United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Concept Note

Virtual Experts Group Meeting

Subregional Studies on the Interlinkages between the Development, Peace and Security, Human Rights and Humanitarian Pillars

Facilitated from
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

17 and 18 December, 2020

I.   Background

I.1 Introduction

1.   Over the past two decades, inter-state armed and violent conflicts have significantly diminished in Africa. Civil wars in Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone have stopped. Nevertheless, there are still many areas throughout the continent where conflicts persist. As at July 2018, The AU had identified 21 conflicts in its 55 member States, which involved four major conflict zones, namely; Mano River Region, the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel/Maghreb Region. There are ongoing armed conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. The United Nations has peacekeeping missions in several of those countries.

2.   In its Africa Governance Report of 2019, the African Union has identified seven causes of conflicts and instability as follows: (1) Poverty and inequality; (2) Disruptive transitions, for example, from autocratic to democratic rule and vice versa; (3) Lack of democracy or democratic accountability; (4) Population pressure, social and economic exclusion; (5) Protracted violence, particular large-scale ones that are prone to relapse; (6) Spill-over effects from neighbouring countries; and (7) Poor political and natural resource governance. Africa also continues to face evolving conflict dynamics and security threats, including the absence of effective State authority, terrorism, organised crime and the impact of climate change, most of which are compounded by lack of accountability resulting in impunity.

3.   A combination of conflict and loss of livelihoods attributed to diminishing grazing land and loss of livestock, continue to cause displacement and humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa and Sahel region. Attacks by extremist groups continue to fuel displacement in many African countries such as in Somalia, in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, and local Islamist groups in Mali, Burkina Faso and Mozambique. Those attacks have further exacerbated inter-community tensions as seen in the Sahel. Conflict over natural resources such as precious stones and minerals in the Central Africa Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and oil in Nigeria and South Sudan have also triggered some of the worst violence and largest waves of displacement in the region.

4.   Some major impacts have been discussed and include the fact that the majority of casualties are civilian non-combatants, mainly women, children and the elderly. In addition to those who die because of injury, thousands suffer death from disease, hunger, malnutrition and communicative diseases. Forced migration, refugees and internal displacement are among the tragedies of conflicts which often transform healthy productive human beings into recipients of humanitarian aid. According to UNHCR (2018) Africa hosts about 37 percent of the world's refugee population of about 7.3 million.

5.   Strengthening state institutions and enhancing their capacity to provide security and development based on principles of good governance are essential for sound conflict management and peace building. The 2019 Africa Governance Report describes peace as a situation whereby wars and civil conflict are absent, but security prevails, usually in the context of a conducive environment for sustained social and political stability. In this context the African Union considers that governance, peace and security are prerequisites for sustainable development.

I.2 Responses by African regional and subregional institutions and the United Nations

6.   African regional institutions are playing major roles in conflict management and the democratization process. This reflects, in part, efforts since the early 2000s to transform the African Union (AU) into a strong, collective security and norm building mechanism. It also stems from the growing role of Africa's regional economic communities (RECs), notably the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

7.   In the dual resolutions passed by the General Assembly and Security Council in April 2016 (Resolutions 70/262 and 2282), "sustaining peace" is understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account. The resolutions recognize the importance of coherence and complementarity between the UN's peace and security efforts and its development, human rights, and humanitarian work. They recognize that international support has a better chance of creating the conditions for sustaining peace if it simultaneously addresses the humanitarian, development, human rights, and security needs of aggrieved communities.

8.   Additionally, in his 2020 report to the UN Economic and Social Council on the Implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), the Secretary General presented the ongoing work across the pillars to achieve the 2030 Agenda in crises or emergency settings. He highlighted the steps taken within this QCPR cycle to strengthen coordination across pillars and ensure United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) can draw on assets from all UN pillars to service the 2030 Agenda. The first critical step was the strengthening of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) itself and the repositioning of sustainable development at the heart of the organization.

9.   Furthermore, the United Nations Secretary General and the African Union Commission Chairperson have made a commitment to work together towards the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in recognition of the nexus between peace and security, human rights and development. The two principals have signed the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (the Peace and Security Framework) and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the Development Framework.) They are expected to sign the Joint Human Rights Framework soon. Additionally, there exists an MOU between the UN and the AU on Humanitarian Action.

II.   The subregional studies on the four pillars

10.   Against the foregoing, ECA through its Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD) and five Subregional Offices (SROs) for Eastern, Southern, North, West and Central Africa, has commissioned subregional studies on the interlinkages between the development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian pillars covering the five subregions of Africa. The studies seek to interrogate and analyze the interlinkages between the pillars in the various subregions with the aim of promoting synergistic, complementary and joined-up

implementation of interventions addressing the four pillars with the intent of contributing to effective and lasting solutions to conflicts in the subregions. The findings will also contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda in the context of the AU-UN cooperation frameworks. The studies will also address crosscutting issues such as gender and youth, and COVID-19. They will analyze transboundary issues with the aim of promoting intra-regional cooperation in tackling conflict situations by harnessing the interlinkages.

11.   The studies are being conducted in partnership with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA). The Department of Global Communications (DGC), the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office on the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) are important collaborators in the process. They will lead to the production of robust study reports on harnessing the interlinkages to inform policy and practice in conflict prevention and resolution situations. They will be published as standalone reports, and at the same time feed into the regional study being conducted under the leadership of OSAA. The primary beneficiaries are the eight African Union recognized Regional Economic Communities (RECs) across the five subregions of Africa. Member States of the RECs, the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Secretariat of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) will benefit from the study findings.

III.   Objectives of the meeting

12.   The main objective of the meeting is to provide a platform for participants to deliberate on the draft study reports to identify gaps, provide comments and inputs and propose recommendations, including revisions to inform their finalization. The meeting will also provide a platform for experts and policy makers from African regional and subregional organizations, member States UN system agencies and organizations, to share experiences, including good practices and lessons in promoting an interlinkages approach to conflict prevention and resolution. Additionally, the meeting will deliberate on how four-pillar interlinkages could be harnessed to contribute to the realization of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 goals in the context of AU-UN Cooperation Frameworks.

IV.   Format of the meeting

13.   The draft study reports on on the interlinkages between the development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian pillars in Eastern, Southern, North and West & Central Africa will serve as the main resources for the meeting.

14.   In terms of format, in addition to the opening and closing sessions, all presentations and discussion will be held in plenary. Presentations and discussion on the Eastern and Southern Africa reports will be held on the first day of the meeting, Thursday, 17 December, and on the second day, 18, December, the presentations and discussion on the West & Central, and North Africa reports will take place.

V.   Expected outcomes

15.   The meeting is expected to lead to a number of outcomes:
   a) Increased understanding and appreciation of the key issues, challenges and opportunities for harnessing the interlinkages to contribute to effective and lasting solutions to conflicts;
   b) Enhanced understanding of the impact of conflicts on women and youth, and their role in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on the interlinkages;
   c) Increased intraregional cooperation in addressing transboundary issues for conflict prevention and resolution through the four-pillar interlinkages approach;
   d) Enhanced understanding of key capacity development issues as they pertain to mainstreaming the interlinkages into policies and strategies, including those related to Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda;
   e) Deeper understanding of how the AU-UN cooperation frameworks could be leveraged to promote an interlinkages approach to conflict prevention and resolution, and the realization of the goals of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs;
   f) Well-articulated comments, inputs and recommendations for the finalization of the subregional study reports.

VI.   Expected outputs

16.   A number of outputs will be delivered at the end of the meeting:

   a) The meeting report;
   b) Press releases and news stories;
   c) Web publications.

VII.   Meeting documents

17.   The meeting will be informed by the concept note, programme and the study reports for Eastern, Southern, North and West & Central Africa.

VIII. Meeting participants

18.   Participants will include officials from the following organizations:
   a) The African Union Commission (AUC)
   b) Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
   c) Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
   d) Eastern African Community (EAC)
   e) Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
   f) Southern African Development Community (SADC)
   g) Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD),

h) Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD)
i) Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA)
j) The African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD
k) The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
l) Member States
m) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
n) United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs)
o) United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU)
p) United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA)
q) United Nations Department of Global Communications (DGC)
r) United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

IX.   Dates and venue

19.   The meeting will on Thursday, 17 December and Friday, 18 December 2020 from 15:00 to 18:00 hrs Addis Ababa time on each day. It will facilitated from Addis Ababa on Kudo.Platform.

X.   Working languages

20.   The meeting will be conducted in English and French with simultaneous interpretation.

XI.   Administrative arrangements

21.   This will be provided in a separate note.

XII. Contacts

22.   Communication related to the meeting should be addressed to:

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