



Concept Note

On Silencing the Guns: Pre-requisites for Realising a Conflict-Free Africa by the Year 2020 for the Open Session of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, AU New Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, 24 April 2014

I. Background

In the period 1963 to 2001, Africa lacked a robust continental institutional framework for effectively preventing and combating the scourge of violent conflict, with its heavy toll on people and the economy. Whilst that period witnessed the liberation of the continent from colonial rule and the dismantlement of apartheid, violent conflicts have remained prevalent in some parts of Africa, thus undermining development gains and efforts.

The advent, in 2002, of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), which embodies the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), was a milestone in Africa's relentless quest for sustainable peace, security and stability as well as for more "bread" and "butter" (improved livelihoods). The PSC Protocol, which entered into force in December 2003, and the progressive implementation of the APSA, reached their 10th anniversary this year 2014. The twin problem of persistence of conflicts and relapse into violence stands as one of the major challenges facing Africa.

II. Context

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, deeply concerned and discomfited by the persistence of conflicts and cases of relapse into violence, in some parts of Africa, declared in their Solemn Declaration on the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the OAU/AU, a pledge "not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans" and undertook "to end all wars in Africa by 2020". In this regard, they pledged to make peace a reality for all African people and to rid the continent of wars, end inter and intra-community conflicts, violations of human rights, humanitarian disasters and violent conflicts, and to prevent genocide.

III. Objective

Since this pledge was made almost one year ago, there has neither been a structured plan of action nor well-defined strategy to ensure that Africa is rid of conflict by 2020. The purpose of the open session on “Silencing the Guns: Pre-requisites for Realising a Conflict-Free Africa by the Year 2020”, is to lay the foundation for the formulation of a framework to guide the actions required to achieve the noble goal of bringing conflicts to an end in Africa. It is intended that during the debate, views will be exchanged on how to effectively address all the root causes of conflicts in Africa in their widest dimension. Furthermore, it is expected that the debate will focus attention on the challenges and opportunities of attaining a conflict free Africa by the end of this decade.

Accordingly, the following questions should inspire and guide the debate:

- i. How can Africa end its ongoing violent conflicts, prevent relapse to conflicts and ensure the sustenance of peace on the continent?
- ii. Can Africa, acting alone, address the internal and external factors that drive and sustain its violent conflicts?
- iii. What strategies are required to prevent relapse into the cycle of violent conflicts?
- iv. How can Africa sharpen its preventive tools in order to neutralize actions and events that often trigger violent conflicts?
- v. To what extent and effect has the continent made use of its Continental Early Warning System, Panel of the Wise and other regional mechanisms to serve its conflict prevention and management efforts?
- vi. Are all African Union Member States willing to sign, ratify and domesticate the existing normative frameworks on governance, peace and security? If not, why not?
- vii. In the six years that remain between now and 2020, what concrete steps are required to ensure that the objective of ending violent conflicts on the continent does not remain a mirage?
- viii. Whose responsibility is it to bring about a conflict-free Africa?

IV. Expected Outcome

A conflict-free Africa is achievable. However, this will not come from high sounding political speeches, slogans and successive declarations or further norm setting. Rather, it can only be achieved through well-articulated plan of action (roadmap) and its effective implementation by all stakeholders with measurable and realistic targets. The outcome of the debate will contribute to the development of such roadmap to underpin the attainment of a conflict-free Africa.

V. Participants

The session will be open to all AU Member States, representatives of diplomatic missions in Ethiopia, development partners, academicians, civil society, think-tanks and other relevant stakeholders. The session will be interactive in nature and participants are encouraged to be frank, objective and innovative in their thinking and refrain from repeating old recycled ideas on conflict prevention and management in Africa.

Interventions will be limited to a maximum of four (4) minutes.