5th Annual Retreat of Special Envoys and Mediators on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability
21–23 October 2014: Retreat
20 October: Meeting of the Chairperson with AU Special Envoys and Special Representatives
Arusha, Tanzania

SILENCING THE GUNS - OWNING THE FUTURE

Concept note
SILENCING THE GUNS - OWNING THE FUTURE

Background

1. More than a decade after the creation of the African Union, Africa’s future presents an apparent paradox. On the one hand there is the narrative of ‘Africa rising’: Africa is the fastest growing region in the world, and annual GDP growth averaged 4.8% over the decade 2002-2011. Indeed, of the ten top fastest-growing economies in the world by GDP, eight African countries featured on the list for 2012, and five for 2013, respectively. This growth has been accompanied by a growing middle class and increased foreign direct investment. On the other hand, this unprecedented economic growth is accompanied by growing levels of inequality, and recent years have also seen a resurgence in instability on the continent, due in large part to a crisis of governance, the growth of corruption, social exclusion, the growth of identity politics, the rise of violent radical extremism, and contestation around elections and efforts by incumbent elites to retain power.

2. Moreover, recent surveys conducted by Afrobarometer in 34 African countries suggest that the ‘Africa rising’ narrative is not shared in popular perceptions of ordinary Africans, an indication that the exponential economic growth is not reflected in the socio-economic development of the population. Prevailing popular perceptions suggest that the economic growth enjoyed by African states has not made the impact one could have expected in the ordinary lives of Africans, and that those millions of people who have been lifted out of poverty remain vulnerable to external forces, and could quickly fall back into poverty with the sudden loss of a bread-winner, the failure of one rainy season, the eruption of conflict or any other single God- or man-made catastrophe. Added to this is the impact of changing global power dynamics including globalization itself. Growing inequality and discontent are features of the global economy, and are issues of concern throughout the world. Of particular concern here is that a number of African countries, or regions within countries, appear to be trapped in a permanent state of fragility and global/national marginalization, evidenced, in some cases, by extreme poverty, poor/weak governance, high levels of inequality and exclusion, high levels of vulnerability to global climactic changes, as well as persistent high levels of instability and violence from which there appears little hope of escape. The result is that Africa’s story is increasingly diverse - consisting simultaneously of divergent strands of success, stagnation and even regression.

3. Against this background, the AU intends to convene its fifth annual High Level Retreat, in Arusha, Tanzania, as an opportunity to focus with a fresh eye on threats and emerging challenges on the continent. The first retreat took place in Cairo, Egypt, from 26-28 August

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1 As impressive as these numbers are, they should be viewed with some caution: many of the countries identified are growing off a very low base, and at least two (Libya and South Sudan) have suffered reverses, mired as they are in internal conflict.
2010, and concluded with the *Cairo Call for Peace* which, among other things, institutionalized the High Level Retreat on Peace and Security as an annual event. Subsequent retreats were held in Cairo in 2011 and 2012 and, in 2013, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

4. The High Level Retreat in Arusha, Tanzania is the second event organized this year in response to the clarion call to ‘silence the guns’ by the year 2020, and to develop a detailed strategy to this end, following the retreat held in Durban, South Africa, in April 2014. That month also saw the Peace and Security Council holding a special session on this topic. A new vigor and momentum is emerging, and the Commission is at the forefront of efforts to develop coherent strategies to ensure that the African continent attains the goal of silencing the guns in the shortest possible time, thereby laying the basis for stability, economic growth and development, social advancement and justice.

5. In accordance with the thinking behind Agenda 2063, the Arusha retreat will adopt a long-term and structural approach to understanding and responding to violence and instability. The retreat will look at trends and forecasts over time, in order to create a shared understanding of the current situation and prospects for the future. It will attempt to answer the question: what are the long-term responses required to respond to Africa’s instability? Two specific threats/emerging issues of particular concern to the continent will also be addressed in some detail, in an attempt to begin narrowing the focus with a view to designing concrete strategies. These particular issues are, firstly, the phenomenon of terrorist/extremist insurgencies and the ways in which local terrorist/violent extremist networks relate both to global trends as well as to transnational organized criminal networks and, secondly, the emerging threat of climate change to peace, security and stability on the continent, a threat that is likely only to growing the coming years and that, if not addressed, will undermine all our efforts to silence the guns.

**Methodology**

6. The Arusha retreat will adopt an informal setting that will encourage an in-depth interrogation of current and emerging trends, informed by experience, drawing on the best recent academic work and practice. To this end all speakers will be requested to speak in their personal capacity, frankly, and on a non-attribution basis.

7. The opening session of the retreat will include introductory address by President Jakaya Kikwete, UN Secretary general Ban Ki Moon and AU Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

8. Thereafter, the retreat will take the format of round-table discussions, moderated by an eminent journalist. Each session will include a maximum of four persons, eminent experts, on the panel, either practitioners or academics, and each panel will include a mix of both. The first part of each session will be led by the moderator, who will pose probing questions to the experts on the subject of that session. This will be followed by a Q&A session with members of the audience. The retreat will be conducted under the rules of non-attribution.
9. For the purposes of the retreat, 2 senior African journalists will be contracted to moderate the discussions. One moderator will be assigned per roundtable, and the two moderators will alternate the sessions. The informal nature of the roundtable discussion will encourage greater participation, and it will also allow more in-depth discussions. At the end of each roundtable, the moderator will provide a summary of the most important points to emerge from the discussion.

10. During day one the retreat will discuss current trends and drivers of instability. On the second day participants will discuss possible responses to emerging trends regarding security threats and instability, and conclude with recommendations with policy implications for the African Union. The subsequent Arusha statement will only be finalized after the conference, to allow time for reflection and integration of inputs into a framework that can, in turn, feed into Agenda 2063.