Insecurity in Africa is growing, Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commissioner Amb. Bankole Adeoye told delegates at the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly in Addis Ababa in February. This despite Member State security forces’ “sustained efforts to silence the gun by 2030, within the larger context of the realisation of the aspirations of Agenda 2063.”

Adeoye was presenting highlights of the 2023 Report on the State of Peace and Security in Africa on behalf of AU Commission Chair H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, complementing the presentation of February 2024 Peace and Security Council (PSC) Chair, Morocco. He said Africa’s multiplicity and complexity of security threats continued last year, with the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) taking strain.

Terrorism and violent extremism, rising insecurity and growing cross-border tensions flourished among AU Member States. This included climate-induced conflicts. Adeoye said the evidence was clear that climate change was a ‘threat multiplier that we should collectively address. ... We remain resolute to contributing to the Common African Position on climate change peace and security in close collaboration with relevant actors’.

From Libya to the Lake Chad Basin, and the wider Sahel zone, from Somalia in the Horn of Africa to Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique, he said, the security picture is depressing. Private military contractors and mercenaries were present in many
parts of Africa. Also worrying was the trend of democratic regression through unconstitutional changes of government (UCGs), complex and prolonged political transitions, and governance deficits. He referred to the successful military coups in Gabon and Niger, and several attempted coups, since last year’s AU Summit. Six Member States were suspended; the highest in AU history. Global conflicts such as the Russia/Ukraine war and the Israeli-Gaza situation, in the face of dwindling multilateralism, also negatively impacted Africa, he said.

One ‘positive’ was Member States’ greater commitment to constitutionalism and the rule of law. This was partly reflected in the successful presidential and legislative elections of 13 countries. A ‘shining light for democracy’ was Liberia’s peaceful transfer of power, where George Weah conceded defeat and handed the reins to President Joseph Boakai. ‘This historic demonstration of constitutional respect and adherence to the rule of law is exemplary, and this Assembly may wish to salute former President George Weah for upholding the cherished values of democracy and transfer of power.’

The AU Assembly had consistently reaffirmed zero tolerance for UCGs, he said. ‘This is greatly commendable. If the aspirations of AU Agenda 2063 are to remain on track, we must consign military dictatorship to the heaps of history. This Assembly has no room for military rulers.’

He said the Commission would continue leveraging AU Election Observation Missions to help Member States anchor constitutionalism and the conduct of regular, inclusive, credible and peaceful elections. Women and youth were also better represented in AU election observation processes last year (women at almost 60 percent). This year, 15 of the world’s over 50 expected elections worldwide will be held by AU Member States.

On another positive note, the AU had achieved numerous institutional milestones on its way to Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns by 2030, Adeoye said. The Commission and United Nations Development Programme launched the Africa Facility to Support Inclusive Transitions (AFSIT) last July. This collaborative initiative will provide a strategic framework for integrated programmatic support to African countries undergoing political transitions.

The AU continues to re-energise the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) through operationalisation of the Inter-Regional Economic Community Knowledge Exchange (I-RECKE) platform. Last year this served as a platform for the AU Commission and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to intensify their collaboration. ‘We are also stepping up partnerships with think tanks through the Network of Think Tanks for Peace (NeTT4Peace) as we inject fresh ideas into promoting conflict prevention and conflict resolution.’ The AU Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) is now operational in Cairo, and the Revised AU PCRD Policy, which takes into account environmental sustainability, youth inclusion and child protection, has been finalised.

‘African solutions to African problems’ is being actualised through the Peace Fund, which the Commission operationalised in 2023. The Crisis Reserve Facility is fully functional, with US$7 million for 2023 and US$10 million for 2024. ‘The complex security challenges in Africa, compounded by increasing geostrategic competition, again confirm the imperative for sustainable, predictable, and adequate funding for AU peace interventions,’ Adeoye said. ‘The revitalised Peace Fund is a great success, and we will build on its potential.’

The AU, through its PSC and African Representatives on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), draws global attention to the UNSC’s part in the sustainable funding of AU-led Peace Support Operations. In December the UNSC adopted Resolution 2719, authored and sponsored by the A3 and co-sponsored by 28 African member states in the UN system. It’s a step towards sustainable financing for AU peace and security operations through UN-assessed contributions. The Commission is continuing its work towards operationalising the African Standby Force through mobilising the RECs/RMs.

It is also intensifying the Women, Peace and Security agenda working with the AU Special Envoy. ‘Given the critical and catalytic role of women in peacebuilding, the Commission is building capacity for women working with the Africa First Ladies Peace Mission and the Organization of African First Ladies for Development for effective coordination and impact,’ he said.

The AU Commission has scaled up mobilisation of partners in areas of governance, peace and security with a touch of innovation and flexibility based on its strategic priorities in the AGA and APSA. Regarding peace and security in 2024, Adeoye said it was
important to scale up mutual solidarity and build local, national, regional, and continental resilience. He said the Commission needed to renew its commitment to mobilise support for general elections in South Sudan slated for December 2024. ‘We commend the C5 chaired by South Africa, with the membership of Nigeria, Algeria, Chad and Rwanda, for the consistent support,’ he said. It also needed to ‘intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive ceasefire and commence political dialogue in Sudan’.

‘The AU High-Level Panel on Sudan, led by H.E. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, is poised to work with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other stakeholders to engage the Sudanese parties.’ He reaffirmed the PSC’s position calling for constructive dialogue in finding amicable solutions to the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict, and said the implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement for Northern Ethiopia was vital. He said the AU would work to consolidate and protect the gains of ATMIS in Somalia post-December 2024. He reminded delegates of the importance of maritime security – saying the AU was to consolidate its plan for the first-ever continental maritime exercise, ‘which has reached an advanced stage’.

The Commission is committed to strengthening AU-REC cooperation. ‘We … will step up collaboration

with IGAD, the Economic Community of West African States, Southern African Development Community, East African Community, and Arab Maghreb Union in addressing peace, security and governance challenges at the regional level,’ he said.

Adeoye noted the Commission’s support for the AU’s theme for 2024, which emphasises the right to inclusive education and education in emergency situations. And the Commission will this year start implementing the AU 10-year Strategic Plan for the protection of human rights.

‘I salute all the Champions, Special Representatives of the Chairperson of the Commission, and High Representatives in the Political Affairs, Peace and Security domain for pushing the continental agenda at the highest level,’ he said. ‘Specifically permit me to duly recognise the immense contribution of the AU Youth Ambassadors for Peace who joined this Assembly.

‘We are fighting a second generation for liberation. That is freedom from the ideology of hate perpetrated by terrorism and violent extremism and unconstitutional changes of government. ... A peaceful and secure Africa, a conflict-free Africa, and a democratic Africa symbolise the Africa we want.’

AU REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO PEACE IN LIBYA, SIGNALS RETURN OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVE TO TRIPOLI

In a solid demonstration of its commitment to stand by Libyan stakeholders in their pursuit of peace, stability, reconciliation and reconstruction, the AU has decided to relocate its representation, the AU Liaison Office in Libya, from Tunis to Tripoli.

Under the leadership of Conflict Management Director Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, a team conducted an assessment mission in Tunis and Tripoli from 29 July to 4 August 2023. The objective was to facilitate the relocation process by the end of 2023, enabling the AU to engage directly with
The AU High-Level Ad hoc Committee for South Sudan (C5), chaired by South Africa’s Minister of International Relations and Cooperation H.E. Naledi Pandor, convened a ministerial-level consultative meeting on 16 February 2024.

This was on the margins of the 37th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Its aim was to consider the progress and challenges in implementing the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), signed in 2018. The C5 comprises Algeria, Chad, Nigeria and Rwanda.

The meeting was attended by H.E. Ahmed Attaf, Algeria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad; H.E. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs, Chadians Abroad, and International Cooperation of the Republic of Chad; as well as representatives from Nigeria and Rwanda.

At the February meeting, the ministers exchanged views on how to support the implementation of outstanding tasks of the revitalised agreement in order to create conducive conditions for credible, transparent December 2024 elections. This in accordance with the roadmap of the extended transitional period reached in August 2022.

The committee committed to working closely with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and East African Community. It decided to undertake a ministerial visit to South Sudan to express solidarity with the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) and the people of South Sudan at this critical stage of the transition period.
It also commended the Commission for its efforts in South Sudan and the leadership of the RTGoNU for their commitment and leadership in implementing the R-ARCSS. It reiterated that dialogue was the only viable means of sustainably addressing their differences, and indicated its readiness to facilitate.

Among others, it also reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to support the South Sudanese stakeholders in successfully implementing the outstanding provisions of the R-ARCSS and completing the transition. It also stressed the need to redouble efforts to mobilise the resources to enable the National Elections Commission, Political Parties Council, and National Constitutional Review Committee to effectively discharge their respective mandates in support of the electoral process, including preparation for the development of the election roadmap.

Additionally, the Committee requested the AU Commission to provide technical and logistical support, including through providing equipment from the Continental Logistics Base in Douala, Cameroon, to the relevant institutions of the RTGoNU, and other forms of logistical support and security arrangements. It also requested engaging partners for financial and material support towards successful completion of the transitional period, thereby laying the foundation for conducive conditions for the organisation of elections.

The committee expressed its concern over the dire humanitarian situation in South Sudan, which is partly exacerbated by intercommunal violence in parts of the county and the influx of returnees and refugees from the ongoing conflict in Sudan. It asked the AU Commission to explore practical ways to mobilise humanitarian aid in support of the efforts of the RTGoNU.

The AU Commission organised the Second AU Reflection Forum on Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCGs), also known as the Accra II process on UCGs, from 18-19 March 2024, in Accra, Ghana. The event was mandated by the Peace and Security Council (PSC), in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Government of Ghana.

The forum, under the theme ‘Robust Response, Deepening Democracy and Sustainable Security’, was designed to reflect on progress made, and plan next steps, since the first edition held in March 2022. It was also to reflect on the Declaration on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa, also known as the Malabo Declaration on UCGs, adopted during the 16th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on Terrorism and UCGs in Africa on 28 May 2022.

At the opening ceremony, Ghana’s President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo reviewed the situation since the 2022 Accra I and Malabo Declarations.

He reiterated calls for more hands-on reports by AU institutions and frank exchanges by leaders to promote proactive, preventive, and robust action.

AU Commissioner Bankole Adeoye said, ‘Accra II should inspire the African base of stakeholders to energise national, regional and continental actors to guard and uphold democracy.’ Amb. Emilia Mkusa of Namibia, PSC Chairperson in March, reiterated the AU’s zero tolerance for UCGs, while H.E. Madam Damtien Tchintchibidja, ECOWAS Commission Vice President, said: ‘A key endeavour of the ECOWAS Commission is to strengthen our regional normative framework to be responsive to the realities of the region.’ Cynthia Chigwenya, AU Youth Ambassador for Peace for Southern Africa, appealed for better leadership and good governance and called for solid institutions working for Africa’s people.

The Accra II process assessed the efforts and initiatives undertaken since the 2022 Accra Reflection Forum and the key achievements and gaps in implementing its recommendations. It also offered
an opportunity to review the latest developments since the Accra I forum, deepen reflection on the structural root causes and impacts of UCGs in Africa, and provide recommendations on the necessary steps to improve and adapt the AU’s responses to the new challenges posed by UCGs, towards consolidating democratic practice and effective governance in Africa.

Among others, the forum stressed that sustainable democracy should go beyond organising elections, and should include promoting and protecting human rights and sustainable development. It appealed to Member States to enhance communication between national authorities and communities, promote constitutionalism through civic and youth education, and popularise the existing national and continental tools established to address democracy and governance challenges. It also requested the AU Commission to continue providing guidance and support to countries in conflict situations due to UCGs and make recommendations on how strategic political support could be provided to address these challenges. The forum brought together African policy and decision makers, including representatives of the PSC, the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), and the armed forces of AU Member States, as well as the AU Commission and relevant AU organs, Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms (RECs/RMs).

Civil society organisations also participated, as did youth and women’s groups, academia, think tanks, labour unions, constitutional lawyers, other professional groups and strategic development partners. They exchanged views on consolidating democratic governance, advancing national ownership of governance processes, and strengthening constitutionalism and the rule of law in Africa. They also explored ways to align on coordination and coherence to implement the Malabo and Accra declarations effectively.

EXPANDED MECHANISM MEETS AU HIGH-LEVEL PANEL FOR SUDAN

The Expanded Mechanism for the Resolution of the Sudan Crisis convened a meeting at the level of Permanent Representatives to the AU on 20 February, in which members were introduced to the newly appointed AU High-Level Panel for Sudan. Present were the AU Commission, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, United Nations, League of Arab States, European Union, Mozambique, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, United States, United Kingdom, Norway, Turkey, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates.

Participants welcomed the appointment of the High-Level Panel on Sudan and expressed their full support of its work. They expressed their grave concern at the continuing conflict in Sudan, its humanitarian toll on the Sudanese population, and its impact on neighboring states. They also stressed the critical importance of working towards a ceasefire and facilitating an inclusive political process that would determine the future political dispensation, and expressed the importance of coordination of the various mediation initiatives.

The High-Level Panel on Sudan stressed that its work would be guided by the AU Roadmap for the Resolution of the Crisis in Sudan, and the principle of inclusivity of all Sudanese stakeholders. It committed to working with all partners and stakeholders towards sustainable peace in Sudan, and said it would undertake a series of consultative visits to key Sudanese stakeholders and other regional partners in the days ahead.

Earlier on 18 February 2024, the AU High-Level Panel on Sudan paid a courtesy call to H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan on the sidelines of the 37th AU Ordinary Summit.
ADVANCING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA’S PEACE PROCESSES

Recognising the pivotal role women play in peace-making and peacebuilding endeavours, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) convened a landmark Ministerial High-Level Seminar themed ‘Commemorating 20 Years of the PSC by Taking Stock of Women’s Participation and Leadership in Peace Processes in Africa’.

Held on 23 March in Swakopmund, Namibia, this inaugural Ministerial High-Level Seminar on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) aimed to champion women’s meaningful participation and representation across all dimensions of peace-making, notably within formal peace processes in Africa.

The event was attended by the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) from the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), women peacebuilders, gender experts, development partners, civil society organisations, think tanks and other stakeholders.

It was inaugurated by Hon. Dr. Peya Mushelenga, Namibia’s International Relations and Cooperation Minister and PSC Chairperson for March 2024. Mushelenga underscored the imperative of amplifying women’s voices, acknowledging their experiences, and advocating for their active involvement in all phases of peace processes.

‘By ensuring women’s full and equal participation, we not only enhance the effectiveness of our peace initiatives, but also pave the way for a more just and equitable society,’ he said.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commissioner, outlined the Commission’s efforts in advancing the WPS agenda in Africa, acknowledging progress made and challenges to be addressed. He highlighted the pivotal role of women in promoting peace on the continent.

Adeoye commended initiatives such as the AU Panel of the Wise, the institutionalisation of the Office of the Special Envoy on WPS, and the establishment of FemWise-Africa. He mentioned the importance of the African Women Leaders Network, cooperation with the African First Ladies Peace Mission, and the inclusion of female AU Youth Ambassadors for Peace. All these enhanced women’s participation in Africa’s peace processes, he said.
The eighth Annual Continental Forum of African Election Management Bodies (EMBs) was held from 1-2 November 2023 in Cotonou, Benin. This independent AU policy platform promotes good governance and participatory democracy, fostering peer learning and harnessing lessons learnt in election management in Africa.

The forum is the only electoral policy and practice engagement platform on the continent that convenes EMBs drawn from across AU Member States. It aims to promote the effective and efficient management of peaceful, credible and democratic elections.

The annual EMBs forum is a strategic part of the Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department’s strategy on electoral assistance to Member States in line with the mandate of promoting good governance and participatory democracy.

‘We need to further strengthen the protection of women and girls by mainstreaming them in all our peace efforts,’ he said, while addressing participants on the impact of conflict on women.

Amb. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the AU, lauded African women’s tireless efforts in promoting peace and security. He urged concerted action to further enhance women’s participation, saying: ‘Let us commit to taking the necessary policy decisions to ensure that our African heroines continue to impact positively on peace processes.’

The seminar welcomed the celebration of the PSC’s 20th anniversary and its commitment towards championing and promoting the women, peace and security agenda.

Participants expressed concern regarding the persistent under representation of women in peace processes and the prevalence of violent conflicts on the continent. They underlined the importance of integrating gender provisions into peace agreements to address women’s security in conflict and post-conflict settings.

They commended Member States with National Action Plans (NAPs) for implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS, urging those who hadn’t yet adopted NAPs to redouble their efforts in advancing the WPS agenda.

The seminar called for the development of a Policy Framework of Women Quotas in Formal Peace Processes across Africa. The policy will guide Africa in meeting the statutory minimum of a 30% gender quota for women’s participation in all conflict prevention and management missions, peace processes and election observation missions led by the AU, while reaffirming its adherence to the goal of full gender parity.

Participants paid tribute to the late President Hage Geingob for his advocacy for women’s meaningful participation in decision-making forums. They expressed sincere condolences to Namibia’s people and government on his passing, and thanked them for hosting the event.
bestowed on the AU Commission under Article 18 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

Participants shared continental, regional and national experiences focusing on cost-effective strategic communication as well as the risks associated with inadequate communication throughout the electoral cycle. They agreed to create networks to effectively combat disinformation, develop essential messages to respond to and counter disinformation, and implement mechanisms to assess the impact of communication strategies.

Participants included representatives from PAPS, EMBs of AU Member States, members of the Association of African Election Authorities, Regional Economic Communities' EMBs networks, international organisations involved in electoral assistance, civil society organisations, and academia working on elections and other governance stakeholders.

PSC MARKS 2023 EDITION OF AFRICA AMNESTY MONTH IN MOZAMBIQUE

On 11 and 12 September 2023, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the Government of Mozambique, organised the 2023 edition of Africa Amnesty Month in Maputo, Mozambique.

The commemorative event was part of the implementation of paragraph 7 of Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.719(XXXII)] on the Report of the PSC. This decision, adopted during the 32nd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government on 10 and 11 February 2019, calls for rotation in the organisation of Africa Amnesty Month across the continent’s five geographic regions.

This was the second Africa Amnesty Month commemoration held outside the AU headquarters. Participants included PSC members, led by Amb. Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the AU and PSC Chairperson for September 2023, and representatives from Mozambique, the Southern African Development Community, and UN Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Other attendees included representatives from civil society organisations, youth and women’s groups, media, the private sector, and faith-based organisations.
PSC ORGANISES HIGH-LEVEL OPEN SESSION TO PROTECT AFRICAN CHILDREN IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

From 4 to 5 December 2023, in Banjul, The Gambia, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) convened a High-Level Open Session focused on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa. This is now recognised as the Banjul Process.

The event provided a platform for PSC members, AU Member States in conflict situations, the African Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts, the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), and other relevant stakeholders, to engage in discussions regarding the establishment of a comprehensive AU Child Protection Architecture. The primary objective was to create a platform that would streamline existing frameworks for safeguarding the rights of children in conflict situations.

The session focused on identifying areas where the AU Commission could offer support to RECs/RMs and Member States in developing their own child protection architectures. The open session resolved to prevent the violation of children's rights in conflict situations and to ensure accountability for any violations against children. Furthermore, the open session agreed to institutionalise and regularise the Banjul Process as an annual event to be held on a rotational basis.

10TH HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA STRENGTHENS PSC-A3 COOPERATION TO ADVANCE AFRICAN POSITIONS GLOBALLY

The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) convened the 10th High-Level Seminar on the promotion of Peace and Security in Africa, also known as the Oran Process, on 17 and 18 December 2023, in Oran, Algeria.

The seminar, held at ministerial level, brought together participants from the PSC Member States, the current A3 Members (Ghana and Mozambique), incoming A3 Members (Algeria and Sierra Leone), former A3 Members as ‘Friends of the Seminar’, the AU Commission, UN, think tanks and partners. Guyana participated as the A3 Plus 1 Member.

In his opening remarks, Honorable Dr. Mamadou Tangara, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, and Gambians Abroad of the Republic of The Gambia and December 2023 PSC Chair, highlighted the need for an amplified African Voice in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

H.E. Ahmed Attaf, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the National Community Abroad of Algeria, as seminar host, welcomed participants. He assured them of Algeria’s unwavering commitment to articulating, defending, and promoting African interests and positions as a new A3 Member, building on the existing momentum.
Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, highlighted the seminar’s objective as a platform for sharpening Africa’s tools, and enhancing the institutional capacity of the A3 to effectively promote peace, security and stability in Africa.

He appealed for enhanced efforts to address unconstitutional changes of government, terrorism, violent extremism, radicalisation, and the impact of climate change on peace and security.

He stressed the importance of ensuring predictable, adequate and sustainable financing for AU Peace Support Operations. He congratulated Algeria and Sierra Leone on their election to the UNSC and commended Ghana and Gabon, outgoing A3 Members, for their outstanding work on the Council.

Honorable Kwaku Ampratwum-Sarpong, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and Coordinator of African members in the UNSC (A3), underscored the importance of maintaining momentum, cohesion, and common messaging. He commended the PSC for its continuous support to the A3 and emphasised the need to reinvigorate monthly coordination meetings between the PSC Troika and A3.

Participants shared perspectives on practical strategies to strengthen cohesion, coherence, cooperation and coordination between the PSC and the A3 in promoting common African positions within the UNSC. They reflected on the milestones achieved since the institutionalisation of the seminar in 2013, the challenges faced, lessons learnt, and best practices.

Discussions also covered the resurgence of unconstitutional changes in government in Africa; the Draft UNSC Resolution on the Financing of AU Peace Support Operations; and the updated Draft Manual on the Modalities for Enhanced Coordination and Cooperation between the PSC and the A3.

In his closing remarks, Adeoye, on behalf of the AU Commission Chairperson, expressed appreciation to the Algerian government and the Oran authorities for hosting the Oran Process. He also thanked the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), partners and friends of the seminar for their contributions to the successful organisation of the event.

The induction session for newly elected, re-elected and outgoing AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) members took place in Swakopmund, Namibia, from 25-26 March.

The induction programme coincided with the commemoration of the PSC’s 20 years of existence, following the election of its new members during the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The induction aimed to provide incoming PSC members with a comprehensive understanding of the Council’s mandate, powers, principles and working methods, while fostering working relationships with other critical stakeholders. It was an opportunity to further explore the PSC’s mandate, functions, role, and operational methods.

Chaired by Amb. Emilia Mkusa, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of the PSC for March 2024, the induction included ambassadors, experts and defence attaches. These were from sitting/continuing five three-year term PSC members (Djibouti, Cameroon, Morocco, Namibia and Nigeria); seven outgoing two-year term PSC members (Burundi, Congo, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe); and newly elected and re-elected two-year term PSC members (Angola, Botswana, Côte D’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda).

Senior officials and staff from the AU Commission and facilitators, including Dr. Admore Mupoki Kambudzi (PSC Founding Secretary and former Peace and Security Department Director), as well as the Institute for Security Studies and AMANI Africa, also attended the session.

During the opening ceremony, Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, expressed appreciation to the outgoing members for their resilience in addressing challenges faced by Africa, particularly terrorism, violent extremism and unconstitutional changes of government.
Commissioner Adeoye emphasised the importance of coordination, consultation and adherence to AU legal foundational frameworks, stressing the promotion of constitutionalism, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms. He highlighted the role of the PSC in advancing the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture.

Representing Hon. Dr. Peya Mushelenga, Namibia’s Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Amb. Jeroboam Shaanika, Deputy Executive Director for Multilateral Relations and Cooperation, underscored the responsibility of the PSC in shaping Africa’s narrative and ensuring peace and security on the continent. He commended the contributions of outgoing members and encouraged incoming members to continue enhancing the work of the Council in promoting peace, security, and stability in Africa.

The induction session provided an opportunity for members to share experiences and exchange views on conflict prevention, mediation, and early warning and response mechanisms. Additionally, it facilitated reflection on challenges requiring urgent attention.

The induction concluded with the official handover and takeover ceremony between outgoing and incoming two-year term PSC members.

**PSC REVIEWS AND ENHANCES ITS WORKING METHODS**

To bolster its institutional capabilities and better fulfill its mandate of promoting peace, security and stability in Africa, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) conducted its 15th Retreat on the Review of its Working Methods. This event took place from 25-27 November in Tunis, Tunisia.

Discussions underscored the PSC’s commitment to continuous improvement and adaptability in Africa’s ever-evolving landscape of peace and security. The retreat’s outcomes will contribute significantly to the Council’s ability to overcome challenges and effectively address emerging issues in the pursuit of lasting peace and stability on the continent.
Since the signing of the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front on 2 November 2022, the Tigray Region has witnessed a significant improvement in security, largely returning to its pre-conflict state.

This shift has created an environment conducive to reconstruction and development. However, challenges persist, particularly regarding the resettlement and voluntary return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially in Western and Southern Tigray. These challenges stem from the prevailing security situation in the Amhara and Afar regions, necessitating political intervention to enable progress in the work of the AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mechanism (AU-MVCM) and National Reconciliation Commission. Additionally, the presence of non-Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) in certain parts of Tigray hinders humanitarian access and the voluntary return of IDPs.

Since its inception in December 2022, the AU-MVCM has achieved significant milestones in both Addis Ababa and Mekelle, delivering much-needed peace dividends and relief to the people of Tigray. Notably, Tigray armed combatants have surrendered heavy and medium weapons, including air force equipment, to the ENDF.

Essential services have been restored, humanitarian aid has resumed, and economic activities, including air and road transport, have recommenced. The education sector has reopened schools, colleges, and universities, while the Federal Police have been deployed in the region. Furthermore, the FDRE has established the Interim Regional Administration and the National Commission for Reintegration to consolidate the peace process.

During the Special Joint Committee meeting, both parties reaffirmed their commitment to fully implementing the agreement. They emphasised the need to expedite the DDR process and the resettlement of IDPs, highlighting the urgency of launching political dialogue to address outstanding issues from the Permanent CoHA. They reiterated the importance of the AU’s continued engagement with partners to ensure support for the Ethiopian peace process and the operations of the MVCM, recommending an extension of the MVCM’s mandate from 1 January to 31 December 2024. They agreed to convene a strategic reflection session involving the AU High-Level Panel in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, the AU announced its commitment of US$1 000 000 from the Crisis Reserve Facility of the AU Peace Fund towards the implementation of the DDR programme under the Permanent CoHA. This funding support has been delivered to the government of the FDRE under a memorandum of understanding.

The governments of Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa and the parties continue to support the AU in the deployment of the Team of African Experts under the MVCM. The AU multilateral and bilateral partners continue to provide funding support for the MVCM. The governments of Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa and the parties continue to support the AU in the deployment of the Team of African Experts under the MVCM. The AU multilateral and bilateral partners continue to provide funding support for the MVCM.
The AU honoured the gallant services of 21 African military and civilian personnel serving under the AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission (MVCM) stationed in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region since December 2022.

On 11 March 2024, AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat convened the First Strategic Reflection Meeting on the Implementation of the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in Ethiopia. This was to review progress, identify key challenges, and propose ways to address gaps in the implementation of the CoHA.

The discussions highlighted, among others, the urgent need to speed up the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process and address the humanitarian situation in the Tigray Region.

The parties reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the CoHA and agreed to hold multifaceted consultations to advance peace, security, and stability. They also decided to consult regularly and reconvene in a similar format in the next few months. The parties acknowledged the progress made and identified areas requiring additional joint efforts towards fully implementing the CoHA.

The meeting, facilitated by the AU High-Level Panel for the Ethiopian Peace Process, brought together representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray Region/Tigray People’s Liberation Front, and observers from the United Nations, European Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, United States, and African Development Bank.

The AU honoured the gallant services of 21 African military and civilian personnel serving under the AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission (MVCM) stationed in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region since December 2022.

These valiant men and women from Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa received AU service medals for painstakingly monitoring, verifying and ensuring compliance with implementing the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in line with the MVCM mandate. Their responsibilities included monitoring the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process, resettlement of internally displaced persons, resumption of economic and social services, facilitation of humanitarian access, and protection of Tigray civilians.

Speaking during the investiture at the AU Headquarters on 12 March, AU Commission Chair H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat commended the team of African experts for their dedication and services in
the spirit of African solidarity, and reiterated the AU’s commitment to durable peace in Ethiopia.

He encouraged the people and government of Ethiopia to sustain the momentum for peace and stability by continuing to work closely together to ‘achieve peace through what has remained a truly Ethiopian-owned and -led process since the signing of the agreement.’

Other speakers included former Nigerian president H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa and Chair of the AU High-Level Panel on the Ethiopian Peace Process; Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security; and Amb. Jainaba Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the AU and Peace and Security Council (PSC) member. She was representing Amb. Emilia Mkusa, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Namibia to the AU and PSC Chairperson for March 2024.

They all commended the recipients for their professionalism and dedication and applauded the parties to the CoHA for their commitment to peace.

Adeoye noted that: ‘Ethiopia is the first country to benefit from the AU Peace Fund, receiving $1 million in support of its DDR process.’

The AU especially recognised partners who supported the AU facilitation process, including the African Development Bank, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Norway, and the United Kingdom, United States and European Union. Members of the diplomatic corps in Addis Ababa, representatives of bilateral and multilateral entities, and the AU Commission attended the colourful ceremony, preceded by the First Strategic Reflection Meeting on the Implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in Ethiopia.

AU, SADC UNVEIL COMMEMORATIVE STATUE OF NYERERE

The AU and Southern African Development Community (SADC) unveiled a commemorative statue of the revered Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania during the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa.

The magnificent statue stands atop a granite base inscribed with Nyerere’s impactful words from 22 October 1959: ‘We would like to light a candle and put it on top of Mount Kilimanjaro which would shine beyond our borders giving hope where there was despair, love where there was hate and dignity where before there was only humiliation.’

Situated on the grounds of the building complex named in his honour, hosting the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, the statue pays tribute to his pivotal role in Pan-Africanism and peacebuilding.

As the first prime minister of independent Tanganyika (1961) and subsequently the first president of the new state of Tanzania (1964), the effigy of the former Tanzanian leader and Pan-Africanist joined the monuments at the AU Headquarters. In 2012, the statue of Ghanaian Pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah was unveiled, followed by the statue of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie in 2019, recognising their significant contributions to the Organisation of African Unity.

Aligned with the 2024 AU theme, Nyerere’s statue emphasises his philosophy on education. He believed that education’s primary purpose was to transmit
accumulated wisdom and knowledge to people, resonating with principles such as self-reliance, critical consciousness, equality, social justice, and common good. Nyerere’s innovative theory links education for liberation to the goal of building an egalitarian society based on ujamaa.

The unveiling ceremony took place in the presence of H.E Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, President of Mauritania and AU Chairperson, and SADC leaders. These included H.E. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of Tanzania; H.E. Hakainde Hichilema, President of Zambia and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation; H.E. João Lourenço, President of Angola; H.E. Emmerson Mnangagwa, President of Zimbabwe; H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa; H.E. Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius; and H.E. Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of Ethiopia.

The event drew further distinction with the presence of leaders from Comoros, Ghana, Kenya and South Sudan, as well as the AUC Chairperson, Commissioners, heads of Regional Economic Communities, and high officials and representatives of the media. Among the esteemed guests were former Tanzanian president H.E. Jakaya M. Kikwete; former AU Commission chairperson, H.E. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma; and the family of Julius Nyerere.

With this event, the name of the building changed from Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere Peace and Security Building to Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere Political Affairs, Peace and Security Building.

**CAIRO HOSTS INAUGURAL RETREAT FOR SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES, ENVOYS OF AU, UN**

On 16 October 2023, Cairo hosted the Inaugural Retreat of the Special Representatives of the Chairperson of the AU Commission (SRCCs) and the Special Representatives and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General (SRSGs and SESGs) of the United Nations. The theme was ‘Enhanced Cooperation and Collaboration in Peace and Security’.

The Retreat took place under the auspices of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat. It was co-chaired by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Amb. Bankole Adeoye, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the AU and Head of the UN Office to the AU, Amb. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga.

The discussions centred on the AU and UN perspectives relating to the prevailing and emerging peace, security and governance challenges in Africa, and strengthening cooperation across the entire gamut of peace and security, conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and development. They also focused on improving collaboration and working methods between the AU Commission and UN Secretariat, AU SRCCs, and UN SRSGs/SESGs.

In alignment with AU and UN normative frameworks, the participants affirmed African ownership and leadership in addressing threats to peace and security challenges in Africa. Such frameworks include the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security signed on 19 April 2017, the AU-UN Framework for the Implementation of AU Agenda 2063, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development signed on 18 January 2018.

They also underlined the need for the provision of predictable, sustainable and flexible financing, including through UN-assessed contributions, on a case-by-case basis, and among others, agreed to work closely together to promote peace, security, and stability in Africa.
QUADRIPARTITE MEETING ON COORDINATION AND HARMONISATION OF REGIONAL PEACE INITIATIVES IN EASTERN DRC

In response to the invitation extended by AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, a Quadripartite Meeting was convened under the guidance of Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commissioner Amb. Bankole Adeoye.

The meeting, concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), brought together defence chiefs from the East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and Southern African Development Community. Participants also included representatives from the DRC, Rwanda, and United Nations.

Taking place on 6 October 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the meeting considered the Report of the Experts on Coordination and Harmonization of Regional Peace Initiatives in eastern DRC. Delegates expressed deep concern over the insecurity in the region, characterised by violence and human rights violations committed by various armed groups. It called for the immediate withdrawal of these groups and the establishment of humanitarian corridors to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The meeting also stressed the importance of continuing the political dialogue, in line with regional efforts facilitated by the EAC and ICGLR.

Additionally, the meeting commended the efforts of Angolan President João Manuel Lourenço and Burundi’s President Évariste Ndayishimiye in facilitating the dialogue and promoting peace, and of H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, Kenya’s former president, the EAC facilitator for the DRC.

A Multilevel Coordination Working Group was set up to ensure effective coordination and harmonisation of intelligence, among others, and a smooth transition between exiting and arriving missions, to prevent a security vacuum. Participants agreed to work towards restoring state authority in affected areas to facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the holding of elections.

SENEGAL ELECTIONS

At the invitation of the Government of Senegal, AU Commission Chair Moussa Faki Mahamat deployed an election observation mission (EOM) to the presidential polls of 24 March. The mission stayed in the country from 17 to 28 March 2024.

It was led by H.E. Bernard Makuza, former Rwandan prime minister, and included among others H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye, former Burundi president and AU Panel of the Wise member. The mission was supported by a Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) team led by Madam Patience Zanelie Chiradza, Director of Governance and Conflict Prevention, who also represented the PAPS Commissioner, along with Alhadji Sarjoh Bah, PAPS Director of Conflict Management.

The mission comprised 42 short-term observers drawn from 24 Member States reflecting the continent’s geographical diversity. This presidential election was the 12th to be organised by Senegal since the country obtained independence in 1960. The mission noted that despite the political context, which was marked by controversies, the electoral process largely followed international standards.
The provisional results were made public on 27 March 2024 with opposition candidate Bassirou Diomaye Diakhar Faye elected as Senegal’s new president in the first round, with 54.28% of the votes. This was subsequently confirmed by the Constitutional Court. The EOM commended the political and democratic maturity of the Senegalese people, the generally peaceful political atmosphere of the presidential election, and the due diligence taken by the national authorities to execute their respective mandates.

AU SUPPORTS LIBERIANS IN MAINTAINING DEMOCRATIC STABILITY AT THE POLLS

The AU Commission deployed an election observation mission (EOM) to Liberia’s 10 October 2023 general elections. It was led by South Africa’s former deputy president Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, a member of the AU Panel of the Wise, and comprised 60 short-term observers deployed from 1-15 October.

The observers, from 26 African countries, were drawn from ambassadors accredited to the AU, officials of election management bodies, members of the Pan-African Parliament, representatives of the AU Panel of the Wise, members of African civil society organisations (CSOs), African election experts, human rights specialists, gender and media experts, and representatives of youth organisations.

They were deployed in 25 teams to nine of the 15 counties across the country, where they successfully visited 279 polling stations. They observed the opening, voting, closing and counting process. The mission was supported by the technical team from the AU Commission and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa.

The mission issued its preliminary statement, presenting a summary of its key findings, conclusions and recommendations on the electoral process up to the closing and counting of the polls. The statement was issued while the tallying and announcement of provisional election results were ongoing.

In the first round of the presidential polls, none of the candidates got the constitutional threshold of 50%+1
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to be declared a winner, and a runoff election was held on 14 November. The EOM deployed four electoral experts from 13-17 November to follow up on the post-election developments and observe the 14 November runoff presidential election, which was won by Joseph Boakai with 50.64% (814 481) of valid votes.

Based on its findings, the AU’s EOM offers recommendations in the final report submitted on 24 October 2024. Overall, the EOM assessed the conduct and management of the first- and second-round elections as an efficient, transparent and well-managed process by the National Elections Commission’s (NEC) personnel.

The AU began its engagements in Liberia’s electoral process in July 2023, with the deployment of a joint pre-election assessment mission with ECOWAS, to assess the state of preparedness and the context in which the elections will take place.

About 8000 local, regional and international observers participated in Liberia’s polls, with ECOWAS, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, the European Union, Brenthurst Foundation and ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions as some of the regional and international election observer missions.

COMOROS ELECTIONS

At the invitation of the Comoros Government, AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat deployed an election observation mission (EOM) for the presidential and governors’ polls on 14 January. The mission was led by H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye, former president of Burundi and member of the AU Panel of Wise. It was joined by the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), led by H.E. Bernard Makuza, former Rwandan prime minister.

The joint EOM was respectively supported by H.E. Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, former president of Burundi and Chairperson of Panel of the Wise of the EASF, and H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commissioner. It comprised 66 short-term observers from 26 AU Member States representing Africa’s geographical diversity, who stayed in the Comoros from 8 to 18 January. The mission was to observe and support the proper organisation of the polls in an impartial and objective manner to further promote democracy, peace, security, and national unity.

These elections were held within the context of the 2018 constitutional reform that extended the presidential term limit from five years to a renewable mandate once per island as part of the principle of rotation.

The EOM noted a lack of trust between the actors. However, the establishment of a Consultation Framework made it possible to find areas of convergence to enable the polls to be held despite political dissension within parties and coalitions, and even across parties. Overall, the elections occurred in a generally peaceful climate, despite political divisions that led to boycotts by some of the opposition.

On 24 January, the final results were proclaimed by the country’s Supreme Court, and H.E. Azali Assoumani, the Comoros’s incumbent president, was declared duly re-elected.
The AU Commission and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) jointly deployed election observers to Egypt’s 10-12 December 2023 presidential elections at the invitation of the Government of Egypt and the National Elections Authority (NEA).

The joint Election Observation Mission, which was deployed by AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, was led by H.E. Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, Ugandan former vice president, with Amb. John O. Kakonge, a member of the COMESA Committee of Elders as Deputy Head. The Mission leadership was supported by Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security. The joint Mission observers were deployed in 16 of Egypt’s 25 regions.

The primary goal of the Joint Mission was to promote peaceful, democratic, and credible elections in Egypt in line with AU and COMESA principles and normative frameworks, and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These include the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the 2012 OAU/AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, and Agenda 2063.

Egyptians living abroad cast their votes from 1-3 December in 137 embassies and consulates across 121 countries. This marked the fourth presidential election following the January 2011 popular uprising. It was the second election administered by the NEA, an independent and permanent election management body established in August 2017 in accordance with Egypt’s 2014 Constitution.

In her presentation of the preliminary statement on 14 December at a press conference in Cairo, Wandira-Kazibwe provided a summary of the Mission’s key findings and recommendations on the electoral process up to the closing and counting of the polls.

The AU Commission and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) deployed a joint election observation mission (EOM) to Madagascar’s 16 November 2023 presidential polls. The joint short-term EOM was deployed at the invitation of the Government of Madagascar. It arrived in Antananarivo on 10 November to observe and report on the conduct of the presidential polls based on the legal framework governing elections in the country and the AU and COMESA normative frameworks on elections.

The mission was led by H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza, former transitional president of the Central African Republic, in collaboration with Amb. Patrice Eugene Cure, member of the COMESA Committee of Elders from Mauritius. It comprised 70 short-term observers drawn from ambassadors accredited to the AU, members of the Pan-African Parliament, officials of election management bodies, members of African civil society organisations, African election experts, human rights specialists, gender and media experts, and representatives of youth organisations, from 35 countries.

The AU Commission team was led by Amb. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, providing technical and diplomatic backstopping to the joint AU-COMESA observation mission.

The observers interacted with state authorities, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), candidates, the media, civil society organisations and international community representatives in Madagascar, and other election observation missions deployed to observe the elections. The assessment focused on the regularity, transparency and credibility of the electoral process.
On 18 November 2023, the joint EOM released a preliminary statement of its initial findings and assessment of the conduct of the vote after election day. The report highlighted issues related to the political context, legal framework, election administration, funding of the election, registration of candidatures, the participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities, and the election campaign, among others.

It noted that the elections were conducted in a calm and peaceful atmosphere despite the boycott by some of the opposition, and in this light, formulated recommendations to critical stakeholders to preserve peace and with the aim to contribute to the improvement of future electoral processes in Madagascar. These stakeholders included the government, CENI, the candidates, civil society organisations and the international community.

AU COMMITS TO SUPPORTING SOUTH SUDAN’S PEACE, DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION PROCESSES

Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commissioner, H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye, led a multi-divisional assessment team to South Sudan from 28-31 January. This was part of the AU Commission’s continued efforts to support the implementation of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

The focus of the visit was to reinforce the AU’s solidarity and support for the implementation of the extended transition period of the R-ARCSS and obtain first-hand information on the implementation of outstanding tasks of the agreement. In particular, ongoing security sector reform/disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction and development initiatives during this critical phase of the transition.

In addition, the mission sought to assess the political and security situation and readiness to hold elections and the constitution-making process, and to reaffirm the AU’s solidarity with the government and people of South Sudan in their endeavours to restore lasting peace, security, stability, and prosperity.

During the working visit, the Commissioner engaged with key stakeholders, including senior Cabinet Ministers, the National Elections Commission, Political Parties Council, African Diplomatic Corps, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Liaison Office, UN Mission in South Sudan, Troika, European Union, International Partners and Friends of South Sudan, civil society organisations, and media.

In his engagements, Adeoye assured the government and people of South Sudan that the AU stood ready to provide assistance for peace, stability, and democratic elections in the region. He conveyed the AU Chairperson’s commendation to President Salva Kiir Mayardit for his steadfast mediation efforts in calling for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Sudan. He expressed appreciation to the government for hosting many refugees despite the dire humanitarian situation in the country.
On the planned elections, the Commissioner commended the president and four vice presidents for the steady progress in implementing the R-ARCSS, and encouraged all stakeholders to expedite the implementation of all outstanding transitional tasks through consensus and constructive dialogue. He pledged the Commission’s support for the electoral process to strengthen the democratic transition further.

Adeoye also briefed the Ministers of the African Union Ad Hoc High-Level Committee for South Sudan (C5) on the situation in South Sudan at the Ministerial Consultative Meeting held on 16 February. This was organised on the margins of the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa.

At this meeting, the members of the C5 adopted practical steps to effectively support South Sudan to ensure the successful implementation of the outstanding provisions of the R-ARCSS and the completion of the transition.

14TH HIGH-LEVEL RETREAT ON THE PROMOTION OF PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFRICA HELD IN CAIRO

The AU Commission convened the 14th High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa in Cairo on 17 and 18 October 2023. The theme was ‘Resetting Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation for the 21st Century in Africa’.

The retreat provided the opportunity to reflect on how to re-energise preventive diplomacy and mediation and recentre it at the heart of the AU’s interventions across Africa. It brought together the AU Commission’s leadership and special representatives and special envoys from other regional and international organisations. This included the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms, United Nations (UN) and European Union. It was organised in collaboration with the Government of Egypt and the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding.

Over the two days, policymakers and decision makers reflected on strengthening existing formal and informal preventive diplomacy mechanisms to help enhance capacities to effectively respond to emerging threats to political stability. They also
The AU convened the 12th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in Africa from 4-6 October 2023 under the theme ‘Delivering peace dividends through the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)’. The meeting, held in Addis Ababa, examined the megatrends on the security and socio-economic development landscape and discussed potential solutions to existing and emerging causes of governance, security and development deficits.

The forum drew comparable lessons on how low levels of development are an underlying cause of insecurity, and explored how trade, particularly with the implementation of the AfCFTA, can reverse the trends and address security and governance challenges.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS); Hon. Rémy Ngoy Lumbu, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and current Chair of the African Governance Platform; Amb. Ayele Lire, the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the AU; and H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn, Ethiopia’s former prime minister, officially opened the Dialogue. The two-day meeting was preceded by youth consultations and a Gender Pre-Forum where participants reflected on ways to promote the full and meaningful participation of women and youth in development and security issues. The outcome of the High-Level Dialogue will inform key decisions in the work of the AU.

The AU hosted the 2023 Convening Committee and Implementation Meetings of the endorsers of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) for International Elections Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. This was held from 14 to 17 November 2023 at the AU Commission headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The DoP for International Elections Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers establish the basis for credible international election observation. These were developed through consultations among more than 20 intergovernmental and international non-governmental organisations involved in the conduct
The AU’s Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise Network) held its eighth retreat in Kigali, Rwanda, on 7 and 8 December 2023 under the theme ‘Enhanced Technical and Political Coordination between the AU, the Regional Economic Communities and the Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), and National Peace Infrastructures on Electoral Preventive Diplomacy: Best Practices and Lessons-Learnt’. This event was convened under the auspices of the Panel of the Wise, and witnessed the participation of eminent personalities, including representatives of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Committee of Elders, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Council of the Wise, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Panel of Elders and Mediation.

The meeting was attended by over 100 participants from around the world. Discussions were focused on six thematic areas. These included communication, youth participation and representation in elections, challenges of observers during elections, data protection and electoral integrity, experiences of heads of election observation missions, and observation considerations and observer security in conflict environments.

A day before the implementation meeting, endorsers held a Convening Committee meeting. They presented updates on their respective election observation experiences and related activities, discussed election processes, and considered requests from other organisations to join the DoP family.

EIGHTH PANWISE RETREAT COMMITS TO STRENGTHENING ELECTORAL PROCESSES THROUGH MEDIATION
Reference Group, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Mediation Reference Group.

Also in attendance were track II and III mediation experts and stakeholders from national peace infrastructures, as well as the AU Commission and secretariats of the RECs/RMs.

The primary objective of the retreat was to address the critical need for proactive strategies to ensure peaceful and credible electoral processes across Africa. Acknowledging the profound impact of elections on regional stability, the retreat sought to foster cooperation, share best practices, and formulate a coherent approach to preventive diplomacy during elections.

It also sought to contribute to the development of stable democratic societies across Africa by bringing together diverse track I, II and III stakeholders to develop a more resilient and comprehensive approach to electoral preventive diplomacy.

Participants stressed the importance of independent electoral commissions, robust accountability structures, and the need to improve women’s participation in governance. They called for a serious focus on post-election diplomacy, support for emerging young leaders, and proactive mitigation of post-election challenges.
The AU Commission’s Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department and Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) held a roundtable discussion on 11 and 12 October 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The meeting focused on enhancing coordination and coherence between the AU Commission, Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), and civil society organisations (CSOs). This was part of ongoing efforts to ensure the effective joint implementation of programmes in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) framework.


During the opening ceremony, Josephat Barugahare, on behalf of the AU Director for Conflict Management, called for an increased AU-REC/RM-CSO partnership centred on the institutions’ comparative advantages. The goal was to ensure complementarity between the stakeholders in addressing Member States’ structural governance and security challenges.

The participants agreed to broaden the scope of the APSA’s work, considered strategies and capacities for coordination and impact on the ground, and committed to working closely to prevent relapse while safeguarding lives and livelihoods in post-conflict settings. They highlighted the need to reinforce and interconnect early warning systems, urging decision makers to sustain momentum in ensuring early response and capacity building.

Over the two days, delegates agreed on the imperative of joint programming in future phases, reflecting on achievements, challenges and lessons learnt in APSA programme implementation. They highlighted the need to develop databases of experts and CSOs to support APSA initiatives.
ADEOYE PARTICIPATES IN HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF 55TH SESSION OF UNHRC, ENGAGES WITH AFRICAN AMBASSADORS IN GENEVA


In addressing the UNHRC in Geneva, Adeoye highlighted key issues and opportunities for advancing human rights in general, and the rights to development in particular.

‘The African Union considers the Right to Development as a strategic priority. The Constitutive Act of the African Union, adopted in 2000, stipulates that Member States should undertake to “promote the political and socio-economic integration of the continent” to ensure sustainable development and improved living conditions for all Africans,’ he said.

Adeoye said that through Agenda 2063, Aspirations 3 and 4, the AU was taking action towards promoting democratic governance and protecting human rights in Africa. It was also contributing to efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, promote constitutionalism, enhance citizens’ participation, and ensure the rule of law.

A joint AU Commission-African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights side event was held the next day. At this high-level dialogue, themed ‘The Right to Development – Fundamental to Realizing the Africa we Want’, Adeoye engaged with the African ambassadors and other stakeholders on human rights and conflict prevention issues, focusing on the right to development.

Adeoye provided the ambassadors with a comprehensive understanding of the right to development as it pertains to Africa, its relevance to Africa’s socio-economic landscape, and potential strategies for promoting and protecting these rights within the international framework.
Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), participated in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP28) in Dubai last year.

On the margins of the conference and leveraging the success of the Africa Climate Summit 2023 in Kenya (4-6 September), PAPS and the Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) Department co-hosted a high-level presentation of the African Climate Security Risk Assessment (ACRA) report on 8 December 2023. This marked a significant step towards a Common African Position (CAP) on the climate, peace, and security nexus, ultimately contributing to the COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace.

Adeoye presented the ACRA findings, while Peace and Security Council representatives from all five regions of Africa attended COP28 for the first time, raising awareness of UNFCCC processes. This oversaw the inclusion of conflict and climate in the first UNFCCC global stocktake process and Loss and Damage negotiations.

With the endorsement of the ACRA study and the Chairperson’s Report on the climate, peace and security nexus, it is expected that in 2024, AU Member States will adopt a CAP on climate, peace and security as informed by transregional consultations to ensure an all-Africa informed position that will determine the designing of responses.

This CAP will signal a united African voice in international climate negotiations, advocating for integrating climate, peace and security concerns into the global discourse on common pathways to promote climate action, peace, security, and development.

COP28 AND BEYOND: AFRICA CHARTS COURSE ON CLIMATE AND SECURITY
The Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Amb. Bankole Adeoye, launched the African Climate Security Risk Assessment (ACRA) Report at the 2023 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) (COP28) in Dubai on 8 December 2023. It was launched during a side event organised by the PAPS Department in collaboration with the Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment Department, the adelphi think tank, and Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacebuilding and Peacebuilding.

This marked the inaugural participation of the PSC in a side event of a UNFCCC COP. The Chair and PSC members from The Gambia, Congo-Brazzaville, Djibouti, and Zimbabwe participated, alongside a representative of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) Chair, some AU Member State representatives, RECs, the UN, partners and members of CSOs.

The ACRA Report served as the foundation for the AUC Chairperson's Report on the Study of the Nexus between Climate Change, Peace, and Security. These reports, together with the 15 Key Messages on the Common African Position (CAP) on Climate Change, Peace, and Security, will play a crucial role in shaping the development of the CAP on the climate change, peace and security nexus.

The CAP aims to establish a unified stance on climate security for AGN negotiations, supported by the recently adopted Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace at COP28. Once finalised, the Draft CAP will be submitted to the PSC for consideration and adoption, and subsequently to the Assembly for endorsement. It is anticipated that the CAP will be presented at COP29.

The Commissioner Bankole Adeoye launches African Climate Security Risk Assessment (ACRA) Report at COP28
On 19 October 2023, the AU, in collaboration with the United Nations Office to the AU (UNOAU), UN Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO), and World Bank Group, launched the fourth phase of the AU Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Implementation Framework, which will run from 2023 to 2025.

The main objective of the event was to enhance awareness and understanding on the importance of DDR processes in Africa. It reflected on the AU DDR Capacity Programme (AUDDRCP) towards sustainable peace, and discussed the evolution of DDR, new approaches and methodologies, development guidelines and policies, from the perspective of various stakeholders. These included Member States, research institutions, academia, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs), African training centres of excellence, and civil society organisations.

Since its launch in 2011, the AUDDRCP has achieved three phases of implementation which have benefitted from support by the UN, World Bank, and other partners. The second and third phases focused on consolidating the results achieved in the first phase. The later phases included a focus on human rights and conflict prevention, and emphasised operational support to Member States and Peace Support Operations. The fourth phase in particular highlights the operational support, preventive role of DDR, and politics of DDR.

The official launch held at the AU Headquarters was attended by ambassadors, Addis Ababa-based institutions, representatives of AU Liaison Offices, RECs/RMs, the UNDPO, UN Office to the AU Representatives, World Bank, European Union Delegation to the AU, centres of excellence, research institutions, some UN agencies and other partners, such as the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies and the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding.

The event culminated in the formal signing of the Partnership Framework document by the representatives of all entities. The Joint Partnership Framework broadly elaborates the scope, principles, objectives and key activities for the fourth phase from 2023-25.

**FOURTH PHASE OF AU-UN-WORLD BANK DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION (DDR) IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK LAUNCHED**

**STRATEGIC DISCUSSION ON AU-UN PARTNERSHIP**

H.E. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General and Head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU), and H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), convened the Annual Roundtable Discussion on the AU-UN Partnership.

This was to enhance synergies on governance, peace and security priorities, and identify areas of collaboration and modalities for joint approaches in promoting good governance, peace and security in Africa.
The meeting, which took place at the UN Economic Commission for Africa premises in Addis Ababa on 20 February, brought together the senior management team of the AU-PAPS Department and the UNOAU. They reflected on the implementation of the AU-PAPS priorities since 2023 in the context of the partnership, discussed the 2024 PAPS vision and priorities, and explored ways to strengthen the partnership in line with the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed on 19 April 2017, during the first UN-AU Annual Conference, by the UN Secretary-General and AU Commission Chair.

A delegation from the Somalia Office of National Security (ONS), operating under the Presidency of the Federal Republic of Somalia, undertook a visit to the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department on 14 and 15 December 2023. The purpose was to garner insights from the AU regarding the establishment of a National Infrastructure for Peace in Somalia.

The seven ONS officers engaged in a comprehensive study and working visit to PAPS, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), and Situation Room. Over two days they received extensive briefings conducted by the CEWS team and Situation Room officers, and Amb. William Azumah Awinador-Kanyrige, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner for PAPS. These informative sessions shed light on various aspects pertinent to the establishment of a robust National Infrastructure for Peace in Somalia.

At the end of their visit, AU-CEWS and Somalia’s ONS pledged to maintain open lines of communication to further enhance collaboration in strengthening this infrastructure.

A notable highlight of the visit was the delegation’s meeting with PAPS Commissioner, Amb. Bankole Adeoye, who reiterated the AU’s steadfast commitment to supporting Somalia in its efforts to establish a National Infrastructure for Peace. This visit marks a significant stride towards deepening the partnership between the AU and Somalia, as both entities endeavour to foster peace and security in the region.

SOMALIA ONS DELEGATION VISITS AUC
AGA-APSA PLATFORM AGREES ON 2024 PRIORITIES AND ELECTS NEW BUREAU AT AU STATUTORY MEETING

The AU Commission hosted the bi-annual statutory African Governance Architecture-African Peace and Security Architecture (AGA-APSA) meeting at the technical and political levels on 12 and 13 February. The event happened on the sidelines of the 37th AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

It provided an opportunity for the AGA-APSA platform to finalise planning of its 2024 activities, review the AU and its organs’ engagements in 2023, and discuss ways to better enhance synergy and coordination among platform members and development partners.

The platform also elected its new chairperson and vice-chairperson for a two-year term. H.E. Wilson Almeida Adão, Chair of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, was elected as Chair of the platform, and H.E. Taïeb Baccouche, Secretary-General of Arab Maghreb Union, as Vice-Chairperson at the political level.

H.E. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and Rapporteur of the platform at the political level, emphasised the promotion of the AGA-APSA synergies, the development of a joint roadmap, the need to overcome institutional challenges, and improve value-driven partnerships and resourcing, and coordination at all levels.

Abiola Idowu-Ojo, Acting Executive Secretary of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) and platform Chairperson at the technical level, highlighted the achievements made during the ACHPR’s tenure as Chair.

EXPERTS ROUNDTABLE ON SILENCING THE GUNS HELD IN NAIROBI, KENYA

The AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns, H.E. Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, hosted a three-day Experts Roundtable on Silencing the Guns in Nairobi, Kenya, from 30 August to 1 September 2023.

The event, themed ‘A decade of Silencing the Guns in Africa: Progress, Lessons Learned and the Way Forward’, brought together African experts from all five regions of the continent. The purpose was to discuss existing approaches and frameworks for ‘silencing the guns’ in the context of Africa’s current state of peace and security.

The meeting reviewed achievements, identified gaps and challenges from the past 10 years since the adoption of the Solemn Declaration on Silencing the Guns on 25 May 2013, and reflected on the way forward in ‘silencing the guns’ by 2030.
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The AU Commission, through its Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, in collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), conducted a five-day virtual training session for artists from 18 to 22 September 2023 on the theme ‘Leveraging Arts for Peace’. This built on the success of the seminar for African artists on Silencing the Guns held in December 2021. The training was designed to harness the transformative power of art in preventing conflicts in communities by fostering awareness and inspiring tolerance despite societal differences.

Held during Africa Amnesty Month, the training brought together 25 African artists from across the continent. The primary objective was to heighten their consciousness about promoting peaceful coexistence and make them agents of change against the potential misuse of art to incite violence, or promote hate speech, hate crimes or other forms of conflict.

In his opening remarks the AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, emphasised the pivotal role of artists in championing and advocating for peace. He urged them to pay attention to African efforts towards building peaceful societies, stressing that, ‘As artists, you have the power to not only bring people together, but also inspire a sense of community.’

Svenja Vollmer, speaking on behalf of Evariste Karambizi, Director of the Division for Peace at UNITAR, applauded artists for their unique ability to translate complex emotions, experiences and societal issues into tangible and relatable forms. She encouraged them to channel their creative energy towards the common goal of Silencing the Guns in Africa. ‘Through music, dance, visual arts, literature, theatre, and more, your guilds have historically challenged injustice, promoted dialogue, and kindled the flames of social change,’ she said.

The meeting outlined key areas to prioritise over the next three years, including the peaceful settlement of conflict, conflict prevention, and strengthening AU post-conflict reconstruction and development policies, particularly on reconciliation. The meeting further proposed strategies to address the illicit circulation of firearms, the expansion of terror threats, and the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government across Africa.

The experts examined the 2016 AU Master Roadmap on Practical Steps to Silence the Guns and its Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism, adopted by the AU Assembly in January 2017, to expedite the implementation of the Master Roadmap.

Participants emphasised the need to strengthen the African Peace and Security Architecture and African Governance Architecture tools to prevent and mediate conflicts. They also stressed the need for an effective domestication of the Master Roadmap at national and regional levels, through national action plans adapted to promote the participation and contributions of African citizens, especially women and youth.

The training examined the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silencing the Guns in Africa. Participants also exchanged views on how to address the negative impact of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons on the continent.

**LEVERAGING ARTS FOR PEACE – AU TRAINING ON SILENCING THE GUNS**

Discussions focused on existing frameworks established by the AU Peace and Security Council to guide Member States, the AU and Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) towards achieving a conflict-free Africa.

The meeting outlined key areas to prioritise over the next three years, including the peaceful settlement of conflict, conflict prevention, and strengthening AU post-conflict reconstruction and development policies, particularly on reconciliation. The meeting further proposed strategies to address the illicit circulation of firearms, the expansion of terror threats, and the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government across Africa.
The AU Commission, through its Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security and the governments of Senegal and Finland, held the first Virtual Seminar on Water Diplomacy on 16 and 17 November 2023.

The seminar sought to foster understanding of the links between water and peace and security in Africa, in particular the concepts and tools of water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation. The seminar also encouraged further reflection on what water diplomacy means for Africa through concrete case studies. The seminar focused mainly on water diplomacy, international water law and cooperation agreements, analytical tools for water diplomacy, and concept trust in water diplomacy. The event saw experts in water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation from the AU and the two countries exchange views on the themes.

The seminar, attended by the various departments and directorates in the AU Commission, including the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms, will be leveraged to reinforce the technical know-how of the AU community, including the RECs, on this emerging issue.

As part of the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commissioner Amb. Bankole Adeoye’s response to the institutional reforms, the first step was to address mismatches and realignment of the new structure. The next step was to develop a strategy of change management culture to help staff effectively address existing and new challenges; Knowledge development, management, capacity building and utilizing an on-going process in this connection.

Accordingly, a training needs assessment was conducted in 2022, with invaluable support from the Training for Peace (TfP) programme. This assessment, a joint effort with our staff, revealed Strategic Planning, Leadership, Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, Team Building, and Negotiations as critical areas needing competence development. Subsequently, the TfP supported developing training manuals to be used in the training process.

On 9 and 10 November 2023, the Department organised the first strategic leadership training for our esteemed staff. With the unwavering support of the TfP, our Technical Knowledge Management Partner, twenty staff members, nine females and 11 males, were not just equipped with strategic leadership tools but underwent a truly transformative experience. The objective of this training was not just to provide a deep understanding of leadership and its importance but to empower each participant, inspiring them to be more effective in their work and contribute to the Department’s success.

Before the training, the Commissioner engaged the participants to understand their expectations from the training and ways the Department could support them in optimally utilising it. The feedback from the opening session and the post-training evaluation unequivocally demonstrates the relevance and timeliness of the training.

The Department will incorporate the invaluable feedback to enhance the training of the other modules. This year, the Department will try to deliver the other outstanding training. In addition, the General Staff of the Department will also receive training in Basic Office Administration and Writing Style for Official Correspondence. I hope all staff will participate in the trainings to enhance their capacities and enhance our joint efforts to deliver as one.
AU MEMBER STATES VALIDATE TEACHERS’ GUIDES AND LEARNERS’ MANUALS FOR INCLUSION AND MAINSTREAMING OF ACDEG IN SCHOOL CURRICULA

The AU Member State validation meeting on the Teachers’ Guides and Learners’ Manuals developed as part of the AU strategy for inclusion and mainstreaming of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) in school curricula was held from 4-6 December 2023.

Held in Maputo, Mozambique, the meeting was organised by the AU Commission’s Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department.

It brought together representatives, experts, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional Mechanisms (RMs), and AU organs from 46 Member States. Over the three days, participants examined and validated the documents. The meeting also set the stage for the effective implementation of the project’s pilot phase in selected countries due to take place in 2024.

The AU strategy for the inclusion and mainstreaming of the ACDEG in AU Member States’ school curricula and its implementation materials, including the strategic roadmap and the training material tool, were reviewed by REC and RM representatives in Abidjan from 12-14 August 2022. This was followed by a consultative meeting in Kinshasa on 29 November 2022 to discuss the documents to be developed to launch the project’s pilot phase.

AU COMMISSION AND PARTNERS ADVOCATE FOR EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

The AU Commission, together with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Institute for Training and Research, World Bank Group, and Institute for Peace and Security Studies, hosted an event titled ‘Ensuring the right to equitable and inclusive quality education to break and prevent cycles of violence in Africa’. This took place on the sidelines of the 37th AU Summit on 13 February 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The primary objective was to raise awareness about the pivotal role of the right to education, and building
resilience, mitigating and preventing recurring and new violent conflict dynamics. The event focused on exploring opportunities to strengthen the preventive impact of the right to education, employing a human rights approach.

There were representatives from the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, Regional Economic Communities, African Youth Ambassadors for Peace, and UN agencies (UN Office to the AU, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights). It also included representatives from the World Bank Group, International Committee of the Red Cross, think tanks, AU Member States, and civil society organizations; and other stakeholders in the policy and practice spaces, e.g. from the United Kingdom, Japan, Finland and Norway.

In her welcoming remarks, AU Governance and Conflict Prevention Director Patience Zanelie Chiradza emphasised the linkages between the right to education and the cycles of violence in Africa. She highlighted the significance of the event aligning with the AU 2024 theme of education. ‘Education is a fundamental human right and a powerful tool for fostering development, peace and progress,’ she said. Commissioner Bankole Adeoye, in his keynote speech, underscored the importance of prioritising and investing in peace education. He said education was key to breaking violence in Africa.

‘Education will change the face of the continent, offering unlimited opportunities, especially for the girl child,’ he said. He stressed that access to quality education equipped people to contribute meaningfully to their communities, engage in constructive dialogue, and seek non-violent solutions to conflicts.

Other speakers, including the Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Prof. Mohamed Belhocine, and Marcel Clement Akpovo, OHCHR East Africa Regional Office (EARO) Representative, addressed the need for comprehensive education and advancing peace education. Dan Owen, World Bank Group Lead Social Development Specialist, highlighted the important role that early warning mechanisms, and inclusive data sets (gender and marginalised groups), had in designing prevention and mitigation responses to violent conflict at regional and national levels.

The event covered, among others, issues such as international and regional instruments on the right to education, Silencing the Guns, and mainstreaming child protection in the implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture. It also covered the importance of integrating a prevention focus into disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in peace education.

Recommendations included the need to invest more in agribusiness development, poverty alleviation, and traditional educational systems. Also discussed was the importance of sharing success stories about peace education, and strengthening early warning systems and regional, national and local partnerships in addressing the root causes of violent conflict. Delegates also spoke about promoting intercommunity dialogue, and reviewing policies in line with peace education in Africa.
19TH AU-EU HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE FOCUSES ON RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The 19th AU-European Union (EU) Human Rights Dialogue was held on 24 and 25 January 2024 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The dialogue was co-chaired by Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and Eamon Gilmore, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

Since the sixth EU-Africa Ministerial Troika Meeting in Vienna, and the seventh meeting in Brazzaville, the AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue has served as a platform for exchanging experiences and addressing human rights, democracy, and legal issues in both Africa and Europe. This year the focus of the dialogue was aligned to the AU Theme of the Year 2024, looking at ‘Safeguarding the Right to Education in Africa and Europe’.

The AU and EU emphasised the importance of ensuring universal access to quality and inclusive education as a fundamental human right. They further discussed their respective efforts to improve access to education for girls and marginalised groups, and to address disparities in educational outcomes for migrant and minority communities.

Additionally, they both welcomed the positive trend of abolishing the death penalty in Africa, discussed the global state of democracy and challenges to democracy in Africa and Europe, and recognised the importance of the organisation of credible elections to counter democratic backsliding.

Also discussed was the role of international election observers to assess the quality of electoral processes. They took note of the progress made in implementing the business and human rights agenda, stressed the importance of upholding human rights in conflict and post-conflict environments and the need to better protect children in armed conflicts, and discussed the implementation of their respective transitional justice policies.

In addition, they welcomed the joint launch of the EU-funded ‘Initiative for Transitional Justice in Africa’ in Addis Ababa in October 2023, and commended the key role of civil society in the AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue. Both institutions agreed to hold the 20th edition of the dialogue at the beginning of 2025 in Brussels.

AU AND PARTNERS REFLECT ON HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS IN AFRICA

At the AU’s third Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Awareness Week, the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA) organised ‘The Operationalization of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in Africa: State of Play and the Way Forward’ expert workshop. It took place on 30 November and 1 December 2023 at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa.

The workshop was organised in the context of Egypt’s Championship of PCRD, and in the CCCPA’s capacity as the Secretariat of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development. It was held in partnership with the AU Commission’s Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department and the AU Development Agency and New Partnership for Africa’s Development.
It was opened by H.E. Mohamed Gad, Egypt’s Ambassador to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU and UN Economic Commission for Africa; Amb. William Azumah Awinder-Kanyirige, Senior Governance and Peacebuilding Advisor, Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, speaking on behalf of the Commissioner; and Amb. Ahmed Abdel-Latif, CCCPA Director General and Executive Director of the Aswan Forum.

The workshop brought together representatives from national governments, international and regional institutions, humanitarian actors, financial and development institutions, civil society organisations, and think tanks. Discussions covered how to advance the operationalisation of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, as part of integrated approaches to tackle peace and development challenges in line with the Revised AU PCRD Policy Framework.

The workshop mainly focused on the need to bridge the gap between policy and practice through greater country leadership and ownership, and more innovative and targeted partnerships geared towards implementing concrete projects at the regional and national levels.

AFRICAN UNION AND PARTNERS REVIEW 10 YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AU SECURITY SECTOR REFORM POLICY IN MEMBER STATES


The event was organised by the AU Commission Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, with the United Nations Office to the AU (UNOAU), African Security Sector Network (ASSN)/Just Future Alliance, Institute for Security Studies/Training for Peace, and African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum.

The aim of the conference was to take stock of the impact and lessons learnt in supporting AU Member States engaged in security regimes and to map the way forward for the next decade.

H.E. Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns on behalf of the PAPS Commissioner, noted that since the AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform was adopted by the AU Assembly in January 2013, the AU Commission had worked persistently to promote and support its implementation.
The AU and European Union (EU) launched a three-year project on 25 October 2023 to support Member States as they incorporate the AU Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) and undertake national transitional justice processes.

The project – the Initiative for Transitional Justice in Africa (ITJA) – is to be implemented by a group of three organisations led by the International Center for Transitional Justice, African Transitional Justice Legacy Fund (ATJLF), and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. The initiative is funded by the EU, which has provided a total of €5 million.

H.E. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UNOAU, and Dr. Niagalé Bagayoko on behalf of ASSN/Just Future Alliance, as ASSN Chair, joined Chambas in opening the conference. Key outcomes of the discussions will be submitted to the AU Peace and Security Council for consideration and guidance.

The Commission, on request, has provided SSR support to Member States in political transitions and post-conflict contexts, including in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, South Sudan and Somalia.

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The event brought together government officials, policymakers, transitional justice practitioners, civil society representatives, and other stakeholders. The aim was to review the ITJA’s fundamental components and encourage their participation in the project’s activities, as well as strategic cooperation among them, which is crucial to advancing transitional justice in Africa.

Adopted in February 2019, the AUTJP provides AU Member States with guidance on creating and implementing effective and credible transitional justice processes. An accompanying roadmap, developed by the AU Commission, lays out actionable steps for putting the policy into practice.

Inspired by African values and based on best practices, lessons learnt, and international norms, the AUTJP and roadmap describe a uniquely African approach to designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating transitional justice mechanisms.

Held on 6 and 7 December 2023, the meeting followed the Fourth Steering Committee Meeting on the Implementation of the Early Response Mechanism, a crucial funding mechanism for interventions during the initial phases of crises.

Hosted by the Southern African Development Community, the meetings were attended by representatives of the AU Commission, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), and the EU Delegation to the AU. Both meetings provided a platform for participants to discuss achievements, challenges and the future trajectory of the programmes.

Participants engaged in dialogues on optimising coordination and information sharing to foster improved synergy and coherence among the AU, RECs/RMs, and the EU. The overarching goal is to fortify joint efforts in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

The AU conveyed its gratitude to the EU Delegation to the AU for their unwavering support and renewed partnership in addressing security challenges in Africa.

The AU further expressed its gratitude to the various RECs/RMs for their solidarity and dedication to advancing the agenda of peace, security and sustainable economic development. The next steering committee meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.