are important in finding solutions to the world's problems.

Youth participation is essential, not just due to their significant demographic representation but because they are at the forefront of both the challenges and opportunities shaping peace and security in the region. The AU's Agenda 2063 and the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace, and Security (CFYPS) highlight the importance of building youth capacity and ensuring their active participation in conflict prevention and resolution. These consultations directly respond to these strategic priorities, ensuring that young people are not merely involved in the discussion but are empowered to take leadership roles in implementing the NA4P.

These consultations address critical issues highlighted in the NA4P, such as managing transnational threats, enhancing regional collaboration, and safeguarding civic spaces while promoting a people-centered approach that prioritizes human rights and the engagement of marginalized groups in peace building efforts. In Africa, where digital tools are increasingly being leveraged to both enhance and restrict civic participation, it is crucial that young people are equipped to navigate these challenges and advocate for the protection of their rights.

By involving youth in these consultations, the African Union and its partners are cultivating a new generation of informed, engaged, and capable peace builders who will play a central role in shaping policies and strategies that affect their lives and communities. These discussions are not merely about addressing current issues but also contributing to a more inclusive, resilient, and peaceful future, where young people exercise their agency.



The introduction of the report sets the stage by outlining the objectives of the consultations and emphasizing the critical role of African youth in peace and security efforts. It highlights the alignment of youth participation with broader global and regional frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063, and underscores the relevance of the New Agenda for Peace (NAP) to these frameworks. This chapter also provides a brief overview of the report's structure.

The second section details the research and data-gathering methodology employed in developing the report, with a focus on ensuring the inclusiveness of the consultations. It explains the approach taken to capture diverse youth perspectives across the regions.

The third section presents the findings from each region, outlining the challenges and opportunities identified by the youth. Each sub-section delves into the specific peace and security issues faced by the five regions and offers an in-depth analysis of how young people can contribute to the New Agenda for Peace.

The fourth section identifies cross-cutting issues that affect youth participation in peace and security efforts across all regions. It focuses on structural barriers that hinder effective engagement and discusses the common themes that emerged during the consultations.

The fifth section highlights key opportunities for youth to take an active role in peace and security initiatives. It outlines how young people can contribute to advancing the recommendations of the New Agenda for Peace and promoting sustainable peace in their respective regions.

Finally, the sixth section concludes the report by summarizing the key insights and recommendations. It reinforces the importance of youth participation in achieving sustainable peace in Africa, highlighting the need to address structural barriers and capitalize on opportunities identified by the youth.

The specific objectives of this dialogue are to:



Synthesize and present the voices of African youth peacebuilders in regional, continental, and global peace and security discourse, particularly within the framework of the New Agenda for Peace (NA4P)



Build the capacities of African youth on global frameworks related to Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) and their intersections with continental and global norms, particularly the NA4P



Provide a networking platform for youth peacebuilders and their networks to engage with national, regional, continental, and global YPS stakeholders, with a particular focus on promoting the active participation of adolescent girls and young women



Enhance the contribution of youth to the policy discourse and action on peacebuilding in Africa and globally.

2. Methodology

To achieve the objectives of fostering meaningful youth engagement on the New Agenda for Peace (NA4P), an inclusive approach was employed. This approach was designed to capture a diverse range of voices and perspectives across Africa's five regions, through a regional consultation coordinated by Youth for Peace (Y4P) and convened by the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs).

2.1. Stakeholder Identification and Engagement

The first step involved identifying and engaging key stakeholders who are actively involved in youth, peace, and security efforts across Africa through the AYAPs. These stakeholders include a broad spectrum of representatives from youth organizations, government agencies, civil society organizations, and academic institutions. By involving stakeholders from diverse sectors, the process ensured that a wide range of experiences and insights were brought to the table, enriching the dialogue and making it more representative of the continent's youth.



2.2. Consultations

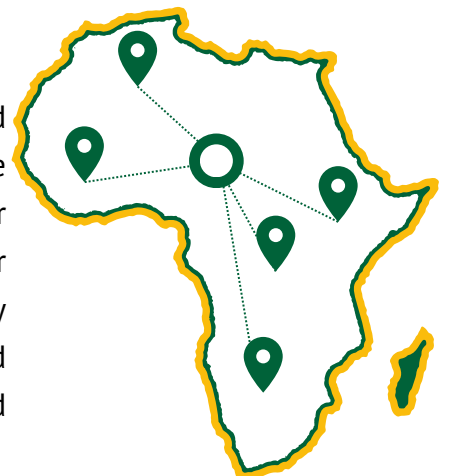
a. Regional Consultations

Building on this foundation, a series of virtual consultation sessions were held, one for each region: Central, East, North, South, and West Africa. These sessions were designed to be inclusive and accessible, allowing participants from different backgrounds and demographics to contribute. During these consultations, participants were encouraged to share their perspectives, and personal experiences, as well as discuss the unique challenges and opportunities they face in the areas of peace and security in their regions. The format of these sessions was interactive, promoting open dialogue and discussions facilitated through breakout sessions and the exchange of ideas, with the goal of collaboratively identifying strategies for advancing the NA4P.



b. Continental Consultations

Following the regional consultations, a pivotal convening was organized in Lusaka, Zambia, which brought together representatives from all five African regions. This meeting served as a crucial platform for synthesizing the outcomes of the regional consultations and for advancing the development of actionable recommendations. By facilitating dialogue among regional stakeholders, the session allowed for a comprehensive review and integration of the insights gathered across Central, East, North, South, and West Africa.



3. Regional Findings

3.1. Central Africa



The state of governance in Central Africa presents a complex and challenging landscape, marked by significant disparities between countries. While some nations have governments established through elections, others are under transitional administrations following coups. Still, others are undergoing major conflicts or are between a state of conflict and recovery from conflict. Additionally, the tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda underscore the deep divisions within the region, hindering collaboration. From active to post-conflict experiences, the youth are caught up in the phases of transitions unfolding in the region, underscoring the imperative of engaging them in conflict resolution, mediation, and other layers of the peacebuilding processes as stressed in the NA4P.

With regard to the persistent conflicts in the region, the youth of Central Africa have identified the lack of precise mapping of conflicts and crises in Central Africa as a significant impediment to effective regional wide peacebuilding and crisis management engagement. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, and Cameroon are all beset with persistent conflicts and suffer from inadequate documentation.

This shortfall is particularly concerning given the complex and evolving nature of conflicts, including local disputes, population displacements, and armed clashes. The incomplete accounts and mapping fail to capture the fluidity of borders, control zones, and front lines, rendering them inadequate for informing interventions. The challenges of inaccessibility, insecurity, and restrictions on independent observation exacerbate the difficulty of collecting accurate geographic data, especially in remote areas where conflicts are most acute. Furthermore, the absence of a standardized, consolidated mapping system leads to fragmented and inconsistent data,



with different sources such as NGOs, UN agencies, and media offering varying accounts. The politicization of conflicts and the geostrategic interests at play further skew the collection and dissemination of geographic information, resulting in a landscape where crucial data is either incomplete or manipulated. This fragmented approach not only hampers the ability to understand and respond to ongoing crises but also undermines the efforts to build long-term peace and stability in Central Africa. The governance challenges in the region are compounded by the hindrance of the participation of youth in decision-making processes by systemic injustices that marginalize their voices, creating a significant barrier to their development and empowerment. In areas of active conflict, the militarized environments make it even harder for youth to participate meaningfully in critical decision-making processes that aid sustainable peace and nurture human security. Under this prevailing condition in some countries, just like other sectors of the civilian population the protection and promotion of youth rights as well as their

aspirations for a stable and prosperous society are at risk. These pervasive unjust conditions not only stifle the potential contributions of young people but also undermine broader peacebuilding efforts, as the energy and perspectives of a critical demographic are left untapped. Despite the recognized importance of youth engagement in peace and security, there is a glaring insufficiency of structures and processes as well as opportunities for their involvement at the national and regional levels within the current YPS frameworks. This marginalization is exacerbated by the lack of financial support for local organizations, leaving many grassroots youth-led initiatives struggling to make an impact. Furthermore, the youth of Central Africa also expressed concern over the misuse of social media which often contributes to heightening existing tensions in many already fragile neighborhoods.

In Central Africa, apart from the lack of conducive infrastructure for youth engagement, the implementation of the NA4P could face significant challenges that are rooted in major governance issues afflicting countries of the region. A key problem is the weakness of state institutions, which hampers the effective implementation of the NA4P's global strategies. This weakness is exacerbated by a lack of resources and political will, leading to a disconnect between the ambitious recommendations proposed by the NA4P and the practical realities on the ground. Moreover, the growing polarization between political elites and local populations presents a structural weakness in applying the NA4P's emphasis on inclusive governance. In a region where conflicts are often driven by political and economic exclusion, achieving what is aspired under NA4P requires profound changes in governance practices, which are difficult to realize under current conditions.

3. 2. Eastern Africa



In Eastern Africa, a tapestry of interconnected challenges continues to undermine peace and security, with mistrust between the military and local communities standing out as a significant barrier. This deep-seated mistrust between state and society, particularly marginalized communities, fueled by incidents of violence, reflects a broader disconnect that hampers collaborative efforts for peace. Economic disparities, particularly high youth unemployment, exacerbate this tension, making young people more vulnerable to extremist recruitment. Despite their potential as agents of change, youth are often sidelined in governance, peace education, and decision-making processes, with their engagement reduced to a tokenistic checkbox exercise. The spread of radical ideologies, amplified by new technologies, further complicates the situation, necessitating more comprehensive peace education programs and conflict resolution mechanisms to address these root causes.

The development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) are stymied by a lack of resources, while inadequate capacity building within government agencies and civil society limits the understanding and application of the YPS agenda. Even when policies are in place, implementation gaps persist due to the absence of effective strategies and resources, especially in preventive diplomacy. Engaging youth from informal structures remains a challenge, particularly those vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, as efforts to include them in peacebuilding initiatives often fall short.

The peace and security landscape for youth in the Eastern Africa region is also marred by several challenges that hinder their active and meaningful participation. A glaring issue is the lack of civic spaces and the absence of National Youth Councils in countries, which suppresses organized youth engagement and advocacy for their rights. In other countries, like Kenya, despite the existence of

relatively better civic space, political manipulation further exacerbates the problem, where youth activists are co-opted into the political system through positions and privileges, silencing their voices or intimidating them into submission. In some extreme cases in other countries, youth politicians are even killed, underscoring the risks involved in political engagement. The exploitation of youth in politics is compounded by a lack of interest or understanding among many young people in the political processes, such as the importance of reading and critically analyzing political party manifestos. Moreover, the lack of a clear understanding of peace and security issues, often rooted in historical contexts, prevents youth from fully grasping the complexities of these issues. The situation is further complicated by the lack of harmonization across the region; while some countries have youth councils, others, like Somalia, do not, creating disparities in youth representation and participation. Additionally, the absence of effective feedback mechanisms and restricted access to information, particularly due to laws limiting the publication of public information in some countries, stymies youth involvement in peace and security dialogues. Despite the theoretical freedom of speech, it remains largely unimplemented in practice, leaving youth voices marginalized and their potential contributions to peacebuilding unrealized.

Another challenge identified by the youth of Eastern Africa is the fragmented approach among youth organizations, regional bodies, and international institutions further complicates the landscape, leading to disjointed efforts that fail to address the underlying issues. **Global policies, though well-intentioned, frequently miss the mark at the local level due to a lack of localized understanding, leaving a disconnect between international frameworks and the realities on the ground.** The complexity of climate change as a conflict multiplier adds another layer of difficulty, particularly in vulnerable states where its impact is most acutely felt.

Additionally, the youth were of the view that the challenges in Eastern Africa have significant impacts on youth, exposing them to heightened violence and insecurity due to porous borders and the illegal movement of weapons. This environment increases the risk of young people being coerced into armed groups, perpetuating cycles of violence. **The rise of artificial intelligence in military applications and misinformation campaigns further targets youth, leading to manipulation and radicalization.** Business cartels in the arms trade and weak policy frameworks exacerbate these risks, leaving youth vulnerable to the dangers of unchecked arms proliferation. **The spillover of conflicts from the Middle East,** along with relaxed small arms control policies, intensifies instability, making it harder for youth to pursue education and employment, ultimately jeopardizing the region's stability and development.



3. 3. Southern Africa



While the existence of youth platforms in political parties for the engagement of youth, the factors limiting Southern African youth participation in peace and security efforts are multi-faceted and deeply intertwined with broader socio-economic issues. A significant barrier is the limited access to information, particularly in rural areas where news about peace and security initiatives fails to reach many young people. While it is not unique to Southern Africa, this issue is compounded by technology gaps, as many youths in rural areas, like other parts of Africa, lack the devices or connectivity necessary to engage with or disseminate information effectively. This problem of digital divide and other challenges to inclusivity further complicates matters; despite global commitments to inclusivity, many young people, especially those with disabilities, find themselves excluded from these initiatives due to inaccessible formats and a general lack of consideration for their needs.

The discussions among the youth of Southern Africa also identified the critical role played by economic factors. Poverty and inequality prevent many youths from participating in peacebuilding, as their daily struggles with basic needs overshadow their ability to engage in peace initiatives. Similarly, a lack of education and employment opportunities impedes their potential, leaving them without the necessary skills or the means to prioritize peace efforts. Capacity building and training are crucial here, as many young peacebuilders are passionate but lack the skills needed for effective involvement. Besides the limited access to capacity-building trainings, funding and technical assistance are often scarce, further limiting the impact and sustainability of youth-led initiatives.

Limited formal participation also remains a key challenge, as youth are frequently sidelined in official peace processes in countries affected by instability. Their grassroots efforts, while important, often go unrecognized and unintegrated into mainstream peacebuilding. This issue is compounded by evolving security threats such as misinformation and radicalization via digital platforms, which existing frameworks have yet to fully address. Regional and global challenges, including rising conflict and terrorism, corruption, and declining youth participation in decision-making, only add to the complexity of the situation.

Participants in the consultation also noted that superficial inclusion of youth, driven more by demographic quotas than by genuine engagement with their skills, fails to harness their full potential. The weak coordination among youth-led initiatives, often confined to isolated regional efforts, prevents the optimization of resources and collaboration opportunities. Furthermore, harmful media narratives on social media and the suppression of democratic freedoms by anti-democratic forces stifle youth activism and participation. Lastly, the discontinuity of local programs and limited government services in remote areas hinder sustained development, making it difficult for peacebuilding efforts to take root and thrive. Lastly, the challenge of social tensions related to immigration, as highlighted by Southern African youth, is intertwined with the political instability of some countries in the region and socio-economic struggles. Driven by political unrest and governance, individuals, particularly young people, are forced to seek opportunities in neighboring countries.

Another challenge identified by the youth of Eastern Africa is the fragmented approach among youth organizations, regional bodies, and international institutions further complicates the landscape, leading to disjointed efforts that fail to address the underlying issues. **Global policies, though well-intentioned, frequently miss the mark at the local level due to a lack of localized understanding, leaving a disconnect between international frameworks and the realities on the ground.** The complexity of **climate change** as a conflict multiplier adds another layer of difficulty, particularly in vulnerable states where its impact is most acutely felt.

Additionally, the youth strongly expressed that the challenges in Eastern Africa have significant impacts on youth, exposing them to heightened violence and insecurity due to porous borders and the illegal movement of weapons. This environment increases the risk of young people being coerced into armed groups, perpetuating cycles of violence. **The rise of artificial intelligence in military applications and misinformation campaigns further targets youth, leading to manipulation and radicalization.** Business cartels in the arms trade and weak policy frameworks exacerbate these risks, leaving youth vulnerable to the dangers of unchecked arms proliferation. **The spillover of conflicts from the Middle East**, along with relaxed small arms control policies, intensifies instability, making it harder for youth to pursue education and employment, ultimately jeopardizing the region's stability and development.

3. 4. North Africa



The youth of North Africa face complex challenges in engaging with the YPS agenda, rooted in various socio-political and historical issues. One significant barrier is the limited awareness and understanding of the YPS agenda and its associated resolutions, a problem exacerbated by the lack of capacity-building initiatives specifically tailored to youth. This gap in knowledge and training hinders their effective participation in and the implementation of peace and security initiatives, particularly in regions where youth are already underserved.

In relation to conflict situations, youth are disproportionately affected by, and often involved in, extreme violence and armed conflicts, further endangering their personal security. Also, in post-conflict situations the reintegration of returned young people from armed groups into civilian life presents additional difficulties, as these individuals often struggle to transition back into society. This challenge is exacerbated by external interference, where foreign powers and non-state actors (NSA), disrupt local peace efforts and exacerbate instability. This interference, along with the actions of non-state actors (NSA) and propaganda-fueled tensions, often exacerbates existing conflicts and delays progress toward peace and development. Additionally, historical tensions, sometimes fueled by external propaganda, threaten social cohesion and could potentially lead to divisions within all African societies, undermining peace and stability.

Another major challenge in the region is the fragmentation of peacebuilding efforts. The absence of trust-building measures and effective dialogue platforms undermines collective initiatives, making it difficult to establish a unified approach to peace. Additionally, youth are often overlooked or entirely excluded from diplomatic efforts, despite their inevitable role in shaping the state of peace today, and tomorrow within our region.

The sustainability of youth-led peace initiatives also emerged as a major concern during the consultations, with participants emphasizing that peace is not a one-time achievement but a continuous process requiring ongoing support and engagement. With many efforts being voluntary and lacking consistent funding. This financial instability directly impacts the ability of youth-led organizations to

sustain their work, particularly in peace and security. Besides the inadequacy of funding, youth from Northern Africa has noted that the evolving definition of terrorism is problematic, as some unlawful actors often manipulate it to suppress certain groups or serve particular interests. This vague and unjust application raises concerns about its impact on peace and security.

Northern Africa youth also questioned how meaningful youth participation in peace and security programs can occur in countries lacking democratic processes. The absence of democratic governance undermines the rights of citizens, including youth, to participate in decision-making and state-building, further marginalizing their voices. Social, historical, and security-related instability makes young people feel insecure, hindering their full participation in peacebuilding.

Lastly, another concern expressed by the youth is regarding the misalignment between African peace and security initiatives and international development programs. Participants questioned whether these initiatives fully address the unique economic, social, and political realities of African countries. This misalignment is compounded by challenges in effectively promoting peace and security initiatives, particularly due to language barriers and differing interpretations of concepts between African youth and international officials.

3. 5. West Africa



The youth of West Africa face various challenges that hinder their ability to contribute effectively to peace, security, and socio-economic development. High unemployment rates and pervasive poverty are among the most significant obstacles, leaving many young people unable to fully participate in or contribute to their communities. This lack of opportunities often drives youth toward hazardous migration routes, seeking better prospects abroad, despite the dangers involved. These migration trends are symptomatic of the broader issue of exclusion from decision-making processes, where young people are marginalized and their voices are often ignored in political and socio-economic matters.

Socio-cultural barriers, deeply rooted in traditional norms, further exacerbate these challenges. The prioritization of age and experience over youth stifles innovation and participation, particularly in rural areas where traditional values are more entrenched. Additionally, the lack of safe spaces for youth to exercise their fundamental rights and engage in socio-economic activities presents a critical challenge. This exclusion is especially pronounced for young people with disabilities and women, who face multiple layers of marginalization. Gender disparities, particularly in provincial areas, prevent women from playing active roles in peace and security, while young people with disabilities are often left out of crucial discussions that directly impact their lives.

In some cases, young people are imprisoned or forced into exile, severely limiting their civic and political engagement. These harsh measures not only strip them of their rights and freedoms but also create a climate of fear and repression, discouraging others from speaking out or participating in political processes. This cycle of exclusion and repression not only marginalizes the affected individuals but also weakens broader efforts to foster inclusive governance and sustainable peace.

Further compounding these issues is the instability and insecurity in the region, which undermines the potential for socio-economic development and innovation among the youth. The lack of security, combined with energy constraints, significantly limits the ability of young people to pursue innovative projects, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure is lacking. Additional challenges, such as poor

mobile network coverage and inadequate road infrastructure, further hinder economic opportunities, especially for young entrepreneurs who struggle to market their products and services effectively.

Western Africa youth further highlighted that lack of support for youth entrepreneurship is glaring, with inadequate access to seed capital, mentorship, and the necessary backing for innovative ideas. Additionally, there is insufficient support for youth-driven initiatives aimed at addressing poverty and socio-economic challenges. This gap in support is compounded by a lack of enhanced skill education, which limits the ability of young people to realize their full potential. As a result, starting and sustaining small and medium-sized enterprises becomes exceedingly difficult, leading to frustration and disengagement among youth. Moreover, stringent financial regulations and limited private sector investment—particularly for women—further stifle youth innovation and development.

Besides the challenges faced by youth entrepreneurs, employment laws have been enacted that adversely affect young people, leading to forced retirements without dignified support. The closure of state agencies has also resulted in widespread job losses among youth, exacerbating their economic difficulties. Such conditions, particularly in rural areas, increase youth vulnerability to radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups, which can lead to inter-community conflicts and further destabilize the region.

The impact of these challenges is compounded by disparities and inequalities within the region. Despite West Africa having one of the youngest populations globally, with over 50% under the age of 25, significant disparities exist between urban and rural youth, as well as within urban areas. These inequalities contribute to the growing socioeconomic divide, limiting access to quality education, training, and employment opportunities. In conflict-affected areas, insecurity has led to the closure of thousands of schools, severely impacting educational opportunities and leaving youth vulnerable to trauma and exploitation.

Political instability and Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCGs) in the region further exacerbate the challenges faced by young people, particularly in entrepreneurship. In some countries, youth are co-opted to legitimize and consolidate military regimes, undermining their potential for independent economic and social contributions. The ongoing conflicts and unconstitutional governments, combined with a lack of accountability and transparency among both the youth and the government, obstruct socio-economic development and hinder progress. Additionally, electoral campaigns in democratic countries often exploit ethnic and religious affiliations to influence young people, deepening divisions and detracting from issue-based politics.



4. Cross-cutting issues



Across Central, Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Western Africa, youth face challenges that obstruct their active participation in peacebuilding, security, and socio-economic development. Despite regional differences, a persistent thread of marginalization, exclusion from decision-making, economic hardship, and socio-cultural barriers consistently undermines the potential of young people to drive transformative change within their communities and nations.

4. 1. Marginalization and Exclusion from Decision-Making

Youth are systematically marginalized from key decision-making processes across the continent. Their contributions to peace and security are frequently overlooked, often exacerbated by a lack of financial support for local youth organizations. In many areas, youth involvement in governance is reduced to superficial engagement, offering limited genuine opportunities for influence. In rural regions, youth are further excluded due to limited access to information and technology, hindering their participation in peace initiatives. The situation is compounded by a widespread lack of awareness of the YPS agenda, leaving youth out of crucial dialogues. This systemic sidelining of young people in political and socio-economic spheres reinforces their exclusion from significant decision-making processes. Such widespread marginalization not only disempowers youth but also weakens the inclusivity and effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts across the continent.



4. 2. Economic Hardships and Unemployment



High levels of youth unemployment and economic disparity are pervasive issues across the continent, fueling instability and making young people more susceptible to negative influences. Economic inequalities exacerbate tensions, leaving youth vulnerable to extremist recruitment in some areas. In many regions, compounded challenges of poverty and inequality limit young people's ability to engage meaningfully in peacebuilding. Economic despair often drives youth to resort to hazardous migration routes or other dangerous alternatives, detracting from their capacity to contribute to socio-economic development. These economic hardships not only stifle the aspirations of young people but also perpetuate cycles of instability, as economic disenfranchisement frequently leads to increased social unrest.

4. 3. Socio-Cultural Barriers and Gender Disparities

Socio-cultural barriers remain a pervasive challenge to youth engagement in peace and security efforts across Africa. Traditional norms that prioritize age and seniority often create structural roadblocks, limiting the participation of younger generations in key decision-making processes. In many communities, youth are viewed as lacking the experience or authority necessary to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding initiatives. This generational bias is compounded by rural-urban divides, where youth in remote areas are further marginalized by limited access to resources, information, and technology. These barriers prevent young people from fully engaging in efforts to promote security and stability.

Gender disparities, coupled with ageism, add another layer of complexity to these challenges. Young women, in particular, face significant obstacles due to deeply ingrained patriarchal norms that exclude them from leadership roles in peacebuilding and governance. In addition, people with disabilities experience further marginalization, often being disregarded in discussions and efforts around peace and security. The intersectionality of these identities—youth, gender, and disability—creates a compounded form of exclusion, where certain groups are almost entirely absent from peacebuilding platforms.

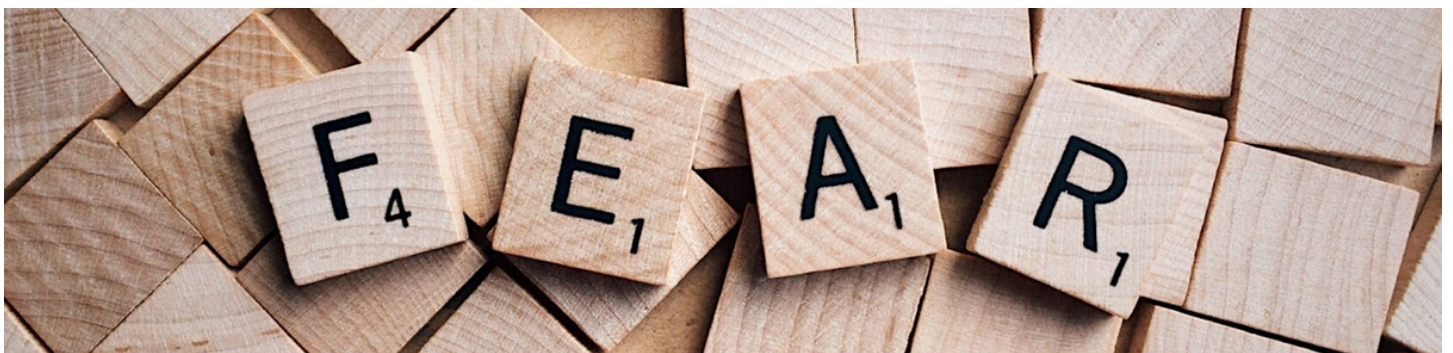


4. 4. Security Concerns and Radicalization



Insecurity and the threat of radicalization are significant concerns across Africa. The spread of radical ideologies, often facilitated by unregulated religious education, poses a serious threat to peace and security in most regions. Youth are increasingly vulnerable to radicalization through digital platforms, where misinformation and emerging security threats exacerbate the issue. Pervasive insecurity and the erosion of human security leave young people particularly exposed to recruitment by extremist

groups. These challenges are compounded by the absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms and preventive diplomacy, both of which are crucial for addressing the root causes of instability and radicalization. The ongoing threats underscore the urgent need for more robust, youth-centered approaches to conflict prevention and resolution.



4. 5. Minimum of Support for Youth-Led Initiatives

A significant barrier to youth empowerment across the continent is the insufficient support for youth-led initiatives. Local youth organizations often struggle due to a lack of financial resources, limiting their impact on peacebuilding efforts. The implementation of National Action Plans on Youth, Peace, and Security is frequently hindered by resource constraints and inadequate capacity-building efforts.



Similarly, a shortage of funding and technical assistance hampers the sustainability of youth-led initiatives. Even when there is interest in funding youth organisations, but mostly there is a challenge with the complex nature of access to grants. Additionally, inadequate support for youth entrepreneurship and innovation curtails the potential contributions of young people to socio-economic development. This widespread lack of support not only diminishes the effectiveness of youth-led initiatives but also undermines the broader peace and security agenda, impeding progress toward more resilient and inclusive societies.

4. 6. Climate Change

The nexus between climate change and conflict presents a profound cross-cutting issue affecting African youth, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and creating new challenges. As climate-related disasters such as droughts, floods, and food insecurity intensify, they fuel competition for scarce resources, leading to conflicts that disproportionately impact young people. Youth in rural and marginalized communities, in particular, bear the brunt of these challenges, facing displacement, loss of livelihoods, and increased exposure to recruitment by armed groups or extremist organizations. The destabilizing effects of climate change also hinder economic opportunities, limiting the capacity of youth to engage in peacebuilding and socio-economic development. Furthermore, young people's exclusion from decision-making processes on climate adaptation and conflict resolution amplifies their marginalization, despite being among the most affected. Addressing the climate-conflict nexus through inclusive, youth-centered approaches is essential for building resilience and promoting sustainable peace across Africa.



5. Youth Engagement Opportunities for the Effective Implementation of the New Agenda for Peace



Despite the various barriers that they face, Africa's youth have a pivotal role to play in advancing the New Agenda for Peace, which emphasizes inclusive, people-centered approaches to global security challenges. Youth engagement opportunities in this context are vast, ranging from grassroots peacebuilding initiatives to active participation in policy dialogues at national, regional, and international levels. With the continent's demographic skewed heavily towards a younger population, harnessing the energy, innovation, and unique perspectives of African youth is crucial for sustainable peace. Programs that focus on capacity-building, leadership development, and digital literacy can empower young people to contribute meaningfully to conflict prevention, peace operations, and governance reforms. By integrating youth voices into the implementation of the New Agenda for Peace, Africa can strengthen its resilience to security threats and foster a culture of peace that aligns with the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace, and Security (CFYPS). Recognizing this, Africa's youth have put forward concrete recommendations on how they can be actively engaged in implementing the twelve (12) action points outlined in the New Agenda for Peace under the five priority baskets, ensuring their contributions are woven into the fabric of peace and security initiatives across the continent.

5.1. Accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to address the underlying drivers of violence and insecurity

If there is one area of profound significance for the current and future of youth in Africa it is the implementation of the SDGs. Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, envisioned by the UNSG, is critical to addressing the root causes of violence and insecurity across the continent. Significant disparities in income, access to education, and healthcare continue to affect rural and marginalized communities. While the SDGs emphasize inclusivity, youth involvement in these initiatives remains limited due to a lack of funding, resources, and recognition. Furthermore, widespread corruption, governance challenges, and the lack of accountability undermine efforts to meet SDG targets, stalling progress.

The rise in conflicts and violence, driven by terrorism and political instability, further complicates development efforts and deepens insecurity. Declining youth participation in decision-making processes, exacerbated by inadequate access to information and harmful media narratives, erodes trust in

governance systems. This exclusion fosters unrest and drives youth to engage in activities that destabilize peace. Additionally, youth-led organizations struggle with limited capacity, while the lack of continuity in local programs and insufficient government services, particularly in remote areas, hinder sustained development. Integrating the SDGs into peace strategies is essential for addressing these socio-economic drivers of instability, ensuring a holistic approach that aligns development with peacebuilding efforts to promote sustainable peace and security across the continent.

In order to achieve this the youth of Africa have recommended:

i. Inclusive Decision-Making & Eliminating Extreme Poverty: Advocating for greater inclusion of diverse youth demographics in decision-making processes promotes equity and addresses economic disparities. By prioritizing sustainable livelihoods and food security initiatives, governments ensure that vulnerable communities are included in development agendas. Besides policies crafted through inclusive processes are more likely to address root causes of poverty, such as lack of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, thereby contributing to sustainable development goals.

ii. Targeted Funding for Youth-Led Initiatives & Accessible Funding for Peace Initiatives: Providing targeted funding for youth-led initiatives not only empowers youth as agents of change but also supports sustainable peacebuilding efforts. Governments can foster innovation that directly impacts socio-economic conditions in communities by aligning funding with SDG targets such as poverty alleviation and education. Financial resources that are readily available and easily obtainable by young people and youth-led initiatives additionally enable youth to play active roles in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, thereby enhancing stability and development.

iii. Tools for Accountability & Participatory Budgeting: Developing tools for youth to monitor SDG commitments, such as online trackers and participatory budgeting processes, enhances transparency and civic engagement. These tools empower youth to track progress, advocate for change, and ensure government accountability in resource allocation. By involving youth in decision-making on resource allocation, governments promote transparency and align funding with community priorities, thereby fostering effective governance and sustainable development.

iv. Mentoring Young Leaders & Grassroots Capacity Building: Mentoring young leaders to engage in decision-making processes complements grassroots capacity building. Empowering youth with leadership skills and amplifying their voices in local initiatives strengthens community-specific strategies aligned with the SDGs. This dual approach enhances inclusivity and innovation in addressing socio-economic challenges, ensuring that youth perspectives contribute effectively to sustainable development agendas.

v. Local Resource Development & Economic Collaboration: Encouraging local resource development and fostering economic collaboration through initiatives like the AfCFTA support sustainable peacebuilding and economic resilience. By leveraging local knowledge and resources, youth-led initiatives can drive inclusive growth and address community-specific

challenges. Cross-border economic collaboration on the other hand enhances regional prosperity and stability, creating opportunities for mutual benefit and sustainable development.

vi. Support for Social Entrepreneurship & Training for Youth-Led NGOs: Supporting social entrepreneurship models and providing training for youth-led NGOs build organizational capacity and address community challenges sustainably. Youth-led initiatives that combine social impact with economic viability drive inclusive growth and effectively address local development priorities. By equipping youth with essential skills such as fundraising and project management, governments could ensure sustainable resource management and the impactful implementation of SDG-aligned strategies.

vii. Advocacy for Youth-Focused Policies & Shared Vision of Peace: Advocating for youth-focused policies and fostering a shared vision of peace among youth promotes inclusivity and stability. Amplifying youth voices in policymaking ensures that policies reflect their needs and aspirations, fostering governance that supports peacebuilding and development efforts. Sustained advocacy and dialogue among youth cultivate solidarity and commitment to common goals, thereby enhancing community resilience and prosperity

viii. Adopting Best Practices & Establishing National Focal Points: Learning from successful peacebuilding practices and establishing national focal points for youth representation strengthen regional coordination and global influence. By adapting proven strategies and integrating youth perspectives into decision-making processes, governments enhance effectiveness in promoting stability and resilience. National focal points ensure that youth voices are heard in regional and global initiatives, aligning efforts with sustainable development goals and fostering inclusive governance.

5. 2. Eliminate nuclear weapons

Given that no African nation currently possesses nuclear weapons, the issue might appear distant from the continent's immediate security concerns. South Africa, once the only African country to develop nuclear arms, voluntarily dismantled its arsenal in 1989, and Libya terminated its nuclear weapons program in 2003. **However, Africa's history with nuclear weapons cannot be overlooked. The nuclear tests conducted by France during the colonial era, particularly in Algeria's Saharan region, have left a lasting and severe legacy. These tests, code-named "Gerboise Bleue" (Blue Desert Rat),** were carried out at the Saharan Military Experiments Centre near Reggane, in the remote desert area of Tanezrouft. The aftermath of these nuclear detonations includes extensive environmental degradation and enduring health crises, such as radiation-induced cancers, congenital disabilities, and other long-term health issues that continue to plague local communities today.

Despite the magnitude of these impacts, there has been a glaring absence of adequate compensation, remediation efforts, or recognition of the suffering endured by the affected populations. The scars of these tests remain etched into the land and the lives of those who inhabit it, yet the broader global community, including many within Algeria, remains largely unaware of this dark chapter in history.

A particularly troubling aspect of this situation is the limited awareness among the younger generation about the nuclear activities that took place in their own region. This lack of historical consciousness contributes to a broader disconnection from the ongoing global threat posed by nuclear weapons at a period where geopolitical tensions are heightened.

5. 3. Boosting Preventive Diplomacy

One key pillar of the YPS agenda emphasizes the vital role of young people in violence prevention. It encourages support for the youth by helping them implement activities that promote social cohesion and foster a culture of peace, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue. The AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (AU CFYPSC) also provides prevention as one of the priority areas of the AU. The implementation of preventive diplomacy could face several challenges in relation to youth involvement in Africa. Firstly, young people often lack access to high-level diplomatic and decision-making spaces, which limits their ability to meaningfully contribute to conflict resolution. This is compounded by insufficient training, skills, and resources, making it difficult for youth to engage in diplomacy effectively. Furthermore, traditional perceptions of authority and leadership tend to exclude young people, reinforcing a cycle of marginalization in peace efforts. In regions, where long-standing conflicts such as Libya, DRC, and CAR persist, the absence of platforms for inter-community dialogue, especially at the grassroots level, exacerbates instability. Youth voices are frequently left out of formal diplomatic efforts, despite their crucial role in building future peace. The youth also emphasized the importance of investing in preventive diplomacy and mediation mechanisms to address regional divides, with early intervention seen as key to preventing conflicts from escalating. However, inadequate support for youth-led initiatives to tackle poverty and socioeconomic challenges, along with limited opportunities for skills development, further hinder youth participation in peace efforts. Private sector investment in youth development, particularly for women, remains minimal, and strict financial regulations stifle youth innovation. Additionally, ongoing conflicts, UCGs, and a lack of accountability and transparency, both within government and youth groups, obstruct socioeconomic progress, further diminishing the role of youth in diplomacy and peacebuilding.

Therefore, the youth have recommended:

- i. Strengthening Youth Inclusion in Preventive Diplomacy Initiatives:** To effectively integrate youth in preventive diplomacy, it is essential to ensure their inclusion as key stakeholders in peace talks and conflict resolution processes at both community and national levels. Creating Youth Advisory Councils within diplomatic structures will provide direct input from young people on peace and security issues, while diplomacy boot camps can equip youth with essential skills in mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution. Additionally, establishing national focal points is crucial to bridge the gap between grassroots communities and continental diplomatic processes.
- ii. Mobilizing and Strengthening Youth Networks:** Supporting and funding youth-led organizations focusing on peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and social cohesion is necessary to mobilize youth at the grassroots level. Strengthening regional youth networks will also facilitate cross-border collaboration, enabling young people to share best practices and engage in joint advocacy efforts. These networks can contribute significantly to the overall preventive diplomacy strategy by fostering inter-community dialogue and cooperation.



iii. Leveraging Technology and Innovation: Digital platforms offer opportunities for youth engagement in peacebuilding through online campaigns, virtual dialogues, and digital storytelling. These platforms can enable youth to participate in conflict prevention activities and promote peace messages across borders. Additionally, innovative conflict monitoring tools, such as apps for reporting early signs of conflict, can enhance early warning systems, allowing for timely interventions.

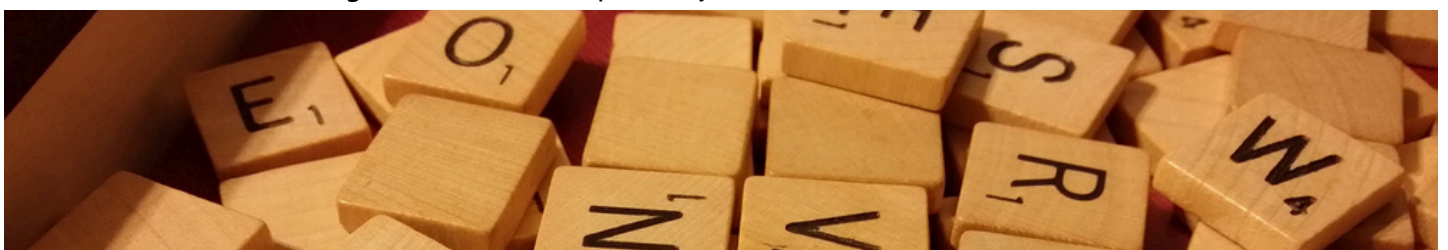
iv. Addressing Challenges Facing Youth Engagement: To maximize youth participation in preventive diplomacy, tackling unemployment and economic marginalization is critical. Creating economic opportunities for young people can reduce the risk of radicalization and violence. Moreover, addressing political exclusion through policies that enhance youth participation in governance and protect their freedom of expression is key to fostering a more inclusive political environment.

v. Promoting Intergenerational Learning, Mentorship and Early Training: Intergenerational mentorship frameworks can facilitate consultations between youth and older leaders on peace and security issues. Additionally, early training programs in peacebuilding will help develop youth awareness and skills from a young age, ensuring a well-prepared generation of peacebuilders.

vi. Supporting Youth-Led Peace Initiatives and Creative Platforms: Providing funding and resources for youth-led peace projects is essential for sustaining youth involvement in peacebuilding. Additionally, arts and cultural platforms, such as festivals, can serve as tools for reconciliation and promoting peace, offering creative spaces for youth to engage in peace efforts.

vii. Enhancing Information Sharing and Educational Initiatives: Developing a harmonized information-sharing platform across regions, utilizing influencers and public figures, will enhance communication on peace and security. Establishing educational initiatives, such as universities and forums dedicated to peace and security, will provide continuous evaluation, improvement, and mentorship opportunities for youth involved in conflict resolution.

viii. Strengthening Advocacy for Youth in Decision-Making: Advocacy efforts should focus on increasing youth representation in decision-making institutions and government processes, as well as creating platforms for youth engagement in political affairs. Targeted training programs can help reverse trends of disengagement and promote active youth involvement in governance and diplomacy.



5. 4. Shift the prevention and sustaining peace paradigm within countries

Shifting the prevention and sustaining peace paradigm within countries across the continent requires addressing several structural challenges and leveraging the unique potential of youth. In many contexts, youth councils and platforms are not independent, limiting the ability of young people to fully participate in decision-making and policy influence. Fragmented peacebuilding efforts further exacerbate this issue, as lack of coordination among different organizations and community groups weakens collective impact.

Intra-community tensions, often driven by competition over resources, continue to fuel violence, yet the absence of cohesive, cross-community peacebuilding efforts prevents the creation of lasting solutions. Moreover, the digital divide and inadequate access to education hinder youth awareness and engagement in peace and security processes, creating an information gap that isolates young peacebuilders from critical frameworks that could amplify their efforts at the national level. While young people are called upon to play a central role in peace and security, they face significant barriers in accessing spaces for meaningful participation. Despite these challenges, pragmatic and youth-led leadership has demonstrated potential in conflict prevention and sustaining peace, underscoring the need to better integrate youth into peace processes and policy frameworks across the continent through:

- **Promoting youth-led initiatives** that actively engage local communities in dialogue and collaborative problem-solving to address the root causes of conflict.
- **Encouraging joint projects** that unite diverse community groups, fostering mutual understanding and trust through shared goals and collective achievements.
- **Developing adaptable and scalable peacebuilding models**, ensuring that successful initiatives can be replicated and tailored to different regions.
- **Empowering youth by providing them with the necessary technical skills and financial resources** to enhance their contribution to peacebuilding efforts.
- **Recognizing and building upon the historical role of youth in conflict prevention**, using these successes to inspire and drive current and future peacebuilding initiatives.

To enhance youth engagement in peacebuilding, integrating successful youth-led initiatives can provide practical examples and inspiration. For instance, promoting youth-led initiatives like the Conflict Sensitivity Guidance in the Libyan Context offers a framework for adapting activities to local realities, ensuring that dialogue and problem-solving efforts are tailored to specific conflict dynamics. This initiative, developed by the Peaceful Change Initiative, provides valuable conflict sensitivity guidelines that could be applied to other regions, fostering peaceful conflict resolution. Similarly, the Peace and Security Coalition in Tunisia, established by the Moghyroun Organization's "Together" project, exemplifies how collaborative efforts can unite diverse community groups, building trust and mutual understanding through shared goals. By encouraging such joint projects, youth can foster long-term partnerships across communities.

These examples also emphasize the need to develop adaptable peacebuilding models that can be scaled and replicated in other regions. Both the Libyan and Tunisian projects demonstrate how effective models can be tailored to local contexts and then serve as blueprints for other areas facing similar challenges. Additionally, youth-led initiatives like these highlight the importance of empowering young people with the technical and financial resources necessary to lead such efforts.

5.5. Transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security

To transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security across the continent, it is essential to address the deep-rooted inequalities that limit women's participation, particularly that of young women, in decision-making and peacebuilding processes. Gender-based violence, educational disparities, and patriarchal systems continue to restrict women's access to leadership roles, preventing them from fully contributing to peace and security initiatives. Despite ongoing efforts to promote gender equality, these campaigns are often fragmented and lack sufficient collaboration between young men and women, which undermines their overall effectiveness. Women remain underrepresented in mediation and peace processes, with few platforms available for them to engage in critical discussions on complex security issues.

Moreover, climate change exacerbates these challenges, as women, often responsible for food production, face added pressures when environmental shocks disrupt food security, making it more difficult to prioritize peacebuilding. Political violence, hate speech, and gender-based discrimination further undermine women's contributions, as they are frequently exposed to unsafe environments that discourage their involvement. Age-related inequalities intensify these barriers for young women, who face additional challenges not only because of their gender but also due to their youth, limiting their access to leadership and participation opportunities. Furthermore, many youth programs fail to address the intersection of gender and age, often excluding young women who are most affected by violence and discrimination. In tackling these challenges and for an effective implementation Africa's youth recommends:

i. Empowering Women in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention: Women have historically been underrepresented in peace and conflict prevention efforts, particularly in leadership roles. To bridge this gap, it is crucial to focus on building their capacity through leadership, negotiation, and mediation training. These skills are essential for effective conflict resolution and can enable women to play a more prominent role in peacebuilding. Empowering women also involves mentorship programs that nurture their abilities and help integrate their community-centered perspectives into broader peacebuilding strategies.

ii. Promoting Awareness and Inclusion in Peacebuilding Frameworks: Many women, particularly those in remote areas, may lack awareness of the existing peacebuilding and conflict prevention frameworks at regional, continental, and international levels. Bridging this knowledge gap through awareness campaigns is vital. Such efforts enable women to engage with these processes, advocate for their rights, and hold decision-makers accountable. Raising awareness also ties into promoting women-led initiatives, which often address community-specific challenges such as gender-based violence and access to resources. These initiatives should be highlighted and supported, as they ensure a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to peacebuilding.



iii. Gender-Sensitive Training and Civic Awareness: Inclusivity in peacebuilding can be further enhanced by providing gender-sensitive training, especially to women from marginalized communities who may lack formal education but possess valuable local knowledge. Training programs should account for cultural and gender dynamics, ensuring these women can contribute meaningfully to peace efforts. Additionally, strengthening civic awareness and peace education for women is crucial. Civic education equips women, particularly young women, with the knowledge to understand their rights and responsibilities in governance and peace processes. This deepens their engagement and ability to advocate for change, empowering them to demand accountability and actively participate in peacebuilding.

iv. Supporting Policy Reforms and Promoting Gender Inclusion in Decision-Making: Advocacy for policy reforms that support young women in peacebuilding is key to achieving systemic change. These reforms should focus on removing barriers to women's participation in peace and security sectors by providing equal access to education, leadership opportunities, and protection from gender-based violence. Moreover, promoting gender inclusion in decision-making, including through mechanisms like affirmative action, is essential. Creating enabling conditions, such as leadership training and support networks, allows women to thrive in decision-making positions at every level of society, ensuring their representation and influence.

v. Engaging Men in Women's Empowerment and Addressing Gender Stereotypes: Involving men in supporting women's empowerment is an important strategy for advancing gender equality in peacebuilding. Men play a significant role in perpetuating or dismantling gender stereotypes and norms. By educating men about women's rights and contributions to peacebuilding, programs can foster greater male support for gender inclusion. Challenging harmful gender stereotypes and cultural norms is also critical. Advocacy campaigns and educational initiatives can help shift societal attitudes and remove barriers that limit women's participation in peacebuilding roles.

vi. Intersection of Gender, Human Rights, and Migration: The intersection of gender, human rights, and migration adds complexity to peacebuilding efforts. Migration often exacerbates gender inequalities; as displaced women face heightened vulnerabilities. Developing platforms that focus on the gendered impact of migration within a human rights framework ensures that migration policies are gender-sensitive and protect the rights of women. This approach also highlights the need for a holistic peacebuilding strategy that accounts for the specific challenges women face due to migration.

vii. Regional Coordination of Gender-Focused Initiatives and Upskilling Women: Collaboration among gender-focused organizations across regions is essential for addressing shared challenges in peacebuilding. By linking gender-related initiatives across borders, these groups can share best practices, pool resources, and amplify their efforts on regional and international platforms. Additionally, investing in the upskilling of young women involved in Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) initiatives is crucial for building the next generation of female peace leaders. Training programs that focus on leadership, negotiation, project management, and advocacy will equip young women with the necessary tools to lead peace and security processes.

viii. Advocacy Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and Inequality: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) remains one of the most significant barriers to women's participation in peacebuilding. Mobilizing resources and increasing advocacy against SGBV is critical for creating a safe environment where women can engage in public life. Engaging women in initiatives to combat SGBV ensures that their voices are heard, and their safety is prioritized, allowing them to contribute more actively to peace processes.

ix. Translating Policy into Action and Monitoring Progress: Ensuring that policy discussions are translated into practical solutions is key to the success of peacebuilding frameworks. Too often, policies remain theoretical and fail to bring about tangible changes. Governments and organizations must prioritize the implementation of these frameworks to ensure women can benefit from them in real terms. Monitoring progress on action plans is equally important, as it ensures accountability and sustained momentum. Regular follow-ups can help identify gaps and make interventions more responsive to the evolving needs of women and communities.

Supporting existing youth led initiatives and their establishment where they don't exist would be critical. The youth-led initiatives in Tunisia, Morocco, Zambia, and Southern Africa play a critical role in implementing these recommendations for empowering women in peacebuilding and promoting gender equality. Programs like the Gender Equality Promotion Program in Tunisia and the Citizenship and Gender Equality Education Program in Morocco foster civic awareness and challenge gender stereotypes by training young people as ambassadors for gender equality and encouraging collaboration in addressing gender issues. These initiatives help bridge the knowledge gap, raise awareness of gender-sensitive frameworks, and advocate against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), ensuring that both men and women actively contribute to peacebuilding efforts in their communities.

Leadership-focused initiatives, such as the Young Women Leaders Program in Tunisia and Peace and Security for Young Women Initiative in Morocco, empower women to take on more prominent roles in governance and peace processes by providing leadership training, mentoring, and advocacy support. Women Lead Africa in South Africa and Girls Gone Political in Zambia further promote gender inclusion by advocating for women's representation in political decision-making and leadership, ensuring their voices are integrated into governance structures. Together, these initiatives advance the implementation of policies that promote gender equality, enhance regional coordination on gender-focused initiatives, and create enabling conditions for women's meaningful participation in peace and security.

5.6. Address the interlinkages between climate, peace and security

The intersection between climate, peace, and security in Africa presents numerous challenges that are deeply intertwined with inadequate capacity and preparedness, resource scarcity, socio-economic instability, and conflict dynamics. Inadequate climate financing, particularly in conflict-prone areas, hampers efforts to effectively address these issues. The exclusion of youth from high-level climate security dialogues further limits the potential for innovative and sustainable solutions.

Climate change intensifies competition over resources such as water and arable land, directly impacting agricultural productivity and exacerbating food insecurity. This competition often fuels tensions between communities, leading to increased conflict and migration. In many cases, climate-induced hardships push vulnerable populations, especially young people, to join armed groups in search of financial stability.

Despite the severity of these challenges, there is a notable lack of climate literacy among youth, with many remaining unaware of the human causes and far-reaching impacts of climate change. This disconnect not only hinders proactive climate action but also weakens peacebuilding efforts, as the crucial links between environmental sustainability and conflict resolution are frequently overlooked. Furthermore, climate change has become a commercialized venture for some civil society organizations, where the focus shifts from addressing core challenges to securing financial gain, complicating efforts to tackle the root causes of climate-related insecurity. Addressing these challenges calls for a holistic, youth-inclusive approach that integrates climate considerations into peace and security frameworks across Africa that:

i. Advocate for Equitable Climate Financing: Advocating for equitable climate financing requires youth to lead global and regional campaigns that push for predictable and substantial financial support for Africa, particularly through mechanisms like the Loss and Damage Fund, which can aid vulnerable communities. In parallel, youth representatives should actively participate in discussions with international financial institutions (IFIs) to ensure that climate financing frameworks are tailored to Africa's unique challenges, particularly in mitigating the interconnected impacts of climate change on peace and security. This dual approach ensures that both advocacy and engagement drive more equitable climate finance solutions.

ii. Mobilize Youth Networks for Climate Action and Peacebuilding: Mobilizing youth networks for climate action and peacebuilding involves empowering youth organizations to lead local climate adaptation initiatives, such as reforestation, water conservation, and sustainable agriculture. These efforts not only build resilience to climate change but also help reduce resource-based conflicts. Additionally, establishing or strengthening youth-led peace corps can address environmental degradation while mediating tensions in communities affected by climate-related conflicts, fostering both environmental sustainability and peaceful coexistence.

iii. Influence National and International Climate Policy: To influence national and international climate policy, youth must advocate for their inclusion in the development of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), ensuring that climate policies reflect the concerns of younger generations, particularly on peace and security. Expanding youth delegations at major climate forums, such as COP conferences, provides a platform to advocate for policies that address the climate-security nexus. Additionally, organizing mini-COPs at national, regional, and continental levels can foster deeper discussions on these issues. Encouraging the creation and submission of youth-led policy proposals to governments, regional bodies, and global platforms further enhances their influence on climate and security policies.

iv. Bridge the Gap Between National Governments, Youth, and Global Governance: To bridge the gap between national governments, youth, and global governance, it is essential to organize regional youth consultations that focus on strategies for tackling climate challenges impacting peace and security. These consultations can generate actionable recommendations for both governments and international organizations. Furthermore, establishing regular dialogues between youth organizations and national governments will help align national climate policies with youth perspectives, ensuring that young people are meaningfully

included in policy development and implementation. This integrated approach ensures that climate strategies effectively address the needs and contributions of both youth and policymakers.

v. Addressing Challenges to Youth Engagement: To address challenges to youth engagement in climate action and peacebuilding, it is crucial to tackle political and institutional barriers that hinder youth participation in climate diplomacy. This includes advocating for inclusive policies and ensuring that youth have the necessary resources and platforms for meaningful involvement. Expanding funding for youth-led projects can enhance their impact on climate change and peacebuilding efforts. Encouraging youth leadership in sustainable practices, such as renewable energy and sustainable agriculture, is essential for mitigating resource-related conflicts. Additionally, ensuring youth representation in local, national, and international climate policy discussions will help shape policies that address both climate and security challenges effectively. Promoting integrated and inclusive approaches that link climate action with peacebuilding can ensure environmental sustainability is considered in conflict resolution and recovery plans. Involvement of youth in policy development at national and continental levels is also critical for rational management of climate-related resources, fostering long-term peace and security.

5. 7. Reduce the Human Cost of Weapons

The human cost of weapons remains a critical concern across much of Africa, where ongoing conflicts have severely impacted civilian populations, particularly the youth. Violent conflicts involving weapons have led to high civilian casualties and large-scale displacement. Despite being disproportionately affected; young people are often overlooked in decision-making processes related to humanitarian response. Their participation in crises is either underrepresented or undervalued, and youth-led humanitarian initiatives frequently encounter barriers such as limited resources, coordination challenges, and a lack of institutional support.

Addressing the human cost of weapons is closely linked to the success of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs. Prolonged conflicts in the region have resulted in the recruitment of young people into armed groups, making DDR efforts essential for their reintegration into society. These programs not only provide a pathway to long-term peace but also serve as a vital mechanism for reducing the human cost of weapons by helping young people transition from conflict participants to active contributors to peacebuilding efforts. The peace and security situation in Africa's five regions underscores the need for comprehensive approaches that prioritize youth involvement in mitigating armed violence and shaping sustainable peace initiatives through:



i. Youth Engagement in Humanitarian Response: To effectively involve youth in humanitarian response, it is essential to position them not only as beneficiaries but also as leaders and decision-makers in relief operations. Actively encouraging youth to take leadership roles in humanitarian efforts fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to the needs of affected communities. Providing technical and financial support to youth-led initiatives is key to amplifying their impact, enabling these efforts to reach more vulnerable populations. Additionally, the focus should extend beyond immediate relief to building long-term community resilience. By addressing sustained needs such as education, healthcare, and psychosocial support, youth-led humanitarian efforts can help communities recover more holistically, ensuring both immediate and future stability.

ii. Youth Involvement in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Programs:

To enhance the effectiveness of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs, it is crucial to actively involve youth in their design and implementation. Youth participation ensures that these programs are more responsive to the needs and realities of the communities they aim to serve. By developing youth-led initiatives that support disarmament and reintegration, young people can play a pivotal role in fostering trust, rebuilding social cohesion, and promoting long-term peace.

5. 8. Strengthen Peace Operations and Partnerships

In many conflict-affected areas, young people, despite being on the frontlines of crises, are often excluded from formal peace operations and international peace processes. This exclusion undermines their potential contribution as key stakeholders in peacebuilding efforts. A significant challenge is the lack of comprehensive training opportunities for youth in critical areas such as peace negotiations, mediation, and conflict resolution. As a result, youth-led networks advocating for peace tend to be fragmented, lacking the cohesion needed to effectively influence larger peace operations.

Strengthening military-civilian cooperation and encouraging youth participation in peace missions are crucial for the success of peace operations. Enhancing these partnerships fosters greater collaboration and boosts the overall effectiveness of peace efforts. Despite this, youth marginalization persists, with limited consultations on peace and security issues. Bureaucratic processes often limit young people's involvement, while formal peace processes remain dominated by older generations, leaving youth voices largely unheard. Overcoming these challenges and building stronger partnerships are essential for ensuring that peace operations are inclusive and representative of all stakeholders—especially youth, who play a critical role in long-term peacebuilding. As such, the youth proposes the following:



i. Support Youth Engagement in Local Business, Creativity, and Community Programs:

Peacekeeping missions should promote values that enhance youth creativity and entrepreneurship. By engaging young people in local business and community programs, peace efforts can shift the focus away from violence and extremism. Encouraging youth participation in business ventures fosters a positive narrative, reduces their involvement in conflict, and provides alternative pathways for growth and development.

ii. Inclusion of Youth in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR):

Peacekeeping missions must prioritize the inclusion of youth, especially young combatants, in DDR processes by involving them in decision-making at both the grassroots and higher levels. This inclusive approach addresses the stigmatization of youth in conflict zones, ensuring that their voices are heard, and contributing to more effective, long-term peacebuilding efforts.

iii. Enhance Skills in Mediation, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution:

Peacekeeping missions should provide comprehensive training programs that equip young people with mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills. By enhancing these skills, youth can play a more active role in local peacebuilding initiatives, fostering stability in their communities and creating a cadre of youth peacebuilders.

iv. Support Education, Mental Health, and Local Dialogue Initiatives:

Investment in education, mental health services, and local dialogue initiatives are essential for youth engagement in peacebuilding. Peace missions should support programs that focus on educating young people and facilitating local dialogues. This holistic approach ensures that youth are empowered, healthy, and capable of contributing to peace efforts.

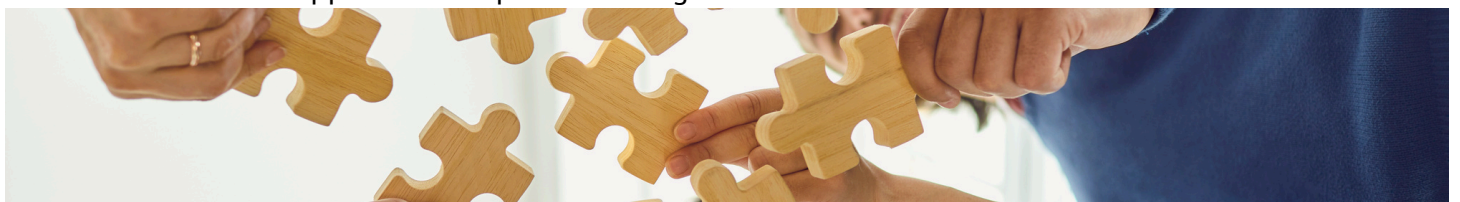
v. Maintain Non-Political Engagement and Grassroots Focus:

Peacekeeping missions should adopt a non-political stance and focus on engaging grassroots-level youth rather than solely interacting with political leaders. This approach ensures that the needs and perspectives of young people in local communities are addressed, promoting more inclusive and effective peacebuilding processes that reflect the realities on the ground.

vi. Strengthen Youth Networks and Partnerships:

Strengthen and unify youth networks advocating for peace by creating platforms for collaboration, information sharing, and joint action. Establish partnerships between youth organizations and international peace agencies to ensure youth voices and perspectives are fully integrated into peace operations.

Additionally, promotes public-private partnerships (PPP) and collaboration between youth, private entities, and SMEs to support conflict resolution and peace agendas, offering innovative approaches to peacebuilding.



vii. Encourage Youth Participation in Global Peace Operations: Peace missions should involve youth as partners, encouraging young Africans to actively participate in peace operations both locally and globally. Supporting their involvement in international missions enhances their contribution to global peace and security while promoting youth-led perspectives in international peace efforts.

viii. Depoliticize and Demilitarize Peace Building Missions: Depoliticizing and demilitarizing peacebuilding missions is essential for fostering greater youth participation in peace and security efforts. Currently, some regional mechanisms are closed off to young people, often requiring access through highly politicized National Youth Councils (NYCs). This creates barriers to meaningful youth engagement. To address this, peace and security platforms should be opened up, allowing defense forces to share their experiences and collaborate with youth. Furthermore, governance issues that exacerbate conflict must be addressed, ensuring that all youth, not just those aligned with political interests, can freely participate in peace initiatives. A clear monitoring and evaluation framework is needed to track the inclusion of youth in ongoing and completed peace processes. Strengthening the autonomy of NYCs would allow them to work more effectively with governments on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agendas, particularly in developing National Action Plans. Additionally, fostering collaboration between youth, private entities, and SMEs through public-private partnerships (PPP) would further enhance conflict resolution efforts and support broader peace agendas.

5. 9. Reform Peace Enforcement Institutions

Most countries in Africa are facing rising political polarization, with declining trust in governance and democratic institutions. This polarization is intensified by the exclusion of youth from political discourse. Many young people in the region feel marginalized, either due to the lack of representation or disillusionment with corrupt and ineffective governance. This underrepresentation of youth in policymaking has resulted in policies that fail to adequately address the needs, aspirations, and concerns of the younger generation, further deepening the sense of disconnect between youth and the political establishment. Due to this reason, Africa's youth recommends to:

i. Engage Youth in Global Reform Dialogues: Actively involve young people in dialogues and advocacy efforts aimed at reforming international bodies such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), making these institutions more effective, inclusive, and representative. By participating in discussions on reform, youth can advocate for changes that address current global challenges and ensure that their perspectives are reflected in decision-making processes. Their involvement is critical in driving reforms that promote equitable representation and responsiveness to the needs of future generations.

ii. Advocate for Inclusive Governance Structures: Promote the creation of governance frameworks at both regional and international levels that are inclusive and representative of diverse groups, including youth, women, and marginalized communities. This advocacy should focus on ensuring these groups have meaningful participation in policymaking, especially on issues that directly impact them. Inclusive governance not only strengthens democratic principles but also leads to more comprehensive and effective solutions to complex global challenges, from peace and security to sustainable development.

iii. Enhance Youth Influence in Regional Peace Support Operations: Strengthen the role of youth in shaping and influencing regional peace support operations by ensuring that their voices are central in discussions about conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and security strategies. This involves creating spaces for youth participation in decision-making processes related to peace support missions and conflict management. By amplifying youth perspectives, peace support operations can become more innovative, sustainable, and responsive to the unique challenges faced by young people in conflict-affected regions.

5.10. Prevent the Weaponization of Emerging Domains

The weaponization of emerging domains is an escalating challenge in today's security landscape, from which Africa and the youth on the continent cannot shield themselves. The rapid proliferation of digital platforms, such as social media, has turned misinformation, hate speech, and other harmful content into powerful tools for inciting violence and intensifying conflicts. Many young people lack the digital literacy needed to critically assess the information they encounter online, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation through disinformation campaigns.

Adding to these challenges is the swift advancement of technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity. While these innovations hold great potential, they also raise profound ethical and security concerns. AI, for example, can be exploited for misinformation, surveillance, and even military purposes, potentially destabilizing already fragile regions.

In regions such as Eastern Africa, porous borders have further enabled the illegal trafficking of weapons and technology, aggravating insecurity. The role of business cartels in the arms trade, coupled with weak policy frameworks and the lax enforcement of small arms control, compounds the problem. Conflicts in the Middle East also amplify these issues, as weapons and strategies from these areas often spill into African countries.

As emerging technologies continue to evolve, there is an urgent need for inclusive governance, robust policy frameworks, and stronger regional cooperation to prevent their misuse. Addressing these multifaceted challenges is crucial to safeguarding the future of African youth and ensuring regional stability by:

i. Enhancing Digital Literacy and Awareness: To effectively address the growing challenges of misinformation, hate speech, and harmful online content, it is essential to enhance digital literacy among youth. Implementing targeted programs that teach young people how to critically assess information, recognize disinformation, and understand the importance of issues like cyberbullying, data privacy, and responsible technology use is vital. Ensuring equal access to digital education, especially for marginalized youth in rural areas, must be prioritized to bridge the digital divide. Alongside these efforts, fostering youth-led initiatives that promote tolerance, understanding, and constructive dialogue in online spaces can further counteract hate speech and divisive content. By empowering youth to actively shape and monitor online discourse, these initiatives will not only improve digital literacy but also contribute to building safer and more inclusive digital environments.



ii. Developing Ethical and Regulatory Frameworks for Emerging Technologies: As emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly shape societal dynamics, it is critical to develop and enforce comprehensive ethical and regulatory frameworks. These frameworks should advocate for the responsible use of AI, particularly in high-stakes scenarios such as elections and emergencies, where the misuse of such technologies could distort public perception and destabilize communities. By formulating policies that mitigate these risks, AI can be harnessed for societal benefit rather than harm. In addition, robust regulations for digital media platforms must be established to prevent their misuse in spreading disinformation and divisive content, safeguarding public interests, and promoting responsible technology use. Developing comprehensive ethical guidelines that govern the application of emerging technologies is essential for ensuring that these innovations contribute to societal progress, rather than exacerbating conflict and instability.

iii. Supporting Research and Innovation: To effectively address the challenges posed by emerging technologies, it is essential to prioritize research and innovation that informs policy and governance decisions. This begins with a commitment to advancing research on the impacts of emerging technologies, particularly in areas like arms control and technology governance, with a focus on publishing findings that can shape effective policies. Complementing this, leadership and innovation programs should be developed to mentor young innovators. These programs will equip youth with the skills to leverage technology for social transformation, peacebuilding, and responsible communication. By fostering a culture of innovation and research, youth can be empowered to not only understand the complexities of emerging technologies but also to lead efforts in creating sustainable and peaceful futures.

iv. Strengthening Cross-Border Collaboration and Civil Society Capacity: To address shared security challenges effectively, it is crucial to promote cross-border youth collaboration, particularly in combating the illegal arms trade and sharing best practices for peacebuilding. By fostering regional partnerships and joint initiatives, young people can collectively address issues that transcend national borders, leveraging their combined efforts for greater impact. In parallel, strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations is essential to support this collaborative approach. Building the skills and resources of these organizations will enhance their ability to engage in digital advocacy, influence technology policy, and facilitate meaningful youth participation in governance processes. This integrated approach not only empowers youth but also ensures that civil society is well-positioned to contribute to effective and inclusive solutions in the realms of technology and security.



TRUST

v. Youth Engagement in Peace and Governance Processes: To effectively integrate youth into peace and governance processes, it is essential to engage them directly in peace negotiations and security-related decision-making frameworks, ensuring their voices are heard and their perspectives are considered. This involvement should be complemented by fostering strong partnerships between youth, civil society organizations, and international bodies, which can amplify their influence and enhance the effectiveness of their initiatives. Additionally, providing comprehensive education and training on the ethical use of technology and its implications is crucial. This will equip young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to actively contribute to the governance of emerging technologies and the formulation of conflict resolution strategies. By linking these elements, we can build a more inclusive and informed approach to peacebuilding and security governance.

5.11. Build a Stronger Collective Security Machinery

The need to build a stronger collective security machinery is gaining increasing relevance in today's global peace and security landscape, especially for African youth. Despite being recognized as critical stakeholders, youth peacebuilders often find themselves excluded from meaningful engagement with international peace and security policies. Structured pathways for their involvement in key advocacy areas, such as the reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), remain limited. This gap is particularly concerning in the context of Africa's pressing need for greater representation within the UNSC. Currently, no African country holds a permanent seat, and efforts to secure additional permanent and non-permanent seats for Africa face strong geopolitical resistance from powerful member states. For African youth advocates, the highly controlled and regulated nature of international peace processes often stifles their ability to contribute to meaningful reforms. The limited financing for these reforms further complicates the situation, as Africa relies heavily on foreign aid, which comes with conditions that may undermine its sovereignty and long-term security interests. This dynamic not only discourages youth from participating but also limits the continent's capacity to influence global security decisions. With Africa's demographic significance and increasing role in international peace and security, the continent's voice must be amplified in key decision-making processes, particularly through the active engagement of its youth through:

i. Reforming the UNSC to ensure that Africa gets permanent seats: As the single most important avenue for ensuring representation of the voice of African people including youth, the reform of the UNSC on the basis of the Ezulwini Consensus of the African Union is a strategic imperative.

ii. Institutionalize Youth Representation and Advocacy: To effectively institutionalize youth representation and advocacy, it is essential to establish formal mechanisms that integrate youth perspectives into peace and security discussions. One crucial step is to create youth advisory councils within the AU and UNSC. These councils would collaborate closely with AU Peace and Security Council and UNSC representatives, ensuring that youth voices are consistently included in policy deliberations and decision-making processes. This approach not only formalizes youth involvement but also enhances the credibility and impact of their contributions. Complementing this, advocating for a dedicated African youth seat on the UNSC is pivotal. Such a seat would provide a direct platform for youth to engage in peacekeeping, community engagement, and mediation processes, thus fostering a more inclusive and representative peace process.

iii. Strengthen Capacity and Support for Youth Advocates: To effectively strengthen the capacity of youth and support their advocacy efforts, it is essential to provide comprehensive training and encourage strategic alliances. Enhancing the skills of African youth, including the African Union Youth Ambassador for Peace, through targeted training in diplomatic negotiation, international law, and advocacy strategies will significantly empower them to influence high-level decision-making processes. This training will equip youth with the necessary tools to engage effectively in peace and security discussions. In parallel, supporting youth advocates in building strategic alliances with member states and civil society organizations is crucial. Such alliances will amplify their voices, enabling them to advocate more powerfully for UNSC reforms and ensure that these reforms reflect contemporary geopolitical realities, including African representation.

iv. Leverage Existing Frameworks and Platforms: To maximize the impact of youth advocacy in peace and security, it is crucial to effectively utilize existing frameworks and platforms. Key global and continental frameworks, such as the UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security (UNSC 2250) the AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (CFYPS), and the African Youth Charter (AYC), provide a strong foundation for addressing youth challenges and ensuring that their needs and priorities are reflected in peacebuilding efforts. By aligning youth advocacy with these frameworks, we can ensure a structured and coordinated approach to addressing their concerns. In conjunction with this, leveraging established platforms such as SADC, COMESA, NARC and UN agencies are essential to support the efforts of national governments and young activists in advancing peace initiatives. These platforms not only offer opportunities for youth participation but also provide access to critical information on international initiatives.

v. Promote Education, Training, and Research: To strengthen youth engagement in peace and security, it is vital to prioritize education, training, and research. Promoting education and training on international resolutions related to youth safety and security will enhance the advocacy capabilities of young peacebuilders, equipping them with the knowledge necessary to engage effectively in high-level discussions. At the same time, investing in policy development and research on youth peace and security will further support these efforts. By empowering young researchers and ensuring their findings are widely disseminated, we can ensure that youth advocacy is not only well-informed but also influential in shaping policy and practice. Linking education and training with research development creates a comprehensive approach where learning and evidence-based insights drive impactful youth participation in peace and security processes.



vi. Enhance Economic Empowerment and Sustainability: To ensure the long-term success of youth engagement in peacebuilding, it is essential to enhance both economic empowerment and the sustainability of youth-led initiatives. Increasing funding for youth-led programs and promoting economic empowerment through targeted financial resources will enable young people to actively contribute to peace efforts. These initiatives should not only focus on immediate economic opportunities but also be designed to foster long-term impact. By developing programs that go beyond short-term projects, we can ensure continued youth involvement and a lasting contribution to peace and security.

vii. Strengthen National and Regional Institutions: To effectively promote youth participation in peace and security, it is crucial to strengthen both national and regional institutions. Supporting national institutions responsible for implementing UNSC resolutions will ensure that these bodies are equipped to execute resolutions effectively while fostering an environment that encourages meaningful youth involvement. Simultaneously, enhancing youth participation in regional peace and security strategies is essential. By actively engaging youth in regional discourse through Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other youth focal points, we can ensure that regional strategies accurately reflect youth perspectives and contributions.

viii. Promote Civil Society Engagement and Mentorship: To enhance youth participation in peace and security, it is essential to foster stronger ties between youth and civil society organizations while promoting mentorship and media engagement. Deepening collaboration with civil society organizations will strengthen advocacy efforts and ensure that youth are actively included in decision-making processes. At the same time, implementing mentorship programs for young leaders and peacebuilders will provide them with the guidance and support needed to navigate the complexities of peace advocacy. Leveraging media and arts, particularly through social media platforms, will further amplify youth voices and raise awareness about peace and security issues.

ix. Address Trust, Social Support, and Mental Health: Building trust and providing social support are crucial to fostering meaningful youth engagement in peace and security efforts. To address trust and relevance issues, it is essential to align UNSC reforms with the immediate needs and priorities of young people, such as employment and education, ensuring that these reforms resonate with their lived experiences. Simultaneously, addressing social support and mental health for youth, particularly those affected by conflict, is vital. By creating platforms that allow youth to share their experiences and learn from one another, we can improve conflict prevention and resolution efforts while also promoting mental well-being.



Conclusion

The structured dialogue spearheaded by the AU in collaboration with Switzerland and Amani Africa on the NA4P is the first of its kind. It sets a very good precedent on how to take the critical issues raised in the NA4P forward with a focus on youth, peace, and security. It also profiles the critical role that the unique infrastructure established by the AU, the AYAPs, can play in advancing the various areas of action in the NA4P.

As canvased in this report, the critical role of African youth in the implementation of the New Agenda for Peace and advancing peace and security across the continent requires engaging both the significant challenges and promising opportunities for their engagement. It highlights significant regional and cross-cutting challenges that hinder the active participation of the youth.

From Central Africa's governance struggles, centered around the weakness of state institutions, which hampers the effective implementation of the NA4P's global strategies, and militarized environments in Eastern and West Africa, in the Sahel to the Eastern and Southern Africa's socio-economic challenges and technological divides, each region faces unique obstacles that impact youth involvement in peacebuilding, thereby signifying the need for tailoring the pursuit of the NA4P to the specific regional and national contexts. North Africa's fragmented peace initiatives and limited awareness of the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda further complicate the integration of youth in conflict resolution and governance.



The cross-cutting issues highlight the systemic challenges that youth face across Africa. Marginalization from decision-making processes, economic hardships, socio-cultural barriers, and security concerns remain prevalent. The lack of support for youth-led initiatives, compounded by climate change and its impact on resource scarcity, further hampers their ability to contribute to peacebuilding and security. The report calls for targeted funding, increased capacity-building, and inclusive decision-making to empower youth. It emphasizes the need for better integration of youth perspectives in peace processes, with specific recommendations for addressing the human cost of weapons, boosting preventive diplomacy, transforming gendered power dynamics, and addressing the climate-security nexus.

In achieving sustainable peace and security, the report indicates the importance of adopting a holistic and inclusive approach that acknowledges and addresses these diverse challenges. The recommendations provided are crucial for ensuring that African youth can play a transformative role in shaping the implementation of the New Agenda for Peace. By leveraging the energy, creativity, and leadership of young people, and by addressing the systemic barriers they face, Africa can pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Key recommendations include increasing financial and technical support for youth-led initiatives, improving access to decision-making spaces, and fostering intergenerational mentorship. Promoting gender equality, addressing the intersection of climate change with peace and security, and enhancing youth involvement in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs are also outlined as crucial steps towards a more inclusive peacebuilding process. Additionally, leveraging technology, improving climate literacy, and advocating for youth-focused policies are essential to overcoming barriers and amplifying the impact of youth in peace efforts.

By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommended strategies, Africa can unlock the full potential of its youthful population, ensuring their meaningful contribution to sustainable peace and security. The commitment to empowering youth, fostering inclusive dialogue, and addressing cross-cutting issues will be instrumental in advancing the New Agenda for Peace and aligning with Africa's broader goals under Agenda 2063 and the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace, and Security (CFYPS).



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