

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي

UMOJA WA AFRIKA



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

UNIÓN AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: +251 115 517 700 Fax: +251 115 517 844
Website: www.au.int

ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION

Thirty-Seventh Ordinary Session

17 - 18 February 2024

Addis Ababa (ETHIOPIA)

Assembly/AU/4(XXXVII)

Original : English

**REPORT OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE
AFRICAN UNION ON ITS ACTIVITIES AND THE STATE OF PEACE
AND SECURITY IN AFRICA**

REPORTING PERIOD: JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| ANNEXES..... | iii |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | iii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | iii |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS..... | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | v |
| I. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| II. PART I: ACTIVITIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 1 | |
| a) Mandate and Term of Office | 1 |
| b) Monthly Chairship of the PSC: January to December 2023 | 2 |
| c) Overview Of Meetings | 3 |
| d) Engagement on Conflict Situations, Political transitions and Thematic Issues | 3 |
| e) Consideration of regional, thematic issues and other situations..... | 4 |
| f) Consultations with other African Union Organs/institutions..... | 6 |
| g) Engagement with the RECs/RMs | 8 |
| h) Engagement with the CSOs | 8 |
| i) Strengthening Partnerships for African Peace and Security..... | 8 |
| j) Consultations..... | 9 |
| k) Other Engagements | 11 |
| l) Field Missions..... | 11 |
| m) PSC participation on stakeholders' activities | 13 |
| n) Retooling the PSC working methods | 13 |
| o) Support role of the PSC Sub-Committees | 14 |
| III. PART II: THE STATE OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA..... | 18 |
| A. EASTERN AFRICA | 18 |
| B. WESTERN AFRICA | 27 |
| C. CENTRAL AFRICA | 34 |
| D. SOUTHERN AFRICA | 40 |
| E. NORTHERN AFRICA | 41 |
| IV. AFRICAN UNION MEDIATION AND DIALOGUE INITIATIVES..... | 44 |
| i. Panel of the Wise Activities | 44 |
| ii. Panel of the Wise-Subsidiary Bodies, PanWise Network/Femwise Activities..... | 44 |
| iii. WiseYouth Network..... | 45 |
| iv. Lessons Learned from the AU-Led and Ethiopian-Owned Peace Process | 46 |
| V. DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND GOVERNANCE..... | 46 |

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| i. | Facilitating Implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance..... | 46 |
| ii. | Strengthening Citizen’s Engagement and Popular Participation | 47 |
| iii. | Strengthening the synergy between AGA and APSA..... | 47 |
| iv. | Enhancing Electoral Processes | 48 |
| V. | AU Elections Observation Missions – Democracy at Work | 48 |
| VI. | CONSTITUTIONALISM, RULE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE | 50 |
| VII. | HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE | 51 |
| VIII. | PUBLIC SECTOR GOVERNANCE | 54 |
| IX. | DEFENCE AND SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE | 55 |
| XI. | EARLY WARNING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION | 61 |
| XII. | PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS..... | 62 |
| XIII. | CROSS-CUTTING THEMATIC ISSUES..... | 68 |
| XIV. | CONCLUSIONS: OUTLOOK, IMPACT AND CHALLENGES | 85 |

ANNEXES

Annex I: Common African Position on the Application of International Law in the Cyber Space

Annex II: Conclusions of the 3rd Joint Retreat between the Peace and Security Council and the Africa Peer Review Mechanism

Annex III: Conclusions of the 10th High Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa: Assisting incoming African Members of the United Nations Security Council in Preparing to Address the Peace and Security Issues on the Continent (Oran Process)

Annex IV: Conclusions of the Annual High-Level Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa (Banjul Process)

Annex V: Conclusions of the 15th PSC Retreat on the Review of its Working Methods

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Mandate | 1 |
| Table 2: Chairship by Month | 2 |
| Table 3: Regional Consideration | 4 |
| Table 4: Thematic Meetings | 5 |
| Table 5: Consultations | 10 |
| Table 6: Field Missions | 12 |
| Table 7: PSC-related programmatic activities | 13 |
| Table 8: Retreats | 14 |
| Table 9: Meetings Summary | 15 |
| Table 10: AU Elections Observation Missions | 49 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Number of Agenda Items | 3 |
| Figure 2: Country & Regional Considerations | 4 |
| Figure 3: 2023 AUPSC Considerations | 6 |
| Figure 4: 2023 Field Missions | 13 |
| Figure 5: Summary of the implementation of activities of the PSC based on the adopted PSC Annual Indicative Programme for 2023 | 17 |
| Figure 6: AUEOM Gender Data | 49 |
| Figure 7: AUEOM Youth Data | 50 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------|--|
| A3 | African Members of the United Nations Security Council |
| AAM | Africa Amnesty Month |
| ACSRT | African Centre for the Study & Research on Terrorism |
| AfCFTA | African Continental Free Trade Area |
| AFLPM | African First Ladies Peace Mission |
| AFRIPOL | African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation |
| AGA | African Governance Architecture |
| APRM | African Peer Review Mechanism |
| ATMIS | African Union Transition Mission in Somalia |
| AU | African Union |
| AUDA-NEPAD | African Union Development Agency |
| AUCIL | AU Commission on International Law |
| AUPSC | African Union Peace and Security Council |
| CADSP | Common African Defence and Security Policy |
| CAR | Central African Republic |
| EAC | East African Community |
| CEN-SAD | Community of Sahel-Saharan States |
| CISSA | Committee of Intelligence and Security Service of Africa |
| CoE | Committee of Experts |
| CPAPS | Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organisations |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| EC | Executive Council |
| ECCAS | Economic Community of Central African States |
| ECOSOCC | Economic, Social & Cultural Council |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| EUPSC | European Union Political and Security Committee |
| HoSG | Heads of State and Government |
| MIN | Ministerial |
| MSC | Military Staff Committee |
| PAP | Pan-African Parliament |
| PPoW | Provisional Programme of Work |
| PR | Permanent Representative |
| PRC | Permanent Representatives Committee |
| PSC | Peace and Security Council |
| PSOs | Peace Support Operations |
| R-ARCSS | Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan |
| RECs/RMs | Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms |
| RECSA | Regional Centre on Small Arms |
| SADC | Southern Africa Development Community |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNSC | United Nations Security Council |
| UCG | Unconstitutional Changes of Government |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) expresses its sincere gratitude to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU for the strategic leadership and guidance in the implementation of its mandate of promoting good governance, peace, security and stability on the Continent, particularly in 2023, in line with its Protocol. The PSC extends its appreciation to all AU Member States for their support to the Council in addressing the complex peace and security challenges in the continent, while recognizing the unwavering commitment and significant contributions of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) in finding peaceful solutions to conflict situations in Africa and on thematic issues relating to peace and security.

In 2023, there was a notable increase in collaboration between the PSC and various regional and international organisations. The Council expresses its gratitude to all stakeholders, both within and outside the continent, for their support in advancing and implementing important AU peacemaking programmes. These programmes include the AU flagship initiative to silence the guns in Africa by 2030, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, as well as efforts to protect children affected by armed conflict. Additionally, the AU has fostered connections with other stakeholders through initiatives like the AU Interregional Knowledge Exchange on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention (I-RECKE) and the AU Network of Think Tanks for Peace (NETT4PEACE).

Council recognizes and commends the steadfast support from the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, under the leadership of Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS). The PSC appreciates the Department's efforts in securing the necessary resources for carrying out its activities, particularly in addressing conflict situations in Africa. This includes the preparation of documents on conflict situations and the formulation of Common African Positions on crucial peace and security issues. Council also acknowledges the increasing role of the PSC Committee of Experts (CoE) in supporting the work of the PSC and interface with the PAPS Department.

Most importantly, Council expresses deep gratitude to AU partners, most notably the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), as well as key bilateral actors, for their collaboration on matters relating to peace, governance, security and stability and particularly, for their continued support.

Council wishes to pay special tribute to African uniformed and civilian personnel who paid the ultimate price in peace-making efforts across the Continent, in particular those deployed in peace support operations, and conveys its condolences to the families and Governments of those who lost their lives in the line of duty.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Report of the Peace and Security Council on its Activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa for 2023 is submitted to the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU, pursuant to Article 7(q) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council.

2. The Report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023 and is divided into two parts. The first section focuses on activities carried out by the PSC during the period under review, including meetings, field missions, retreats, joint consultations, informal joint seminars, and other activities of the Union involving the PSC. The second part provides a comprehensive assessment of the state of governance, peace, and security on the Continent as well as the status of implementation of various decisions of the Assembly within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA). The Report concludes with observations and proposals for the Assembly's consideration and the outlook for 2024.

II. PART I: ACTIVITIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

a) *Mandate and Term of Office*

3. The election of Members of the PSC is based on the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the AU, the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (the PSC Protocol) and the Modalities for Election of Members of the Peace and Security Council adopted by the Policy Organs of the Union in March 2004 (the PSC Modalities). During the Sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly in January 2006, the Assembly delegated its power to elect PSC members under Article 5(2) of the Protocol to the Executive Council of the AU.

4. In conformity with the provision of Article 5 (1) of the PSC Protocol, the PSC is composed of fifteen (15) Members elected on the basis of equal rights: i) Ten (10) Members elected for a term of two (2) years, and ii) Five (5) Members elected for a term of three (3) years to ensure continuity. During the 35th ordinary session of the Assembly held in February 2022, the following countries were elected to serve as members of the PSC:

Table 1: Mandate

| No. | Country Name | Region | Start of Mandate | Mandate (Years) | End of Mandate |
|-----|-------------------|----------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. | Burundi | Central | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 2. | Cameroon | Central | 1/4/2022 | 3 | 31/03/2025 |
| 3. | Republic of Congo | Central | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 4. | Djibouti | Eastern | 1/4/2022 | 3 | 31/03/2025 |
| 5. | The Gambia | Western | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 6. | Ghana | Western | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 7. | Morocco | Northern | 1/4/2022 | 3 | 31/03/2025 |

| | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|----------|----------|---|------------|
| 8. | Namibia | Southern | 1/4/2022 | 3 | 31/03/2025 |
| 9. | Nigeria | Western | 1/4/2022 | 3 | 31/03/2025 |
| 10. | Senegal | Western | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 11. | South Africa | Southern | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 12. | Tanzania | Eastern | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 13. | Tunisia | Northern | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 14. | Uganda | Eastern | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |
| 15. | Zimbabwe | Southern | 1/4/2022 | 2 | 31/03/2024 |

5. The mandate of the ten (10) Members of the PSC, elected for a two-year term, will end on 31 March 2024. The 44th Executive Council to be held in February 2024 will elect ten (10) Members for a two (2) year term each, to be endorsed by the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union in February 2024. The ten (10) newly-elected members will assume their seats in the Council on 1 April 2024, and their mandates will end on 31 March 2026. The mandate of the PSC's five (5) Members with a three (3) year term will end on 31 March 2025.

b) Monthly Chairship of the PSC: January to December 2023

6. Article 8 para 6 of the PSC Protocol stipulates that the chair of the PSC shall be held in turn by the Members of the Peace and Security Council in the English alphabetical order. Each Chairperson shall hold office for one calendar month. In 2023, the chair was held as follows:

Table 2: Chairship by Month

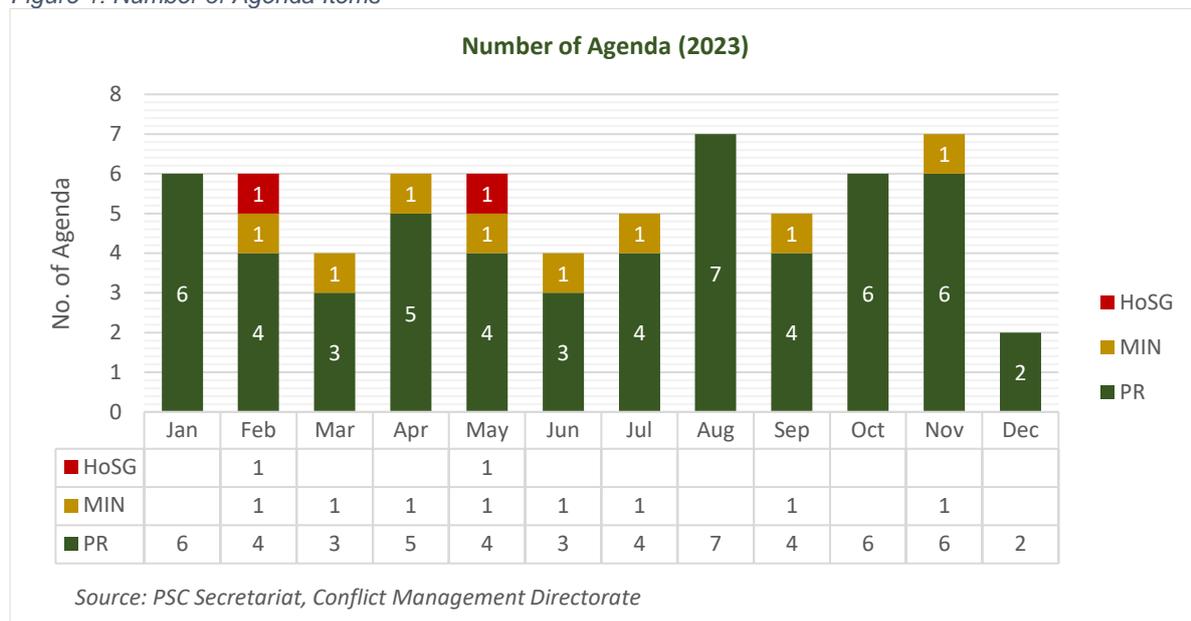
| No. | Month (2023) | Chairing Country | Permanent Representative |
|-----|--------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | January | Uganda | H.E. Amb. Rebecca Amuge Otengo |
| 2. | February | South Africa | H.E. Amb. Edward Xolisa Makaya |
| 3. | March | Tanzania | H.E. Amb. Innocent Shiyo |
| 4. | April | Tunisia | H.E. Amb. Abdelhamid Elgharbi |
| 5. | May | Uganda | H.E. Amb. Rebecca Amuge Otengo |
| 6. | June | Zimbabwe | H.E. Amb. Sophia Nyamudeza |
| 7. | July | Senegal | H.E. Amb. Mohamed Lamine Thiaw |
| 8. | August | Burundi | H.E. Amb. Willy Nyamitwe |
| 9. | September | Cameroon | H.E. Amb. Churchill Ewumbue-Monono |
| 10. | October | Congo | H.E. Amb. Daniel Owassa |
| 11. | November | Djibouti | H.E. Amb. Abdi Mahamoud Eybe |
| 12. | December | The Gambia | H.E. Amb. Jainaba Jagne |

Source: PSC Secretariat, Conflict Management Directorate, DPAPS

c) Overview Of Meetings

7. The PSC convened 61 sittings during 2023, in which 64 agenda items were considered, compared to 71 meetings in 2022. Two meetings were held at the Heads of State and Government (HoSG) level and eight at the Ministerial level. Conflict situations and political transitions accounted for 41% of PSC sessions in 2023. The PSC adopted fifty-five (55) Communiqués, two (2) Press Statements, and one (1) Summary Record. Decisions and directives of the PSC provided strategic guidance to the Commission, Member States, RECs/RMs and other stakeholders on peacemaking efforts on the continent.

Figure 1: Number of Agenda Items



d) Engagement on Conflict Situations, Political transitions and Thematic Issues

8. The PSC continued to be actively seized of crisis, conflict and post-conflict situations on the continent. Council devoted attention to the situations in Burkina Faso, Sudan, Niger, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Libya, the Central African Republic, Chad, South Sudan, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel region and the Gulf of Guinea. Council convened emergency sessions to review the situations in Sudan, Niger and Gabon.

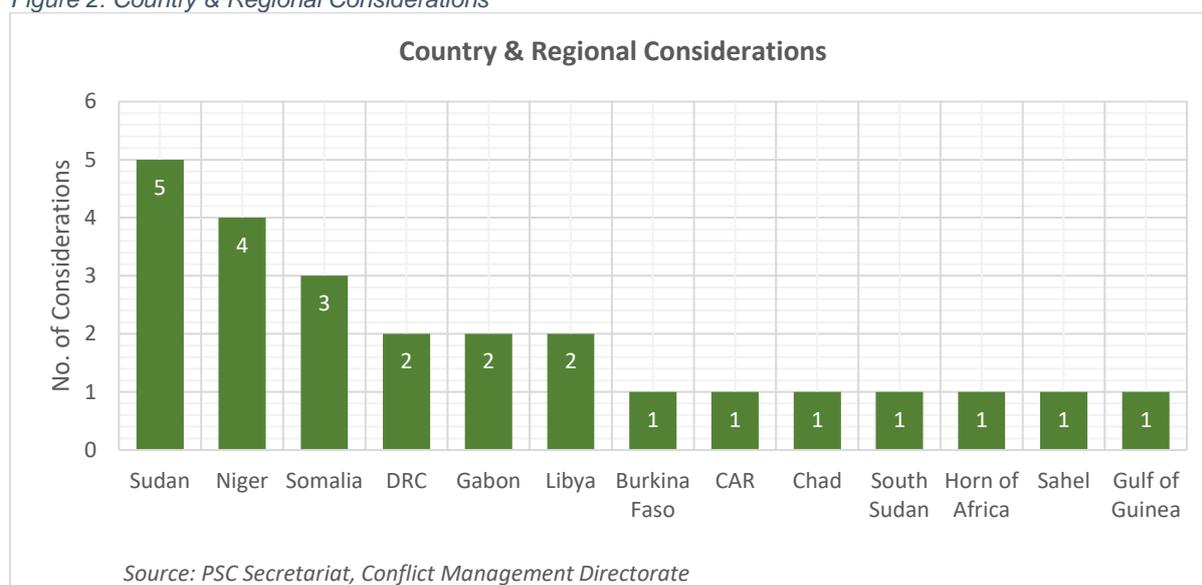
9. Various thematic issues, namely Climate Change, Elections in Africa, Continental Early Warning, Cybercrime and Cybersecurity, Humanitarian Action in Africa, private military and defence companies and mercenaries operating in Africa, and financing of the AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs), were also considered.

10. Council also reviewed and endorsed the extension of the mandates of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the AU Monitoring,

Verification and Compliance Mechanism (MVCM) in Tigray, Ethiopia up to 31 December 2023.

11. The PSC also held two informal sessions, in April 2023 (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Sudan) and December 2023, on countries in transition (Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso) to review the progress in the implementation of their transition roadmaps. On 17 May 2023, the PSC, in a historic meeting with the Chairperson of the AU, H.E. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, engaged in extensive deliberations on the state of governance, peace and security on the continent, focusing mainly on political transitions; developments in the Horn of Africa, Great Lakes and Sahel Regions.

Figure 2: Country & Regional Considerations



e) Consideration of regional, thematic issues and other situations

12. Underscoring the importance of addressing regional peace and security matters, as well as thematic issues relating to peace and security, the PSC, in line with its 2023 Annual Indicative Programme, held several meetings on regional issues, namely the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea, in which decisions were adopted to provide guidance to AU Member States and RECs/RMs on addressing peace and security challenges. Below are the meetings held and outcomes adopted by the PSC on regional, thematic and other situations from January to December 2023:

Table 3: Regional Consideration

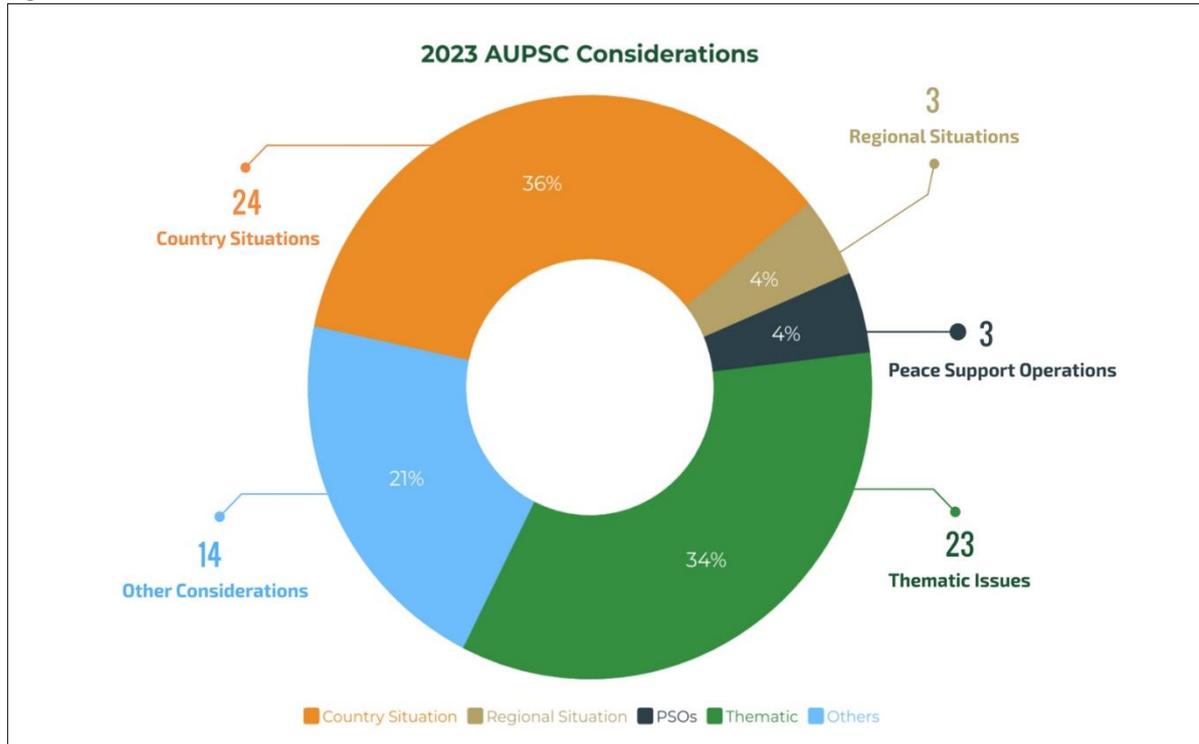
| No. | Date | Region | Meeting No. | Regional Consideration |
|-----|--------|----------------|-------------|--|
| 1. | 15 Jun | Horn of Africa | 1158 | Briefing Update on the Situation in the Horn of Africa |
| 2. | 20 Jul | Sahel Region | 1162 | Updated Briefing on the Situation in the Sahel |
| 3. | 18 Sep | Gulf of Guinea | 1174 | Briefing on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea |

Table 4: Thematic Meetings

| No. | Thematic Meetings | Occurrence | Meeting No. |
|-----|---|------------|-------------|
| 1. | Elections in Africa | 2 | 1132, 1165 |
| 2. | Early Warning | 2 | 1138, 1170 |
| 3. | Women, Peace and Security | 2 | 1144, 1187 |
| 4. | Cybercrime and Cybersecurity | 2 | 1148, 1171 |
| 5. | Mine Action | 1 | 1146 |
| 6. | Ideology of Hate Crimes in Africa | 1 | 1147 |
| 7. | Humanitarian Action in Africa | 2 | 1155, 1178 |
| 8. | CADSP and Other Relevant Defence and Security Instruments on the Continent | 1 | 1159 |
| 9. | Engagement with the PRC Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance; and the AGA Platform | 1 | 1167 |
| 10. | African Union Sanctions Regime | 1 | 1181 |
| 11. | Counter-Terrorism and Related Issues | 1 | 1182 |
| 12. | Youth, Peace and Security in Africa | 1 | 1183 |
| 13. | Climate Change, Peace and Security Nexus | 1 | 1184 |
| 14. | Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in Africa | 1 | 1188 |
| 15. | Private military and defence companies operating in Africa | 1 | 1189.1 |
| 16. | Inaugural commemoration of Africa Day of Peace and Reconciliation | 1 | 1135 |
| 17. | Community responses to security challenges on the continent | 1 | 1163 |
| | Total | | |

13. In summary, the PSC held 24 meetings on conflict situations, 23 agenda items on thematic issues, 3 on regional issues, 3 on peace support operations (PSOs), and 14 on other matters relating to governance, peace and security in Africa, including coordination with A3 and engagements with other bodies/organisations.

Figure 3: 2023 AUPSC Considerations



f) Consultations with other African Union Organs/institutions

14. The PSC dedicated its 1167th meeting on 11 August 2023 to an experience-sharing session with the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Platform members. This was the second engagement following the first held during the 1095th meeting on 1 August 2022. The Council underlined the need for commitment by Member States to the universal ratification, domestication, implementation and reporting of AU Shared Values, particularly the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) and, in this regard, encouraged all Member States, which have not yet done so, to sign, ratify and domesticate the Charter. The Council further requested the AU Commission and the African Governance Platform (AGP) to organize a consultative meeting to identify joint initiatives beyond the experience-sharing sessions, paying particular attention to the following areas: Joint PSC, the PRC Sub Committee and the AGP promotional visits on AU-shared values instruments; a more active role in preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts; greater PSC involvement in the planning and delivery of the AGA Flagship Initiatives; and the establishment of follow-up mechanisms on the decisions of the joint session between PSC and AGP. In addition, Council requested the AU Commission to expedite the operationalization of the African Governance Facility in order to facilitate effective resource mobilization to support the initiatives of the AGP and Member States towards the promotion of good governance and strengthening of democracy on the continent; and in the same context, also requested the AU Commission to further strengthen the PRC Sub Committee on HRDG and AGP, as well as the institutional capacity of the AGA-APSA Secretariat to more effectively discharge their respective mandates.

15. Pursuant to article 18 of the PSC Protocol, the PSC had its third engagement with the Pan African Parliament (PAP) during its 1160th meeting held on 30 June 2023. This follows the first and the second meetings held during the 148th meeting on 22

August 2008 and the 344th meeting on 27 November 2012, respectively. The PSC encouraged the PAP to continue championing African interests and African common positions, including advocating for the lifting of sanctions and unilateral coercive measures imposed against African Union Member States, and consider developing close working relations with similar organizations from other Continents or regions, to galvanize support for African interests, and to enhance collaboration and cooperation in addressing issues relating to the promotion of peace, security, democracy and good governance in the Continent. The PSC, mindful of each other's respective mandate, underscored the need for the two Organs to continue exploring practical means and ways of further enhancing their collaboration and cooperation in the promotion of peace, security and stability in the continent, as well as African Common Positions of peace and security matter, particularly in the international fora.

16. The PSC and the AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL) held their second engagement during the 1171st meeting on 24 August 2023. This follows the inaugural interface held during the 1120th meeting on 9 November 2022. The Council reiterated its deep concern over the increasing global cyber threats and attacks, which seriously threaten national, regional and international peace and security, and in this respect, strongly condemned all cyber-attacks particularly the recent large-scale attack on AU Commission IT infrastructure. Council welcomed the draft statement by the AUCIL on the application of International Law to the use of ICTs in cyber space prepared by the Special Rapporteur on the prohibition on intervention in internal and external affairs of States, and requested the Special Rapporteur to continue to engage Member States and other stakeholders in order to further develop the Draft Statement. In this connection, the Council decided to establish an expert-level working group, with the participation of the PSC Committee of Experts and other interested AU Member States, to review the Draft African Statement adopted and endorsed by the AUCIL for consideration and adoption by the PSC as a Common African Position on the Application of International Law in the Cyber Space. The Working Group, with the participation of the PSC CoE, in November 2023 in Tunis, Tunisia, and in January 2024 (virtual meeting), finalized the Draft Common African Position on the Application of International Law in the Cyber Space. The Common Africa Position has been considered and adopted by the PSC at its 1196th meeting of 29 January 2024. The Common African Position on the Application of International Law in the Cyber Space is attached as Annex I.

17. To enhance collaboration with AU Organs/institutions on early warning and intelligence sharing, CISSA, ACSRT and AFRIPOL were invited to the 1138th, 1170th and 1182nd meetings held respectively on 8 February 2023, 22 August 2023 and 27 October 2023, and respectively to brief the Council on early warning and continental security outlook, including terrorism and violent extremism.

18. The PSC also held its 3rd engagement with the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in a joint retreat held from 11 - 12 December 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Discussions during the retreat centred on the APRM Impact Study over the last 20 Years; Implementation of AGR Reports: Case of AGR 2023 On UCG – Chad, Comoros, Sierra Leone and Lesotho; Foreign Interference and Military Coups in Africa; and the launch of the Africa Governance Report. The Joint Retreat adopted the Conclusions attached to the report as Annex II.

g) Engagement with the RECs/RMs

19. Article 16 of the PSC Protocol provides for the PSC and the RECs/RMs to engage on matters of peace, security and stability in Africa. The 3rd Annual Consultative meeting between the PSC and RECs/RMs was held from 28 to 30 August 2023 in Bujumbura, Burundi, to enhance cooperation and collaboration in addressing the Continent's governance, peace and security challenges. Discussions focused on (i) the upsurge in Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa and (ii) the Application of the Principle of Subsidiarity and Complementarity – Challenges, Lessons and Prospects for the Future. Further, AU-IRECKE on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention serves as the platform to boost PSC and RECs/RMs interface on the mandate of the Council.

h) Engagement with the CSOs

20. Pursuant to Article 20 of the PSC Protocol and the Conclusions of the Retreat of the PSC, held in Livingstone, Zambia, on 4 and 5 December 2008 (Livingstone Formula), which called for increased interaction between the PSC and CSOs in the promotion of peace, security, and stability in Africa, the PSC convened its 2nd Annual Joint consultative meeting with the Economic, Social and Cultural Council and Representatives of Civil Society Organizations (ECOSOC) on 6 July 2023. Council underscored the role of the CSOs in several thematic areas and urged them to (i) strengthen their roles in promoting the culture of peace through educating African citizens on the culture of peace, peacebuilding and intercommunity dialogue in the fight against ideologies of hate; (ii) enhance their efforts to respond to the increasingly complex and challenging threats to peace and security in the continent as the interface between policymakers and the grassroots stakeholders; and (iii) use the social media to prevent conflicts and to disseminate reliable and credible information. Finally, Council underlined the importance of launching the AU Network of Think Tanks and Research Centers and the report of the mapping exercise of CSOs working on governance, peace and security matters by the AU Commission. The Pan African Network (PANPAPS) of CSOs on Political Affairs, Peace and Security is another platform supporting the Livingstone Formula. Council welcomed the various ways through which research organizations and CSOs have, thus far, been engaging in the peace, security and governance work of the AU in line with the Livingstone and Maseru PSC Retreat Conclusions, within the Framework of Article 20 of the PSC Protocol, and to reiterate the right and duty of the state to regulate the activities of these organizations in accordance with their respective national legislation.

i) Strengthening Partnerships for African Peace and Security

21. The PSC and the European Union Political and Security Committee (EUPSC) held their 6th Informal Joint Seminar and the 14th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting (AJCM) and the from 2-3 May 2023, respectively, in Brussels, Belgium, to exchange views on their joint efforts to address the threats to peace and security in Africa. The Informal Joint Seminar discussed peace support operations in Africa and the global consequences of geopolitical development, while the Consultative meeting discussed the situations in the Horn of Africa, The Sahel and Lake Chad Basin and the Great Lakes Region. However, the PSC with the EUPSC did not reach commonly agreed conclusions for the second time.

22. Article 17 of the PSC Protocol provides for the PSC to cooperate and work closely with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and other relevant international organizations on the issues of governance, peace and security in Africa. In this context, the PSC and the UN Security Council convened their 8th Informal Joint Seminar and 17th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting (AJCM) on 5 and 6 October 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and adopted a Joint Communiqué. The Informal Joint Seminar discussed, among others, the issue of financing AU Peace Support Operations and the Consultative Meeting discussed the situations in Sudan, the Sahel region, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia, as well as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). While underscoring the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, the two Councils reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to working together to address the challenges in these theatres in a coordinated manner.

23. Underscoring the importance of post-conflict and reconstruction activities in Member States emerging from conflict, the PSC convened a consultative meeting with the UN Peacebuilding Commission (UN-PBC) on 13 November 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The session focused on enhancing collaboration between the two bodies and coordinating peacebuilding efforts on the continent.

24. In December 2023, the PSC and the three elected African Members of the UNSC (A3) participated at the Tenth High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa: Assisting Incoming African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3) in Preparing to Address Peace and Security Issues on the Continent, in Oran, Algeria, pursuant to communiqué [PSC/AHG/COMM/1.(CCCXCVII)], adopted by the PSC at its 397th meeting held at the level of Heads of State and Government on 23 September 2013. Key outcomes centred on enhancing PSC-A3 cooperation in advancing and promoting Africa's agenda and interests in the UNSC agenda. The PSC and A3 commemorated its 10th Anniversary and considered the Manual on Modalities for Enhancing Coordination between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council. The Manual aims at providing guidance on how the PSC and A3 can promote and defend common African positions within the UNSC in accordance with the UN Charter, AU legal instruments and relevant decisions of the AU Policy Organs. The Conclusions of the 10th High Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, the Oran Process, have been adopted by the PSC at its 1193rd meeting of 22 January 2024, and attached herewith as Annex III.

j) Consultations

25. Article 8 (10) and (11) of the PSC Protocol provides for the PSC to hold open meetings and informal consultations with parties concerned by or interested in a conflict situation or thematic issue under its consideration. The list of such engagements is below:

Table 5: Consultations

| Date | Location | Level | Invitees | Agenda |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------|--|--|
| Informal Consultations: | | | | |
| 26 April | Addis Ababa | PR | Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Sudan. | Informal consultations with countries in political transition (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Sudan). |
| 17 May | Addis Ababa | PR | H.E. Azali Assoumani, President of Comoros and AU Chairperson. | Meeting with the Chairperson of the AU on Governance, Peace and Security in Africa: Focusing on the conflict resolution and political transition in Sudan. |
| March, April & October | Addis Ababa | PR | PSC and CPAPS | Informal Engagement on UCG, budget execution and AU Peace Fund. |
| 21 December | Virtual | PR | Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso | Informal Consultation: Updated briefing on the countries in Political Transition |
| Open Meeting: | | | | |
| 4-5 December | Banjul, The Gambia | MIN | PSC Members; AU Member States; ACERWC; Members of AP-CAAC; United Nations; think tanks; children affected by conflicts | Ministerial and High-Level open session on the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of children in situation of conflict in Africa |

26. In March, April and October 2023, the PSC and Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (CPAPS) held informal meetings on early warning, preventive diplomacy, and early action with the PSC. The PSC also engaged the PAPS Department on the AU sanctions regime, brainstorming on how to enhance its effectiveness to address the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government on the continent.

27. On 26 April 2023, the PSC held an inaugural informal consultation with Member States in Political Transition (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Sudan) who are suspended from participation in AU activities, its Organs and institutions, in accordance with the relevant instruments of the Union. The main focus of this engagement was to receive updates from the countries concerned on the status of implementation of PSC and REC/RM decisions, as well as their respective transition plans/roadmaps, in order to provide the necessary support to return to constitutional order.

28. On 17 May 2023 the PSC held a consultative meeting with H.E. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of Comoros and Chairperson of the African Union for 2023. H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, provided an overview of the state of governance, peace and security on the continent, focusing mainly on political transition; the Horn of Africa; the Great Lakes Region and the Sahel region. The PSC and the Chairperson of the AU highlighted the critical importance of peace, security and stability as the overarching framework to fully implement the AU theme of the year 2023 – “*Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area Implementation*”. The meeting emphasized the imperative of a multidimensional approach in addressing the myriad threats to governance, peace and security on the continent, including tackling the structural and

emerging root causes in an ever-changing world, deepening and defending democracy, and further capacitating institutions. Also, the meeting reaffirmed the AU's zero tolerance to unconstitutional changes of government, in this regard, highlighted the need for Member States in political transition to respect the specified timelines.

29. On 21 December 2023, the PSC convened the second informal consultations with Member States in Political Transition, namely Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. The discussions centred on the status of the implementation of the transition roadmaps in the respective countries. The PSC noted with concern the lack of progress in the three countries and requested the AU Commission to work closely with the ECOWAS to engage the countries concerned in finding solutions to the challenges faced by the transition authorities.

k) Other Engagements

30. On 4 to 5 December 2023, the PSC convened in Banjul, The Gambia for a Ministerial and High-Level open session on promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of children in situations of conflict in Africa. The meeting aimed to facilitate the sharing of lessons and the exchange of ideas on practical approaches to safeguarding the rights of children in such challenging circumstances. The meeting approved the 'Banjul Conclusions' and decided to establish the "Annual High-Level Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa" as a permanent event, referred to as the Banjul Process and to be held on a rotational basis, at a venue to be agreed upon. It was also agreed that AP-CAAC would utilise this platform to provide updates on its yearly initiatives and exchange knowledge, with a focus on finding solutions for children affected by conflict. The meeting reached a consensus on the importance of involving children impacted by conflict in the Banjul Process. The Conclusions of the Annual High-Level Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa (Banjul Process) is attached as Annex IV.

l) Field Missions

31. The PSC and affiliated statutory bodies, undertook six field missions in 2023 including (i) the AU Panel of the Wise mission to Chad, from 12 to 18 March 2023, in line with the Press Statement [PSC/BR/PR/1121(2022)] of the PSC adopted at its 1121st meeting, held on 11 November 2022, to gather first-hand information, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders on the ground and brief the Council before 31 March 2023; and (ii) the PSC Military Staff Committee mission to Somalia conducted from 9 to 11 June 2023 aimed at obtaining first-hand information regarding the military and security realities on the ground in Somalia, with a view to advising the PSC to take evidence-based decisions within the context of the drawdown of the ATMIS in compliance with PSC and UNSC Decisions. The list of field missions by PSC, below:

Table 6: Field Missions

| Date (2023) | Undertaken by | Country | Agenda |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--|
| Feb. 23 to 25 | PSC | South Sudan | To obtain first-hand information regarding the state of progress in the implementation of the 2018 R-ARCSS and the ongoing transition process. |
| Mar. 12 to 18 | PoW | Chad | Mission was deployed in line with the Press Statement [PSC/BR/PR/1121(2022)]of the PSC adopted at its 1121 st meeting, of 11 November 2022, where Council requested the AUC to deploy the PoW to Chad to gather first-hand information, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, and to brief the Council. |
| Mar. 20 to 23 | PSC | DRC | To gather first-hand information regarding the political, security and humanitarian situation in the DRC, with a particular focus on the developments in the eastern region, as well as the status of implementation of the 2013 Framework Agreement and the ongoing Luanda and Nairobi Processes. |
| Jun. 9 to 11 | MSC | Somalia | To Obtain first-hand information regarding the military and security realities on the ground in Somalia, with a view to advising the PSC to take evidence-based decisions within the context of the drawdown of the ATMIS troops, in compliance with UNSC Resolution 2670 (2022). |
| Jul. 22 to 27 | PSC | Burkina Faso | To (i) express solidarity, provide support and reaffirm the commitment of the AU to the Government and people of the Republic of Burkina Faso in addressing the plethora of challenges ranging from terrorism and violent extremism, inter-communal violence, climate change and humanitarian related challenges, as well as political transition; (ii) Obtain first-hand information on the political, security, socio-economic, and humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso; and (iii) ascertain the state of progress in the implementation of the Transition Roadmap. |
| Sep 11 to 13 | PSC | Maputo, Mozambique | Following the Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.719(XXXII) of February 2019 to commemorate the Africa Amnesty Month (AAM) on a rotational basis in the five geographic regions. This year's AAM was the second to be commemorated outside the AU headquarters, in Maputo, Mozambique, bringing together the Government of Mozambique, SADC, United Nations Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) and other relevant stakeholders in Mozambique, including civil society organizations, youth and women, media, private sector and faith-based organizations. |

Figure 4: 2023 Field Missions



Source: PSC Secretariat, CMD, DPAPS

m) PSC participation on stakeholders' activities

PSC-related programmatic activities

Table 7: PSC-related programmatic activities

| Date | Activity | Country | Main Objective |
|--------------|---|----------------|---|
| 8-9 May 2023 | Meeting of the African First Ladies Peace Mission (AFLPM) | Abuja, Nigeria | The PSC Chairperson for May 2023 attended the General Assembly of the AFLPM and the inauguration of the AFLPM Headquarters. The PSC Chairperson engaged the AFLPM on their activities on promoting peace and security on the continent. |
| 8 December | PSC Chairperson for December 2023 and 5 PSC Members representing the five regions of the Union participated at COP 28 | Dubai, UAE | Presentation of the initial draft of the Common African Position on the nexus between climate change, peace and security |

n) Retooling the PSC working methods

32. The PSC held its 15th Retreat on working methods held from 25 to 27 November 2023 in Tunis, Tunisia. The 15th Annual Retreat of the PSC was organized as part of steps by the PSC to continuously strengthen its working methods so as to enable the Council to discharge its mandate within the framework of the APSA and AGA more effectively, as embodied in the PSC Protocol. The Retreat focused on three key issues, namely: (i) Working methods of the Council, including an assessment of the

Annual Indicative Programme of Work for 2024 and budget considerations; (ii) Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCGs) on the Continent and (iii) the outcome of the retreat of the PSC CoE held from 21 to 23 November 2023. In addition, the PSC, during its Retreat, considered the draft UNSC Resolution on Financing AU Peace Support Operations. In addition, the PSC agreed to commemorate its 20th Anniversary since its official launch which took place on 25 May 2004. The 20th Anniversary will provide an opportunity for the PSC Members, AU Member States and partners to reflect on the state of peace and security in Africa and how to enhance the role of the PSC and to reaffirm Member State commitment to promoting peace and security on the Continent.

33. The PSC adopted the Conclusions of the 15th PSC Retreat was adopted through communique [PSC/PR/COMM.1190(2023)], adopted at its 1190th meeting of 18 December 2023, via the silence procedure and herewith attached as Annex V.

Table 8: Retreats

| Date | Activity | Chair | Outcome |
|---------------------|--|--|---|
| 25-27 November 2023 | 15 th Retreat of the PSC on its Working Methods | Amb. Abdi Mahamoud Eybe, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to the African Union | Conclusions of the 15 th Annual Retreat on the Review of its Working Methods |

o) Support role of the PSC Sub-Committees

34. The Committee of Experts (CoE) is a subsidiary body of the PSC established to provide support to ensure the efficient functioning of Council activities. The CoE, during the reporting period prepared a number of technical documents in preparation of PSC activities, such as joint meetings, retreats and regular PSC meetings. The Committee also, for the first time, engaged with the UNSC Ad Hoc Working Group in preparation of the annual joint meetings with the UN Security Council. Notably, the CoE held two (2) retreats in May 2023 and November 2023 to review and considered the Terms of Reference of the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions, the Draft Manual on engagement between the PSC and the A3, as well as the draft Terms of Reference of the Ministerial Committee on Counter-Terrorism. It should be noted that, under the reporting period the CoE held twelve (12) meetings. It should also be noted that, the PSC CoE, following the decision of the PSC, took lead on the review of the Draft Common African Position on the Application of International Law in the Cyber Space. The meetings of the Technical Group to review the Draft Document were chaired by the chair of the PSC CoE.

35. The PSC Military Staff Committee (MSC) has continued to support the Council's efforts by advising on peace and security issues, particularly those relating to the deployment and sustainment of peace support operations. The MSC met eight (8) times, a record in its history, including an Inaugural Induction Training Workshop held from 16 to 17 March 2023 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The MSC also engaged with the UNSC Military Staff Committee and exchanged views on enhancing

cooperation on military-related issues on the continent. The MSC, from 9 to 11 June 2023, undertook a field mission to Somalia to gather first-hand information regarding the military and security realities on the ground in Somalia, with a view to advising the PSC to take evidence-based decisions within the context of the drawdown of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) troops, which is in compliance with UNSC Resolution 2670 (2022), through which the UN Security Council exceptionally extended Phase 1 of ATMIS mandate until 30 June 2023 and Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM. 1121 (2022)] on the revised timelines relating to the drawdown of 2000 ATMIS troops beyond 31 December 2022, adopted by the PSC on 11 November 2022.

Summary of the meetings held by the PSC from January to December 2023

Table 9: Meetings Summary

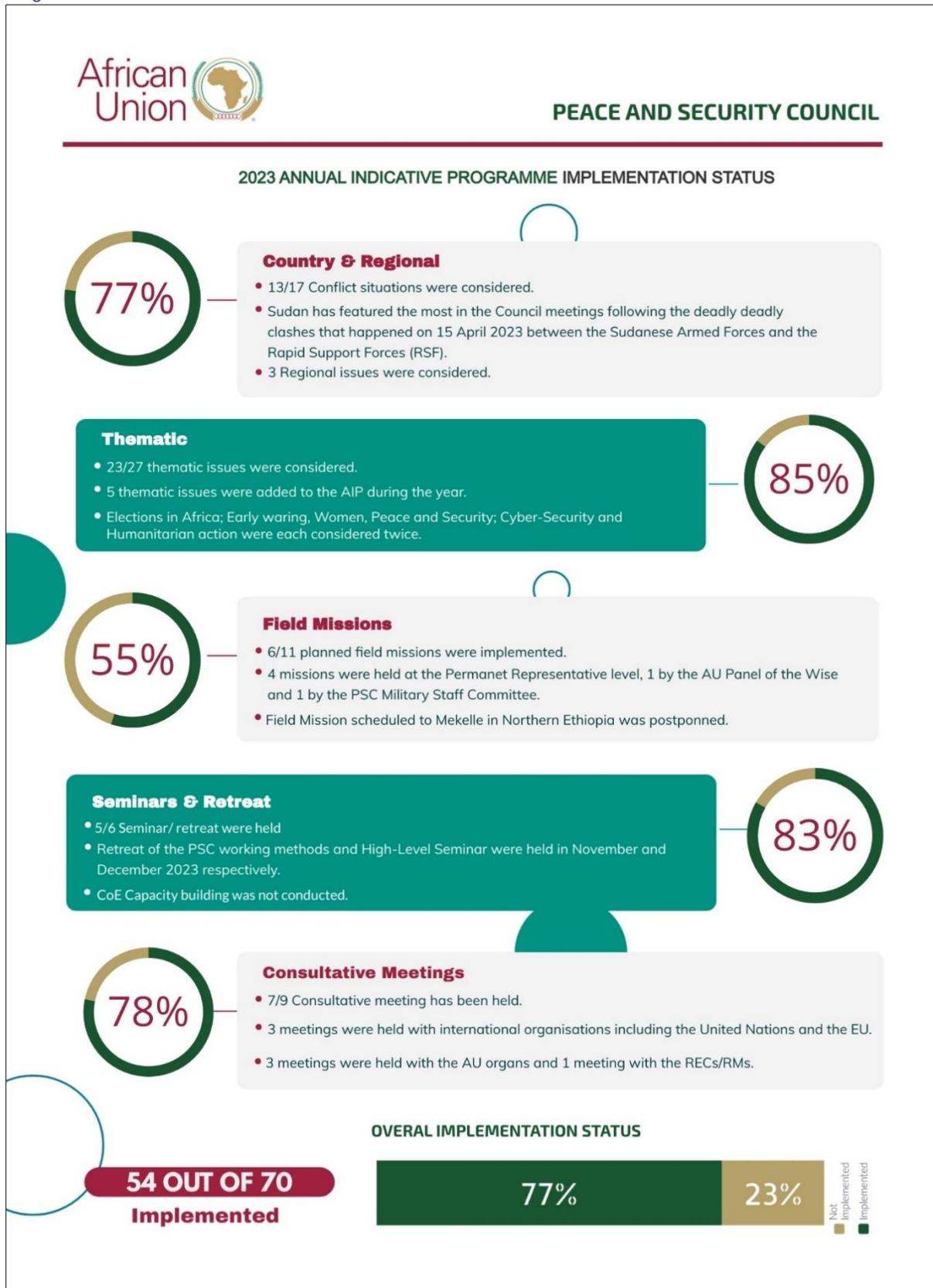
| Month | Chair | | Meeting |
|----------|--------------|---|---|
| January | Uganda | Amb. Rebecca Amuge Otengo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda to the African Union (stand-in Chair) | 1130 , 1131 , 1132 , 1133 , 1134 , 1135 |
| February | South Africa | H.E. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa | 1140 |
| | | H.E. Dr. Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa | 1137 |
| | | Amb. Edward Xolisa Makaya, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the African Union | 1136 , 1138 , 1139 , 1141 , |
| March | Tanzania | H.E. Dr. Stergomena L. Tax, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania | 1142 |
| | | Amb. Innocent Shiyo, Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the African Union | 1143 , 1144 , 1145 |
| April | Tunisia | H.E. Nabil Ammar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia | 1150 |
| | | Amb. Abdelhamid Elgharbi, Permanent Representative of Republic of Tunisia to the African Union | 1146 , 1147 , 1148 , 1149 , 1151 |
| May | Uganda | H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda | 1156 |
| | | H.E Gen. Odongo Jeje Abubakhar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda | 1153 |
| | | Amb. Rebecca Amuge Otengo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda to the African Union | 1152 , 1154 1154 ¹ , 1155 |
| June | Zimbabwe | Hon. Frederick Shava, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe | 1159 |

¹ Press Statement

| | | | |
|------------------|------------|--|---|
| | | Amb. Sophia Nyamudeza, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the African Union | 1157 , 1158 , 1160 |
| July | Senegal | H.E. Ms. Aïssata Tall Sall, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad of the Republic of Senegal | 1163 |
| | | Amb. Mohamed Lamine Thiaw, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the AU | 1161 , 1162 , 1164 , 1165 |
| August | Burundi | Amb. Willy Nyamitwe, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Burundi to the AU | 1166 , 1167 , 1168 , 1169 , 1171 , 1172 |
| September | Cameroon | H.E. Mbella Mbella, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon | 1175 |
| | | Amb. Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Republic of Cameroon to the African Union | 1173 , 1174 , 1176 , 1177 |
| October | Congo | Amb. Daniel Owassa, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Congo to the African Union. | 1178 , 1179 , 1180.1 , 1180.2 , 1181 ² , 1182 |
| November | Djibouti | H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Djibouti | 1185 |
| | | Amb. Abdi Mahamoud Eybe, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to the African Union | 1183 , 1184 , 1186 , 1187 , 1188 |
| December | The Gambia | H.E. Dr. Mamadou TANGARA , Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad of the Republic of The Gambia, Chairperson of the AU PSC for December 2023 | Ministerial and High-Level retreat on Child Protection; and 10 th High level Seminar, Oran Process |
| | | Amb. Jainaba Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the African Union | 1189.1, 1189.2, 1190 |

² Summary Record

Figure 5: Summary of the implementation of activities of the PSC based on the adopted PSC Annual Indicative Programme for 2023



Source: PSC Secretariat, CMD, DPAPS

36. The Assembly may wish to commend the PSC for its continued efforts in addressing peace and security challenges on the continent, in particular, the efforts towards operationalizing the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions to monitor the implementation of the decisions on unconstitutional changes of government; the establishment of an annual Process to Enhance the Protection of Children Affected by Conflicts on the continent (Banjul Process), as well as reflection on its working methods in order to address the situations on the ground; in this regard, the Assembly may wish to endorse the Conclusions of the Banjul Process and the Oran process and the Conclusions of the 15th PSC Retreat on its working methods, the conclusions of the 3rd Joint Retreat of the PSC and the APRM and the Common African Position on the Application of International Law in the Cyber Space. The Assembly may wish to call all Member States and partners to participate during the commemoration of the PSC 20th Anniversary.

III. PART II: THE STATE OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

A. EASTERN AFRICA

37. The situation in the Eastern Africa region remains volatile, characterized by the devastating war in Sudan, the elongated transition in South Sudan, stabilization and state-building efforts in Somalia supported by the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), slow implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) in Tigray and violent conflict in the Amhara region in Ethiopia, and transnational organized crime including human trafficking. The humanitarian situation in the region has been exacerbated by severe drought and flooding related to climate change in this environmentally fragile region, with a significant impact on lives and livelihoods across the Horn of Africa in particular.

i. Ethiopia

38. The Commission has continued to support the AU-led and Ethiopian-owned peace process by maintaining the deployment of the Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mechanism (MVCM) in northern Ethiopia. Since its deployment on 29 December 2022, the situation in the Tigray region has continued to improve. In general, some of the overall achievements include:

- the handover of heavy and medium weapons by the TPLF to the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) as part of the DDR process;
- the resumption of commercial air and road transport services;
- the return of normal social and economic activities, such as telecommunication, electricity and health services, reopening of banking services and factories; and
- the gradual reopening of schools and colleges in parts of the region.

39. The MVCM monitors the parties' compliance with implementing the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) in line with the outcomes of the senior commanders' meetings in November and December 2022. The Joint Committee, established pursuant to Article 11 of the COHA to monitor the effective implementation of the peace agreement, convened twice in 2023, most recently on 1 December 2023.

It recommended an extension of the AU MVCAM for an additional year until 31 December 2024, to allow the MVCAM to continue supporting the peace process in northern Ethiopia, for example through monitoring the collection of small arms and light weapons; clearance of unexploded ordnance (UXOs); monitoring the relocation of ex-combatants to designated sites; and to support the full implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process as well as the return of IDPs and refugees to their homes.

40. While steady but slow progress is being made in the Tigray region, the conflict in the neighbouring regions poses a threat to the implementation of the COHA. The conflicts in the Amhara and Oromia regions threatens stability in those parts of Ethiopia and, therefore, needs to be addressed urgently.

41. **The Assembly may wish to commend the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the leadership of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the people of Ethiopia for working toward sustainable peace and promoting national dialogue and reconciliation. The Assembly may wish to urge the parties to speed up and ensure the full implementation of the COHA and the effective implementation of the DDR program. The Assembly may wish to commend the MVCAM in Tigray for monitoring the parties' compliance with the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Further, the Assembly may wish to commend the High-Level Panel on Ethiopia and the Commission for their continued support of the implementation of the Ethiopian peace process. The Assembly may wish to urge IGAD, the UN, the AfDB and other AU partners, to continue their support in the implementation of the COHA. To this effect, the Assembly may wish to welcome the disbursement of the sum of 1 million USD from the Crisis Reserve Fund of the AU Peace Fund to support the DDR programme within the Pretoria COHA for the Tigray region. The Assembly may wish to appeal to the international partners to support Ethiopia's efforts towards effective recovery and reconstruction of the Tigray region and the neighbouring regions.**

42. **The Assembly may wish to appeal to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to engage in dialogue and reconciliation in the Amhara and Oromia regions to resolve their differences peacefully and minimize the suffering of civilians. Finally, the Assembly may wish to reaffirm the AU's continued readiness to support the Government and People of Ethiopia in their quest for lasting peace.**

ii. Somalia/ATMIS Activities

43. Somalia continues to achieve progress at the political level and on its inclusive political agenda by focusing on dialogue and building consensus on critical issues necessary for peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. In May 2023, the National Consultative Council (NCC) agreed to adopt the one-person, one-vote election model, with a president and vice president elected at the federal level and submitted to the Federal Parliament for deliberation. In August 2023, the NCC agreed to accelerate the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS)-led offensive operations against Al-Shabaab and to prioritise stabilisation and social reconciliation in the newly liberated areas.

Despite its absence from the NCC, Puntland expressed its intention to engage in direct talks with the FGS.

44. In a positive development, in December 2023, Somalia reached a major milestone by concluding key reform efforts towards securing debt relief. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that Somalia had successfully completed its sixth and final review of the Extended Credit Facility (ECF), which enabled Somalia to reach the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Completion Point. This status will provide Somalia with total debt service savings of USD 4.5 billion.

45. The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) continued to provide operational support to the FGS-led offensive operations against Al-Shabaab. This support enabled SSF to achieve considerable operational success. While there has been a significant degradation of Al-Shabaab capabilities in the ongoing operations, a fluid and unpredictable security situation is evident across the country and in all ATMIS sectors as highlighted in the Report of the Joint Technical Assessment. Continued Al-Shabaab enabling and kinetic activities have led to some security and operational setbacks, indicating that Al-Shabaab retains the ability to undertake significant attacks across Somalia and pose a threat to the country and the Horn of Africa region.

46. In parallel to ATMIS support to the SSF-led offensive, progress has been achieved in FGS-ATMIS joint efforts to implement a smooth and orderly transition. In this context, a Report of the Joint Technical Assessment was submitted to the PSC and the UNSC, in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 2687 (2023), to ensure that the ATMIS drawdown does not leave a vacuum to be exploited by Al Shabaab. The Report outlined the impact assessment of Phase 1 drawdown, include threat assessment, ATMIS performance, lessons learned, funding requirements and the detailed plan and timeline for the Phase 2 drawdown, including implications of the drawdown of 3000 ATMIS by 30 September 2023. However, in September, the FGS requested a 90-day “technical pause” of the second phase of the ATMIS drawdown of 3000 troops to December 2023. In a letter to the UN Secretary-General, the ATMIS Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) strongly supported the request. As a result of the formal request of the FGS, the PSC agreed to support the request in its Communique 1177th and transmitted it to the UNSC for endorsement with the condition of international funding. While the UN Security Council endorsed the request for a three-month technical pause, the request for international financial support was not addressed. The second phase of the drawdown of 3000 troops was successfully concluded at the end of December 2023.

47. In December 2023, the United Nations Security Council recognised Somalia's efforts to reach the benchmarks on implementing the security transition, the Somalia Transition Plan, and the national security architecture and unanimously agreed to lift the longstanding arms embargo on Somalia. Lifting the arms embargo through the UN Security Council 2714 (2023), will enable Somalia to strengthen its security capacity-building, improve its management of weapons and ammunition, and enhance its maintenance of national security and stability.

48. The ATMIS drawdown process continues to face serious financial challenges due to the FGS request for two extensions, the 6-month extension of Phase 1 and the 3-month pause in the drawdown of Phase 2. Without any further delays in the drawdown of the remaining phase/exit, there is expected to be a significant financial estimate of over 100 million USD by the time the ATMIS forces exit on 31 December 2024. Other challenges encountered during the drawdown process involve insufficient support and potential security risks to the FGS government, UN, and other partners' facilities and the local populations residing near ATMIS FOBs, which will either be closed or handed over to the Somali Security Forces.

49. In a further effort to highlight Somalia's commitment to strengthen its security sector development as part of the planned exit of ATMIS in December 2024, the FGS convened the Somalia Security Conference on 12 December 2023 in New York. The conference was chaired by H.E President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and co-hosted by the African Union and other key international partners. The conference welcomed the Somalia Security Sector Development Plan and committed to further developing elements of the plan. This included continued support to the FGS to degrade and defeat Al Shabaab and the recognition of the need for a multilateral mission to provide external support to the Somalia Security Forces (SSF) following the departure of ATMIS in December 2024. It was agreed that support for the priorities of Somalia would be concretized and that partnership principles would be adopted to aid in the coherence, transparency, coordination, and support of a capable, accountable, and affordable security sector.

50. The security situation continues to deteriorate in Las Anod, the capital city of the Sool region, a disputed area between Puntland and the self-proclaimed region of Somaliland, since the outbreak of fighting in the area in early February 2023.

51. The 23rd Ordinary Summit of the EAC Heads of State held on 24 November 2023 in Arusha, Tanzania, admitted the Federal Republic of Somalia into the EAC as a full member of the EAC. The letter of accession was signed in Kampala on 15 December 2023.

52. The Assembly may wish to commend the FGS under the leadership of H.E. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for progress being made, as well as ATMIS and the T/PCCs for the sacrifices made in supporting the FGS in the fight against Al Shabaab, leading to the liberation of a sizeable part of the country formerly controlled by Al Shabaab terrorists; the Assembly may wish to encourage the SSF to further enhance its efforts to hold forward operating bases and secure areas where ATMIS troops will withdraw and appeal to the Member States and the international community, in particular bilateral partners, to increase their support to the FGS efforts at this critical stage including in enhancing force generation, with attendant capabilities and structures, particularly intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and aviation, including causality and medical evacuation to increase its performance, to degrade and ultimately defeat Al-Shabaab, as well as towards , social cohesion, and extension of stabilisation initiatives, including to newly liberated areas which will be critical in winning the hearts and minds of the people; maintain momentum against Al Shabaab and promoting national ownership of the peace and security programmes by the population; encourage the UN, together with

the relevant partners, to fast track the reconciliation and stabilisation processes, including issues related to SSR and DDR; commend the UN, EU, UK for their financial and logistical support to ATMIS, and urge the AU and partners to provide financial support to ATMIS to complete its remaining transition period, prevent a security vacuum, while focusing on capacitating the SSF to take over security responsibilities. The Assembly may wish to request the Commission, in consultation with FGS, the TCCs, UN and other partners, to reach an agreement on transition to FGS responsibility for security in order to make an informed decision including on Phase 3 drawdown scheduled for June 2024 and final exit by December 2024 in order to avoid future ad hoc decisions on extension. The Assembly may also wish to acknowledge the disbursement of 3.5 million USD from the CRF, AU Peace Fund and 19,068,914 USD from AU Member States contributions to bridge the 25,895,129 USD funding gap in ATMIS operation.

iii. Situation in South Sudan

53. The Revitalised Agreement to the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (RARCSS), signed on 12 September 2018, brought relative peace and stability to the country. South Sudan is preparing for elections at the end of the transitional period in December 2024. However, several transition period extensions have raised significant concerns about the risks associated with a prolonged transition.

54. The PSC has remained actively seized of the situation in the country and has repeatedly encouraged the South Sudanese stakeholders to remain steadfast and to honour their commitments to build lasting peace and stability in the country. The AU Commission has continued to work with various stakeholders, including the UN and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), to support the full implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

55. On 30 May 2023, the U.N. Security Council renewed the arms embargo and sanctions imposed on South Sudan for another year, until May 2024, including asset freezes and travel bans on named individuals. The Security Council expressed concern over the continued intensification of violence, prolonging the political, security, economic, and humanitarian crises in most parts of the country. In response, H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit, during the 78th United Nations General Assembly in September 2023, disclosed the pre-condition of the deployment of the Necessary Unification Forces (NUF) on the lifting of the arms embargo to enable the arming and equipping of the NUF for effective deployment and provision of security across the country.

56. On 26 September 2023, the President of South Sudan assented to the National Elections Act 2012 (Amendment) Bill 2023, paving the way for elections in December 2024. Relatedly, the President has issued Decrees to reconstitute the National Elections Commission, the National Constitutional Review Commission, and the Political Parties Council to facilitate the constitution-making and electoral processes towards peaceful elections. The passing of the Electoral Bill and Decrees in the National Legislature constitute positive steps in implementing the R-ARCSS.

57. The Government of South Sudan and the AU jointly held a Transitional Justice conference in April 2023 to facilitate sharing experiences on truth and reconciliation, reparations, and establishing a hybrid court in South Sudan. The Government also recently approved the two bills on the Commission of Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH) and Compensation and Reparations Authority (CRA) at the Council of Ministers and submitted them to the Transitional National Legislative Assembly for adoption into law to address transitional justice issues in the country.

58. The AU Commission's collaboration with the RTGoNU to establish the Hybrid Court of South Sudan has not yielded much progress, as the Government adopted a phased approach to respond to transitional justice issues in the country. Issues relating to truth, reconciliation and healing, compensation and reparations are the immediate priorities to ultimately feed into the justice and accountability programs in South Sudan through the eventual establishment of the Hybrid Court. The AU, however, continues to engage the Government to initiate actions to establish the court.

59. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains dire. The impact of the conflict in Sudan has worsened the existing humanitarian crisis in the country, in addition to inter-communal conflicts, with the influx of Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese returnees who had sought refuge in Sudan amidst dwindling support from humanitarian actors. As a result, there is a need for increased humanitarian assistance to IDPs and refugees and the resettlement and reintegration of those in existing IDP and refugee camps across the country.

60. The PSC called for the establishment of the Trilateral mechanism (AU/IGAD/UN) to engage with the Government on the two main areas of constitution-making and electoral processes. In response, the RTGoNU established a Government-Trilateral Joint Taskforce (JTF) in July 2023 to facilitate efforts in this direction towards a permanent constitution and elections.

61. The Assembly may wish to commend South Sudanese Parties, especially H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit and First Vice President Dr. Riek Machar Teny, for their commitments to peace and their commitment to avoid any relapse to war; encourage them to maintain their stance on pursuing dialogue and compromise on all areas of disagreement, for the peace and prosperity of South Sudan; urge all holdout movements including the parties to the Rome Peace Talks, to urgently resume negotiations bearing in mind the limited time available before the end of the transition and further encourage the Sant'Egidio process to sustain the negotiations in order to end the conflict in South Sudan; encourage the RTGoNU to mainstream active participation of women and youth to promote gender empowerment and post-conflict reconstruction and development programmes to sustain peace, to enhance representation and inclusive decision-making processes; congratulate President Salva Kiir on appointing the leadership of the National Elections Commission, the National Constitutional Review Commission, and Political Parties Council, which pave the way to start constitutional and electoral processes; renew its calls to the RTGoNU to facilitate the rapid implementation of the R-ARCSS as critical tasks still remain unattended, particularly in the areas of constitution-making and electoral processes; call on the RTGoNU to immediately deploy the trained Necessary Unified Forces (NUF), and to commence the training of the second

batch to ensure security and protection of civilians in the country; and reiterate calls for the lifting of punitive measures imposed against South Sudan, particularly economic sanctions and the arms embargo, in order to create a facilitating environment for the RTGoNU to fully implement the outstanding transition tasks including enabling the Government to equip the NUF to undertake effective security tasks. The Assembly may wish to emphasize the urgent need for the implementation of the transitional security arrangements including the DDR and SSR programmes, among others, with a view to also addressing the scourge of proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons and in this context, commend the AU Commission for deploying the DDR/SSR expert to the AU Liaison Office in South Sudan. The Assembly may wish to appeal to the international community to support the efforts of the RTGoNU including in redoubling its efforts in providing humanitarian support to the population in dire need of assistance in South Sudan which has been exacerbated by influx of refugees of the war in Sudan.

iv. Sudan

62. On 15 April 2023, fighting erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Lt. Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), headed by Lt. Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, following a period of increased tensions. The conflict emerged over executing the Political Framework Agreement of 5 December 2022. This Framework Agreement sought to facilitate the return to democratic civilian rule. Implementing the Agreement had been a matter of contention, especially concerning the timeline for incorporating the Rapid Support Forces into the Sudanese Armed Forces. The SAF proposed a two-year timeframe for integration, while the RSF presented a 10-year timeline.

63. However, the crisis in Sudan has deep historical roots, which lie in a history of neglect of the peripheries by the central government, dating from colonial times and continuing to the present day. These conflicts have manifested at different levels, including local disputes over resources and administrative authority, conflict between the peripheries and the centre of power in Khartoum, and the use and instrumentalization of ethnic and racial divisions by successive governments.

64. Despite numerous attempts to facilitate an unconditional ceasefire, spearheaded by the United States of America and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Jeddah Process, the conflict continues to rage in Khartoum, in Darfur, in parts of Kordofan, and has also spread to Gezira and other states. The ceasefire talks that have been ongoing in Jeddah since 6 May 2023 have not had any discernible impact on lessening the fighting. Of particular concern have been reports of an increase in reports of sexual violence against women and girls and allegations of ethnic cleansing.

65. The conflict has had profound humanitarian consequences for the civilian population. At least 12,000 people are believed to have been killed in the conflict, though this is almost certainly an undercount. Over 6.3 million people have been displaced, including over 1.2 million who have fled to neighbouring countries. There have been credible reports of grave violations of human rights, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including claims of ethnic cleansing as well as systematic sexual assault in Darfur and other parts of Sudan. Humanitarian

agencies are deliberately targeted, and many civilians are desperately short of food. At the same time, the health system in the country has collapsed, as has the education system, along with other critical services, such as electricity and water.

66. In the absence of external humanitarian assistance, Sudanese civil society, mostly locally based and networked through social media, has become the first responder in the crisis through resistance committees, which first arose during the revolution of 2019. These committees have been providing health care, crowd-sourcing medicines, food and other emergency supplies, identifying safe routes out of war zones and to emergency health facilities, and providing/sourcing transport for civilians desperate to leave the war zones.

67. Following the outbreak of the violence, the AU has deployed efforts to address the crisis and end the fighting. The AU has focused on ensuring coordination of regional and international efforts to resolve the crisis and to reduce the proliferation of possibly competing initiatives. It has done so by putting in place an Expanded Mechanism and its Core Group for the Sudan Crisis, which brings together all interested stakeholders on a single platform to prevent forum shopping by the belligerents. The Chairperson of the Commission coordinates the Expanded Mechanism.

68. The Commission developed a Roadmap for the Resolution of the Sudan Crisis, which was endorsed by the PSC on 27 May 2023 at Heads of State and Government level at a meeting chaired by H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda in his capacity as Chairperson of the month of May 2023. It focused on the following elements:

- a) Ceasefire: stopping the fighting is the number one priority, and is a necessary condition for all other processes;
- b) Humanitarian engagement, to address the fast deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sudan;
- c) Protection of civilians: to ensure that the belligerents respect International Humanitarian Law and protect civilians caught up in the fighting, and to ensure accountability for violators;
- d) Regional engagement: the crisis is not confined to Sudan - there are large numbers of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries, putting strain on their capacities; it is also important that the countries of the region show solidarity, and also that they are also included in activities of humanitarian actors;
- e) Resumption of a credible, inclusive political process towards a democratic civilian government; and
- f) Establishment of a mechanism to ensure all efforts by international and regional stakeholders are coordinated to ensure no parallel initiatives that could be exploited by the belligerents.

69. The AU Centre for Disease Control (CDC) has provided US\$3 million for support to the health sector in Sudan, including provisions of emergency supplies and essential drugs. The AU Permanent Representative Committee Sub-committee on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Refugees has provided US\$ 650,000 to supplement the contribution of the CDC.

70. It is widely acknowledged that the previous negotiations to address the Sudanese crisis in 2019 and 2022 lacked inclusivity and failed to consider the perspectives of certain civilian communities. Regardless of the criticism, it is crucial to recognise the positive outcomes of the previous negotiations. These outcomes should serve as a foundation for a more comprehensive political process. This process should not only focus on the current dispute regarding the security sector reform, but also aim to tackle the longstanding divisions and governance issues that have plagued Sudan since its independence.

71. In order to overcome the limitations of past initiatives, a technical team was established by the AU and IGAD. This team has been diligently working towards organising a comprehensive political process that would involve various stakeholders such as belligerents, political parties, armed movements, civil society actors, resistance committees, traditional leaders, women's groups, youth groups, religious organisations, trade unions, professional associations, and academic associations. The objective is to reach a consensus on the next steps, including the formation of a transitional government. There are still some unresolved matters among Sudanese stakeholders, such as the involvement of the warring parties and remnants of the previous regime. The AU and IGAD are actively engaging with the Sudanese stakeholders, recognising the importance of a comprehensive political process that embraces inclusivity in resolving the Sudanese crisis.

72. The AUC has also conducted shuttle diplomacy missions to countries in the region to share the AU's plans and to impress upon them the importance of remaining neutral with regard to the belligerents and treating those fleeing the conflict and seeking refuge in their countries or safe passage to third countries with solidarity, dignity, and compassion.

73. The Assembly may wish to condemn in the strongest terms the continued unnecessary unjustified fighting and resultant loss of lives and destruction of property, including critical infrastructure. The Assembly may wish to stress to the Parties that there is no military solution to the crisis and that the Parties must immediately and unconditionally stop the fighting and work to end the suffering of the Sudanese people. The Assembly may wish to welcome with appreciation the agreement by both H.E. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, the Chairman of the Transition Sovereign Council of the Republic of the Sudan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, Commander of the RSF, to have a one-to-one meeting at the request of the 41st Extraordinary Assembly of IGAD held on 9 December 2023 in Djibouti, and to request the AU Commission in collaboration with the IGAD Secretariat to facilitate, as soon as possible, a convening of such meeting so as to lead to an unconditional cessation of hostilities and alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese population.

74. The Assembly may wish to affirm the need for a single coordinated international effort to resolve the crisis in Sudan, under the auspices of the African Union together with IGAD, with the support of the UN, League of Arab States and key international partners, and based on the AU Roadmap for the Resolution of the Sudan Crisis. The Assembly may wish to encourage the Chairperson of the Commission to continue using his good offices to engage the parties to the conflict in order to facilitate the dialogue and the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Sudan. Regarding this, the Assembly may wish to

request the AU Commission, working closely with the IGAD Secretariat, to expedite the launch of the fully inclusive Sudanese Political Dialogue in early 2024. The Assembly may further wish to express concern at the humanitarian situation in Darfur, Kordofan and Khartoum, as well as in Abyei Administrative Area, and the spread of conflicts to parts of the country hitherto spared to the worse form of conflict; and call upon all parties to ensure rapid safe and unhindered humanitarian access through out Sudan, in accordance with relevant provisions of international law and in line with the UN guiding principles of humanitarian access. The Assembly may further stress the imperative of respect for all the provisions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) by all Sudanese and international actors. The Assembly may wish to urge the signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement to remain steadfast and strongly appeal to all holdout movements to embrace peace efforts, refrain from undermining the peace process and to continue to work towards an inclusive consensual solution to the challenges facing Sudan. The Assembly may wish to stress the need for all States, especially those neighbouring Sudan and external interests, to strictly respect neutrality in relations with the belligerents, and not to provide military and/or financial support to the belligerents, and therefore to prevent the conflict from spreading beyond a point where it can be speedily resolved. The Assembly may wish to commend the Chairperson of the Commission for appointing Members of the High-Level ad Hoc Panel on Sudan and may wish to congratulate the appointed three eminent African personalities, as members of the AU High-Level Panel on Sudan, namely, Dr. Mohamed Ibn CHAMBA, AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns (Chairperson); Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, Former Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda (Member); and Ambassador Francisco MADEIRA, Former Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission (SRCC) to Somalia and Head of AMISOM/ATMIS – (Member). The Assembly may wish to encourage the Members of the panel to work with all Sudanese stakeholders, including women and the youth, in order to ensure an inclusive process towards the restoration of peace and stability, as well as the establishment of a civilian-led political transition. The Assembly may wish to appeal to the Sudanese stakeholders and the international community to extend the necessary support and cooperation to the Panel Members towards a successful execution of their mandate.

B. WESTERN AFRICA

75. The situation in the region has been characterized by unconstitutional changes of government in Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and growing insecurity, resulting from the activities of terrorism and violent extremism within the Sahel region. The region has witnessed continuous violent attacks by extremist groups on both security forces and civilians. The humanitarian situation in the region continues to deteriorate as terrorist and armed groups mount pressure and unprecedented attacks on local communities with impunity. The devastating impact of climate change and transnational organized crime continues to serve as a threat multiplier in West Africa.

i. Burkina Faso

76. Following the military coup d'état in Burkina Faso, which resulted in the ousting of a democratically elected President, H.E. Marc Roch Christian Kabore, Burkina Faso has been suspended from participating in the activities of the Union and its Organs by

the PSC since the 1062nd PSC meeting on 31 January 2022. Since then, the situation in Burkina Faso has remained insecure and uncertain. Continued confrontations between state defence forces and insurgent and terrorist groups continue to threaten the lives of both civilians and uniformed personnel. For over five years, terrorist groups operating in the Central Sahel in general, and Burkina Faso in particular, have systematically used sieges, abductions, kidnapping, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and landmines targeting innocent civilians and symbols of the State, wanton destruction of public infrastructure, including telecommunication installations and bridges. As with the rest of the Sahel, the security situation in Burkina Faso remains extremely volatile and precarious.

77. In support of the return to constitutional order in Burkina Faso, the PSC undertook a field mission to the country in July 2023, within the context of its mandate and function as stipulated in Article 6 (a) to (g) of the PSC Protocol. The PSC observed that the political, security, socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso remains dire. The political transition is complex and protracted due to the deteriorating security situation affecting Burkina Faso and the Sahel region.

78. Unsurprisingly, the transition process has yet to make substantial progress. This was corroborated by the transition authorities, who, during the PSC field mission, stressed that the main aim of the transition roadmap was to regain control of all Burkina Faso territory, restore security country-wide, and address the humanitarian situation. It was reported that the Transitional Authorities controlled between 65% and 70% of the national territory and the remaining was contested between the state and non-state armed groups. Relatedly, and in line with the electoral timeline concluded with ECOWAS, it was highlighted that if the key challenges and threats facing the country were addressed before the agreed deadline, the transitional authorities would call for elections before 2024. Furthermore, regarding the transitional agenda, the Speaker of the Transitional National Assembly informed the PSC that the transition administration had already engaged in consultations with key stakeholders across the country, including traditional and faith-based leaders and civil society organizations, to solicit their perspectives on critical reforms such as the constitution, electoral code, and the transition charter and that the report would be shared with the PSC once finalized. The Transitional Authorities informed the PSC Delegation that the approach of the mediation process need to be revisited so as to make it bottom up, this would allow for the meeting of technical officials who will take stock of the steps taken in implementing the agreed measures in the transition process and also take account of any challenges thereto. The outcome of this engagement would then be considered at the level of Heads of State as opposed to the current framework where the Mediator who is the Head of State travel to a country and engage at the high level and prepares a report.

79. **The Assembly may wish to urge the Transitional Authorities to expedite the transition process for the return to constitutional democratic order, as per the PSC and ECOWAS decisions, and welcome the progress achieved thus far regarding the establishment of the Transition Roadmap and electoral calendar, including the Independent National Electoral Commission; urge the Transitional Authorities to demonstrate in concrete terms its commitment, ensure that elections are successfully organized, and to complete the Transition within the stipulated timelines. The Assembly may wish to request the AU Commission,**

through the operation of the existing financial mechanism, including the Africa Facility to Support Inclusive Transitions (AFSIT) and the CRF, to continue providing the required technical support to Burkina Faso in accompanying the country towards the full restoration of constitutional order. The Assembly may wish to underscore the need for an inclusive transitional process and the need to work with all stakeholders at national and local levels to ensure national ownership, a whole of society and whole of government approach and a comprehensive process; and emphasize the importance of mutual confidence and trust building measures. The Assembly may further request Member States in a position to do so, the Commission and international partners to support the transitional process in Burkina Faso as well as the efforts of the Burkinabe Transitional Authorities aimed at combating terrorism and violent extremism.

80. In addition, the Assembly may wish to call for the operationalization of the AU, UN, ECOWAS, Joint Transition Monitoring Mechanism, including the resumption of the work of the ECOWAS Mediators in providing requisite support towards the effective implementation of the transition Roadmap; and urge the Transitional Authorities to lift the ban on the activities of political parties and other key stakeholders, in order to foster an inclusive, participatory and credible political transition process. The Assembly may wish to encourage all political parties, civil society organizations and the media to play a more constructive role and place the supreme interest of the country above all else and to refrain from any activities that may further inflame the current situation.

ii. Mali

81. The situation in Mali has been characterised by a complex political, security, and socio-economic environment, including a setback in implementing the transition and the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which emerged out of the Algiers Process signed on 20 June 2015. These challenges necessitate collective regional mediation action. Another significant concern is the stalled political transition processes, particularly the stalemate between the ECOWAS Mediators and the Transition Authorities in the joint transition monitoring mechanism. Despite the referendum on 18 June 2023 and the subsequent adoption of Mali's new constitution, lingering challenges cast doubt on the commitment to the transition. Even though the postponement of the 25 September 2023 local elections was attributed to technical difficulties, it indicates a need for more adherence to the transition roadmaps and calendars by the Malian Authorities, especially as this was the second time the local elections were postponed.

82. On security, the Malian armed forces made progress in taking of Kidal from rebels. However, the future of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is under severe strain, resulting from a misunderstanding between the Transition Authorities and some of the Signatory Parties. This situation reinforces existing doubts about the current status of the 2015 Peace Agreement, even if the government considers that the Agreement has not been broken. Against this backdrop of escalating violence between the parties, the Algiers Platform of Movements of 14 June 2014 informed the Malian authorities and the international community, in a Communiqué dated 26 September 2023 of its withdrawal from the Cadre Stratégique Permanent pour la Paix, la Sécurité, et le Développement (CSP-PSD). However, the

Platform reiterated its commitment to work alongside the Government of Mali to implement the Peace Agreement.

83. Dialogue between the transitional authorities and the signatory armed movements to the Peace Agreement had been deadlocked for several months, and tensions have intensified. It should be recalled that on 16 June 2023, the transitional authorities requested the UN Security Council to withdraw the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) from Mali. In compliance with the request, MINUSMA completed its withdrawal in December 2023. Meanwhile, heightened clashes occurred between government armed forces and signatory armed groups in Mali's northern regions, including in Timbuktu and Gao, as parties fought over the control of former bases of the MINUSMA and strategic areas such as Anefis, Bamba, and Bourem. Meanwhile, the CSP reiterated that any transfer by MINUSMA "of their strongholds in the north should be preceded by a consensus to avoid tensions". The group also called on MINUSMA "to take into account the positions adopted by the parties when the Ceasefire Agreement was signed in May 2014".

84. The CSP challenged the handover of the Ber camp (Timbuktu region) in September 2023 and launched attacks against positions of FAMA, notably at Bamba on 1 October 2023, which enabled the CSP to briefly take control of the camp, before being dislodged by the FAMA. The situation is becoming increasingly complex, with large numbers of deaths and injuries. Nonetheless, on 14 November 2023, Mali's transitional authorities officially announced that the town of Kidal was fully under the control of the Malian army and that the operation to secure the entire national territory would continue.

85. The Assembly may wish to welcome the progress made by the Transition Authorities in the implementation of the transition Calendar, including the establishment of the independent election management Organ and the Constitution review process. However, the Assembly may also express serious concern on the postponement of the elections, initially scheduled for February 2024, and call on the Transition Authorities to undertake to hold the elections within an acceptable timeframe and in line with the transition election calendar. Further, the Assembly may wish to urge the authorities to take the necessary steps to relaunch dialogue with ECOWAS, within the framework of the local and international mechanisms for monitoring the transition.

86. In addition, the Assembly may wish to note with concern the ongoing contest for control of the forward operating bases (FOBs) from departing MINUSMA forces, especially between certain Signatories of the 2015 Peace Agreement, insurgent groups and the Malian Armed Forces, and call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and terrorist attacks in the country; and encourage the transition Authorities to take action to avert further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation. The Assembly may wish to call on the Transition Authority of Mali to expedite the implementation of the AU PSC and ECOWAS decisions and ensure a smooth return to constitutional order.

iii. Guinea

87. Following the overthrow of the former President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, in September 2021, the PSC suspended the country from participating in the activities of the Union. Since then, it has been on the agenda of the PSC to provide the required support to return the country to constitutional order. There has been insufficient progress in implementing activities to restore constitutional order. This state of affairs continues to fuel criticism and fears on the part of political players regarding the conduct of the transition by the Comité National du Rassemblement pour le Développement (CNRD). The Head of the transition, Colonel Mamadi Doumbouya, in his address to the 78th United Nations General Assembly on 21 September 2023, did not refer to the state of implementation of the transition timetable. In the face of a lack of information regarding the implementation of the transition timetable of April 2023, dialogue with ECOWAS has stalled.

88. Attention must be given to fundamental human rights and freedoms under the transition regime. Given the expiration of the transition period, initially scheduled for January 2024, doubts arise regarding the CNSP's commitment to restoring constitutional order. It is essential to highlight that the Transition Authorities, via the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, unveiled the transition timetable on 28 April 2023. Ten areas of engagement, including the budget, were identified as crucial for promoting a restoration of constitutional order. Meanwhile, debates on the duration and inclusivity of the transition remain. Although the Transition Administration has assured that they will respect deadlines, certain political actors in the country remain sceptical, concerned that failure to meet these deadlines could result in a significant political upheaval.

89. Given the above issues, the Assembly may wish to express serious concern over the stalled implementation of the transition timetable, coupled with the shrinking civic space, and strongly urge the transition Authorities to ensure strict operationalization of the transition calendar, as well as implementing the AUPSC and ECOWAS decisions to ensure an expeditious return to constitutional order.

90. Furthermore, the Assembly may wish to urge the transitional authorities to resume collaboration with the ECOWAS Mediator and reiterate the urgent call for the operationalization of the Monitoring Mechanism of the Transition in Guinea (MMTG), comprising the AU, ECOWAS, the UN and all other relevant stakeholders, in accordance with Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM. 1030(2021)] of 10 September 2021. In that regard the Assembly may wish to urge the Transitional Authorities to accord the necessary facilitation. The Assembly may wish to request the AU Commission to engage with the transitional authorities of Guinea in order to provide the required technical support towards the restoration of constitutional order.

iv. Sierra Leone

91. Following the presidential election in Sierra Leone on 24 June 2023, Sierra Leone has experienced instances of violence stemming from protests by opposition political parties who have raised concerns about the election's outcome. ECOWAS and AU undertook a mission to Freetown with the aim of easing the tension and finding a peaceful resolution to the disagreements among the political party leaders. During

the process of implementing a peace agreement facilitated by the AU, ECOWAS, and the Commonwealth, an unfortunate incident occurred on 26 November 2023. The Government of Sierra Leone described it as an attempted coup d'état and promptly called for calm, imposing a curfew. Emotions ran high after the Government's announcement that former President Ernest Bai Koroma was being interviewed as a potential suspect in the attempted coup d'état. On 29 November 2023, the Chairperson of the AU Commission expressed concern over the violence that occurred in Freetown, which has had a negative impact on peace, democracy, and stability in Sierra Leone. He assured the Government and people of Sierra Leone of the AU's continued commitment to supporting the strengthening of inclusive democracy, stability, and nation-building in Sierra Leone.

v. Guinea Bissau

92. While the situation in Guinea Bissau remained relatively calm for most of 2023, the politically motivated violence that erupted in Bissau on 1 December 2023, due to differences of political party leaders, almost disrupted constitutional order and rule of law in the country. The violence resulted in two fatalities and two military soldiers being wounded. The Chairperson of the Commission issued a statement condemning the violence in the country perpetrated by elements of the National Guard, noted with concern the dissolution of the National Assembly, and called on the Government and all national stakeholders to prioritize dialogue in the furtherance of peace and to respect the Constitution to preserve the stability and unity of the country.

93. **On the two situations, the Assembly may wish to strongly reiterate the AU's zero tolerance of any form of unconstitutional changes of government and call on the people and the political leaders in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau to place the supreme interests of their countries and their peoples above all else and to resolve their differences peacefully, through dialogue, respect for human rights and the rule of law. The Assembly may also wish to commend the decision of the leaders of the region to deploy an ECOWAS Security Mission to Sierra Leone to facilitate the stabilization of the country, as well as extension of the ECOWAS Stabilization Support Mission in Guinea Bissau by one year.**

vi. Niger

94. On July 26, 2023, Niger's armed forces, led by General Abdourahmane Tiani, toppled the democratically elected President, H.E. Mohamed Bazoum. General Tiani, the chairman of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP), named Ali Lamine Zeine as prime minister on July 28, 2023. The junta announced the creation of a government of 21 civilian and military members on August 10. There have been reports of a series of arrests and detentions, where prominent politicians and members of the previous administration have been detained without proper due process. President Bazoum, members of his cabinet and some of his family members are still under house arrest, and the Junta in Niamey has threatened to prosecute them for treason. The CNSP has ignored international calls for the release of all detainees and the return to constitutional order.

95. Following the coup d'état, the PSC, on 14 August 2023, through its communique [PSC/PR/1168.(2023)] adopted at its 1168th meeting, suspended Niger

from participating in activities of the AU... The PSC and ECOWAS called for an immediate and unconditional release of the President, his family, and cabinet members. The PSC urged the military junta in Niger to cooperate with ECOWAS and the AU for a peaceful and speedy restoration of constitutional order. Furthermore, the PSC called upon all Member States of the AU and the international community, including bilateral and multilateral partners, to reject this unconstitutional change of government and to refrain from any action likely to grant legitimacy to the illegal regime in Niger.

96. Meanwhile, the CNSP is strengthening its military cooperation with neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso to respond to a potential military intervention from the ECOWAS. Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have formed a military coalition called the Alliance of Sahelian States (ASE). Thus, they are reaffirming their unequivocal opposition to any military intervention in their territories.

97. On the diplomatic front, the CNSP, despite its claims to being open to dialogue, has rejected all peaceful initiatives deployed by the ECOWAS, supported by the AU, to find a political solution to the crisis. On 7 August 2023, the junta rejected a joint ECOWAS, AU and UN mediation initiative. Algeria, through its foreign minister, announced its plan to address the Niger crisis through political dialogue instead of military intervention. This initiative envisioned a swift return to constitutional order within a span of six months, to be organized through an inclusive process under the aegis of civilian authority. However, this initiative was also rejected by the CNSP and bilateral relations between Algeria and Niger are presently tense.

98. The political and security situation remains volatile. While the threat of a military intervention by ECOWAS is receding, the overthrown President Mohamed Bazoum has sought reprieve from judicial authorities against the military regime. After having filed a complaint with the ECOWAS Court of Justice in mid-September, on 2 October 2023, lawyers of the former Head of State referred the matter to the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Human Rights Committee within the Human Rights Council (CDH) of the United Nations, for “Conspiracy against State authority, sequestration and arbitrary detention”. These legal processes are still underway.

99. Niger is also facing severe economic challenges due to the effect of sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and similar steps by other international actors. These measures have led to rising inflation, increased prices of basic goods and a shortage of essential commodities. While intensifying initiatives against the ECOWAS sanctions, the ruling CNSP announced a drastic reduction of the 2023 national budget.

100. **The Assembly may wish to commend H.E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for providing leadership and for championing democratic ideals in the region, in his capacity as the Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. The Assembly may also wish to welcome the outcome of the 64th Ordinary Summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government held on 10 December 2023 and in line with the outcome of the Communiqué urge the Transition Authorities in Niger, to collaborate with ECOWAS and AU on the establishment of a credible and inclusive transition Roadmap, acceptable to all Parties, towards a speedy return**

to constitutional order, and to unconditionally release President Mohamed Bazoum, his family and other detainees with immediate effect.

101. Furthermore, the Assembly may wish to express concern over the humanitarian situation in Niger and call for establishment of a humanitarian corridor. In this regard, the Assembly may wish to urge the Transitional Authorities to cooperate fully with ECOWAS and to ensure humanitarian access into the country, while urging ECOWAS to ensure that the ordinary citizens of the country, especially the civilians, do not suffer disproportionately on account of the enforcement of sanctions. The Assembly may also wish to condemn the establishment of the AES which negates the Union's integrated cooperation agenda. The Assembly may also wish to request the transitional authorities in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, to immediately disband AES and re-join existing regional and continental security mechanisms in addressing the security challenge in their countries and the Sahel region.

C. CENTRAL AFRICA

102. The Central African region continues to face security and political challenges, most notably in the Central African Republic, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the activities of armed groups and negative forces, as well as mercenaries, particularly in the Central African Republic and the Great Lakes region and the unconstitutional change of government in Gabon. The humanitarian situation has been complicated by the re-emergence of the M23 armed group in eastern DRC. The failure to implement various peace agreements, as well as the beginning of the departure of the UN Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), give rise to concerns about the potential for increased violence in the region. The deployment of the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) and the SADC Mission in DRC, together with the Luanda and Nairobi processes, demonstrates regional leaders' commitment to stabilising the situation in eastern DRC and the region as a whole.

i. Democratic Republic of Congo

103. The prevailing insecurity and deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the deterioration of bilateral relations between DRC and Rwanda remain issues of significant concern in the region. There have been reports of gross human rights violations, committed by the M23 and other armed groups including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Regional actions by the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), through the Nairobi and Luanda Processes, have focused on securing a ceasefire, the withdrawal of the M23 Movement, the disarmament and cantonment of its combatants, and improved relations between Rwanda and DRC through political dialogue. The EAC Regional Force (EACRF) announced full deployment status following the arrival of the South Sudanese contingent in the Eastern DRC in April 2023.

104. On 8 May 2023, the SADC Troika, consisting of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security, Namibia, along with the incoming

Chairperson (Zambia) and the outgoing Chairperson (South Africa), in Windhoek, Namibia, authorized the deployment of a SADC Mission in DRC (SAMIDRC) to restore peace and stability in eastern DRC. The meeting was also attended by President Felix Tshisekedi of the DRC, Chairperson of SADC, and the troop-contributing countries of the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade, namely Malawi, Tanzania, and South Africa. On 4 November 2023, SADC held an Extra-Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government in Luanda, Angola, which provided strategic guidance on deploying the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC). On 18 November 2023, DRC signed an agreement on the status of the SADC Force planning to deploy in the country's east.

105. To ensure coordination of the multiple deployments by several RECs/RMs operating in the eastern DRC, on 27 June 2023, in Luanda, Angola, the AU, under the auspices of the Chairperson of the Commission, organized a Quadripartite Summit on Coordination and Harmonization of Peace Initiatives in the Eastern DRC, involving the EAC, ECCAS, ICGLR and SADC, as well as DRC and Rwanda, and with the participation of the UN. The Summit, chaired by the Chairperson of the AU, H.E. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, adopted a Communique and a Joint Framework. The outcomes aimed to promote coherence of the existing peace initiatives with a clear division of responsibilities and agreed timelines. The Summit also called for a meeting of Chiefs of Defence of the Quadripartite Platform to coordinate military deployments in eastern DRC. The Chiefs of Defence, in their meeting held on 6 October 2023 in Addis Ababa, agreed on modalities to coordinate deployment efforts on the ground and to meet regularly to ensure information sharing and cooperation, to optimize results, and to avoid a security vacuum.

106. On 20 September 2023, President Felix Tshisekedi, in his address to the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly, called for the speedy withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO). The MONUSCO's withdrawal commenced in December 2023 instead of December 2024 as initially planned.

107. On 24 November 2023, at its 23rd Ordinary Summit held in Arusha, Tanzania, the EAC adopted a communique stating that the DRC will no longer extend the mandate of the EACRF beyond 8 December 2023, and directed the CDFs of EAC and SADC to meet before 8 December 2023 and submit their recommendations on the way forward. The CDFs held their meeting on 6 December 2023 and recommended the immediate withdrawal of the EAC RF by December 2023.

108. The PSC convened its 1140th meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government on 17 February 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the leadership of H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa and Chairperson of the PSC for February 2023. The PSC adopted Communique [PSC/HoSG/COMM.1140 (2023)], calling for the urgent revitalisation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC Framework), in collaboration with the regional actors, to ensure the harmonisation of the multiple peace efforts in eastern DRC. In line with this decision, the AU organised a meeting of the guarantors of the PSC Framework in Addis Ababa on 29 March 2023, which adopted an action plan to revitalise the PSC Framework. At the 11th High-Level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) of the PSC Framework, held in Bujumbura, Burundi, on 6 May 2023, the Heads of States and Government of the Framework's signatory

countries requested the Technical Support Committee (TSC) to conduct an “independent, frank and sincere assessment of the implementation of the PSC Framework, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses, and adherence by the signatory countries to its principals and commitments”. In this context, the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, in cooperation with the African Union (AU) and in partnership with the other Guarantor Institutions including International Conference of the Great Lakes (ICGLR) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) as well as representatives of the signatory countries, held a retreat on 31 October and 1 November 2023 in Durban, South Africa, to assess the implementation of the PSC Framework since its signature in 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Retreat provided an opportunity for the key stakeholders to reflect on the implementation on the PSC Framework for the past ten (10) years with a view to renew consensus and commitment on the actors on cooperative security in the region.

109. The PSC undertook a field mission to the DRC from March 20 to 23, 2023. The PSC engaged with Government officials and stakeholders in Kinshasa and Goma and visited the displaced persons’ camp in Kanyaruchinya, Goma. The PSC observed that the security situation in the eastern part of the country and the tensions between the DRC and Rwanda remain matters of significant concern which require international support. The Governor of North Kivu province expressed profound appreciation to their excellences the Presidents of Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania for their dedicated efforts under the Nairobi Process aimed at restoring peace and stability in the DRC. He also saluted H.E. President Joao Lurenco of Angola, for leading the Luanda Process. The PSC was further informed that the Government of the DRC had adopted the policy of good neighbourliness and had even concluded a bilateral agreement with Uganda to jointly construct roads in eastern DRC. However, as soon as the Contractor had deployed the road equipment, the M23 launched an attack. The PSC called for calm and concerted efforts to reconcile the two sisterly countries, the DRC and Rwanda, through dialogue in furtherance of sustainable peace in the region. The country’s humanitarian situation has deteriorated due to attacks by armed groups which have caused mass displacement. According to the UNHCR the DRC has the largest displaced population in Africa and a third globally, only after Afghanistan and Syria. Access was reported to be one of the constraints that humanitarian actors faced, especially in areas rendered insecure by activities of armed groups. In response to the dire humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC, the PSC called on Member States and the international community to redouble their efforts to address the humanitarian needs and alleviate the suffering of the affected population and called for the convening of a Humanitarian Pledging Conference to support the humanitarian response and address the challenges in the eastern DRC.

110. On 20 December 2023, general elections in DRC took place in a relatively calm and peaceful atmosphere, though with major logistical delays and challenges. The Independent Election Commission (CENI) was compelled to extend the voting deadlines to 21 December 2023 to allow citizens the opportunity to vote. On 31 December 2023, the Independent Election Commission declared H.E President Felix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo the winner of the election with 73 % of the vote.

111. The Assembly may wish to commend the progress made through the Luanda and the Nairobi Processes under the leadership of President João

Lourenço and former President Uhuru Kenyatta, respectively. The Assembly may wish to welcome the support of the Guarantor Institutions and the signatory countries to revitalize the Peace and Security Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Great Lakes and to ensure that the Framework is adapted to the emerging realities in the region. The Assembly may wish to welcome the institutionalization of the Quadripartite Platform on coordination and harmonization of peace initiatives in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo with the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms, namely, the East Africa Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the DRC and Rwanda, with the participation of the UN. The Assembly may wish to encourage the concerned RECs/RMs to continue their coordination under the Quadripartite Platform to optimize outcomes. The Assembly may wish to congratulate the EAC RF and the troop contributing countries for their dedicated efforts aimed at the stabilization of eastern DRC. The Assembly may wish to commend SADC for the deployment of the SADC Mission in the DRC on 15 December 2023.

112. The Assembly may wish to commend the Congolese people for their commitment and determination to exercise their civic duty peacefully towards consolidating democracy. The Assembly may also wish to express deep concern over the security and humanitarian situation in eastern DRC and appeal to the Government of the DRC to continue to collaborate with the concerned RECs/RMs deployed on the ground to facilitate and support the efforts of the DRC in ensuring security in the country. The Assembly may wish to condemn in the strongest terms attacks on civilians and targeted attacks against the FARDC by the various armed groups operating in the eastern DRC and reiterate the call for M23, FDLR and all armed groups to unconditionally withdraw from eastern DRC, unconditionally disarm and cease hostilities and to call upon AU Member States, in a position to do so, and partners to provide the requisite support for the implementation of national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. The Assembly may urge Member States, in a position to do so, humanitarian partners and the international community to redouble their efforts in addressing the humanitarian needs and in alleviating the suffering of the affected population and further call for the convening of a humanitarian pledging conference to support the humanitarian response and address the challenges in the eastern DRC. The Assembly may further wish to underscore the need to address the underlying root causes and drivers associated with youth participation in violence, including through supporting socio-economic empowerment programmes aimed at economically empowering the people especially women and youth, in order to reorient them away from the politics of identity to the politics of interest.

ii. Central African Republic

113. The Central African Republic (CAR) has been making slow but steady progress since the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR-CAR) was signed in Bangui on 6 February 2019 between the Government and fourteen (14) armed groups. Following the Khartoum negotiations, under the auspices of the AU, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the countries of the

region, the CAR authorities have worked to ensure sustained peace dividends. In this regard, and within the context of the APPR-CAR, some of the accomplishments achieved include: i) harmonizing the Luanda Joint Roadmap and the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation as a coordinated response to produce concrete results; ii) disbanding some of the 14 armed groups who expressed commitment to peace; iii) engaging other armed groups who are not signatories to the APPR-CAR to join the APPR-CAR; iv) setting up a review committee to oversee and spearhead the organization and functioning of the National DDR and SSR Program, as well as the Implementation and Monitoring Mechanism of the APPR, with a primary responsibility to identify lapses in the Agreement and review and adapt to the current reality with innovative measures; and v) the sustained demarches by CAR for the lifting of the arms embargo imposed on the country, leading to the relaxation of the embargo by the United Nations Security Council on 27 July 2023, allowing the government to purchase weapons to equip its defence and security forces. Although the overall objective of the full lifting of the embargo has yet to be achieved, this is an important step that could strengthen the capacity of the government to assume full security responsibility for the country. On 30 July 2023, CAR held a Constitutional Referendum. Following the vote, the Constitutional Court released its verdict on 21 August 2023, two weeks after the National Elections Authority published the results of the referendum, upholding the YES vote with 95.03% against the NO votes. The referendum paves the way for the removal of term limits, a shift that has raised concerns among some national stakeholders. Meanwhile, the municipal elections and the first round of the regional polls initially planned for 2023 have been scheduled for 13 October 2024. Despite the gains, it is important to note the persistent pattern of violence carried out by the armed groups that have chosen not to participate in the Peace Agreement. Their actions persistently undermine the peace in CAR. Due to ongoing conflicts and the spillover effects from neighbouring Sudan, the Central African Republic continues to face a fragile security situation in its hinterland, where various armed groups are active. Additionally, the country is grappling with the humanitarian and socio-economic repercussions of the war.

114. The Assembly may wish to commend the CAR for its steady progress and encourage it to take necessary actions towards the successful implementation of the overall DDRR process to ensure the disarmament of ex-combatants and their integration into the national security apparatus. The Assembly may also wish to salute MINUSCA and all troop and police contributing countries for their commitment in sustaining peace and stability as well as protection of civilians in the CAR. The Assembly may also wish to encourage those armed movements not yet signatories to the APPR-CAR to join and for the Government to continue its efforts to bring these movements into the peace process. The Assembly may wish to welcome the UN Security Council's decision to relax the arms embargo on CAR and call on the body to lift the arms embargo to allow the country to respond to its security challenges appropriately. The Assembly may wish to call on relevant CAR authorities to ensure the conduct of the local elections in an inclusive, transparent, free and fair manner that responds to the aspirations of the people of CAR. The Assembly may wish to urge neighbouring countries of the Central African Republic, RECs/RMs, international partners and other relevant stakeholders to step up their efforts towards efficient implementation of the commitments contained in the Yaoundé Declaration of 27 April 2022 adopted by the International Conference organised to find lasting solutions to

forced human displacement caused by the crisis in the Central African Republic.

iii. Gabon

115. In February 2023, the Republic of Gabon organized political consultations on proposed constitutional amendments, which key opposition parties boycotted. The constitutional amendments included replacing multiple rounds of voting with a single round, reducing the length of the presidential term limits from seven years to five, the removal of term limits, and the principle of holding presidential, parliamentary and local government elections at the same time.

116. Presidential elections were held on 26 August 2023. On 29 August 2023, then-incumbent President Ali Bongo was declared the winner for a third term. The following day, 30 August, a group of military officers organized a coup d'état which overthrew the President. The military announced the dissolution of state institutions and placed President Bongo under house arrest. The coup leaders named General Brice Oligui Nguema as interim Transition Head. On 4 September 2023, General Nguema was sworn in as the new Head of State of the Transitional Authority in Gabon. Following the military takeover, Gabon was suspended from the AU on 31 August 2023 (1172nd PSC meeting). ECCAS also suspended Gabon. While the AU and ECCAS suspended Gabon, it remained one of the three elected African Members of the UN Security Council (A3) and a member of the UN Human Rights Council.

117. To resolve the crisis in Gabon, ECCAS deployed the President of the Central African Republic (CAR), H.E. Faustin-Archange Touadera, to Libreville as a Mediator. ECCAS also decided to relocate its headquarters from Libreville, the capital of Gabon, to Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea. It should be noted that the ECASS decision of relocating its Headquarters was reversed. The Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who served as the vice-chair of ECCAS, took over as the Chair of ECCAS.

118. On 19 September 2023, the Head of the Transition of Gabon made his first trip abroad, to Equatorial Guinea. On 1 October 2023, President Nguema made his second overseas trip, to the Republic of Congo, where he met with H.E. President Denis Sassou Nguesso. The choices of Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo illustrate the desire of the new Gabonese government to restore and strengthen relations with its neighbours to reassure them and lobby for the lifting of sanctions. The visits demonstrated the readiness of the new Gabonese Government to restore and strengthen relations with their Central Africa neighbours and win their trust while pleading for the lifting of sanctions imposed by ECCAS.

119. On 23 October 2023, the PSC, at its 1180th meeting on the situation of the Republic of Gabon, expressed deep concern about the lack of a clear, practical and time-bound timetable for the implementation of the Transitional Charter, particularly with regard to the holding of a national dialogue and elections.

120. On 14 November 2023, the Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions (CTRI) published an indicative timetable for Gabon's political transition, including holding elections in 2025, which will be preceded by an Inclusive National Dialogue scheduled for April 2024.

121. To support the transition in the Republic of Gabon, the Chairperson of the Commission dispatched his High Representative for Silencing the Guns, H.E. Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, to Libreville, Gabon, from 27 to 28 November 2023, to hold consultations with senior authorities of the Transition and other stakeholders. The mission provided an opportunity to discuss the evolution of the transition and the potential areas of the AU's support to the Transitional Government for a swift return to constitutional order.

122. The Assembly may wish to call for a swift return to constitutional order in the Republic of Gabon. The Assembly may wish to urge members of the transitional authorities to fulfil their commitments and refrain from embracing any self-succession in the election. The Assembly may further underscore the imperative of sustained mediation efforts and stress the need for the transitional authorities to ensure conducive conditions for the Inclusive National Dialogue with the participation of all stakeholders, including youth and women.

123. The Assembly may wish to note the adoption of the Transitional Charter, the appointment of a civilian Prime Minister, the formation of a transitional administration, and the appointment of members of the Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions (CTRI). The Assembly may also wish to note the announcement of the government's transitional roadmap, in particular the National Dialogue scheduled for April 2024, the drafting of the constitution that will be submitted to a referendum between November and December 2024, and the plan to hold general elections in August 2025, including the deployment of independent regional and continental observation missions. The Assembly may wish to request the Chairperson of the AU Commission to continue collaborating with ECCAS including through the establishment of an inclusive monitoring mechanism comprising the AU, ECCAS and other relevant stakeholders, to engage the transition authorities of Gabon to provide the necessary support to ensure the speedy return to constitutional order. In this regard, the Assembly may wish to commend and support ECCAS efforts and, in particular, welcome the final Communiqué of the Vth Extraordinary Summit of ECCAS Peace and Security Council held on 15 December 2023 in DJIBLOHO, Republic of Equatorial Guinea and devoted to the political Transition in Gabon, notably its conclusions that underscored: i) the importance of the role of the ECCAS Facilitator who should continue to deploy efforts towards implementation of the political transition roadmap in the Republic of Gabon; ii) the need to establish a mechanism to finance ECCAS's Transition facilitation activities with resources generated from special contributions by Member States; iii) the waiver on relocation of the ECCAS headquarters.

D. SOUTHERN AFRICA

124. Southern Africa remained generally calm except for the situations in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. The region remained seized with the political and security situations in Mozambique through the operations of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), which made significant progress against the Jihadist group in Mozambique.

i. **Mozambique**

125. The security and humanitarian situations in Mozambique remains volatile, , particularly the province of Cabo Delgado. The region has experienced escalating violence and displacement due to insurgency attacks. This has had a significant impact on the civilian population, with thousands of people being forcibly displaced and facing urgent humanitarian needs. The security situation in the affected areas poses challenges to the delivery of humanitarian aid and support to those in need. This requires coordinated responses of national and international actors, including Government authorities, humanitarian organizations, and development partners to effectively address the humanitarian crisis in northern Mozambique.

126. Addressing the root causes of the conflict and providing immediate assistance to affected populations are crucial priorities. The AU and the whole international community have an important role in supporting Mozambique in addressing these complex challenges and fostering peace and stability in the region. The AU has been working closely with SADC to address Mozambique's security and humanitarian situation, particularly in response to the crisis in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, including support to the SAMIM.

127. The Assembly may wish to commend the efforts being deployed by the Government of Mozambique towards addressing the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism in Cabo Delgado and other affected areas and to encourage the Government to redouble its efforts towards comprehensively addressing the attendant structural drivers of conflict and extremism, including through countering extremist ideology and blocking sources of funding for terrorist activities; The Assembly may also wish to call for continued intensive engagements with the Government of Mozambique, SADC and SAMIM to enhance coordination in supporting efforts aimed at combating terrorism and violent extremism restoring peace and security and smooth transition during the drawdown.

E. NORTHERN AFRICA

128. The North Africa region remained generally calm except for the continuing transition in Libya and the impact of natural disasters, floods in the east of the country, and the effects of terrorism in the Sahel. The region also continues to witness the growing activities of transnational organized criminal networks involved in drug, human and weapons trafficking. The deluge of irregular migrants from various parts of Africa created unease and political tensions across the region, including in Tunisia and Libya, relating to the adverse effects of African immigrants crossing over to Europe.

i. **Libya**

129. The security situation in Libya remains a matter of great concern, characterized by episodic clashes as the country continues to grapple with local militias and the absence of a unified government and national institutions. Limited progress has been achieved given the non-withdrawal of Foreign Fighters, Foreign Forces and Mercenaries, as recommended by the October 2020 Ceasefire Agreement signed by

all Libyan stakeholders and endorsed by both UNSC Resolution and PSC Communique PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLXI).

130. Heavy clashes occurred in 2023, including in the coastal city of Zawiya in May 2023 during the Eid holidays, between two major local militias, resulting in loss of life and hundreds of injuries. Al Zawiya has witnessed frequent, intense and continuous fighting among armed groups. The control over these militias has become more and more challenging for the Libyan authorities due in part to breaches of the arms embargo and continuous foreign interference in Libyan internal affairs.

131. The most serious clashes occurred in Tripoli in August 2023 between the influential 444 Brigade and the Al-Radaa, or Special Deterrence Force, militias that have vied for power since the 2011 overthrow of former Leader Muammar Gaddafi. The fighting led to the death of 55 people, with 146 wounded. The GNU's plan to reconstruct Tripoli's International Airport is the most problematic fault line developed in Tripoli. Competing militia have competed for territorial control over the airport.

132. Thus, the political situation in Libya has not witnessed any notable improvements this year. The two conflicting Governments of the West and the East continue to compete for legitimacy and authority over the country. Constitutional and Presidential elections have not occurred, although progress has been made by the High National Elections Commission (HNEC) and the 6+6 Commission reviewing electoral laws. However, critical contentious points over these laws, concerning mainly presidential candidate criteria, impede the process.

133. In light of the decision made by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2020, 2021, and 2022, as well as previous decisions made during the AU High-Level Committee for Libya meetings in Brazzaville and Oyo in January and March 2020, respectively, for the relocation of the AU Liaison Office from Tunis to Tripoli, an AUC Task Force recently conducted a technical assessment mission to Tunis and Tripoli from 29 July to 4 August 2023. The team assessed the financial, facility, assets, and support services to ensure a smooth and efficient office relocation. The relocation will enable the AU to directly engage with Libyan stakeholders and partners on the ground, including finalising the Host Nation Agreement. The working team subsequently agreed upon a roadmap to facilitate the relocation of the AULO from Tunis to Tripoli. The finalisation of a draft Host Agreement with the Libyan authorities is underway, aiming to relocate the AULO to Tripoli by the first quarter of 2024.

134. With respect to the reconciliation efforts of the AU Commission and the High-Level Committee for Libya, chaired by H.E. President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, a preparatory meeting on the inter-Libyan Reconciliation Conference took place in Brazzaville, Congo, in July 2023 with the participation of the Chairperson of the Commission, and adopted a roadmap of activities for the preparatory commission in charge of convening the inter-Libyan National Reconciliation Conference: to hold the next preparatory meeting in the city of Al-Bayda (Eastern region), and to convene the 3rd preparatory meeting in the Southern region (Sabha). Due to the devastating storm Daniel in the East and its dramatic humanitarian consequences, the second consultation took place in Benghazi on 14-15 November 2023.

135. On the humanitarian track, migrants continue to suffer at the hands of human trafficking networks operating throughout Libya, especially in the Southern region. Hundreds of cases of serious human rights violations among migrants and asylum seekers have been reported this year. In addition, the Eastern city of Derna was gravely affected by Storm Daniel, which struck the country from 9 to 11 September 2023, resulting in catastrophic flooding. Thousands of people lost their lives, and thousands were declared missing, with large-scale devastation and destruction of properties in the East. A consolidated team from Africa CDC was immediately dispatched to assess the situation and the needs of the populations affected with a view to bringing relief and humanitarian support.

136. The Assembly may wish to call for the expedited relocation of the Tunis-based AULO for Libya to Tripoli in 2024, and to capacitate it with all the necessary human and technical resources in order to operationalize its full mandate on the ground. The Assembly may wish to commend H.E President Denis Sassou Nguesso, Chair of the AU High-Level Committee for Libya, for his relentless efforts to bring all Libyans together in a National Reconciliation Conference that is very much needed to ensure the sovereignty, national unity, prosperity and stability in Libya.

ii. **Tunisia**

137. The situation in Tunisia has been marked by reports of difficulties faced by African migrants. In February 2023, the President of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, strongly condemned the public statement made by Tunisian authorities targeting African compatriots, which goes against the letter and spirit of the African Union, its founding principles, and objectives. Subsequently, the Commission President dispatched two AU Commissioners, namely from the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development and the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, to engage in dialogue with Tunisian authorities to improve the conditions faced by African migrants in Tunisia. The two AU Commissioners were granted an audience by H.E. President Kais Saied, who reiterated the Tunisian government's commitment to continue protecting African migrants.

138. The Assembly may wish to take note of the development dimension of migration. The Assembly may wish to commend the efforts and measures taken by the Tunisian Government to protect the rights of African migrants.

139. The Assembly may wish to emphasize the call made through the Common African Position on Migration to tackle the root causes of irregular migration, including the pull and push factors, both at continental and international levels. The Assembly may wish to request the AU Commission to undertake a comprehensive study on the issue of illegal migration and its effects on peace and security in the continent and to present the outcome of the study to the PSC. The Assembly may also urge all AU Member States to steadfastly uphold their international law and human rights obligations, while respecting the African values which prioritizes African solidarity.

IV. AFRICAN UNION MEDIATION AND DIALOGUE INITIATIVES

i. Panel of the Wise Activities

140. In addressing and preventing the escalation of tensions among political leaders in the Central African Republic, the Commission deployed a preventive diplomacy mission of the Panel of the Wise in March 2023, in line with the directives of the AU Assembly of States [Assembly/AU/Dec.842(XXXVI)]. The mission, comprising H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye and Professor Babacar Kante, assessed the political and security landscape, reviewed the progress of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR-CAR), and proposed strategies to assist CAR in achieving peace, reconciliation, and democracy. The Panel of the Wise briefed the PSC on 13 June 2023 at its 1157th meeting on the findings of the preventive mission.

141. Following the PSC decision on the situation in Chad, the Panel undertook a fact-finding mission to the Republic of Chad from 12 to 18 March 2023 to evaluate Chad's political and security processes. The Panel's findings, which were presented to the PSC, as stated in the first section of the report, emphasized the AU's crucial role in supporting Chad's political processes for peace and stability.

142. As part of the Commission's reappraisal and nexus approach to peace, security, governance and sustainable development, the Panel of the Wise Members actively engaged in pre-, during and post-election phases in several AU Member States during 2023. The Panel of the Wise covered elections in Sierra Leone. H.E. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, a Panel of the Wise member, served as the Head of Mission during Liberia's 2023 Presidential elections.

143. Specifically, in Sierra Leone, a High-Level Preventive Diplomacy Mission (PDM) led by H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn Boshe and Hon. Justice (Rtd) Effie Owuor was conducted from 23 to 28 June 2023 to mitigate post-election tensions. This mission led to the AU–ECOWAS joint appointment of H.E. Fatoumata Jallow-Tambajang to facilitate dialogue between the government of Sierra Leone and the opposition's All People's Congress Party. The dialogue resulted in the signing of an agreement that, among other things, is aimed at fostering national cohesion through sustained dialogue and review of the country's electoral processes.

144. From 19 to 22 December 2023, H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye and Hon. Justice (Rtd) Effie Owuor undertook a consultative mission to South Sudan to complement the efforts of the AU Ad-Hoc High-Level Committee for South Sudan (C5) in supporting the ongoing peace process. The outcome and findings of the mission of the Panel has been elaborated under the above section on the situation in South Sudan.

ii. Panel of the Wise-Subsidiary Bodies, PanWise Network/Femwise Activities

145. The AU's collaboration with Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) was bolstered by the 2nd Annual Technical Coordination Meeting on Preventive Diplomacy and the 8th Retreat of the Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise Network), both of which were held in Kigali, Rwanda from 6 to 8 December 2023. The meeting validated the Framework for the Revitalization of the PanWise Network and defined the Terms of Reference for the PanWise Steering

Committee, thereby enhancing coordination of collaborative activities such as the deployment of the AU Panel of the Wise.

146. The involvement of the FemWise-Africa Network in Guinea-Bissau during post-election phases and Sierra Leone showcases the AU's commitment to enhancing the participation of women in mediation. In Sierra Leone, the Network deployed FemWise members to provide support to the national mediation team and the Situation Room of the Independent Commission on Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC). Their main focus was on mediation and conflict prevention during the electoral period.

147. The FemWise-Africa Networks continue to maintain their long-term presence at the AU Liaison Offices in Sudan, South Sudan, and Chad. Their main objective is to provide support for the ongoing peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. This highlights the AU's dedication to enhancing the involvement of women in peace processes. These deployments remain essential pathways for FemWise-Africa's contribution to AU-led peace processes, with a focus on gender sensitivity and inclusivity.

148. The deployment of the FemWise-Africa Co-chair to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as part of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace, and Security's Peace Advocacy Mission underscores the AU's commitment to incorporating women in peacebuilding and dialogue processes. In this role, the Co-chair focused on identifying potential avenues for future assistance to the DRC from the Panel of the Wise and its subsidiary mechanisms.

149. In August 2023, the Panel of the Wise formally adopted the Decentralization Framework for the FemWise-Africa network, paving the way for the Commission to support the establishment and operationalisation of regional and national chapters of the Network. The decentralisation process aims to promote the formation of a critical mass of women engaged in mediation, dialogue and conflict prevention at all levels; promote the role of women mediators to support regional and national peace undertaken by RECs, RMs and Member States; and leverage the comparative advantage of women mediators to intervene early in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peace endeavours.

150. Subsequently, between September and November 2023, the Commission supported establishing and launching FemWise-Africa national chapters in Uganda, Malawi and Ethiopia, all anchored and hosted within various national ministries mandated to promote peacebuilding efforts in the respective countries. The chapters, working in close collaboration with the hosting ministries, aim to facilitate the implementation of robust national and community-based interventions to promote the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and mediation processes.

151. It is equally important to note that in enhancing AU mediation efforts, the AU's drafting of a policy brief on stakeholder coordination to enrich African mediation, based on the 13th AU Annual High-Level Retreat in Namibia, represents a strategic approach to enhancing mediation processes. This policy brief offers insights and recommendations for effective multiparty mediation coordination.

iii. Wise Youth Network

152. It is recalled that the Network of African Youth on Conflict Prevention and Mediation (WiseYouth), was established through a decision of the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2022 (Assembly/AU/Dec.815(XXXV), as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise, to ensure and promote a focused and strategic engagement of youth in preventive diplomacy, mediation and dialogue across the Continent.

153. The WiseYouth Network was subsequently launched at the 13th High-Level Retreat of Special Envoys, High Representatives and Special Representatives of the Chairperson of the Commission in October 2022, in Windhoek, Namibia.

154. Towards enhancing its Operationalization, the AU Commission convened a Consultative Meeting with all RECs, RMs, the LCBC and the G5-Sahel, on 31 August – 01 September 2023 in Bujumbura, Burundi, where the Operational Modalities and Terms of Reference for Members of the Network were finalized and validated. Premised on this, the Commission is now in the process of launching an Open Call for Applications for the 1st Cohort of the WiseYouth Network, with this process expected to be completed in early 2024.

iv. Lessons Learned from the AU-Led and Ethiopian-Owned Peace Process

155. The AU's intervention in the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia, spearheaded by a high-level panel consisting of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, and former South African Deputy-President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, marked a significant milestone in AU's peacemaking efforts. The peace negotiations between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front culminated in a substantial peace agreement signed on 2 November 2022 in Pretoria. The Commission has initiated a Lessons Learned Exercise to distil valuable insights from the process. This exercise assesses the AU-led, Ethiopian-owned peace process, analysing its achievements and challenges. The aim is to collect valuable insights to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of future AU mediation and dialogue initiatives. This exercise is vital for strengthening the AU's conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies across Africa and contributes to effective PAPS Knowledge Management. Once completed, the outcome of the Lessons learned Exercise will be communicated to all AU Member States.

V. DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND GOVERNANCE

i. Facilitating Implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

156. The High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights has catalysed informed policymaking and practice in Africa. By fostering dialogue among stakeholders, policymakers, the private sector, think tanks, academia, and practitioners, this initiative has provided a platform to reflect on crucial issues related to democratic governance, human rights, and peace. The outcomes and resolutions from these forums have become invaluable resources for informing and implementing governance policies and practices. The policy proposals generated by these dialogues demonstrate the influence of these discussions. The outcomes of this year's High-Level Dialogue on the theme "Delivering Peace Dividends through AFCFTA

Implementation," held on 23 October 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, offer guidance to state and non-state interventions at various levels.

157. The African Governance Platform (AGP) brings together AU organs and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in a concerted effort to enhance governance and peace and security to help guide member states towards more effective governance. At the AGP's annual statutory meetings, members of the platform agree on flagship initiatives such as the African Governance Report and review of State Party reports by member states. By these, the AGP offers guidance to member states to improve governance across the continent, addressing the root causes of conflicts and instability and ultimately contributing to the realization of Agenda 2063 - The Africa We Want.

158. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACDEG) catalyses profound change in Africa's governance culture. It has been critical in promoting democracy, human rights, and sustainable peace. However, the impact of ACDEG is contingent on state parties' compliance. To ensure compliance, the AGP has begun a review of state party reports received from two Member States (Togo and Rwanda). This process helps assist in holding member states accountable for their commitments, leading to tangible improvements in governance.

159. The Assembly may wish to urge Member States that have ratified the Charter to submit their reports for review by the AGP for relevant gains to be derived in the consolidation of governance in the Continent. If effectively implemented, ACDEG can be the key driving force towards Africa's commitment to good governance, democracy and human rights.

ii. Strengthening Citizen's Engagement and Popular Participation

160. Meaningful engagement of African youth in democratic processes has long been a crucial goal. The African Governance Platform's Youth Capacity Building Programme has made some strides towards achieving this objective. By providing Training of Trainers (TOT) to young people in South Sudan (as the country will have its elections in 2024), the initiative has empowered them with the knowledge and capacity to participate actively in elections and political processes. In Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Liberia, it was noted that youth who have undergone TOT have become integral participants in electoral processes, serving as voters, candidates, polling agents, and observers. This heightened youth engagement has breathed new life into African democracies and strengthened the representation of the continent's diverse population.

iii. Strengthening the synergy between AGA and APSA

161. Establishing the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democracy, and Governance has been a transformative step towards synergy and coordination. This sub-committee has been instrumental in bridging the gap between AU institutions, member states, and regional communities. In 2023, the sub-committee fostered collaboration between AU institutions and member states through regular meetings and joint engagements with the Peace and Security Council. The outcome is a unified approach to addressing issues related to

good governance, democracy, peace and security, profoundly impacting the continent's stability and prosperity.

iv. Enhancing Electoral Processes

162. Efforts to enhance democratic governance on the continent continue as most countries conduct regular elections. The African Union Commission contributed to the monitoring and evaluation of democratic processes by providing technical assistance to member states, particularly election management bodies, educating citizens about political participation and electoral processes, and deploying election observation missions. Technical and political pre-election assessment and preventive diplomacy missions integrated into election observation missions have helped address pre-election, electoral, and post-election issues.

163. The Kingdom of Morocco hosted and financed the second edition of the training of election observers, which saw forty people from across the five regions of the continent trained. This commitment has significantly contributed to building the AUEOMs' capacities. The Commission hosted the 2023 edition of the 'Implementing Organizations of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation'. This meeting gathered about 150 participants from fifty organizations worldwide at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa for the first time. The issues discussed during the three-day sessions include communication, youth participation, challenges faced by observers during missions, data protection and electoral integrity, and security considerations in complex environments. The event's highlight was an experience-sharing session by heads of missions from the EU, Carter Centre, NDI and the AU, which was represented by Dr Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe, the former Vice President of the Republic of Uganda.

164. The Assembly may wish to direct the Commission to continue supporting the ongoing synergy building between the African Governance Platform (AGP), PSC and PRC Subcommittee on Democracy, Elections, and Governance to foster continuous collaboration and information exchange in order to enhance the promotion of good governance; including the relevant and accompanying internal Commission structural realignment. The Assembly may also wish to urge Member States to implement actionable measures derived from High-Level Dialogues promptly. The Assembly may wish to thank the Kingdom of Morocco for having organized, with the Political Affairs Peace and Security Department of the AU, the second training of African election Observers in Rabat, from 23 to 26 May 2023 and underscore the importance of replicating this experience by organizing the third edition with a view to further contributing towards the improvement of professional conduct of election observer missions.

V. AU Elections Observation Missions – Democracy at Work

165. The African Union Commission deployed election observation missions to all the Member States that held general, presidential and legislative elections during the year 2023 namely, Djibouti, Nigeria, Mauritania, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, Liberia, Madagascar, Egypt and DRC. However, the AU could not deploy to the Republic of Benin, and the Republic of Gabon, due to internal technical/logistical challenges and non-invitation by the host government respectively.

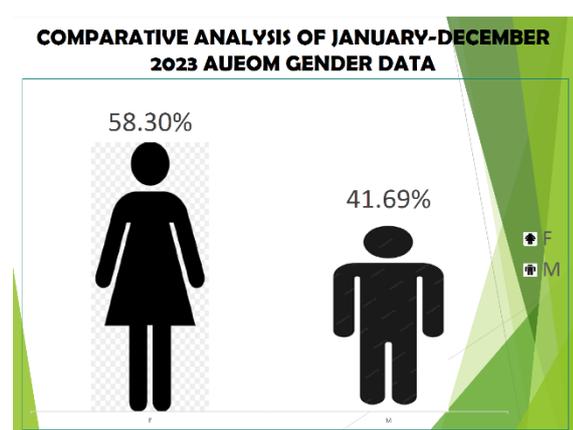
The deployment of election observation missions is broadly welcomed by the majority of the electorate across the continent as observers help mitigate the possibility of irregular practices during the electoral process. However, it should be noted that in some cases, the observation missions have been perceived as complicit when some citizens view the elections as not free and credible while some stakeholders would have expected the African Union to condemn such polls.

Table 10: AU Elections Observation Missions

| | Country | Total Observers | Total Female Observers | % Total Female Observers |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Djibouti | 7 | 5 | 71.43% |
| 2. | Nigeria | 71 | 36 | 50.70% |
| 3. | Mauritania | 7 | 3 | 42.86 |
| 4. | Guinea Bissau | 41 | 17 | 41.46% |
| 5. | Sierra Leone | 53 | 27 | 50.94% |
| 6. | Zimbabwe | 64 | 34 | 53.13% |
| 7. | Eswatini | 53 | 28 | 52.83% |
| 8. | Liberia | 55 | 28 | 50.91% |
| 9. | Madagascar | 62 | 33 | 53.23% |
| 10. | Egypt | 71 | 47* | 66.20% |
| 11. | DRC | 71 | 43* | 60.56% |
| Total | | 555 | 310 | 54.23% |

166. Pre-election assessment missions at technical and political levels were deployed to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republic of Sierra Leone, the Union of Comoros (in preparation for the 2024 elections), the Republic of Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Technical assistance was provided to Sierra Leone and Liberia, while post-election support was given to Sierra Leone and the Kingdom of Eswatini. To make the best use of the Commission's resources, the Commission considered several factors in deciding on the size and composition of the African

Figure 6: AUEOM Gender Data

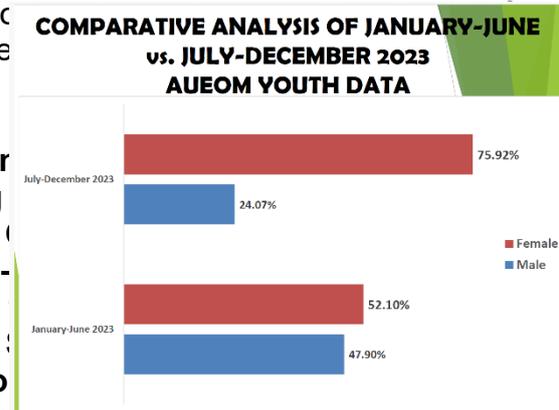


Union Election Observation Missions (AUEOM). Among the factors to examine are population, anticipated number of voting stations, and election type. The AUEOMs are made up of members of the Pan-African Parliament, PRC members, representatives of AU organisations and institutions, former ambassadors, members of election management bodies, civil society, and young people. Deliberate measures put in place have increased youth involvement and ensured equitable representation of men and women in missions. 555 observers from the Union's 55 member nations were

dispatched for the 11 missions undertaken in 2023, with at least fifty-four percent (54% being women).

167. The AUEOMs continue to collaborate with RECs and RMs during election observation missions. The AU's joint observation missions with COMESA have become the most regular, with joint deployments to Zimbabwe, Madagascar and Egypt. This has helped to increase the coverage of the missions as well as collaborate on interventions during the missions. The mission observation missions on the ground in pre-poll to share notes and, in some cases, strategic engagements as may be necessary.

Figure 7: AUEOM Youth Data



168. **The Assembly may wish to coordinate successfully conducted elections during Member States to implement the African Union Governance in order to prevent election-related violence who are yet to sign and ratify the Charter for its support provided to Member States. The deployment of conflict preventive missions should extend their support to the AU Commission, further urge all member States to welcome the AU Election Observer Missions during their respective elections.**

VI. CONSTITUTIONALISM, RULE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

169. The normative framework of the African Union, in conjunction with the instrumental role played by the Peace and Security Council, has produced commendable outcomes. The utilization of this framework has effectively contributed to the establishment of constitutional governance and the smooth transition of power in numerous member states. Furthermore, it is worth noting that African populations have exhibited increased vigilance in their pursuit of respect for constitutional and democratic principles, alongside a desire for enhanced engagement in political processes.

170. Some member states have demonstrated commendable advancements in the establishment of robust institutions, the adoption of sound governance principles, the implementation of judicial reforms, and the pursuit of anti-corruption endeavours. However, it is important to acknowledge that Africa has faced particular challenges in recent times, specifically concerning the re-emergence of Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCGs). The aforementioned actions pose a potential challenge to the democratic advancements achieved in recent decades and to the overall stability and development of the continent. These serve as a reminder of the imperative for the African Union to carefully reconsider and strengthen its normative frameworks, especially the implementation of existing frameworks, to tackle emerging threats effectively and take proactive measures to prevent them. While acknowledging the commendable efforts that some member states have made, it is important to note that challenges continue to persist in the areas of constitutionalism and the rule of law.

171. **The Assembly may wish to urge member states to redouble efforts in developing comprehensive strategies to address the underlying cause factors**

unconstitutional changes of government such as lack of inclusion and broad-based participation of all key stakeholders in the elective politics of the country, emphasizing targeted initiatives for constitutional reforms and legitimacy-building measures, and to establish deliberate socio-economic programmes aimed at economically empowering the population especially the women and the youth; and further direct the Commission and RECs/RMs to enhance coordination in support of Member States. The Assembly may wish to request the commission to fastrack the conclusion of a comprehensive and objective study on structural root causes/drivers and impact of unconstitutional changes of government in Africa.

VII. HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

i. **Business and Human Rights**

172. The African Union Business and Human Rights Policy, under the DPAPS's coordination and with the support of other AU organs, is an ambitious effort designed to infuse respect for human and labour rights into the continent's business environments. The policy's broad framework encompasses critical interventions, including support for developing National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights and organising the Annual Africa Business and Human Rights Forum. Of equal significance is the technical assistance that the AU Member States will receive with the adoption of the draft policy. Implementing this policy will undoubtedly mitigate business and labour-related conflicts, which, if left unaddressed, could seriously compromise the continent's peace and security. In tandem with the African Union Business and Human Rights Policy, the DPAPS organised the second African Business and Human Rights Forum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in September 2023. This forum enabled sharing best practices in business and human rights among AU Member States. Its multifaceted objectives extended to providing technical guidance and assistance to Member States currently crafting their National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights. The forum also had the overarching goal of encouraging Member States and the private sector to respect and implement the three pillars of Business and Human Rights, encompassing the government's role in protecting human rights in business environments, the private sector's responsibility to respect human rights, and the need for robust remediation mechanisms, as prescribed in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the draft AU Business and Human Rights Policy. The forum resulted in a series of recommendations, which are now being translated into tangible actions across the continent, primarily at the national level.

173. The roadmap on Business and Human Rights which have been developed include the development of a comprehensive continental program on Business and Human Rights, continued delivery of a continental African Business and Human Rights Forum, enhanced engagement with regional economic communities, and support for sub-regional Business and Human Rights Forums. The plans also include advocating for the integration of human rights expertise into the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), promoting human rights in the free movement of persons within the AfCFTA, and addressing the human rights implications of this pivotal agreement. The effective implementation of these future plans is poised to

significantly enhance corporate governance, prevent conflicts, and ultimately foster peace and development in Africa's dynamic environment.

ii. Africa Regional Consultation on the Right to Development

174. Realizing the right to development in Africa is both compelling and pivotal, given the persistent disparities in socioeconomic, civil, and political rights. To surmount these challenges, prioritizing and promoting the right to development is imperative. In response, the leadership of DPAPS facilitated the first-ever continental consultation on the right to development. The event, held in September 2023, laid the groundwork for developing a draft African contribution to the global agenda on the right to development. The draft document is in its final stages of preparation, with African Union Member States and African Groups in Geneva and New York actively contributing to its refinement. In addition, the African Union is collaborating with regional economic communities, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UNDP, and other relevant institutions to bring the consultation outcomes to fruition at the national level across the continent. This initiative would help contribute to conflict prevention as well as the promotion of sustainable peace and development.

iii. The Commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: African States Responsibility to Protect Citizens and Collective Development

175. The commemoration of the 29th edition of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, held in April 2023, was both a remembrance and an unwavering commitment to safeguard peace and security in Africa. Under the theme “Kwibuka29 – Remember-Unite-Renew,” this event underscored the profound impacts of hate speech, hate crimes, and intolerance on the peace and stability of the continent. The commemoration laid bare the consequences of corruption, diversity mismanagement and governance failures on regional peace and stability. Beyond remembrance, the event also emphasized the importance of unity among African Union Member States in a shared effort to combat genocide, genocidal ideology, mismanagement of diversity and the other preconditions that could lead to a repeat of the tragic events of April 1994 in any African state. **The Assembly may wish to commend Member States in general and Rwanda in particular for considerable progress made and urge Member States to stand together against hate speech, intolerance, and the mismanagement of diversity—factors that often precede genocide.**

iv. Transitional Justice

176. The African Union Commission's transitional justice programmes are instrumental in creating an environment to address human rights violations and fostering peace, national reconciliation, justice, accountability, and sustainable development in post-conflict and post-authoritarian settings across Africa. Guided by the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) and the AU Roadmap, the AU Commission has played a pivotal role in providing technical support to member states and stakeholders engaged in various forms of transitional justice mechanisms.

- *Technical Support to Ethiopia on Transitional Justice Policy*

177. In response to Ethiopia's historic Agreement for Lasting Peace with the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), the AUC offered technical and financial assistance to Ethiopia's National Working Group on Transitional Justice. This resulted in the organisation of an international stakeholders' conference on Transitional Justice Policy Options for Ethiopia in March 2023 in Addis Abeba. Ethiopia opted to adopt a comprehensive transitional justice programme as part of its attempts to strengthen democracy and assure long-term peace. A Transitional Justice Working Group was formed with the goal of developing a context-specific strategy to redress past crimes and steer the country towards justice, reconciliation, equality, human rights, and inclusion. The Ethiopian methodology included carrying out a research on previous transitional justice initiatives, as well as meetings and seminars with international experts from Africa and beyond. The long-term impact of this Ethiopian-led and AU-supported process is expected to promote inclusive policy formulation and implementation by ensuring the participation of ethnic minorities, women, children, youth, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups disproportionately affected by conflicts. When implemented, Ethiopia's transitional justice programme will significantly contribute to good governance, peace, and security in Africa.

- *Technical Support to South Sudan on Transitional Justice Implementation*

178. Following Ethiopia's success, the AUC received a formal request from the Government of South Sudan for assistance in organising a national and international stakeholders' conference on the theme "Building a Sustainable South Sudanese Model for Transitional Justice System." The conference, held in Juba in May 2023, was to enrich the draft bills on the establishment of the Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing Commission (TRHC), the Compensation and Reparation Authority (CRA), and the proposed Hybrid Court, as outlined in Chapter 5 of the Revitalised Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

179. The conflicts in South Sudan in 2013 and 2016 led to extensive loss of life and property, necessitating the signing of the R-ARCSS. The conference provided essential technical and financial support to South Sudan's transitional justice mechanism, aiming to promote sustainable peace, democratic governance, the rule of law, justice, national reconciliation, accountability, and development. The event attracted the participation of the South Sudanese President and government officials. In addition, technical experts from across Africa shared insights into truth and reconciliation mechanisms.

- *Training of African Women on Transitional Justice and the Establishment of the African Women for Transitional Justice (AW4TJ) Initiative:*

180. The AUC organised a comprehensive training programme for thirty-five women across Africa, with a focus on AU member states involved in different transitional justice mechanisms. The training, which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 2023, resulted in the establishment of the African Women for Transitional Justice (AW4TJ) initiative. Participants on this platform have a proven history of actively promoting peace and stability in their respective countries, including Ethiopia, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, Togo, and Mali. They prioritise the inclusion of gender

perspectives in matters of justice, accountability, and national reconciliation. These women are instrumental in promoting good governance, peace, and security in Africa.

- **The 7th Edition of the African Forum on Transitional Justice**

181. The DPAPS, the Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) and the National Council for Human Rights of Morocco (CNDH) organized the seventh edition of the African Forum on Transitional Justice, from 12 to 14 September 2023 in Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco. The Forum focused on the interconnection between transitional justice, gender equality, mental health and psychosocial support and socio-economic justice in Africa.

182. **The Assembly may wish to call on Member States for systematic integration of regional and continental norms into existing national and local legal frameworks, emphasizing practical steps for mutual understanding, cooperation, and local commitment; encourage Member States to support and empower local organizations actively engaged in promoting human rights, particularly social and economic rights, fostering sustainable social development; and request the AU Commission to provide the relevant guidance, coordination and technical backstopping to RECs/RMs and Member States. The Assembly may wish to request the AU Commission further to provide consistent and additional support for transitional justice programs, with a focus on promoting reconciliation and national cohesion, and conduct in close collaboration with RECs/RMs, a comprehensive review of judicial independence, civic spaces, and existing frameworks, with a specific action plan to address constitutional infringements and enhance legal safeguards.**

VIII. PUBLIC SECTOR GOVERNANCE

i. Public Service

183. The interconnected nature of good governance, human rights, and peace and security is the cornerstone of Africa's progress. However, the continent grapples with a pressing issue: widespread human rights violations, which have far-reaching consequences for good governance, regional peace and security, and public service delivery. Recognizing the urgency of addressing this challenge, African nations require a resilient public service capable of delivering on its developmental mandate. The AUC, in collaboration with several key partners, has embarked on a series of strategic initiatives to promote good governance, human rights, peace, security, and sustainable development across the continent.

184. The 9th Biennial Continental Africa Public Service Day, held in June 2023 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, brought together African Union Member States to analyse the crucial role of a capable African public administration in successfully implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This high-profile conference promoted the exchange of groundbreaking public service practices, acknowledged the dedicated work of public servants, and created an opportunity for the exchange of ideas in the African public sector. The conference recommendations emphasised the importance of effective governance for successfully implementing AfCFTA. It highlighted the need to eliminate trade barriers and facilitate the movement of

entrepreneurial capabilities. The conference also stressed the importance of streamlining production processes to ensure affordable local products.

185. 180. Additionally, it underscored the necessity for robust collaborations among countries to combat cross-border crime, which can threaten trade and investments. The successful implementation of these recommendations is of utmost importance for the AfCFTA's success, which is expected to impact Africa's socioeconomic transformation significantly. This transformation is crucial for promoting regional peace and security in line with AU Agenda 2063.

ii. **Joint AU - UN-Habitat Session**

186. A joint session was held between the African Union and UN-Habitat in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2023 to help address Africa's urbanization challenges. The Africa Urban Forum is envisioned as an essential platform that will harmonize African countries' efforts to address the challenges posed by rapid urbanization and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in addressing governance deficiencies that impact regional peace and security.

187. **The Assembly may wish to encourage Member States that have not yet done so to ratify the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration and the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development.**

IX. DEFENCE AND SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE

188. The African continent has long grappled with multifaceted peace, security, and development challenges. Proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, landmines, and the need for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs have remained persistent threats to peace and stability. In addition, the ever-changing security landscape requires constant adaptation through security sector reform (SSR). Furthermore, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) necessitates strict adherence to international instruments and peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.

i. Fight against Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons

189. Within the frameworks of the African Union's initiative on 'Silencing the guns' and the United Nations new "Vision for Disarmament", a key pillar of the "New Agenda for Peace", the Commission, through the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), has developed a "Joint Cooperation Framework for Enhanced Partnership on Peace and Security" covering a range of issues on control of conventional arms, and disarmament and nonproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The two organizations are now moving to develop a fundraising strategy that will guide the mobilization of funds to support the implementation of identified activities. The programme is expected to be rolled out from 2024.

190. The Commission continued supporting Member States in the fight against proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their ammunition

because they remain significant conflict enablers and threaten Africa's peace, security, stability, and social and economic development. The availability of illicit SALW exacerbates the plight of civilians, especially in countries in conflict, and therefore, helping countries to strengthen arms control frameworks is essential, including ensuring proper management of stockpiles. The effective management of SALW is critical to achieving the goal of Silencing the guns by 2030.

191. The Commission is supporting Member States towards strong participation during the Fourth Review Conference of the United Nations "Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects" scheduled for June 2024 through elaborating a Common Position that would guide them in the review process. The Member States experts' meeting held in November 2023 identified areas of concern for the continent that would be highlighted during the conference.

192. The Standing Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) of the AU, gathering the eight (8) RECs/RMs recognized by the African Union, held an extraordinary meeting on 20 and 21 September 2023, in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. The meeting focused on the preparation of the African Common Position on the 4th Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

193. The Commission also mobilized the African Group in New York towards strong participation during the Fourth and final Substantive Session of the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Conventional Ammunition, established by the UN to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps through-live ammunition management. This enabled Member States to rally around Continental concerns for enhanced global controls on conventional ammunition. The final report of the OEWG was adopted without a vote.

ii. Mine Action

194. The Commission is providing assistance to Member States that are still affected by landmines, which remain a significant danger impacting the lives of millions, in order to eliminate them. The Commission conducted technical assessments of Zimbabwe and Guinea Bissau to evaluate the current status of demining efforts and assistance provided to landmine victims. The Government of Algeria also organized the African Regional Seminar on Mine Action in Algiers, Algeria from 30 to 31 May 2023 which called for enhancement of south-south cooperation in support of African countries that are still affected by mine situation. The Commission remains committed to collaborating with partners in order to secure the necessary technical and financial assistance for these Countries to meet their clearance deadlines, in accordance with the Mine Ban Convention.

iii. Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)

195. Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes remain integral to promoting peace and stability in Africa, in line with the 2004 Common Africa

Defense and Security Policy (CADSP) and the 2006 Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy.

196. The Commission provides support in DDR to Member States on demand across the entire peace continuum within and outside the framework of comprehensive peace agreements. In this regard, the Commission is guided by the Revised Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) as developed by the United Nations and in which the Commission participated. The support included training and capacity building for national DDR practitioners using the IDDRS and AU-OGNs. The Commission organized a webinar series as well as face-to-face workshops for eleven (11) Member States, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Somalia. These enabled enhanced information and peer-to-peer exchange on implementing DDR activities, promoting good practices and exploring appropriate responses to common challenges among them.

197. As part of the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), the Commission is collaborating with the National Rehabilitation Commission (NRC) to raise the necessary financial and technical resources to support Ethiopia in its ongoing national DDR efforts. The Commission also supported Somalia and Mali in sensitizing national security and rule of law enforcement institutions on effective weapons and ammunition management. This was aimed at minimizing leakage and loss of state-owned weapons into unauthorized possession.

198. As a strategy for enhanced support to Member States, the Commission, in partnership with the United Nations and World Bank, launched a Joint Collaborative Framework on DDR for 2023-2025. The framework will be implemented through broad interventions covering research, analysis, operation, knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity building.

iv. Security Sector Reform (SSR)

199. The Commission continues to support Member States in implementing Security Sector Reform (SSR) upon request, guided by the AU SSR Policy Framework. In 2023, SSR interventions focused on supporting National SSR efforts in Member States in political transitions and post-conflict reconstruction and development contexts. In this regard, the Commission supported The Gambia in developing a fundraising strategy to guide the efforts to raise funds to finance its SSR program. This is because of the limited national resources to finance the planned activities.

200. The Malian transitional authorities have included in Chapter II Article 2 of the Charter of Transition of 1 October 2020 the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (PRA) resulting from the Algiers process, which promotes security sector governance as a key pillar for sustainable peace. In this context, Mali revised its National SSR Strategy 2022-2024 to adapt it to the present security needs.

201. The Commission supported the sensitization of state and non-state security actors on ownership of the new National SSR strategy. The National SSR is in two regions - Bamako and Kati. Participants included the National SSR Commission, other Government officials, local authorities, and Civil Society Organizations – including women and youth associations. During the discussions, one of the topics addressed was the process of integrating ex-combatants into the national forces or reintegrating them into civilian life. This valuable experience can be shared with other Member States to strengthen their ownership of national SSR.

v. A decade of implementation of the AU SSR Policy Framework

202. Since the AU SSR Policy Framework was developed in January 2013, it has been used by some Member States as a guide in reforming their security sector. At its 874th meeting on 5 September 2019, the PSC directed the Commission to work closely with Member States to implement SSR on the continent. AU support to member states has centred on three main pillars: providing direct assistance to Member States implementing SSR; production of knowledge tools and building human capacities; facilitating coordination and dialogue among regional and international actors.

203. However, socio-political, financial and technical challenges have undermined the implementation of the Policy Framework over the past ten years. Within this context, the Commission surveyed experiences and lessons learned in implementing the AU SSR Policy Framework in five Member states implementing SSR, including The Gambia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali and South Sudan.

204. The Commission continues to develop operational Guidance Notes in identified areas to serve as a reference for Member States and other practitioners. The “Operational Guidance Note on SSR and Mediation” is being developed to provide standardized guidance on security sector governance in mediation, negotiation, and implementation of peace agreements. The Commission is also developing an “Operational Guidance Note on Oversight and Accountability of the Security Sector”, which is intended to serve as a guide in strengthening democratic oversight of the security sector. Furthermore, the Operational Guidance Note on SSR and Gender is in the process of development.

205. Following the recommendation by the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety, and Security (STCDSS) at its 12th Meeting held in Cairo, Egypt, in December 2019, directing the Commission to review the Organization of African Union Unity (OAU) Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, the Commission, in partnership with the RECs, has developed a draft Revised Convention. The Draft will be submitted to Member States Experts for consideration before submission to the Policy Organs.

206. The decision to review the Convention was a result of the concern over the changing security landscape in the continent emanating from what was seen as the changing nature of mercenaries and related phenomena, including the emergence of Private Military Companies (PMCs), Foreign Fighters, and transnational non-State armed groups, among others.

vi. Weapons of Mass destruction

207. AU Member States are party to multilateral instruments against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological. In this regard, the Commission partnered with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and conducted a capacity-building workshop on mitigating risk related to CBRN materials held from 12 – 13 December 2023 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The workshop was conducted within the framework of the European Union (EU) Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence (CoE) initiative, which presently supports 28 AU Member States.

208. The workshop contributed to strengthening Member States to meet their obligations under the various multilateral instruments on WMDs, including within the framework of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, which obliges all countries to develop and enforce appropriate legal and regulatory measures against the proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons and their means of delivery.

209. Other than ensuring adherence to the prohibitions under the various multilateral instruments, the Commission, including through the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCON), continues to work with technical partners like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to promote the application of nuclear science and technology for peaceful uses in the areas of health, education, agriculture, mining, industrialization and other developmental areas. In the same context, the Commission is strengthening its partnership with the Technical Secretariat of the Organization to support Member States adhering to prohibitions under the Chemical Weapons Convention, which ensures strict controls, security and safety of scheduled chemicals imported for legitimate use for manufacturing, extraction industry and other developmental purposes.

210. **The Assembly may wish to take note of the outcome of the African Regional Seminar on Mine Action held in Algiers, Algeria in May 2023 and request the Commission, as well as Member States and partners in position to do so, to support the efforts of AU Member States facing the challenge of landmines to enable them to meet their landmine clearance obligations. The Assembly may wish to encourage Member States to participate in the meeting to develop African Common Position on the Fourth Review Conference of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons that will be held in New York in 2024. The Assembly may also wish to direct the Commission, in close collaboration with the Member States, RECs/RMs, to update the data on the numbers and availability of illicit SALW in the Continent in a disaggregated manner. This will help facilitate evidence-based policy and decision-making in the Member States. Additionally, it will support Member States implementing DDR programmes to revise and update their national legislations and policies. This will enable the elaboration of national DDR programmes and initiatives or strategies that strengthen national ownership. Furthermore, the Assembly should encourage partners to work with the Commission to support Member States' DDR programmes, including through mobilisation of the requisite technical and financial**

resources. The Assembly may wish to urge Member States undertaking security sector reforms to explore innovative measures and alternative ways to implement domestic resource mobilisation to support SSR programs, consolidate national ownership, and establish effective coordination mechanisms for sustainable and efficient SSR processes. Member States implementing SSR programmes could benefit from utilising the AU Operational Guidance Notes. The Assembly may also request the Commission to strengthen its support to Member States in utilising SSR as a crucial tool for conflict prevention, including by incorporating security sector governance indicators into continental and regional conflict early warning systems. Also, the Assembly may further request the Commission and the international community to prioritise and assist in developing local expertise to ensure that programmes are owned and sustained and to develop a comprehensive strategy for arms control frameworks, landmine clearance, and DDR programs, emphasising empowerment of Member States and sustained collaboration with relevant international bodies such as UNICRI and the IAEA for peaceful applications of weapons of mass destruction.

X. POST CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

211. During the year under review, the African continent has experienced a notable reduction in violent conflicts, reflecting the collective determination and unwavering efforts of the AU in collaboration with its partners. The progress in conflict reduction has underscored the imperative of continued commitment to peace consolidation and post-conflict reconstruction. The complex nature of operating environments, often characterized by multifaceted conflicts, has hindered a systematic and comprehensive implementation of PCRD pillars and interventions. The intricacies of conflict zones necessitate a flexible approach, which can be challenging to implement cohesively.

i. Revision of the AU Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Policy

212. From May 30 to June 1, 2023, the AU convened a second workshop to finalise the comprehensive revision of the PCRD policy, which had begun in 2022. This revision is a critical milestone in fine-tuning strategies for post-conflict recovery across Africa. It empowers the AU to respond more effectively to post-conflict challenges, ensuring a structured approach to peace consolidation. This updated document will further be enhanced by the ongoing development of draft Guidelines on Stabilisation drawing from rich experiences in the Lake Chad Basin and elsewhere on the continent.

ii. Launch of the AU Working Group on PCRD

213. On 26 May 2023, the AU formally launched the AU Working Group on PCRD. This strategic move reflects the AU's dedication to engage in post-conflict scenarios proactively. The working group's primary role is to facilitate coordination and cooperation among stakeholders, ensuring a coherent and holistic approach to post-conflict recovery.

iii. Operationalization of the AU Centre for PCRD

214. In September 2023, the AU Centre for PCRCD became fully operational with the recruitment of its Executive Secretary. This development enhances the AU's capacity to provide expertise and resources for post-conflict reconstruction. The Centre further solidifies the AU's role in post-conflict environments, contributing to long-term peace and stability.

215. The Assembly may wish to endorse the revised Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy, while requesting the Commission to work with the RECs/RMs to implement measures for its effective implementation. Furthermore, the Assembly may congratulate the African Union Champion for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, His Excellency Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for his continued commitment and leadership.

XI. EARLY WARNING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

216. The initiatives undertaken by the Commission in this area show a direct and purposeful connection to the overarching goal of conflict prevention on the continent. In democratic governance, strategic emphasis is placed on enhancing coordination among member states, as facilitated through mechanisms like the African Governance Platform. This collaborative approach aims to build consensus and promote dialogue among diverse stakeholders, mitigating potential sources of conflict that may arise from political volatility and electoral processes. Notably, initiatives like the High-Level Dialogue on Democracy serve as proactive measures to foster discourse, reducing the likelihood of disputes and contributing to the maintenance of stability.

217. Simultaneously, endeavors in democratic and public sector governance can contribute to conflict prevention by advocating novel methodologies and promoting good governance practices. Processes such as election observation and monitoring, technical assistance to member states, and events such as Africa Public Service Day align with Agenda 2063 objectives, emphasizing the importance of effective governance in reducing socio-political tensions. The prioritization of human rights through initiatives like the African Union Business and Human Rights Policy and the Africa Regional Consultation on the Right to Development ensures that fundamental principles are integrated into corporate settings, contributing to a more equitable and just socio-economic landscape. This, in turn, addresses potential sources of social unrest and conflict.

218. Furthermore, the support to member states in transitional justice programs and the initiative for African Women for Transitional Justice reflects a commitment to addressing historical grievances and fostering national cohesion, critical elements in conflict prevention. Within security sector governance, the AU's comprehensive initiatives, including disarmament, small arms control, and post-conflict reconstruction, directly contribute to preventing the emergence or resurgence of conflicts by addressing key factors that fuel violence.

219. Therefore, the analytical coherence of these initiatives not only underscores the AU's dedication to conflict prevention but also emphasizes the need for nuanced, multi-faceted approaches to tackle the continent's complex challenges. By addressing

root causes, promoting dialogue, and establishing frameworks for justice and good governance, the Commission's initiatives actively create conditions that deter the escalation of tensions and contribute to sustained peace and stability across the African continent.

XII. PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

220. **The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia:** The Commission continues to support the implementation of the ATMIS mandate as per the Communique of the 1068th meeting of the AU PSC of March 2022. Significant progress has been made through ongoing offensive operations led by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) jointly with ATMIS, which have led to the recovery of territory previously under Al Shabaab control.

221. The Phase 1 drawdown of 2,000 ATMIS troops experienced a delay. From the initial completion timeline of December 2022, the first phase of the drawdown was only completed on 30 June 2023. The Somalia National Armed Forces (SNAF) assumed responsibility for security from the 2,000 ATMIS force personnel, fulfilling Somalia's responsibilities under phase one of the ongoing ATMIS drawdown. The FGS has also committed to generating and equipping its security forces to take over security responsibility from departing ATMIS forces. It has also trained many Somali National Army (SNA) personnel. To continue degrading and defeating Al Shabaab sustainably, the SNA and ATMIS require critical support, including appropriate firepower, force enablers and multipliers, and adequate logistical support.

222. **The Assembly may wish to commend Troop and Police Contributing Countries for their continued pursuit of peace, security, and stability in Somalia, and commend ATMIS for the effective implementation of its mandate in support of the Federal Government of Somalia. The Assembly may wish to request the AU Commission in collaboration with FGS to undertake a study to evaluate the progress made by the FGS in reforms, force generation and readiness to stabilize the country, as well as needs assessment to determine the support required to accompany the FGS in its aspiration for degrading Al Shabaab and protecting the territorial integrity of the country. The Assembly may wish to encourage Member States and partners to continue their support for ATMIS, and more critically, to assist the Federal Government of Somalia in the post-ATMIS period.**

223. **Conduct of the AMISOM Lessons Learned Exercise:** In response to the AU PSC's decision outlined in paragraph 32 of the PSC Communique [PSC/PR/COMM.1068(2022)] adopted at its 1068th meeting held on 8 March 2022, emphasizing the importance of preserving AMISOM's legacy, the Commission initiated a Lessons-Learned Exercise of the mission, to identify and document good practices that other AU Peace Support Operations can replicate in the implementation of their respective mandates. The report is expected to be submitted in early 2024.

224. **SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM):** In July 2023, the SADC Extra-Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Troika plus, extended the mandate of SAMIM for another 12 months to consolidate the gains achieved since

the deployment of the mission and further enhance stabilization processes and facilitate the return of Internally Displaced Persons to their places of origin.

225. On 17 August 2023 at its 43rd Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of SADC, in Luanda, SADC endorsed a 12-month extension of SAMIM to continue its mandate towards neutralizing the terrorist threat, strengthening and maintaining peace and security, restoring law and order and in facilitating the provision of humanitarian aid to the population affected by terrorist activities particularly women and children. The Summit also endorsed the commencement of a phased drawdown of SAMIM. Subsequently, the SADC Secretariat, Troop and Police Contributing Countries to SAMIM undertook a field assessment in November 2023 to reflect on the mission's activities vis-à-vis the end of the mission's mandate in July 2024.

226. Pursuant to the AUPSC Communique adopted at its 1062nd meeting held on 31 January 2022, the AU continues to provide logistical and financial support to SAMIM. In addition to the equipment that was donated in 2022 from the Continental Logistics Base (CLB) in Doula, Cameroon and funding through the Early Response Mechanism and European Peace Facility, SAMIM received an additional \$7 million worth of equipment from the AU in 2023. The equipment, part of the second batch donated by the People's Republic of China to the AU, was officially handed over to SAMIM at a ceremony held in Pemba, Mozambique, in November 2023. It is noteworthy that even though SAMIM has acknowledged the invaluable role of the equipment received in the success of the mission, challenges remain regarding the lifting of all the equipment from the CLB, with some equipment still at the Base a year after the first batch was air lifted with the support of the Republic of Angola. The Commission has since approached strategic partners like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to assist with the strategic lift. Relatedly, the Commission continued engaging SAMIM to explore areas of support and collaboration further. While significant progress has been made by the mission, a number of challenges still remain with continued insecurity in some areas, and humanitarian needs owing to the terrorist activities and impact of climate change conditions.

227. The Assembly may wish to commend SADC efforts in assisting the Government of the Republic of Mozambique to combat terrorism and violent extremists. The Assembly may also wish to endorse additional support to SAMIM through the Peace Fund under the Crisis Reserve Facility, until the end of its mandate. The Assembly may wish to appeal to AU Member States and international partners to support SAMIM on its operations until the end of its mandate.

228. **Support to the EAC Regional Force in Eastern DRC:** Following the endorsement of the EAC Regional Force in the Eastern DRC by the 36th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, the Commission was requested, inter alia, to develop modalities for support by the AU Peace Fund. A technical meeting between the PAPS and the EAC Secretariat was held from March 28 to 29, 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting defined the type and modalities of support for the EAC Regional Force. To this end, the AU Commission facilitated the disbursement of 1 million USD from the Crisis Reserve Facility of the AU Peace Fund to EAC-RF.

229. Lake Chad Basin Region and the Multinational Joint Task Force against

Boko Haram (MNJTF): The MNJTF, with the support of the AU Commission, continues to conduct effective operations against terrorist groups within its designated Area of Operation. Despite continued attacks via Human and Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) aimed at hampering state authority within the areas, the mission has registered significant progress in degrading the capabilities of the Boko Haram terrorist group, restricting its freedom of action, and denying their access to the civilian population. With the support of the AU Commission, MNJTF has recorded a 25 per cent reduction in the attacks on military targets and about a 28 per cent decrease in the attacks on communities compared to 2022. Of significance, there has been an increase in the number of terrorist fighters that continue to surrender to the national agencies and undergo rehabilitation and reintegration in line with IHL and IHRL standards. To enhance these processes further, there is a need for equal commitment of all Troop and Police Contributing Countries as well as the AU Commission to provide greater support for competent national agencies handling and managing surrendered Boko Haram fighters.

230. Additionally, the AU Commission has supported the Force in successfully conducting two major military operations and diminished the lethal attack capabilities of Boko Haram as well as the effects of the group's IED/VBIED attacks. This has resulted in creating an environment that enables the return and resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the implementation of humanitarian activities among the local communities. While the number of resettled populations continues to rise, most of these communities have received little or no humanitarian assistance, and there is a need for urgent action to enhance the livelihood of these resettled communities. However, the current situation in Niger, especially its suspension from the AU, has affected the operational activities of the Force. Niger also recently announced its withdrawal from the MNJTF. The implications of Niger's withdrawal from the counter-terrorism efforts require a comprehensive analysis by the AU Commission and the LCB Commission.

231. Extensive efforts by stakeholders to implement the AU Supported Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of Boko Haram Affected Communities in the Lake Chad Basin (RS-SRR) has yielded critical inputs supporting the return of IDPs to their ancestral homes. These include the revitalization of economic activities and the provision of basic social services in liberated communities. Although the RSS was originally scheduled to terminate in August 2023 after a five-year run, the Fourth Steering Committee of the RS-SRR, co-chaired by the AU Commission, has approved a one-year extension of the Strategy till August 2024. During this period, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, with the support of the AU Commission and other key stakeholders, is expected to prepare an adjusted draft strategy for consideration and approval by the Steering Committee.

232. **The Assembly may wish to commend the Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission for their unwavering support to the MNJTF, and call on AU Commission and the UN to support the ongoing efforts to reintegrate surrendered fighters and to continue providing support to the resettlement of IDPs in the area. In light of the prevailing challenges, the Assembly may further wish to advocate for and facilitate swift action to enhance the livelihoods of the resettled communities through the continued implementation of the RS-SRR. This should include prioritization and expedition of humanitarian assistance by**

coordinating with relevant international agencies, NGOs, and local governments to ensure a comprehensive and immediate response to the humanitarian needs of the affected populations. The Assembly may further wish to call on the AU Commission to support the LCBC as it considers the adjustment of the RSS for the post-August 2024 period.

233. **Status of Implementation of the AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission (AU-MVCM):** In Northern Tigray, Ethiopia, the AU continues to support the implementation of the Ethiopian peace process, primarily through deploying the AU Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mechanism (AU-MVCM). Since its deployment, the situation in the Tigray region has continued to improve.

Operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF)

234. **Strategic Review of the ASF:** Pursuant to the directive of the 14th meeting of the STCDSS, which requested the AU to work closely with the RECs/RMs and Member States to undertake a comprehensive review of the African Standby Force (ASF), a workshop on the Reconceptualization of the ASF Concept was convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 29 to 31 March 2023, with no definitive conclusions. Consequently, the 15th meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security (STCDSS), which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 9 to 12 May 2023, directed the Commission to conduct a Strategic Review of the ASF and to submit its findings to the 16th meeting of the STCDSS.

235. On 12 May 2023, the Commission convened the 15th STCDSS, which reviewed the progress made in the operationalization of the ASF and adopted key strategic policy and guidance documents, namely, the draft memorandum of understanding between the RECs/RMs on the ASF, as well as three documents under the AU Compliance and Accountability Framework (AUCF), including the draft AU Strategic Framework for Compliance and Accountability in PSOs, and the draft AU Policies on Selection and Screening, and the Protection of Civilians. Adopting these key policy documents will enable further implementation of the AUCF. These strategic documents adopted by the 15th meeting of the STCDSS are hereby submitted to the 37th Ordinary session of the AU Assembly, for consideration and adoption.

236. The Commission finalized the drafting of the Strategic Lift Concept in 2023. The document has been validated and is awaiting submission to the 16th STCDSS. Additionally, the Commission held the meeting of the 15th Training Implementation Workshop, wherein training and capacity building for the ASF/PSOs priorities for the period 2024 – 2026 were identified and will form part of the 2024 – 2026 ASF/PSO Strategic Training Directives.

237. **The Assembly may wish to commend the AU Commission, Member States and the RECs/RMs for continued enhancement of the ASF, specifically in the development of the draft AU Strategic Framework for Compliance and Accountability in PSOs, and the draft AU Policies on Selection and Screening, and the Protection of Civilians.**

238. **The African Union Continental Logistics Base (CLB):** As part of the efforts to enhance Peace Support Operations (PSOs), the CLB in January 2023 facilitated a

shipment totaling Seven Million United States Dollars worth of equipment to Mozambique. Some of equipment was handed over to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as part of the AU's support to the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM). The equipment is part of China's second batch of equipment to the African Union. In August 2023 the MNJTF submitted a request of an additional support from the AU Commission, including equipment from CLB, to support the activities of the Mission in combating Boko Haram. The CLB has also received a request for support with providing APCs and materials to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS). However, the equipment shipment has been delayed due to a lack of funds from the approved annual budget that would support the CLB in facilitating the shipment of equipment from the Base. The CLB also needs more staff capacities to support the Base, especially regarding executing timely shipments to regions in need. There is also the need to encourage RECs/RMs that have not done so, to take steps towards establishing and operationalizing their regional logistics depots.

239. The Assembly may wish to recall the approved structure of the CLB as per Decision EX.CL/Dec.1168(XLI) and reiterate its call to AU Member States to allocate adequate funding for the implementation of the approved structure by 31st December 2024. The Assembly may further wish to request AU Member States to continue providing support to the CLB, by deploying staff at their own cost pending the recruitment of staff as per the approved structure. Furthermore, the Assembly may wish to direct the AU Commission to expedite the development and operationalization of the Regional Logistics Depots (RLDs) in the regions. The Assembly may wish to direct the AU Commission to provide substantial support in the form of equipment from the CLB to the MNJTF and FGS in order to strengthen the operational capacity of the MNJTF and FGS. The Assembly may further wish to commend Leaders from West African region for the progress being made towards the completion of the ECOWAS logistic Depot in Lungi, Sierra Leone and in that regard, request the AU Commission to provide support to RECs/RMs that have made requests particularly ECOWAS with access to equipment in the CLB to enable them to effectively address security challenges in their regions.

240. AU Compliance and Accountability Framework: Since the endorsement of the 'Report on Predictable and Sustainable Financing for Peace in Africa' by AU Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.605(XXVII) of July 2016, the Commission has taken steps to enhance the AU Human Rights Compliance and Accountability Framework (AUCF), by putting in place appropriate policies and mechanisms to enhance efforts to prevent, monitor and respond to allegations of violations of IHRL, IHL, PoC and AU standards of conduct and discipline. As part of efforts to continuously strengthen the AUCF, the Commission has finalized and adopted three strategic documents, as elaborated above, to be adopted by the Assembly of HOSG in February 2024. Additionally, the Commission has engaged broadly with PSOs, RECs/RMs, Training Centres of Excellence (TCEs), Military Attaches as well as AU Human Rights Organs, to ensure the mainstreaming of compliance and accountability into AUPSOs. Some of these engagements include the conduct of Technical Working Sessions with senior leadership of military and police training academies of SADC, EAC and ECOWAS Member States, including their respective TCEs and Institutions (TIs). The objective was to advocate for a joint approach in compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and

Conduct and Discipline - as part of the implementation of the AU Strategic Framework on Compliance and Accountability in PSOs. A comprehensive roadmap for collaboration and partnership was drafted and agreed upon for the effective implementation of the AUCF.

241. Relatedly, several Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions were conducted on the AU Compliance Curriculum to equip trainers with the requisite knowledge of the AUCF. As an outcome of these engagements, a comprehensive roadmap for collaboration and partnership was drafted and agreed upon to implement the AUCF effectively. Furthermore, the Commission also organized a joint experience-sharing engagement in collaboration with the ICRC and support from the UN and EU to assess the compliance and accountability status of existing PSOs and provide strategic guidance and support to the missions in strengthening their frameworks. Similarly, the Commission undertook a comprehensive review of the ATMIS Rules of Engagement and the Directives on the Use of Force, which have been approved and have since been dispatched to the mission for implementation. AUC-wide consultations were also convened to revitalize the AU Compliance Architecture to ensure comprehensive implementation of the AUCF. The meeting agreed on standardized Terms of Reference, including membership and the roles and responsibilities of the different offices within the Commission. Additionally, the Commission is currently working on the establishment of a comprehensive case management system to streamline accountability measures with respect to PSOs on issues relating to violation of IHL, IHRL and other acts amounting to misconduct under the relevant AU rules and regulations and to this end has developed a draft case management guideline which is being finalized.

242. **AMANI AFRICA III ASF Continental Maritime Exercise:** The planning for the conduct of a continental maritime exercise is underway. It aims to test the regional maritime task forces and their cross-regional coordination and interoperability in addressing maritime security threats on the continent. The continental maritime exercise will seek to cover four (4) regional maritime bodies, namely, the Gulf of Guinea Region (for ECOWAS and ECCAS under the Yaounde Maritime Architecture), EASF, SADC, and NARC. As part of the planning processes, the Commission engaged with the Republic of Nigeria to understand the capabilities required and the level of involvement expected of participating Member States. Subsequently, the Commission visited the four (4) regions to discuss the exercise plan, and consolidate the inputs of RECs/RMs to guarantee a successful exercise.

243. The Commission has also briefed the African Defense Advisors Forum (ADAF), Military Staff Committee (MSC) and the Chiefs of Navies and Coast Guards of the Gulf of Guinea during their virtual meeting on the establishment of their combined Maritime Taskforce on 18 April 2023. As guided by the 15th Ordinary meeting of the STCDSS held in May 2023, this exercise shall follow the ASF Exercise Planning Guidelines, including holding an Initial Planning Conference (IPC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The planning of the exercise has, however, faced two key challenges: funding for the IPC and the follow-on activities and the slow pace of feedback from the RECs/RMs on the nominations needed for the exercise processes.

244. **The AU Assembly may wish to call on all Member States and RECs/RMs (including the respective maritime architectures and taskforces) to support the exercise for its successful conduct and completion before the end of 2024.**

245. **Verification of the North African Regional Capability (NARC):** Following a request by NARC and the subsequent decision by the STCDSS, a verification exercise was undertaken to NARC to ascertain the operational readiness of NARC to deploy under the ASF. NARC was the only regional mechanism that had not declared Full Operational Capability due to some considerations in developing the regional capabilities. The verification exercise was undertaken to the NARC Planning Element and one selected country to assess the pledged capabilities and the regional logistics bases. An assessment visit was also undertaken to the logistics base in Algeria. A report has been submitted to the STCDSS, and the recommendations on the operational readiness of NARC will subsequently be considered by the 16th STCDSS in May 2024.

XIII. CROSS-CUTTING THEMATIC ISSUES

i. Gender, Peace and Security

246. The Commission continued to enhance its actions to integrate gender and advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda at the continental level. A comprehensive approach based on the four pillars of prevention, protection, participation, relief and recovery for the full and effective implementation of gender equality and the WPS agenda, taking into consideration the unique contexts of countries in armed conflict or those emerging from it, was adopted.

247. The Commission supported the commissioning of the new Headquarters of the African First Ladies Peace Mission (AFLPM) in Abuja, Nigeria, as a key step toward promoting the Peace Mission's organizational efficiency and sustainability under the auspices of the then First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E. Aisha Muhammadu BUHARI, then President of AFLPM. Furthermore, an MoU between AFLPM and AU was signed. The Commission has initiated consultations with the new President of the AFLPM, the First Lady of Burundi, H.E. Angeline Ndayishimiye, on the partnership.

248. In collaboration with UN Women, Women International Peace Center, and the Femwise-Sudan Desk, the Commission established a Women Technical Working Group on Sudan. Several virtual meetings of the working group have been organised, leading to the development of a project proposal titled "Strategic Engagement to Promote Women's Meaningful Participation in Political Dialogue and Peace Efforts for Sudan" to raise funds through the United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, Rapid Response Window on Women's Participation in Peace Processes and the Implementation of Peace Agreements. The project seeks to support eight women-led Sudanese peace coalitions, representing around 80 different and diverse groups, coalitions and networks of Sudanese women from different parts of Sudan, including young women. These coalitions also have a representation of people living with disability. This group of women briefed the AU-PSC on 17 November during the open session on Women, Peace and Security on the impact of the current situation in Sudan

on women and called on the members of the PSC to adopt initiatives to end the war immediately.

249. In accordance with the PSC meeting of 4 December 2013 (PSC/PR/BR/CDVII), which stressed the need to develop an African capacity, the Commission has embarked on the development of a set of training tools, including a training package on gender mainstreaming in the Security Sector and an operational guidance note on gender mainstreaming in Early Warning Mechanisms. These training tools aim to develop the knowledge of a critical mass of actors in the security sector environment to facilitate the implementation of international and regional commitments for gender equality.

250. In furtherance of the Communiqué of the 987th meeting of the PSC, the Gender Peace and Security programme within PAPS, in partnership with the Office of the Special Envoy on WPS, established a platform for Member States and RECs/RMs to share experiences and best practices in promoting gender equality and the WPS agenda. The aim is to address the complexities associated with implementing the WPS agenda and foster collaboration between the AU, RECs, and Member States to strengthen cooperation towards expediting the fulfilment of Africa's commitments to the WPS.

251. The Assembly may wish to commend Member States for the progress made in mainstreaming the Gender, Women, Peace and Security Agenda in their national activities and for the AU Commission for its continued support in championing the WPS agenda in all activities of the Union. The Assembly may wish also to encourage Member States to ensure allocation of sufficient resources on WPS and commend partners to continue supporting the AU in mainstream WPS in the activities of the Union. The Assembly may wish to stress the imperative for the protection of women, youth and children and vulnerable groups in situations of conflict and crisis, including against sexual and gender-based violence and request the AU Commission to provide support to the countries concerned to develop and implement rehabilitation programmes for women and girls affected by conflict, in particular sexual abuse.

ii. Youth, Peace and Security

252. The AU has demonstrated its commitment to youth involvement in peacebuilding efforts through the operationalization of the WiseYouth Network, initiated during a technical consultative meeting in Burundi from 31 August to 01 September 2023. This meeting established the Network's operational modalities, terms of reference, and membership criteria, followed by a call for nominations from regional bodies. To demonstrate the importance that accorded to youth living with disabilities, H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi and the AU Champion for Youth, Peace and Security, engaged with youth with disabilities in August 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

253. Complementing these efforts, the AU commemorated Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) Month in November 2023. The PSC's annual open session on YPS was a crucial platform for evaluating the implementation of the YPS agenda across Africa and making critical decisions, including the appointment of the African Youth

Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs). As the 2nd Cohort of AYAPs, appointed in February 2022, approaches the end of its term in February 2024, the AU Commission launched a call for applications for the 3rd Cohort, resulting in over 2000 applicants. Following the outcome of the selection committee, the following African Youth Ambassadors have been selected from the five Regions of the AU:

- a) Central African Region: Mr. Julien Vikemba from Democratic Republic of Congo
- b) Eastern African region Ms. Nakabira Nashiba from the Republic of Uganda
- c) Northern African region: Mr. Arif Abdjalil Moussa from Algeria
- d) Southern African Region: Ms. Mpule Kgetsi from the Republic of Botswana
- e) Western African Region: Ms. Simone Mbode Diouf from the Republic of Senegal

254. In parallel, the Bujumbura Consultative Meeting outcomes indicated that the WiseYouth Network will consist of twenty-six youth representatives from the RECs/RMs, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), and the AYAPs, all committed to mediation, dialogue, and peace initiatives.

255. Further highlighting its focus on youth participation, the Government of Burundi and the AU Commission organized the Second Youth, Peace, and Security Continental Dialogue in Bujumbura, Burundi, from 14 to 17 December 2023, under the leadership of H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of Burundi and AU Champion of Youth, Peace and Security. This event, aligning with UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), addressed challenges such as unemployment and risky migration. The dialogues included panel discussions, a youth product exhibition fair, and virtual and in-person activities, like the 2nd Edition of the Continental Dialogue on Youth, Peace, and Security, the ICGLR Youth Forum, and the Innovation Week Competition. These engagements enabled interaction between African and global youth leaders, facilitated assessment of the Youth, Peace, and Security Program, and built networks. Key objectives included supporting the "Silencing the Guns in Africa" initiative, promoting inclusive financing, and encouraging political dialogue. The outcomes included a deeper understanding of the AU's Continental Framework on Youth, reinforced political commitment, development of a youth mentoring platform, showcasing youth innovations, and adopting resolutions for youth empowerment.

256. In light of the above, the Assembly may wish to commend H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of Burundi and AU Champion for Youth, Peace and Security for his tireless efforts in the promotion of youth agenda and for successful organization of the 2nd Continental Youth Dialogue in Bujumbura. The Assembly may also wish to commend the 2nd cohort of the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace for their relentless efforts in championing peace, security and governance efforts in their respective regions during their tenure and thank them for their service and congratulate the new AYAPs of the 3rd cohort for their appointment, and urge them to deploy the efforts to involve youth in their respective regions to promote peace, security and stability in the Continent. The Assembly may wish to call on Member States to continue to implement the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security, including

through the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) on YPS, for those who are yet to do so. The Assembly may also wish to encourage Member States to further promote the political participation of youth and to promote the role of youth through concrete continental actions by leveraging specialized agencies and organs in youth matters such as the Pan-African Youth Union. The Assembly may wish to encourage Member States to invest in the youth in terms of research capacity building, mentorship and development initiatives that empower young people to actively carry out their roles in advancing peace, security and stability at local, regional and continental levels, as well as putting in place policy frameworks providing for financial inclusion to encourage youth empowerment in entrepreneurship.

iii. Protection of Children in Situations of Conflict

257. Children in situations of conflict on the Continent continue to be killed, separated from their families, abducted, trafficked, sexually assaulted, maimed and recruited into armed forces and groups. They are also less likely to be in schools or to be able to meet their basic needs for health care, clean water and sanitation. Further, they continue to be vulnerable to death from disease and malnutrition. In many cases, despite the pervasive harm and shame children experience in war, the opportunity for redress to receive the necessary assistance and support for reparation and justice remains slim or non-existent for many children.

258. To respond to this plight, the Commission supported the adoption of two major child protection policies namely, Policy on Integration of Child Protection into African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and another on Mainstreaming Child Protection in African Union Peace Support Operations (AU PSOs). In 2023, the Commission focused on the implementation of the policies through dissemination to relevant stakeholders including the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflict and RECs/RMs. A key outcome of the consultative sessions was an agreed action plan for all RECs/RMs to develop child protection architecture within their peace and security efforts to respond to the plights of children in situations of conflict.

259. In 2023, the AP CAAC undertook a lesson learning mission to Sierra Leone to learn about the reforms that were implemented across all sectors to mainstream reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for children affected by the conflict in the country. The report has been developed on the best practices adopted by Sierra Leone to address situation of children affected by armed conflict to be shared to countries experiencing conflicts for lessons learnt.

260. The Commission supported the AU PSC to organize a High level/ Ministerial Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa. The High-Level engagement provided an opportunity for PSC Members, AU Member States in conflict situations, the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (AP CAAC), the RECs/RMs, and other relevant stakeholders, to brainstorm on the modalities of establishing a comprehensive AU Child Protection Architecture (CPA) as a platform to streamline existing frameworks for protecting the rights of children in conflict situations. It also provided an opportunity to identify areas of support that AU can lend to RECs/RMs and Member States in the establishment of their own CPAs. The meeting resolved to prevent the violations of

children in conflict situations and advance accountability for violations. To ensure the sustainability of consultations, the meeting agreed to institutionalize the Banjul Process as an annual event to be held on a rotational basis.

261. The Assembly may wish to commend the efforts of the Commission to establish a child protection architecture as an element of the African Peace and Security Architecture at the Continental level, and the technical support it continues to provide towards this goal. The Assembly may also wish to reiterate its call to the Chairperson of the Commission to appoint a Special Envoy for CAAC to advocate for the protection of children affected by armed conflict and to promote AU policy in this regard.

iv. Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes

262. In light of the growing threat of terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organised crime in various parts of the continent, the Commission took practical steps to revitalise the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes, security mechanisms that were established to address the security threats in the Sahelo-Sahara and East Africa/ Horn of Africa regions respectively, through the promotion of intelligence sharing and shared policy interventions on common threats. To this end, the Commission, in collaboration with the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, convened a technical-level meeting of intelligence services in Nouakchott, Mauritania from 5 to 7 November 2023. Participant countries included Algeria, Benin, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan and Tanzania. Related institutions and mechanisms that participated in the meeting included the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Accra Initiative; the Abuja Fusion Centre; the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS); the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), and the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL) of the Sahel countries.

263. The need for enhanced cooperation and coordination between the two Processes and the RECs/RMs was underscored in order to promote effective coordination for conflict prevention, management and resolution, and called on the Commission to develop their modalities. They agreed to conduct regular meetings at various levels at least once a year bringing together the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes, and the Accra Initiative, convened by the African Union Commission as the overall coordinator of these Processes.

264. The Assembly may wish to commend the Commission in partnership with CISSA for revitalizing the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes in the light of the growing threat of terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organized crime. The Assembly may also wish to request the Commission to ensure that these processes meet regularly, at least once a year, to share information and cooperate on joint action that can be leveraged to optimize our response to security threats in these two regions.

v. Silencing the Guns (STG) Initiative

265. To speed up the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns by 2030, in January 2023 the Chairperson of the Commission appointed H.E. Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas as the High Representative for Silencing the Guns, tasked with galvanizing support to end violence and promote sustainable peace on the continent.

266. In fulfilment of his mandate, the High Representative engaged with stakeholders in various Member States and partner countries towards peace in the continent. In N'djamena, Chad the High representative consulted with H.E. Mahamat Idriss Deby, the Transitional President of the Republic of Chad, on AU's response to the war in neighbouring Republic of Sudan, and on the need to strengthen the search for a common regional approach to the deepening crisis in Sudan.

267. With regard to the unconstitutional change of government in Niger, the Chairperson of the Commission dispatched the High Representative for Silencing the Guns, to join the ECOWAS delegation that had planned to visit Niamey on 9 August 2023. However, for various reasons, the visit to Niamey by the ECOWAS delegation did not take place due to non-approval by the Nigerien authorities.

268. The Commission, through the Silencing the Guns program, continued to support Member States in the commemoration of Africa Amnesty Month (AAM). This year, the AAM was commemorated in Maputo, Mozambique from 11 to 12 September 2023 under the theme "Disarmament as a key opportunity for silencing the Guns," in recognition of Mozambique's efforts to silence the guns in Africa through the 2019 peace and reconciliation agreement and the successful completion of the DDR process in June 2023. The commemoration witnessed an open event of the PSC with the participation of the Government of Mozambique, the High Representative for Silencing the Guns, SADC, the United Nations, the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) and other relevant stakeholders in Mozambique, including civil society organizations, youth and women, media, private sector and faith-based organizations.

269. As part of enhancing the participation and involvement of CSOs in the Silencing the Guns Initiative, a five-day virtual training for African Artists from across the five regions of Africa was organized by the Commission from 18 to 22 September 2023, under the theme, "Leveraging the Arts for Peace", in recognition of the power and influence that the artists hold when engaging the masses, and the influential role that they play in the peace and governance processes at national, regional and continental levels. The training, which brought together twenty-five (25) young artists from across the continent, helped deepen the artists' understanding of how to contribute to a cohesive society through conflict prevention, conflict resolution and reconciliation. Held during the commemoration of Africa Amnesty Month, the training sought the artists' support to encourage, through their art, African citizenry in possession of illicit firearms to voluntarily surrender them to designated authorities.

270. A High-level Engagement Plan for sub-regional organizations to enhance domestication of the Master Roadmap at the regional and Member States levels was established, culminating in a meeting with the leadership of ECOWAS in Abuja, Nigeria, on 10 May 2023, where the High Officials explored collaborative ways of realizing the goal of silencing the guns in Africa.

271. In consideration of the prevailing security situation in the continent, the Assembly may wish to call on Member States and RECs/RMs to renew their political will and provide strategic direction for the Silencing the Guns initiative as the continent approaches the 2030 deadline. National and regional domestication of the AU Master Roadmap on STG is key in this regard. The Assembly may wish to call on Member States, RECs/RMs and other stakeholders to provide comprehensive reports on their actions to silence the guns to the AUPSC and Commission in order to generate knowledge and document initiatives on Silencing the Guns across the continent.

vi. AU Border Programme

272. Through the AU Border Programme (AUBP), the Commission continued its support to Member States in the areas of delimitation/demarcation/reaffirmation of inter-state boundaries, the promotion of cross-border cooperation, and strengthening the capacities of border stakeholders. In this regard, the AUBP, in collaboration with the EAC, facilitated the organization of a confidence-building peace caravan from 28 June to 07 July 2023. The Caravan sought to foster peaceful coexistence, strengthen neighbourly relations, and promote the amicable resolution of disputes among communities in Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda. In addition, the Programme completed its second and third regional studies- Inter-state Boundary and Territorial Disputes in Southern Africa and Border and Territorial Disputes in the ECCAS Region. Each study sought to understand the status of border and territorial disputes underway in the regions and to shed light on actions for preventing, managing, and resolving disputes by the Commission and the relevant AU organs.

273. In commemorating African Border Day (ABD) on 7 June, the AUBP, in collaboration with Malawi and Zambia, marked the 13th African Border Day in Chipata, Zambia, from 19 to 20 July 2023. The day was celebrated under the AU theme of the year, “Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)”, and attended by representatives from the African Union, Zambia, Malawi, and other affiliated organizations. The 13th celebration illustrated the crucial role of cross-border cooperation in successfully implementing the AfCFTA. A notable highlight of the celebration was the visit to the Mwami One Stop Border Post (OSBP), where participants could explore the challenges and benefits of such a facility. The need to adopt inclusive strategies to heighten public awareness on the benefits of cross border cooperation, workshops, media campaigns, and educational programs was emphasized. These insights serve as a blueprint for bolstering the impact of the AUBP’s African subsequent endeavors.

274. The Commission organized a Strategic Review Workshop on the AUBP from 25 to 27 October 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The workshop served as a platform through which experts assessed the impact of the Programme and re-conceptualized the Programme in terms of structure, strategic orientations, practices, and representation. The workshop defined the strategic orientation for the AUBP as a tool for conflict management, regional cooperation, and integration to strengthen border governance.

275. **The Assembly may wish to commend Member States that have signed and ratified the African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention) and encourage those Member States who have not yet done so to do the same. The Assembly may also encourage Member States, with the technical support of the Commission, to develop cross-border cooperation programs and facilitate the free movement of persons, goods and services under the AU Strategy on Better Integrated Border Governance.**

vii. Terrorism and Violent Extremism

276. Terrorism and Violent Extremism were among the primary threats to peace, security, national stability, national cohesion, territorial integrity, and development on the continent during 2023. The phenomenon has, however, developed into a complex mix of ideology-driven acts of violence, due to the cooperation and growing linkages between terrorists, insurgence, and other criminal groups, linked to transnational organized crimes. This is manifested in the multiplicity of terrorist and violent extremist groups with varying motives and trajectories that are spreading and unleashing violence across the continent. The threats continue to mutate with new variants of inter-communal massacres, violent conflicts and a gradual but persistent expansion into new territories by global Al-Qaida and Islamic State (Da'esh)-aligned Terrorist and Violent Extremist groups who now have a presence in all regions of the continent, including West African Coastal countries. This expansion and control of a large swathe of territory allows terrorists and violent extremism groups to run their criminal economies in the areas under their control in conjunction with transnational organized criminal networks. Often, the local population benefit from these criminal economies.

277. Across the continent, Member States and regional bodies have continued to review and adopt a series of counter-terrorism measures, including field deployments to deal with the threats of violent extremism and terrorism, which have contributed to degrading the capacities of terrorist groups to a greater extent. Through the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the Commission continues to support the capacities of Member States to respond to the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism. These include the development and reviewing of national counter-terrorism strategies and plans of action, as well as the enhancement of Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) capacities, the development and delivery of tailored CT training programs, and the enhancement of CT Information exchange and Analysis through its Continental Counter-Terrorism Early Warning System (CT-EWS), including the publication of periodic analytical reports on the terrorism situation in Africa and various policy briefs during the reporting period. In addition, the ACSRT strengthened its partnerships and collaboration with various partners, including the UNODC, UNICRI, and the UNOCT, with whom it is developing Compendiums of Best Practices, European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL). In 2023, amidst logistical and financial constraints, the ACSRT, with the support of partners, undertook some capacity-building activities, which benefitted more than 1,000 African CT and PCVE experts, most of whom are Law Enforcement Officers, Military, Government Policy decision-makers, Judicial Officers and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). It is important to commend Namibia and Angola for directly financing National capacity-building activities delivered by the ACSRT.

278. **The Assembly may wish to encourage Member States and partners to continue supporting the programmatic activities of the ACSRT and the AU in mobilizing funding in order to respond to the increased requests by Member States and RECs/RMs for assistance in Capacity building; The Assembly may wish to request the Commission to accelerate the change of name of the ACSRT to the African Union Counter Terrorism Centre (AUCTC), and the review of its status and structure, following the due process, in order to improve synergies, within the framework of institutional reforms, and report back to the Assembly. The Assembly may wish to welcome hosting the Summit on Counter-Terrorism in April 2024, Abuja, Nigeria, in line with the Malabo Declaration and Decision on Terrorism and Violent Extremism of May 2022.**

viii. Climate Change, Peace and Security Nexus

279. The Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security unveiled the African Climate Security Risk Assessment (ACRA) Report at COP 28 in Dubai on December 8, 2023. The Side Event was held by DPAPS in collaboration with the AU Department for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE), Adelphi think tank, and the Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding (CCCPA).

280. This was the first time the PSC participated in a side-event of a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP). The Chair and members of the PSC from the Gambia, Congo Brazzaville, Djibouti, and Zimbabwe graced the occasion, along with a representative of the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), representatives of some AU Member States, RECs, the UN, partners and members of CSOS.

281. The ACRA report highlights the nexus between climate change, peace, and security in Africa, in which climate change impacts, through floods, drought, storms and other climate stressors or hazards, undermine human security and exacerbate conflicts. It conceptualised climate change impacts through the lens of peace and security, emphasizing linkages and emerging pathways that heighten vulnerabilities. These were reflected in an African regional climate security profile, clearly demonstrating forced displacement, mobility, migration, fertile grounds for activities of armed groups, and the exacerbation of conflicts in the five regions of the continent. These have brought about food, water, energy and health risks with dire consequences on livelihoods.

282. Key findings of the study included the shrinking of the Lake Chad basin, continent-wide water security risks, and the Sahel-Sudanian bio-climatic zone increased agro-pastoralist conflicts. Also worth noting are the intensified activities of armed and terrorist groups in climate change-affected areas, and submerging coastlines of African Island States.

283. Misunderstanding and lack of in-depth knowledge about the climate, peace and security nexus, in addition to the weak interface between early warning and early action climate-security mechanisms, have undermined climate-security responses. This is also compounded by the siloed approach to or lack of integrated responses to the problem, particularly in post-conflict reconstruction and development or peacebuilding contexts, and the climate finance dilemma. The exclusion of indigenous

climate-security institutions in adaptation, resilience and mitigation efforts has not helped in the climate action, while seeking African solutions to the problem.

284. The recent Declaration on Relief, Recovery and Peace at the COP 28, by state and non-state actors, remain instructive in bringing to the fore the urgent attention to the climate, peace and security dynamics, requiring integrated, catalytic responses in affected-communities, with a focus on vulnerable groups.

285. The ACRA Report served as the basis for drafting the AUC Chairperson's Report on the Study of the Nexus between Climate Change, Peace, and Security. These reports, along with the 15 Key Messages on the Common African Position (CAP) on Climate Change, Peace, and Security, will inform the development of the CAP on the nexus. DPAPS, in collaboration with the ARBE and partners, will develop the CAP for consideration and possible adoption by the June/July 2024 AU Summit, and for presentation at COP 29. The CAP seeks to provide a unified stance on climate security for AGN negotiations, supported by the recently adopted Declaration on Relief, Recovery, and Peace at COP 28. This will also further guide the development of a climate, peace and security strategy to mainstream climate change and adaptation to promote peace in Africa.

286. Prominent among regional cooperation programmes on the nexus between climate change, peace and security is the "International Ministerial Conference on Transhumance on the nexus: transhumance, protected areas and natural resources, development, peace and security" that brings together Ministers for Defense, Ministers for Forests and Protected Areas and Ministers for the Environment and Livestock of about ten countries, as well as representatives of some sub-regional and regional institutions. It is expected that the Final Communiqué of the second edition of the "International Ministerial Conference on Transhumance on the nexus: transhumance, protected areas and natural resources, development, peace and security", which took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 10-12 July 2023, under the patronage of H.E. Paul BIYA, President of the Republic of Cameroon, would deepen understanding on how climate change is influencing transhumance challenges and threatening peace and security as well as cross-border cooperation in different parts of Africa, particularly in the Lake Chad basin Countries, the DRC, the CAR, Sudan, South Sudan etc.

287. The Assembly may wish to commend the AU Commission efforts in undertaking the African Climate Security Risk Assessment (ACRA) Study, and coming up with the ACRA Report which was presented at COP 28 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Dubai in December 2023, and request the Commission to expedite the finalization of the draft Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the Study on the Nexus between Climate Change, Peace and Security, taking into consideration the contributions from all AU Member States and RECs/RMs, to deepen the understanding of the nexus, and to be submitted to the PSC for further consideration. The Assembly may further wish to commend the successful organization, in Yaoundé, Cameroon, of the second edition of the "International Ministerial Conference on Transhumance on the nexus: transhumance, protected areas and natural resources, development, peace and security" from 10-12 July 2023, under the patronage of H.E. Paul BIYA, President of the Republic of Cameroon, and welcome the adoption of the

“Yaoundé Final Communiqué” that outlined a range of commitments that should serve as roadmap for addressing the influence of climate change in transhumance activities and in peace and security in Africa, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin Region and in the Congo Basin Forest. The AU Assembly may also wish to encourage the “International Ministerial Conference on Cross-border Transhumance” to carry on with the efficient implementation of the roadmap as well as urge sub-regional institutions and relevant partners to continue providing requisite multifaceted support required to achieve the contents of the “Yaoundé Final Communiqué”.

ix. The African Union Inter-Regional Economic Communities Knowledge Exchange (I-RECKE) on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention

288. I-RECKE held its inaugural policy session in March 2023 centred on “Silencing the Guns: The Conceptual, Strategic and Operational Issues.” The inaugural policy session resolved that I-RECKE would serve as a policy-to-practice-knowledge tool and coordination mechanism to re-energize early warning systems, preventive diplomacy and peace-making efforts. It emphasized the importance of strengthening the collaboration of continental, regional and national mechanisms engaged in combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. This also includes engagements with border authorities to counter cross-border trafficking of arms.

289. Following the inaugural policy session, the I-RECKE platform in July 2023 on the sidelines of the Mid-Year Coordination meeting, held its Second Policy Session with the theme “*Cross Regional Strategies in Preventing Terrorism and Violent Extremism*” where country-specific success stories (Algeria and Egypt) and regional multi-country approaches (such as in the Lake Chad Basin) as well as initiatives of regional organizations (such as the SADC Mission in Mozambique) in countering terrorism were effectively discussed. Key lessons highlighted during the session included the following:

- i. A robust multidimensional and comprehensive response works effectively, when such strategy is based on a durable strategic combination of well-defined legal framework; kinetic solutions and the whole of society approach;
- ii. Adequate Research and Analysis at the level of Political Leaders Informed by Prompt and Real-Time Intelligence Sharing is Efficient In Defeating Terrorists;
- iii. A Fundamental Way to Counter Terrorism Effectively is to Block the Sources of Financing by Terrorist Groups. Thus, IRECKE proposes the strengthening of internal and external financial systems in combating illicit financing of terrorism and violent extremism;
- iv. The cross-regional and globalizing nature and scope of terrorism demands the necessity of effective coordination between continental and regional peace operations, and the building of integrated and requisite anti-terrorism offensive capabilities. It is critical for rapid and successful deployment of peace enforcement missions.
- v. Any deployment of Counterterrorism Missions beyond 30 days is not a good practice and therefore not effective. This is a forward-looking lesson for the future operationalization and deployment of the African Standby Force;
- vi. No Member State is spared from the scourge of terrorism. All the 5 regions are currently experiencing the specter of terrorism. Thus, no member state, no

- region can combat violent extremism alone. This calls for an effective collective security and seamless collaboration among all stakeholders;
- vii. RECs & RMs under IRECKE showcased the good results usually associated with the adoption and implementation of counter terrorism legal and policy frameworks at country-level, premised on key thematic of prevention, protection, stabilization, and psychosocial support to victims to build resilient communities as well as the promotion of religious tolerance & addressing the hate perverted ideology of hate that violent extremism and radicalization fuels;
 - viii. Critical collaboration and coordination between continental, regional and national actors to implement counter terrorism strategies is vital in holistically addressing the scourge of violent extremism;
 - ix. That the value-driven Global Partnership be forged to Counter Terrorism with restructured focus on enhancing Africa's offensive capabilities;
 - x. That silencing the Guns, including the combat of terrorism, must take into account addressing the global threat posed by climate change which is a threat multiplier. Climate security is imperative to peace and stability.

290. The Assembly may wish to commend the I-RECKE platform for its work and urge it to continue to facilitate cross-regional learning on conflict prevention and resilience building as part of efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns.

x. Launch and operations of the Africa Facility to Support Inclusive Transitions (AFSIT)

291. The AU Commission, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-established the Africa Facility to Support Inclusive Transition (AFSIT). The AFSIT was launched on 15 July 2023 at the margins of the AU Mid-year Coordination Meeting in Nairobi. The Facility responds to complex political transitions, broadly defined, with an initial focus on preventing and responding effectively to military coups.

292. The key objective of AFSIT is to strengthen governance and uphold development gains during complex political transitions. Leveraging the regional leadership of the AU and the RECs/RMs as well as the country presence of UNDP as a premier development agency of the United Nations system, AFSIT supports countries in political transitions.

293. Effective support for complex political transition equates to protecting development. AFSIT represents an opportunity to uphold and safeguard development as a primary objective during transitions. This requires a clear recognition of the need to prioritize the restoration, and strengthening, of accountable and responsive governance as a key component of the transition agenda.

294. AFSIT is positioned as a continental tool to support the implementation of comprehensive governance reform in critical areas such as constitutional review, justice sector reform, support to electoral processes, and the overall quest for rebuilding vertical and horizontal trust between the state and citizens and amongst communities. AFSIT also seeks to advance women and youth participation in transition processes, primarily by increasing the quantity and quality of women and youth participation in dialogue and political decision-making processes.

295. AFSIT has benefitted from extensive collaboration with AU Policy Organs including stakeholders in the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Most notably, AFSIT has consistently engaged with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), and the AU Peace and Security Council.

296. The Accra Declaration of March 2022 on Unconstitutional Changes of Government endorsed by the 16th AU Extraordinary Assembly of Heads of State and Government on Terrorism and UCG in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in May 2022, duly acknowledged the important contribution to be made by the AFSIT. AFSIT as a joint AU/UNDP tool responds to the evolving findings of the assessment of the comprehensive and objective analysis of the structural root causes of UCG i.e. the AGR report and the UNDP's Soldiers and Citizens report which examined the resurgence of coups.

297. The momentum on AFSIT implementation has been commendable. The pilot phase kicked off with a joint UNDP-AUC mission to Mali from 6 to 15 November 2023. The mission consulted with several Malian authorities, including ministries of foreign affairs, territorial administration, women and family affairs, youth and culture, health and national solidarity, and state reforms, as well as the transitional national council, the AU (MISAHEL) and ECOWAS missions and several UN agencies in the country as well as a consortium of civil society organisations. The mission identified entry points for supporting the transitional process in Mali towards the restoration of constitutional order especially through the focus on women and youth in the transition process. Burkina Fasso will also be supported in the pilot phase.

298. Both AU and UNDP are mobilizing support from African stakeholders and partners for the Facility to robustly serve as an effective tool in promoting the restoration of democratic order in the continent.

xi. African Union Network of Think Tanks for Peace (NeTT4Peace)

299. On 8 February 2023, the AU Network of Think Tanks for Peace (NeTT4Peace) was launched in Addis Ababa. This Network of Think Tanks for Peace initiative intends to drive the much-needed strategic partnership between African Knowledge Communities (focusing on governance, peace and security) and the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (DPAPS). Together with the I-RECKE platform, both initiatives are designed to address one of the priorities of promoting a knowledge approach to AU action and bridging the gap between research, policy, and practice.

300. One of the key outcomes during 2023 was a collaborative initiative between DPAPS and NeTT4Peace, in drafting and reviewing the AU's contribution in the form of an Advisory Note on the key priority areas for the UN Secretary General's New Agenda for Peace (NA4P). This contribution demonstrates the AU's vision for multilateral actions towards peace and security for a world in transition.

301. The Commission and the NeTT4Peace jointly held a webinar under the theme: "African Perspectives on the New Agenda for Peace", on 3 August 2023, to provide insights and inputs on the recommendations featured in the Policy Brief and ensure

that the NeTT4Peace is fully aligned with the implementation of key AU strategies and programmes, including most notably Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want and the Silencing the Guns.

302. The Assembly may commend Nett4Peace and the AU Commission for their efforts and encourage them to continue to provide a structured and focused interface between AU DPAPS and African think tanks in support of evidence-based decision-making and collaborative efforts needed to achieve African solutions to African problems in the peace, security and governance domains.

xii. Operationalization of the Peace Fund and Financing AU Peace and Security Activities

303. Pursuant to the Assembly Decision, Assembly/AU/Dec.2(XXXVI) of February 2023 approving the immediate use of the AU Peace Fund and its Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF), the Commission under the auspices of the Chairperson commenced operationalization of the Peace Fund with the utilization of the CRF.

304. In this regard, the Commission through the Department of PAPS, collaborated closely with the relevant organs and statutory bodies of the Union particularly the Assembly, Executive Council, PSC, PRC, and the Peace Fund Executive Management Committee (EMC) and the Board of Trustees (BoT) to operationalize the Fund in 2023. Thus, the Commission secured approval of USD 7 million as CRF level for the 2023 financial year, which the Commission disbursed as follows:

- a) USD 2 Million to support the East African Community (EAC) Regional Force deployed to Eastern DRC for stabilization operations. This disbursement was effected through the signing of a Grant Agreement between the AU Commission and the EAC Secretariat in June 2023 in Luanda, Angola on the sidelines of the Quadripartite Summit on Eastern DRC. Thus, EAC became the first REC/RM beneficiary of the AU Peace Fund.
- b) USD 3.5 Million as AU support to address the funding gap arising from the extension of the drawdown in ATMIS military personnel, through two tranches of USD 2 Million and USD 1.5 Million in July and December 2023;
- c) USD 1 Million to support DDR program of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Tigray region as an integral part of the implementation of the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. This disbursement was realized through the signing of a Grant Agreement between the AU Commission and the Government of Ethiopia in December 2023 in Addis Ababa. Significantly, Ethiopia became the first AU Member State to benefit directly from the AU Peace Fund.

305. The balance of USD 500,000 from the approved CRF USD 7 Million was approved by the Chairperson of the Commission and set aside to support the Sudanese Peace process including the AU/IGAD political dialogue. However, this funding could not be utilized due to the ongoing protracted consultations with

Sudanese civil actors on the modalities and dates for the Dialogue already endorsed by the AUPSC.

306. Furthermore, the PRC approved in November 2023 the Commission's proposals for the 34 Pilot Projects covering 15 priority areas under the AU Peace Fund amounting to USD 5 million in 2024. The Commission is poised to fully operationalize the Peace Fund with these projects, which are complementary to the 2024 regular budget and the CRF for peace, governance and security, and in line with the approval of relevant organs/bodies. The pilot projects are spread across the 3 eligible windows of the peace fund namely (a) Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation; (b) Institutional Capacity and (c) AU PSOs, and programmed to cover all 5 regions of the continent,

307. In 2024, a CRF level of USD10 million has been approved by relevant organs for use by the Commission to respond to emerging peace and security related crises on the continent.

308. Most importantly, the operationalization of the revitalized AU Peace Fund is in fulfilment of the AU's commitment to promote African ownership and leadership by contributing substantially to financing its own agenda for peace, security and stability, in compliance with relevant Assembly Decisions. This has not only provided a political signal that Africa is committed to improving on its self-reliance targets but will also provide the Commission with the capacity to operationalize its early response mechanism, which further helps bridge the gap between early warning and early response.

309. The Assembly may wish to commend the Executive Council, the Chairperson of the Commission, the PSC, PRC, F-15, Board of Trustees and EMC for steps taken to operationalize the Peace Fund and call on the Peace Fund Secretariat to accelerate initiatives to mobilize more resources, particularly from the private sector and development partners to the Peace Fund and the CRF. In addition, the Assembly may wish to commend the direct contributions of the AU through the disbursements to the EAC, ATMIS and Ethiopia as pioneer beneficiaries of the Fund, and as a testament of the Union's commitment towards contributing to its peace enforcement, stabilization, recovery and DDR activities.

310. Relatedly, the African Representatives in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), following consultations with relevant stakeholders including the Commission, the AUPSC and UNSC members, on 21 December 2023 in New York authored and sponsored a resolution on financing of African Union-mandated/led Peace Support Operations (PSOs). The framework resolution 2719 (2023), unanimously adopted by the UNSC, "Agrees to consider on a case-by-case basis, while aiming at early action and rapid deployment to prevent violent conflict and its escalation, requests from the African Union Peace and Security Council seeking authorisation from the United Nations Security Council for African Union-led peace support operations under chapters VII and VIII of the Charter to have access to United Nations assessed contributions.....". With this resolution, AU-led PSOs authorized by the UNSC could receive funding from the UN assessed contributions, by up to 75 percent of their annual budgets, with the remaining amount to be mobilized from the international community jointly by the AU and UN as extra-budgetary resources. The UNSC also

commits to consider all viable options in the event of significant shortfalls in resource mobilization.

311. Whereas the UNSC resolution 2719 (2023) is an initial step, it falls short of 100% access to UN assessed contributions that Africa had pushed for, as a way of guaranteeing predictable, adequate and sustainable financing of AU peace and security activities. The Resolution is inconsistent with the guidance provided by the Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.842(XXXVI) of February 2023 which adopted the African Consensus Paper on Adequate, Predictable and Sustainable Financing of Peace and Security Activities (Consensus Paper), and was also contrary to the guidance provided by the PSC to the A3. It should be noted that the AU Consensus Paper did not commit Africa to finance 25% of any AUPSO. It however, indicates that AU Member States will contribute towards AU peace and security efforts in the continent.

312. The Assembly may therefore wish to note of the UNSC Resolution 2719 (2023) as an initial step towards securing predictable, adequate and sustainable financing for AU Peace and Security Activities from the UN-assessed contribution. The Assembly may wish to further urge the Commission and UN Secretariat, as well as AU Partners, to ensure the full implementation of the resolution, in good faith, honouring the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in reaffirmation of the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.

xiii. PAPS Institutional Priorities

313. The Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department in 2023, under the leadership of the Commissioner remained guided by five (5) strategic pillars in the implementation of its broad mandate as follows:

- a) Implementation of the PAPS structure for better coordination and impact;
- b) Re-energizing the AU early warning systems, conflict prevention and mediation;
- c) Building Integrated capacity for conflict management, especially counter-terrorism and violent extremism;
- d) Strengthening democracy and good governance;
- e) Inclusive and smart partnership for human security.

314. In this regard, DPAPS has, while utilizing available resources, continued to implement the PAPS structure, to effectively mainstream political governance in peace and stabilization processes in Africa at all levels.

315. The Commission provided technical backstopping to Member States to deal with various political crises, including capacity building for early warning and early action, elections management, as well as putting in place measures towards stability. It continued to advance structures to promote strategic partnerships at national, regional, and international levels and is providing strategic guidance on the issue of funding for peace operations, among others.

316. The AU's Member States, RECs/RMs remained central to the delivery of the Department's mandate. This collaboration has become stronger, most importantly through the AU I-RECKE on Early Warning Conflict Prevention, in responding to Africa's security challenges with the input of regional bodies, while providing leadership support for consolidating constitutional democracy.

317. Notably, the PAPS Department also continued to rely on support of development partners, who offered in 2023, invaluable human, financial, technical and other resources through direct bilateral and common funding platforms inclusive of the Joint Financing Arrangement (JFA) to implement the core priorities identified in the PAPS Priority Action Plan and Agenda 2063, premised primarily on Silencing the Guns. Women's political empowerment and youth inclusion are taking pride of place in the Commission's areas of competence with the strengthening of FEMWISE and its associated mechanisms as well as operationalization of WiseYouth and democratic governance.

318. Furthermore, awareness is being progressively created in PCRD in collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD, while the Africa Platform for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, co-chaired by the Ambassador/PR of The Gambia to the AU and Commissioner PAPS, continues to be the advocacy arrowhead for the AU Child Protection Architecture being built.

319. Recognizing the multi-dimensional nature and scope of security challenges, the Department is actively engaged in the imperative of a multi-stakeholder approach to finding durable solutions. It has embraced the Nexus approach between Peace, Security, Governance and Sustainable Development while tapping into the existing wealth of knowledge base in African think tanks through the full operations of the AU NeTT4Peace, as well as Civil Society engagement through the Pan-African Network of CSOs for Political Affairs Peace and Security (PANPAPS).

320. DPAPS further prioritized the implementation of the new PAPS organizational structure within the ambit of the AU Institutional reform. Fully cognizant of the imperative of staff satisfaction and welfare, the department organized a 3-day retreat in June 2023 with support from GIZ and an external consultant retained to support the organizational change management processes in DPAPS. This PAPS staff retreat held with the overriding goal of promoting greater understanding of the delivery model and modalities embedded in the new PAPS structure through the strengthening of the ability of the Department to deliver as one, effectively and efficiently. Overall, the retreat facilitated common understanding of the DPAPS structure among the staff members of the two (2) Directorates, including the mismatches, misalignments, misplacements, and missing links in the structure that have been identified for relevant action towards making the department more functional and effective.

321. DPAPS acknowledges that the Department's ability to deliver on its mandate is dependent on its human capital and has invested in enhancing staff competencies. With the support of the Training for Peace programme, the Department has developed a number of knowledge products and training manuals for staff. These include a Handbook for Standardising and Enhancing the Working Documents of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union Commission and five training manuals on Leadership, Strategic Planning, Project Management,

Monitoring and Evaluation and Report Writing. In 2023, the Department organized the first ever-leadership training from 9 to 10 November 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for fifteen senior and mid-level staff. Subsequent trainings will be organized in 2024.

322. Taking into consideration the merging of the two former departments, namely; Peace and Security Department and Political Affairs Department, the Assembly may wish to request the Commission to undertake the necessary actions to change the name of the building hosting the new Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security from “Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Peace and Security Building” to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Political Affairs, Peace and Security Building” and the Plenary Hall of the Building to be called “Peace and Security Council Chamber”.

XIV. CONCLUSIONS: OUTLOOK, IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

323. In 2024, the African Union will continue to play a crucial role in addressing the various ongoing and emerging disputes and crises across the continent. This will continue to be part of the Commission contribution to the burden sharing of maintaining international peace and security. The crises will mostly remain internal, and in some cases, internationalised, and will continue to impact the overall state of peace and security in Africa. Additionally, the crises will be compounded by interlocking threats of a transnational nature, particularly climate change, transnational organized crime and irregular migration and human trafficking.

324. While the current state of peace, governance and security across Africa indicates an urgent need to reverse the present trajectory, the African Union will be required to intensify its notable actions to build on some of the positive gains of 2023. These include sustaining the comprehensive cessation of hostilities agreement among the Ethiopian parties, the admittance of the African Union to the G20 to enhance its global voice, visibility and influence, increasing role of multistake holders in the AGA and APSA agenda, and other ongoing mediation and preventive diplomacy efforts.

325. In particular, the ongoing conflict in the Central Africa, Sahel, the Great Lakes and the Lake Chad Basin region and in Libya and the withdrawal of MINUSMA and MONUSCO will continue to witness increasing dependency on irregular private military contractors to address insecurity and insurgencies. In contrast, others will deepen their multilateral security frameworks, such as the MNJTF, to respond to the threat of terrorism and extremism. The region’s efforts towards advancing democratic change and political transitions will have mixed results. Some states are likely to maintain their electoral calendars, but others will encounter challenges to achieve free and fair elections, and some will likely find it difficult to advance their respective transition processes. Overall, in the region, the humanitarian situation is unlikely to improve significantly, particularly the living conditions of refugees and IDPs, preventing some from returning to their communities.

326. The political and security gains in states such as Ethiopia and Somalia in 2023 will likely be sustained in 2024. In Ethiopia, the African Union’s facilitated negotiated settlement between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) will continue to be upheld despite concerns regarding the

Federal Government of Ethiopia's reform efforts. Similarly, in Somalia, the Federal Government, with the continued support of ATMIS, will maintain the security gains and operational pressure on Al-Shabaab to complete the security transition and enable the African Union mission to exit in December 2024. The cumulative progress expected in Ethiopia and Somalia will likely improve stability in the Horn of Africa in 2024. The Eastern Africa region will continue to be impacted by the situation in Sudan, particularly with increasing challenges to ending the war and returning the country to a path of democratic transition.

327. The situation in Libya will dominate the political and security landscape in the Northern Africa Region. Fighting and armed clashes are likely to persist in 2024, with sustained interference from foreign countries supporting the country's competing institutions and foreign fighters, foreign forces and mercenaries are likely to ignore the AU PSC decisions to withdraw from the country. While constitutional and legal frameworks have accelerated efforts to advance the political process in 2023, specifically in place for holding elections, 2024 will likely present challenges that could further delay the delivery of free, transparent and inclusive elections in Libya.

328. Most of the Southern Africa Region will remain peaceful and stable, exhibiting relative democratic guarantees. Regional efforts will also remain focused on Mozambique, currently combating violent extremism and terrorism. Mozambique's efforts to decisively defeat terrorism will be presented with a major test from July 2024 when SAMIM finally exits the country. SAMIM's exit from Mozambique, will leave counterinsurgency operations to the coalition of Mozambique's security forces and a local militia. This will increase concerns about their combined ability to degrade and defeat the terrorists and concurrently address emerging security threats such as people-smuggling. While elections in October 2024 are expected to take place, should there be a resurgence of terrorism activity, this may impact elections in particular areas.

329. In 2024, the Sahel region will continue to face complex security threats from extremist groups and unconstitutional changes in government attempts. The Sahel countries' current leadership will require support in implementing credible transition processes, thus requiring external support from ECOWAS/ECCAS and the AU. While the outlook for 2024 is uncertain, emerging risks could further destabilise the region. The Sahel countries will continue to face challenges degrading and dismantling extremist groups in their territories, leading to the deterioration of human rights and limited space for governance issues. The AU and ECOWAS will remain committed to supporting the Sahel countries, requiring further high-level diplomatic engagements and positive signaling from key regional actors. The Commission should continue to monitor the protracted political transition in the suspended Member States in the Sahel while the operations of the so-called AES may impact the Sahel and effectively replace G5 Sahel Joint Force.

330. Despite the concerted efforts of AU Member States and the Specialised AU offices, such as the ACSRT, Africa will continue to confront the threat of terrorism and violent extremism at an alarming rate. In 2024, the threat of terrorism will mostly continue to expand, although unevenly across the regions, with some countries failing to contain the threat of terrorism. This will mean there will be an increase in terrorism-related deaths in 2024 from 48 per cent recorded in 2023 for sub-Saharan Africa.

Additionally, the threat of terrorism will persist due to Africa's sustained conflicts, weak rule of law, human rights abuses and low unemployment rates. Likewise, the nexus of transnational organised crime and terrorism will remain, as will the use of autonomous weapons systems, including unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and artificial intelligence.

331. The outlook in some conflict situations across Africa will remain of increasing concern, with the growing presence of irregular private military contractors and foreign power competition for influence. This trend will likely continue and remain a source of instability, particularly in parts of Northern Africa and in the Horn of Africa. Moreover, the inability of regional multilateral organisations to address the issue of Unconstitutional Changes of Government, especially in the Sahel, will continue to attract the presence of irregular private military contractors and enable foreign power competition to persist, hindering efforts of the AU to bring peace to these conflict settings. The conflict in Sudan will define the geopolitical landscape in the Horn of Africa.

332. The recent trend of the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government in the form of military coups and attempted coups will remain a concerning issue for Africa in 2024. Such a pattern will continue across Africa unless urgent action is taken by regional multilateral organisations and the AU in regions such as the Sahel and West Africa. Given the prevalence of poor living standards, weak governance systems, and poverty, this trend will also continue in the absence of sustainable economic growth and poverty eradication in some regions. The structural root causes should be squarely addressed by the AUPSC and the Commission.

333. There is an expectation that at least seven (07) countries will remain uncertain in advancing their political transition processes. These countries remain mostly AU Member States currently involved in conflict settings or recently undergone unconstitutional changes of government. Overall, in 2024, democratic elections are scheduled to be held in nineteen (19) AU Member States. Despite an overall electoral management system improvement across Africa, challenging factors will persist, resulting in low participation of women and youth and insecurity. The early warning mechanisms will not be sufficient in some regions to deliver governance guarantees required and advocated for by the African Union within the context of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) and other AU instruments.

334. Climate change will continue to pose a significant threat to peace and security in Africa. It will exacerbate existing risks and vulnerabilities across the continent. Occurrences such as extreme weather, droughts, floods, displacement, and loss of livelihoods, resulting in humanitarian crises and conflicts, will remain dominant in 2024. Similarly, the adverse effect of climate change will witness the continent facing increased competition over natural resources. While the AU and its member states will continue to deepen the knowledge of the nexus between climate change and security and development, more is needed to address the impact of climate change on the continent throughout 2024.

335. The AU remains committed to deliver on its governance, peace and security mandate in order to foster integration and prosperity across the continent. The

attainment of all the aspirations of Agenda 2063 is contingent on a peaceful and secure continent that is amenable to socio-economic growth, and prosperity. The leadership role and strategic support of AU Heads of State and Government is paramount in achieving the continental goal of robust response to the direct and immediate threats; deepening democracy and effective governance; and building collective security for peace enhanced peace dividends.

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الأفريقي
UMOJA WA AFRIKA



UNION AFRICAINE
UNIÃO AFRICANA
UNIÓN AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

Assembly/AU/4(XXXVII)
Annex I

**COMMON AFRICAN POSITION
ON THE APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW TO THE USE OF
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN CYBERSPACE**

I.Preamble

1. Recalling the Constitutive Act of the African Union adopted in 2002, in particular Articles 3 and 4 of the Act and, the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention) adopted in 2014.
2. Noting that information and communication technologies (ICTs) in cyberspace are an indispensable part of the lives of human beings throughout the world. ICTs are an instrument of human interaction, a vehicle for social development, and an engine of economic growth, poverty eradication, and sustainable development.
3. Further noting that it is in the interest of all States, societies, and present and future generations to develop a global legal architecture that ensures that ICTs are used for peaceful purposes, and that prevents the malicious and criminal use of these technologies, promotes greater cooperation between States, guarantees that cyberspace remains open, secure, stable, accessible, and peaceful, protects basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals and peoples, and advances the common interests of humankind.
4. Reaffirming that international law applies in cyberspace and governs the use of ICTs in cyberspace, and underscoring that States are under an obligation not to engage in internationally wrongful acts such as those outlined in this Common Position and to combat malicious and criminal cyber operations by non-State actors. In this regard, it is necessary, in light of the unique technical characteristics of cyberspace and the distinctive nature of the threats posed by unlawful behavior in this domain, by both States and non-State actors, to further expand dialogue between States, regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate and within their respective roles and responsibilities through transparent, inclusive, and multilateral processes on how international law should further apply in this area.
5. Reiterating their commitment, consistent with their obligations under international law and in accordance with due diligence, to combat malicious and criminal cyber operations by non-State actors and emphasized that non-State actors, particularly those whose conduct is attributable to States, should refrain from engaging in malicious or criminal use of ICTs in the Cyberspace.
6. Emphasizing that the process of further clarifying how international law applies to the use of ICTs in cyberspace and, where necessary, further developing the rules of international law that are applicable in this area is a matter of common interest to all States. All States have an equal right to participate in the articulation of rules of international law that apply in cyberspace and the views of all States have equal weight and value in this process.
7. Noting that the process of articulating rules of international law that apply to the use of ICTs in cyberspace would benefit from the adoption of a United Nations declaration on this subject that would be negotiated with the participation of relevant stakeholders, as

appropriate and within their respective roles and responsibilities, including other international and regional organizations.

8. Taking note of the ongoing meetings of the UN Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. The African Union encourages its Member States which have not yet done so, to consider signing and ratifying the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention).

9. Commending the efforts undertaken by the United Nations to address issues relating to cybersecurity, especially the World Summit on Information Society hosted in Africa by a Member State of the African Union, Tunisia, and recalling, in this regard, the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Plan of Action contained in U.N. Document A/60/687.

10. Highlighting that this Common African Position was adopted in the spirit of seeking to contribute to global debates on the application of international law to cyberspace. In this regard, given the continuous and rapid development of technology in this area, this Common African Position should be viewed as a non-exhaustive contribution to ongoing discussions in this field. The positions expressed herein may further evolve in light of technological developments and continuing engagement in discussions with the international community. The Member States of the African Union are also encouraged to issue national statements on the application of international law to the use of information and communication technologies in cyberspace. Moreover, there are aspects of the rules of international law as they apply in cyberspace that are not addressed in this statement, such as the immunities of diplomatic missions and international organizations, the inviolability of official State communications and diplomatic correspondences, the legality of countermeasures, and the restrictions on invoking necessity as a circumstance precluding wrongfulness, on which the African Union reserves its position

11. Reaffirming that the adoption of this Common African Position confirms the commitment expressed by the African Union in the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa to harness digital technologies and innovation to transform African societies and economies to promote Africa's integration, generate inclusive economic growth, stimulate job creation, bridge the digital divide, and eradicate poverty for the continent's socio-economic development and ensure Africa's ownership of the modern tools of digital management.

II.Sovereignty in Cyberspace

12. Sovereignty is an attribute of States. By virtue of sovereignty, States enjoy, under international law, territorial sovereignty, and supremacy in their internal and external affairs. States are also under an obligation to uphold principles of international law including the duty not to infringe on the independence of other States or to violate their territorial sovereignty.

13. Territorial sovereignty is a corollary of State sovereignty. By virtue of territorial sovereignty, States are entitled, within the limits established by the applicable rules of international law, to exercise exclusive control over their land territory and its appurtenances, including the airspace and maritime zones that are subject to the sovereignty of the State. The obligation to respect the territorial sovereignty of States is a primary rule that is firmly established in international law, which applies to State conduct in cyberspace. This rule is reflected in several judicial decisions, including the judgment of the International Court of Justice in the *Corfu Channel Case*, which affirmed that “[b]etween independent States, respect for territorial sovereignty is an essential foundation of international relations,” and the judgment of the International Court of Justice in the *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua*, which affirmed that “[t]he basic legal concept of State sovereignty in customary international law, expressed in, *inter alia*, Article 2 paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter, extends to the internal waters and territorial sea of every State and to the air space above its territory.”

14. By virtue of territorial sovereignty, States are entitled to exercise jurisdiction, including legislative, adjudicative, and enforcement authority, over the components of cyberspace that are located on their territory. The jurisdiction of States also applies extraterritorially to ICTs located on aircraft and ships flying the State’s flag and satellites and other spacecraft in outer space registered by the State.

15. The African Union affirms that international law, as it applies to the use of ICTs in cyberspace, does not permit a State to exercise enforcement authority on the territory of a foreign State in response to unlawful cyber activities that emanate from the territory of that foreign State. This applies even if the exercise of such enforcement authority by a State does not have harmful effects, whether virtual or physical, on the territory of a foreign State.

16. The African Union affirms that by virtue of territorial sovereignty, any unauthorized access by a State into the ICT infrastructure located on the territory of a foreign State is unlawful. Therefore, the African Union emphasizes that the obligation to respect the territorial sovereignty of States, as it applies in cyberspace, does not include a *de minimis* threshold of harmful effects below which an unauthorized access by a State into the ICT infrastructure located on the territory of a foreign State would not be unlawful. The African Union further affirms that cyber operations that are attributable to a State against ICT infrastructure located on the territory of a foreign State that causes effects, such as loss or impairment of functionality, on the territory of a third State, may constitute a breach of the territorial sovereignty of that latter State.

17. The African Union underscores that seeking to codify rules of international law that apply in cyberspace that purport to permit States to exercise enforcement authority on the territory of a foreign State or that establish a threshold of harm that reduces the protective scope of the rule of the inviolability of the territorial sovereignty of States poses significant risks from a policy perspective. Given the vast disparities of technical capabilities between States, such rules would, as noted by the International Court of

Justice in the *Corfu Channel Case*, “from the nature of things, be reserved for the most powerful States,” which could give rise to serious abuses that would undermine the principles of the independence and sovereign equality of States.

18. As a corollary of territorial sovereignty, States shall protect, in accordance with the applicable rules of international law, especially international human rights law and, when applicable, international humanitarian law, natural and legal persons located on their territory against unlawful uses of ICTs in cyberspace that are attributable to foreign States or non-State actors.

19. The obligation to respect the territorial sovereignty of States is a rule that applies in inter-State relations. Accordingly, only an internationally wrongful act that is attributable to a State in accordance with the applicable rules of international law, as outlined in Section 9 herein, could constitute a violation of the territorial sovereignty of a State.

III. Due Diligence in Cyberspace

20. Due diligence performs an important role in the area of cyberspace. Given the technical challenges relating to establishing attribution for internationally wrongful acts committed through ICTs in cyberspace and the fact that such acts are often committed by non-State actors, due diligence provides an important tool to promote the openness, accessibility, safety, and security of cyberspace.

21. The African Union recognizes that due diligence is an obligation that operates in the context of other primary rules of international law. In this regard, the African Union affirms that by virtue of territorial sovereignty, every State is under an obligation, as stated by the International Court of Justice in the *Corfu Channel Case*, “not to allow knowingly its territory to be used for acts contrary to the rights of other states.” This principle, which is a corollary of sovereignty is also confirmed by other judicial precedents, including the *Pulp Mills Case* and the *Island of Palmas* arbitral decision.

22. The African Union considers that due diligence, as it applies in cyberspace, establishes an obligation of conduct, not an obligation of result. Therefore, due diligence does not require a State to guarantee that its territory or territory under its control or jurisdiction is not used to commit an internationally wrongful act. Rather, due diligence establishes an obligation to take necessary measures that are feasible to the extent of a State’s capacity and the means available to it to prevent or halt an internationally wrongful act that a State knows or should have known is undertaken using ICTs in its territory or in territory under its control or jurisdiction.

23. The due diligence obligation to take necessary measures, to the extent of the capacity available to the State, to prevent or halt an internationally wrongful act is triggered only if a State has knowledge that such an act is originating from or transiting through ICTs located on its territory or in territory under its control or jurisdiction. Knowledge, however, is not to be presumed simply by virtue of the fact of territorial

sovereignty or control. Indeed, in the Corfu Channel Case, the International Court of Justice stated that “it cannot be concluded from the mere fact of the control exercised by a State over its territory and waters that that State necessarily knew, or ought to have known, of any unlawful act perpetrated therein, nor yet that it necessarily knew, or should have known.” Therefore, whether a State knows or has reason to know that an internationally wrongful act is originating from or transiting through ICTs located on its territory or in territory under its control or jurisdiction is a matter that has to be determined on a case-by-case basis in light of the information available to a State, the technical and institutional capabilities, and financial resources available to that State.

24. Due diligence also reinforces the obligation of States not to permit another State to use ICTs located within its territory or under its jurisdiction or control to commit internationally wrongful acts against another State.

25. The African Union also recognizes the unique challenges faced by developing countries in implementing due diligence measures due to resource constraints, and challenges related to technical expertise. The African Union emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and information sharing, including through Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)/Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs), to further enable States to fully uphold the obligation of due diligence. In this regard, the African Union underscores the importance of expanding international cooperation and capacity building as outlined in Section X, and further empowering and enabling the full participation of developing countries in policy making forums related to the governance of cyberspace.

IV. The Prohibition on Intervention in the Internal and External Affairs of States in Cyberspace

26. The prohibition on intervention in the internal and external affairs of States is a principle of general international law that is also reflected in several multilateral treaties, including the founding instruments of regional organizations, such as the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Charter of the Organization of American States, the Charter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, in addition to other instruments, such as the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, and UN General Assembly resolutions, such as the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States.

27. The prohibition on intervention is a rule that applies to inter-State relations. Accordingly, only acts that are attributable to a State in accordance with the applicable secondary rules of international law could constitute a violation of the prohibition on intervention.

28. The prohibition on intervention protects against acts that impinge on matters within the domestic jurisdiction of States in relation to which each State is permitted, by the principle of State sovereignty, to decide freely. It is also established that, by virtue of their

sovereignty, States have an inalienable right to choose their political, economic, social, and cultural systems, without intervention from any other States.

29. The prohibition on intervention applies to the use of any instrument, including armed, political, economic, or any other means, and instruments of information, that may be used by a State for the purposes of intervening in the internal or external affairs of a foreign State. The prohibition on intervention is especially pertinent in the context of cyberspace given the increasing connectivity between States and societies which provides greater opportunities for malicious actors, including States and non-State actors the acts of which are attributable to States, to misuse ICTs for the purpose of intervening in the internal and external affairs of States. Various codifications of the prohibition on intervention have also affirmed that this rule proscribes both direct intervention by de jure and de facto organs of a State and indirect intervention by persons or groups acting under the direction, instruction, or control of a State. This rule also proscribes the organizing, funding, or the provision of any form assistance to non-State actors engaged in acts of intervention against another State.

30. To constitute a violation of the prohibition on intervention, ICTs in cyberspace must be employed in a manner that amounts to coercion, which the International Court of Justice described, in the *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua*, as the element that “defines, and indeed forms the very essence of prohibited intervention.”

31. The African Union is of the view that coercion, in the context of the prohibition on intervention, should be defined as a policy that is designed to impose restraints on the will of a foreign State. Assessing whether the use by one or more States of ICTs in cyberspace to influence the conduct of a foreign State amounts to coercion is a determination that should be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

32. While the definition of coercion in this context requires further study and deliberation between States, the African Union is of the view that it is not necessary, in order to constitute coercion, that the conduct of a State must rise to the level of completely depriving a foreign State of its freedom of choice or to compel that State to either act or refrain from acting involuntarily. Coercion may also occur through threats of intervention. Furthermore, there is no requirement that, in order to constitute a violation of the prohibition on intervention, an act of coercion must actually succeed in compelling the State subjected to such acts to change its conduct. An unsuccessful attempt of intervention is unlawful under international law. The African Union stresses that offers or calls to peacefully settle disputes through negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, good offices, arbitration, and judicial settlement, and diplomatic discussions and communications are presumed not to constitute acts of coercion.

33. The African Union recalls that, by virtue of their territorial sovereignty, all States are under an obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent the use of their territory by

other States or by non-State actors to engage in acts that constitute a violation of the prohibition on intervention in the internal or external affairs of States.

V.The Peaceful Settlement of Disputes in Cyberspace

34. The obligation to settle international disputes by peaceful means is a rule of customary international law that is also codified in international and regional treaties, including the U.N. Charter and the founding instruments of regional organizations, such as the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

35. The African Union recalls Article 4(e) on the peaceful resolution of conflicts and Article 4(f) on the prohibition of the use of force or the threat to use force of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and reaffirms that in accordance with Article 2(3) and Article 33 of the U.N. Charter the obligation to settle international disputes peacefully applies to any dispute that may arise between States relating to acts, omissions, or any disagreement on a point of law or fact, that relates to the use of ICTs in cyberspace, or that relates to the application or interpretation of international law in this field. This obligation is not limited to disputes the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

36. In accordance with the U.N. Charter, States are obligated to settle international disputes through peaceful means such as negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, good offices, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or any other peaceful means of their own choice.

37. The African Union recognizes the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance the peaceful settlement of disputes and encourages the use of ICTs in the context of dispute settlement. The African Union also supports the development of ICT-based tools and platforms for the peaceful settlement of disputes, such as online mediation platforms and dispute resolution software, and urges states to invest in research and development of ICTs for the peaceful settlement of disputes in cyberspace.

VI.The Prohibition on the Threat or Use of Force in Cyberspace

38. The prohibition on the threat or use of force is a rule of jus cogens³ and a fundamental and cardinal rule of general international law that is also a cornerstone of the U.N. Charter. This rule is also enshrined in many treaties and founding instruments of regional organizations, such as the Constitutive act of the African Union, and in bilateral agreements. This rule of international law applies in cyberspace and governs the conduct of States in relation to ICTs in cyberspace.

³ The Kingdom of Morocco, expressed a reservation regarding the reference to the concept of “jus cogens. The Kingdom of Morocco holds the view that: In the framework of the progressive development of international law, the prohibition of the use of force could eventually be qualified as a peremptory norm by the competent organs of the United Nations to whom the mandate of codification and progressive development of international law is entrusted.

39. The prohibition on the use of force admits only two exceptions: the use of force in self-defense if an armed attack occurs, and the use of force that is authorized by the UN Security Council acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The African Union affirms that this rule applies to the use of armed force by States. The African Union is of the view that cyber operations would fall within the scope of the prohibition of the use of force when the scale and effects of the operation are comparable to those of a conventional act of violence covered by the prohibition. In particular, a cyber operation, depending on its scale and effect, would amount to use of force if it is expected to cause physical damage, injury, or death, that is comparable to the use of force by an act covered by the prohibition.

40. For example, a cyber operation that destroys, inflicts damage, or permanently disables critical infrastructure or civilian objects within a State, may be considered as amounting to a use of force under international law. Similarly, a cyber operation that targets a military asset by destroying, damaging, or deactivating a missile defense system, could constitute a violation of the prohibition on the use of force. The determination of whether a cyber-operation or a cyber-operation that is executed in combination with the use of non-cyber weapons constitutes a use of force should be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

41. The African Union underscores that there is a distinction between the gravest forms of the use of force that constitute an armed attack, which entitle the injured State to invoke the right to individual or collective self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, and less grave forms of the use of force. Whether a particular cyber operation constitutes a use of force or amounts to an armed attack should be determined on a case-by-case basis. That determination should be thoroughly substantiated on the basis of an assessment of the scale and effects of the particular cyber operation. Generally, the criterion of scale requires an examination of elements such as the duration of the attack, the nature of the targets attacked, the locations of the targets attacked, and the types of weapons used, while the criterion of effects measures the extent of the damage caused by the attack.

42. The African Union takes note of the views that assert that States have a right to exercise self-defense against imminent threats of the use of force. This is a controversial question on which there is a paucity of judicial precedent and a lack of unanimity among highly qualified publicists. The African Union is of the view that this matter requires further study and deliberation between States taking into consideration both the unique characteristics of cyberspace and cyber-operations and the implications that any rules that may emerge in relation to this question may have for the integrity of the prohibitions on the threat or use of force. In this regard, the Member States of the African Union emphasize that, from a legal perspective, the Article 51 of the U.N. Charter permits States to use force in individual or collective self-defense "if an armed attack occurs" against a U.N. Member State. Furthermore, the African Union underscores that, from a policy perspective, the maintenance of international peace and security favors the continued

adoption of a restrictive interpretation of the exceptions to the prohibition on the use of force.

43. The prohibition on the threat or use of force addresses States in their international relations. Therefore, this rule and the exceptions thereto do not apply to the conduct of non-State actors that is not attributable to States. Accordingly, the African Union affirms that the right of self-defense is triggered solely if an armed attack is attributable to a State according to the applicable rules of customary international law of State responsibility.

44. The African Union notes that arming and training non-State actors could amount to a violation of the prohibition on the threat or use of force. This applies to the provision of technical assistance or training to non-State actors that engage in acts amounting to the threat or use of force through ICTs against another State.

45. In this context, the African Union reiterates that, by virtue of their territorial sovereignty, all States are under an obligation to exercise due diligence as reflected in Section III above and to ensure that their territory is not knowingly used to violate the rights of other States through acts that constitute a threat or use of force, whether such acts are undertaken by organs of the State or non-State actors acting under the direction, control, or instruction of the State.

46. Conduct that does not amount to a violation of the prohibition on the threat or use of force may, depending on the circumstances, constitute a breach of other rules of international law, especially the obligation to respect the territorial sovereignty of States and the prohibition on intervention in the internal or external affairs of States.

VII. International Humanitarian Law in Cyberspace

47. The African Union affirms that International Humanitarian Law (IHL) applies in cyberspace. Despite the fact that most rules of IHL emerged before the appearance of cyberspace, IHL applies, concurrently with any other applicable rules of international law, to cyber-operations that may be undertaken in the context of an armed conflict. As noted by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, by virtue of its “intrinsic humanitarian character,” IHL applies to “all forms of warfare and to all kinds of weapons, those of the past, those of the present, and those of the future.”

48. In order to trigger the application of IHL, a situation must amount to an armed conflict. IHL recognizes two categories of armed conflict: international armed conflicts, in which the parties are States that are engaged in hostilities using armed force, and non-international armed conflicts, in which the parties are State armed forces engaged in hostilities against organized armed groups or a situation in which armed groups are engaged in hostilities amongst each other on the territory of a State.

49. In an international armed conflict, the application of IHL commences whenever armed force is used between States regardless of the intensity of such activities. The application of IHL to an international armed conflict is unaffected by either the absence of a formal declaration of war or by the assessment of the legality, under the applicable rules of the U.N. Charter, of the use of force by the belligerent States. On the other hand, The African Union is mindful of the possibility that cyberoperations as in itself may trigger a non-international armed conflict. The application of IHL commences in a non-international armed conflict when the intensity of the conflict amounts to protracted armed violence, which means that it is above the level of violence associated with internal disturbances, such as riots, isolated, and sporadic violence, and in situations where the armed groups engaged in hostilities reach a certain degree of organization.

50. The African Union reaffirms their commitment to the cardinal principles of IHL that govern all means and methods of warfare and reiterate that such principles apply to the use of ICTs in cyberspace as a means of warfare and afford protection to civilian ICTs during armed conflicts. In particular, the African Union recalls the principle that “the right of belligerents to adopt means of injuring the enemy is not unlimited” and the principle that belligerents are under an obligation to limit the suffering, injury, and destruction caused by an armed conflict.

51. On the basis of these general principles, the African Union underscores the importance of the principle of distinction, which prohibits attacks that are directed at civilians or civilian objects, including ICTs, whether such attacks are undertaken using kinetic or cyber means. The African Union also emphasizes the importance of the principle of proportionality, which prohibits attacks that are expected to cause incidental civilian harm that would be excessive to what is necessary to achieve a definite military advantage.

52. The African Union emphasizes that certain civilians and civilian objects, including the related ICT infrastructure associated with them, enjoy additional specific protection under the relevant rules of IHL. These objects, which are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, include hospitals, medical personnel, and facilities as well as humanitarian relief operations. Such objects must be respected and protected at all times and not be interfered with, attacked, destroyed, removed or rendered useless.

VIII. International Human Rights Law in Cyberspace

53. The African Union affirms that international human rights law (IHRL), whether codified in universal or regional conventions to which States are party or embodied in customary international law, applies in cyberspace, and also reaffirms the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. Accordingly, States shall respect, protect, and ensure the human rights of individuals and peoples on their territory or under their jurisdiction that relate to the peaceful use of ICTs in cyberspace, including by protecting such individual and collective rights against infringements by third parties and non-State actors.

54. The African Union further affirms that IHRL requires States to protect the freedom of expression online, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas and to disseminate opinions through ICTs. Any restrictions imposed by States on these rights must be provided by law and must be limited to what is strictly necessary in a democratic society to respect and protect the rights or reputations of others and to protect national security, public order, public health, or morals. The African Union also reaffirms that States shall ensure that ICTs are not misused for the purposes of inciting to violence, hate crimes, terrorism, violent extremism, organized crimes and trafficking in persons, or discrimination on any grounds, including race, ethnicity, color, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status. In this regard, the African Union recalls that special regard should be to be paid to persons in vulnerable situations.

55. The African Union is of the view that responsible behavior in relation to the use of ICTs in cyberspace requires States to ensure that their conduct does not infringe on the human rights of individuals or peoples in other States. In particular, certain activities undertaken by States, such as the transnational interception of communications, indiscriminate surveillance and data misuse, may constitute a violation of the right to privacy of individuals who are subjected to such conduct, in addition to potentially violating the territorial sovereignty of States on the territory of which such interception occurs. Despite the existence of international and regional legal frameworks, the African Union expresses concern about the misuse of private data by malicious or criminal actors as well as its misappropriation and commodification by private actors.

56. The African Union affirms that States shall protect individuals and peoples within their territory or in areas under their jurisdiction against violations of human rights that are committed by third parties, especially business enterprises operating in the ICT sector. Moreover, business enterprises that operate in the ICT sector have a responsibility to respect and protect human rights, especially the right to privacy and the freedom of expression, including by exercising due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for any adverse human rights impacts of their activities.

57. The African Union emphasizes the importance of keeping cyberspace open, secure, stable, accessible, and peaceful, which is an important element in promoting economic growth, attracting investment opportunities, and advancing sustainable development, especially in developing and least developing States. In this regard, The African Union underscores that, pursuant to the right to development under international law, States shall cooperate in good faith including as outlined in Section X on Capacity-Building and International Cooperation, to support developing countries in their efforts to expand their scientific and technological capacities, including in the area of ICTs, in order to accelerate the realization of the economic, social, and cultural rights of the peoples of those countries.

58. The African Union highlights the importance of bridging the digital divide to ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights. In this regard, States shall contribute to

further empowering women and girls. States shall also further promote the full enjoyment of the benefits of ICTs by persons with disabilities by ensuring that the design, development, and production of ICTs incorporates assistive and adaptive technologies that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

59. The African Union calls for the responsible development and management of digital identity systems in a manner that will respect human rights of all individuals.

60. The African Union encourages States to consider the conclusion of agreements on mutual assistance in the area of combating all forms of cyber-crime, which would further contribute to the protection and full realization of individual human rights.

IX. The Rules of Attribution of Conduct to a State in Cyberspace

61. Subject to the emergence of specific rules of attribution, the African Union affirms that the customary rules on State responsibility, as reflected in the ILC Draft Articles on the Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts provide the applicable rules of the attribution to States of conduct undertaken through ICTs in cyberspace.

62. The African Union is of the view that, in conformity with the relevant rules of international law, the burden to substantiate a claim that a State has committed an internationally wrongful act through ICTs in cyberspace is on the State making such a claim. The African Union also underscores the importance of cooperation, including between national authorities, such as Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)/Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs), to detect, investigate, prevent, and halt internationally wrongful acts undertaken through ICTs in cyberspace.

63. The African Union underscores that responses to internationally wrongful acts committed through ICTs in cyberspace should be in accordance with its obligations under the UN Charter, especially the obligations relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the other applicable rules of international law, including the obligation to respect the territorial sovereignty of States.

X. Capacity-Building and International Cooperation in the Field of Information and Communication Technologies and Cyberspace

64. The African Union emphasizes the importance of international cooperation in facing the global challenges of our times, including in the area of cyberspace. The African Union also recalls that in a digitally interdependent world, international cooperation, including through assistance with technical expertise and capacity-building, is essential for bridging the digital-divide and for ensuring that cyberspace is open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful.

65. The African Union underscores the importance of cooperation, with partner States, international organizations, and the private sector by developing regional and national

institutional capacities through capacity building, technical assistance, and the exchange of technical expertise in area of cyberspace in order to identify and address digital-divides and inequalities, and to improve coordination between technical, policy, legal, and regulatory authorities at the national and international level.

66. The African Union stresses the importance of enhancing capacity-building efforts aimed at enabling States to identify, protect, and collectively safeguard critical national infrastructure, including critical information infrastructure and to cooperatively safeguard critical information infrastructure. The African Union also affirms that special attention is needed to support the capacities of developing states at both the policy and technical levels in areas such as the development of national cyber security and resilience strategies, providing access to relevant technologies, and support to Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)/Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs). The African Union reaffirms that special attention is needed for enhancing international cooperation in further clarifying and developing the rules of international law that apply to cyberspace, in a manner that fully integrates the development dimension in the future elaboration of these rules.

67. The African Union reiterates that capacity-building and technical assistance must respect State sovereignty, and should also be based on mutual trust and recognition of national ownership. The African Union emphasizes that capacity building and all cooperation in this area should respect the integrity and security of national ICT infrastructure, and correspond to nationally identified needs and priorities, and respect and protect the confidentiality of national policies and plans.

XI. Conclusion

68. The views expressed in this Common African Position are a non-exhaustive articulation of the views of the African Union regarding some of the salient questions relating to the application of international law in cyberspace. These views are without prejudice to the possible application of other rules of international law that relate to the governance of cyberspace, especially any applicable regional or international instruments relating to combatting cybercrime. These views expressed herein may be the subject of further development and elaboration by the African Union and by the Member States of the African Union acting both individually or collectively, in light of technological developments and the ongoing discussions on these questions.

69. The African Union remains committed to engaging positively and contributing constructively to international, inclusive, and multilateral debates on these matters, with a view to ensuring that cyberspace remains open, safe, peaceful, secure, stable, and accessible, and that ICTs continue to serve as a vehicle for the promotion of regional integration in Africa and upholding the common interests of humankind.

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الأفريقي
UMOJA WA AFRIKA



UNION AFRICAINE
UNIÃO AFRICANA
UNIÓN AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

Assembly/AU/4(XXXVII)
Annex II

THIRD JOINT RETREAT OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND
AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM
11 – 12 DECEMBER 2023
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

PSC/APRM/Retreat.3(2023)

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE THIRD JOINT RETREAT OF THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW
MECHANISM AND THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL**

CONCLUSIONS OF THE THIRD JOINT RETREAT OF THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM AND THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) held their Third Joint Retreat in Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa, from 11 to 12 December 2023, under the theme: **“Strengthening diversity management in Africa as an effective response to governance, peace and security challenges in Africa”**. The Third Joint Retreat was co-chaired by H.E. Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the AU and the PSC Chairperson for the month of December 2023 and H.E Dr. Abdoulie Janneh, Chairperson of the African Peer Review (APR) Panel of Eminent Persons.

2. Noteworthy, the holding of the Third Joint Retreat took place when the APRM was celebrating its 20th Anniversary.

II. OPENING CEREMONY

3. On 11 December 2023, the Co-Chairs declared the Third Joint Retreat opened and delivered their opening statements. They outlined the purpose of the Joint Retreat pursuant to both Assembly and PSC Decisions. It was recalled that the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the Union, through [Assembly/AU/Dec.686 (XXX)], mandated the APRM as an early warning tool for conflict prevention. Subsequently, the PSC, at its 914th meeting, requested the AU Commission and the APRM Secretariat to organise a Joint Retreat to thoroughly interrogate the various Country Review Reports. To date, the PSC and the APRM have held two successful joint Retreats in Durban, eThekweni Municipality, South Africa, in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

4. The following dignitaries made opening remarks, Dr Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) on behalf of H.E Madam Graça Machel, Co-Chair of the Elders and Chairperson of ACCORD Board of Trustees; H.E. Prof Eddy Maloka, APRM Continental Secretariat Chief Executive Officer and Honourable Amara Kallon, Minister of Public Administration and Political Affairs of the Republic of Sierra Leone in his capacity as the Chairperson of the APR Focal Point Committee.

5. Representatives of AU Institutions and Organs participated in the third Joint Retreat as follows: the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD). Also in attendance were the following: Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

III. ORGANISATION

6. The Third Joint Retreat had two High-Level Panels focusing on two themes. The First High-level panel facilitated discussions on the overall theme of the retreat, “*Strengthening Diversity Management in Africa as an Effective Response to Governance, Peace and Security Challenges in Africa*”. The Second High-Level focused on reflections on the “*20th Anniversary Celebration of the APRM: “Accelerating and Deepening Governance Reforms: Measures and Interventions by the APRM.”*”

7. The Third Joint Retreat agenda focused on the following areas of discussion, namely:

- i. Presentation on the APRM Impact Study over the last 20 Years;
- ii. Presentation of the APRM Country Review Report of the Republic of Niger;
- iii. Presentation of Methodology for Implementation of AGR Reports: Case of AGR 2023 On UCG – Chad, Comoros, Sierra Leone and Lesotho;
- iv. Presentation of the Outcomes of the Joint Retreat of the AU Panel of the Wise and APR Panel of Eminent Persons;
- v. Presentation on Foreign Interference and Military Coups in Africa;
- vi. The launch of the Africa Governance Atlas; and
- vii. Update on the Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa.

IV. HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSION ON STRENGTHENING DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA AS AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO GOVERNANCE, PEACE AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

8. In accordance with the theme of the Joint Retreat, a High-Level panel discoursed on strengthening diversity management in Africa as an effective response to governance, peace and security challenges in Africa.

9. The High-Level panel comprised H.E Baleka Mbete, Former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa and Former member of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons, H.E. Lassina Zerbo, former Prime Minister of Burkina Faso and Tana Forum Board Member, H.E. Assoumani Youssouf Mondoha, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Union of Comoros to the AU and Chairperson of the AU Permanent Representative Committee (PRC); Prof. Babacar Kante, Chairperson of the AU Panel of the Wise and H.E Khayar Oumar Defallah, Minister for APRM and APR Focal Point of the Republic of Chad.

10. Following extensive deliberations, the following observations and recommendations were made to mitigate diversity-related conflicts:

- i. The need for the PSC to continue its support to the APRM, particularly in its country review exercises, which provide a wealth of empirical findings on the nature and causes of conflict and political tensions; and encouraged the APRM to provide timely early warning reports on governance deficits, marginalization, inequitable access to resources and repression of liberties;
- ii. The need to promote the politics of interest instead of the politics of identity and promote social cohesion; and the need to harness the positive elements of diversity whilst instituting mechanisms to effectively manage negative aspects; furthermore, the need to elevate the importance of incorporating the RECs/RMs in the efforts to strengthen the positive impacts of diversity through the development of policies and programmes that accommodate the interests of the diverse people in their jurisdictions;
- iii. The need to take advantage of community and traditional leadership, as well as grassroots initiatives in mediating differences and grievances, as well as the role in maintaining peace in communities;
- iv. The imperative to curb all forms of discrimination and intolerance; encouraged Member States to endeavour to align their national visions and development plans with the AU Agenda 2063, particularly Aspirations 1 and 6. In this regard, stressed the importance of popularizing Agenda 2063;
- v. Encourage Member States to undertake institutional reforms to further enhance the full and meaningful participation of women and youth in all spheres of politics and development;
- vi. The need to further strengthen the existing relationship between the AU Panel of the Wise and the APR Panel of Eminent Persons, particularly in conflict prevention, and highlighted the imperative of the full implementation of the eThekwini Conclusions, which underscored the importance of experience sharing and carving out areas of collaboration between the AU Panel of the Wise, the Pan African Network of the Wise, FemWise and the APR Panel of Eminent Persons in preventive diplomacy efforts;
- vii. The need for the APRM Continental Secretariat to contribute towards the African Governance (AGA) and African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), particularly in developing strategies to further enhance preventive diplomacy;
- viii. The imperative of having a common language and, in this regard, commended Member States which took the initiative to introduce Swahili in their respective education curricula and urged others to do the same to promote African languages and culture;

- ix. The need to emulate the practices on diversity management from South Africa, Kenya, Uganda and other Member States.
- x. The imperative of facilitating free movement within the Continent in order to further enhance regional integration; and
- xi. Highlighted the need to inculcate Pan-Africanism and establish educational programmes in this regard.

V. HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSION ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE APRM: ACCELERATING AND DEEPENING GOVERNANCE REFORMS: MEASURES AND INTERVENTIONS BY THE APRM

11. The Third Joint Retreat accordingly included a theme on reflecting on the 20th Anniversary of the APRM, focusing on accelerating and Deepening governance reforms: measures and interventions by the APRM.

12. Members of the High-Level Panel included Honourable Amara Kallon, Minister of Public Administration and Political Affairs of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Chair of the APR Focal Point Committee; H.E Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika, Vice-Chairperson of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons; H.E Mohamed Ashraf Rashed, Chairperson of the APRM National Governing Council (NGC) of Egypt, Chairperson of the APRM Continental Committee of NGCs and Chairperson of COMESA Committee of Elders and Mr. Ahmed Bening, Secretary General of the Pan-African Youth Union (PAYU).

13. Following extensive deliberations, the following observations and recommendations were made:

- i. Underlined the need to reform the divisive colonial systems and redouble efforts on further enhancing African common objectives and practices;
- ii. Highlighted the need to promote cultural exchanges and cross-border programmes, including cross-border trade, in order to facilitate regional integration;
- iii. The need for concerted efforts to mainstream gender in all activities and create conducive conditions for meaningful participation of women and youth in this regard highlighted the importance of establishing national coordinating mechanisms to encapsulate all youth structures, reinforce existing structures and create platforms for exchanging best practices and expertise;
- iv. The necessity to champion public service reforms in the respective Member States, including promoting engagement of youth through National Youth Councils on governance issues;

- v. The imperative of concerted efforts towards popularising the APRM and establishing a network of parliamentarians for APRM and other platforms for advancing the APRM activities;
- vi. The need for the full accession of AU Member states to APRM and the need to further enhance the capacity of the APRM to effectively discharge its mandate;
- vii. The need for the APRM to reexamine the objectives and methodology of undertaking country reviews to ensure that Countries under review avoid relapses into conflict or experiencing unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) and the imperative of APRM to accompany political transitions to enable them to swiftly return to constitutional order;
- viii. The need to harness the potential of the African diaspora in contributing towards the continent's development; and
- ix. Took note of the initiative to develop an African Index for Governance to encourage good governance, democracy, and constitutionalism.

VI. DELIBERATIONS

14. The Third Joint Retreat considered briefings on various studies conducted by the APRM aimed at apprising the Council on the methodology and the impact of the reviews undertaken over the years. Following an unconstitutional change of government in the Republic of Niger and its subsequent suspension from participating in all AU activities in accordance with normative instruments of the Union, the Country Review Report on Niger was not considered.

15. Following the comprehensive presentations and discussion on the agenda items under consideration, the PSC and the APRM:

A. On the Presentation of the APRM Impact Study over the last 20 Years

- i. Took note of the APRM Impact Study and its similarity to the Afro Barometer report and expressed concern over the apparent governance deficit on the Continent;

B. Presentation of Methodology for Implementation of AGR Reports: Case Of AGR 2023 On UCG – Chad, Comoros, Sierra Leone and Lesotho;

- i. Took note of the progress reports presented by Chad, Comoros, Sierra Leone and Lesotho and commended these countries for voluntarily participating in the study on UCG; encouraged them to redouble efforts in implementing the recommendations emanating from the Africa Governance Report 2023; and welcomed the commitment made by Chad to present a detailed progress report on the implementation in the fourth joint retreat;

C. Presentation of the Outcomes of the Joint Retreat of the AU Panel of the Wise and APR Panel of Eminent Persons;

- i. Welcomed the outcomes of the Second Joint Retreat of the AU Panel of the Wise and the APR Panel of Eminent Persons held on 10 December 2023 in Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa, and witnessed the signing of the Communique of the Second Joint Retreat and Framework of Cooperation between the AU Panel of the Wise and APR Panel of Eminent Persons; encouraged the two Panels to implement the Framework of cooperation and to further enhance synergies in areas of conflict prevention and peace-making in Africa;

D. Presentation on Foreign interference and Military Coups in Africa

- i. Emphasized the need for collective security approaches to mitigate interference on the Continent;
- ii. Affirmed the need for exchanging of early warning information and analyses between all relevant stakeholders, including the military, intelligence and academia, in order to prevent debilitating conflicts with risks of reversing economic gains on the Continent;
- iii. Underscored the imperative of concerted efforts to promote regional integration in line with Aspiration 2 of Agenda 2063 to ensure a politically united continent, with unity of purpose based on Pan-Africanism;
- iv. Highlighted the need to massify education on the Continent to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth to realise a prosperous Africa;
- v. Stressed the importance of one African market, eliminating barriers to trade in Africa and boosting intra-Africa trade; in this regard, underscored the need for Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to rally behind the African Continental Free Trade (AfCFTA);
- vi. Underlined the need for universal access to energy to contribute towards Africa's growth; and also highlighted the importance of further improving infrastructure on the Continent, including roads, ports, healthcare, and all other essential services; and

E. The launch of the Africa Governance Atlas

- i. Encouraged Member States to make their observations and forward them to the APRM Continental Secretariat for consideration and possible inclusion in the final report;

F. Update on the Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa

- i. Took note of the activities by the Tana High-Level Forum on Security and the theme for 2024, which is “Africa in an evolving global order”.

VII. CONCLUSION

16. During the second day of the third Joint Retreat, the PSC and APRM considered the status of Implementation of the Conclusions of the Second Joint Retreat of the PSC and APRM Joint Retreat, followed by the Draft Conclusions of the Third Joint Retreat. The Secretariats were requested to disseminate the matrix of the status of the implementation of the Conclusions for the consideration of the Council.

17. In the closing ceremony, a representative of the European Union, representing all partners, delivered a goodwill message. H.E. Ambassador Aminu Nasir, the Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, gave a vote of thanks on behalf of the PSC. H.E Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika, Vice-Chair of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons, and H.E. Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the AU and PSC Chairperson for December 2023, gave closing remarks.

18. The PSC and APRM expressed gratitude to the Government and People of the Republic of South Africa for the hospitality extended to the delegations and for graciously hosting the Third Joint Retreat.

19. The participants commended the PSC Secretariat and APRM Continental Secretariat for the collective and successful organisation of the Third Joint Retreat. They looked forward to the 4th Joint Retreat in South Africa in November 2024.

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي

UMOJA WA AFRIKA



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

UNIÓN AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

Assembly/AU/4(XXXVII)
Annex III

PSC/HLS/10(2022)

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE 10TH HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR
ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA, ORAN PROCESS**

***“CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF PROGRESS AND COOPERATION: A DECADE OF
TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION, REACHING NEW HEIGHTS TOGETHER”***

17 TO 18 DECEMBER 2023, ORAN, ALGERIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3), in collaboration with the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission (AUC), the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), organized the *10th Annual High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa: Assisting Incoming African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3) in Preparing to Address Peace and Security Issues on the Continent*, from 17 to 18 December 2023, in Oran, Algeria. The Seminar was held pursuant to Communiqué [PSC/HoG./COMM(CCCXCVII)] adopted by the PSC at its 397th meeting held at the level of Heads of State and Government in New York, on 23 September 2013, which reviewed the partnership between the AU and the United Nations (UN) in the area of peace and security, and decided, inter alia, on the need for "greater consultations between the Peace and Security Council and the African Members of the Security Council, to ensure that PSC decisions and those of the AU Assembly are effectively promoted and defended in the UN Security Council."

2. The 10th High-Level Seminar coincided the 10th anniversary of the High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. In this context, participants seized the opportunity to take stock of progress achieved by the A3, thus far, in amplifying the African voice and championing African interests and positions within the United Nations Security Council decision-making process, including the challenges faced, lessons learnt and best practices.

3. The Seminar also considered the Draft Manual on Modalities for Enhancing Coordination and Cooperation between the AU PSC and the A3.

II. MAIN OBJECTIVE

4. Building on the foundation laid by the previous nine (9) High-Level Seminars, the 10th High-Level Seminar sought to contribute towards further strengthening the capacity of the A3 to more effectively promote, articulate and defend common African positions on peace and security issues concerning the Continent, within the decision-making process of the UN Security Council, as well as to further strengthen the cooperation, collaboration and coordination between the AU PSC and the A3, with a view to further strengthening Africa's voice within the United Nations Security Council.

5. More specifically, the Main Agenda of the Seminar focused on:

- a) The 10th Anniversary of the High-Level Seminar: The Role of the PSC and the A3 in Promoting Africa's Voice on Peace and Security issues in the UN Security Council agenda: What More Needs to be Done?
- b) The Resurgence of Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa: Global Outlook, Response and Implications for A3;

- c) Update on the Draft UN Security Council Resolution on Financing of AU Peace Support Operations; and
- d) Presentation of the Final Draft Manual on Modalities for Coordination and Cooperation between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3).

III. PARTICIPATION

6. The Seminar was chaired by Honourable Dr. Mamadou Tangara, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Gambia, and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of December 2023. Participants included the fifteen members of the PSC as follows: Honorable Ministers of The Gambia, Nigeria, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, Deputy Ministers of Ghana and Uganda and Permanent Representatives of Burundi, Cameroon, Djibouti, Morocco, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania. The following Members of the current A3 also attended the Seminar, namely: Ghana and Mozambique. The Gabonese Republic did not attend the Seminar as it was under suspension from participating in any activities of the AU and its Organs, following the unconstitutional change of government in August 2023. The Ministers of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Republic of Sierra Leone equally attended the Seminar as incoming A3 Members.

7. The AU Commission was represented at the highest level by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, who was accompanied by H.E. Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambers, the AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns and H.E. Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, the AU Permanent Representative to the United Nations and staff from the AU Commission, including senior and support staff of the Commission. H.E. former President Olusegun Obasanjo, the High Representative for the Horn of Africa participated as a Guest of Honour.

8. The UN was represented at the highest level by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the AU and Head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU); the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as well as officials from UNITAR and the Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD).

9. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Angola, as well as representatives of Egypt, Ethiopia and Kenya attended as Friends of the Seminar, while the Cooperative Republic of Guyana participated as A3 – Plus. AMANI Africa and the Institute of Security Studies attended as Guests of the Seminar.

10. The representatives of Denmark, Norway and Switzerland equally attended the Seminar, in their respective capacities as partners.

IV. OPENING CEREMONY

11. The Opening remarks were delivered by Honourable Dr. Mamadou Tangara, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Gambia, in his capacity as the PSC Chairperson for the month of December 2023. H.E. Ahmed Attaf, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and of Algerian Community Abroad, delivered the welcoming remarks as the host of the Seminar. H.E. Kwaku Ampra Twum-Sarpong, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana also delivered remarks as Coordinator of African Members of the Security Council (A3) and H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs Peace and Security delivered statements on the strategic objectives of the High-Level Seminar. A goodwill message was equally delivered by H.E. Elisabeth Droyer, Ambassador of Norway to Algeria, on behalf of the Partners (Denmark, Norway and Switzerland).

12. The Speakers, during the opening segment, congratulated the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Republic of Sierra Leone on their election as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and expressed Africa's hope for the contribution of the two AU Member States in championing the Common African Positions within the UN Security Council decision-making process.

V. FORMAT

13. The Agenda of the High-Level Seminar was structured into the following four main sessions:

On Day 1: 17 December 2023

Open Segment

14. **High- Level Panel Discussion I**: 10th Anniversary of the High-Level Seminar: The role of the PSC and the A3 in promoting Africa's Voice on peace and security issues in the UN Security Council agenda, what more needs to be done? The Panel was moderated by H.E. Ahmed Attaf, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and of Algerian Community Abroad, and it included the following Panelists:

- H.E. Tete António, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Angola;
- H.E. Mr. Nabil Ammari, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad of the Republic of Tunisia;
- H.E. Kwaku Ampra Twum-Sarpong, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and Coordinator of African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3);
- H.E. Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, AU Permanent Representative to the UN; and
- H.E. Mr. Jean Pierre Lacroix UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations.

15. High-Level Panel Discussion II: The Resurgence of Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa: Global Outlook, Response and Implications for A3. The Panel was moderated by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, with the following as Panelists:

- H.E. Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- H.E. Dr. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe;
- H.E. John Mulimba, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda; and
- H.E. El Ghassim Wane, UNSG Special Representative, Head of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

On Day 2: 18 December 2023

Closed Segment:

16. Update on the Draft UN Security Council Resolution on Financing of AU Peace Support Operations.

17. Presentation and consideration of the Final Draft Manual on Modalities for Coordination and Cooperation between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council.

VI. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED DURING THE SEMINAR

A. On the 10th Anniversary of the High-Level Seminar: The Role of the PSC and the A3 in Promoting Africa's Voice on Peace and Security Issues in the UN Security Council Agenda- What More needs to be Done?

18. Participants took note of the reflections of the Panelists. They also noted the significant contribution of the High-Level Seminar, towards enhancing and further strengthening the capacity of the A3 to more effectively discharge their Africa-given mandate. Among the milestones achieved since the institutionalization of the High-Level Seminar, participants noted, in particular, the following, namely:

- a) The establishment of the A3 and the African Caucus in New York;
- b) The establishment of the rotating A3 Coordinator;
- c) The Formalization of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN, in New York, as the A3 Secretariat;
- d) Regular consultations between the A3 and the PSC;

- e) Participation of representatives of the A3 in Addis Ababa, in the meetings of the PSC;
 - f) Extensive consultations between the A3 and the PSC ahead of annual joint consultation meetings between the AUPSC and the UN Security Council;
 - g) Amplification of the African voice in the decision-making process of the UN Security Council, including through pen-holding/ co-pen-holding on Africa dossiers;
 - h) The effective defence, articulation and promotion of African solutions to African problems. For example, in responding to the conflict in northern Ethiopia (Tigray); the lifting of sanctions imposed on Somalia and Central Africa Republic;
 - i) Enhanced cohesion and unity of purpose among the A3 which led to the adoption of several UN Security Council resolutions of interests to Africa, such as UN Security Resolution 2457 (2019) of 27 February 2019 on Silencing the Guns in Africa;
 - j) The establishment of the A3 Plus 1 Mechanism and the development of related guideline principles or mechanism;
 - k) Strengthened relations between the A3 and the Africa Group in New York, as well as with other regional groupings;
 - l) Enhanced coherence and coordination between the AU PSC and the A3, thanks to the timely transmission of PSC Decisions to the A3, coupled with the support provided by the AU Permanent Observer Mission in New York (A3 Secretariat) and the PSC Secretariat.
 - m) Encourage the A3 to pursue and defend Africa's Common Positions and interests in the UN Security Council during their membership;
 - n) Forging close ties with other Members of the UN Security Council and the wider UN Family to effectively mobilize support for African common positions and interests, including the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 (G-77); and
 - o) Coordination between the PSC and A3 experts in negotiation on the outcomes of the joint meeting between the PSC and UNSC.
- 19.** Notwithstanding the milestones achieved, participants noted the following challenges faced during the course of the decade, namely:
- a) Sustainable solutions to the institutional capacity constraints facing the A3 Secretariat;

- b) Balancing national interests of individual A3 Members with Africa's interests caused by lack of cooperation and harmonization of positions of capitals of the Member States of the A3;
- c) Inability to develop modalities for joint field missions of the PSC and the UNSC;
- d) The increasing paralysis of the UN Security Council resulting from the divisions among the Permanent Members and the continued recourse to UN General Assembly Resolution 377 of 3 November 1950 (Uniting for Peace Resolution), as well as the increasing divisions within the UN Security Council itself; and
- e) Procedural misunderstandings arising from the negotiations for the UNSC Resolution on predictable and sustainable funding for AU PSOs.

20. In order to effectively address the challenges faced by the A3, participants proposed the following recommendations:

- a) The need for the PSC to always respond swiftly and to provide timely strategic guidance to the A3;
- b) The need to institutionalize and regularize the meetings between the PSC and the A3 in order for them to be abreast with the activities of the A3 in order to provide political and strategic guidance at the highest level;
- c) The need for the A3 to continue to explore the possibility of ensuring pen-holding or co-pen-holding on all African dossiers and dossiers of interest to Africa, within the UN Security Council agenda;
- d) The need for the A3 to continue to strengthen its relations with the Africa Group in New York, as well as with other regional groupings;
- e) The urgent need for the appointment of a Focal Point on A3 within the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department;
- f) The need for the reinvigoration of the monthly coordination meetings between the A3 and the PSC Troika;
- g) The need to continue to further strengthen the capacity of the A3, both, in New York and in Addis Ababa;
- h) The need to explore the possibility of involving the A3 in missions of the PSC relating to conflict/post-conflict situations in Africa;
- i) The need to institutionalize the A3 Plus 1 Mechanism;

- j) The need to regularize and institutionalize the interactions between the PSC and A3 Experts;
- k) The need to urgently establish a credible knowledge management system and a digital repository for the A3 institutional memory which will ensure and enhance a smooth transition between the incoming and the outgoing A3;
- l) The need for the A3 to brief the PSC on a quarterly basis or at any other time when the need arises, on African issues on the Agenda of the UN Security Council, for purposes of information sharing and necessary guidance;
- m) The need for the development of practical modalities for managing/addressing situations where a Member of the A3 is suspended from participating in the activities of the AU;
- n) The need for the AU Commission to urgently address the perennial institutional capacity challenges facing the A3 Secretariat and, in this respect, the need for other Member States, in a position to do so, to emulate Algeria, Morocco and Nigeria who have continued to second staff to the A3 Secretariat at own cost; and
- o) The need to finalize and adopt the Manual on Modalities for Coordination and Cooperation between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council, to guide the working relationship between the PSC and the A3.

B. On the Resurgence of Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa: Global Outlook, Response and Implications for the A3

21. Participants took note of the reflections shared by the Panelists. They expressed deep concern over the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government in the Continent despite the existence of a plethora of formidable AU normative instruments. These instruments include the 2007 African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance (ACDEG); Declaration and Decisions [Ext/Assembly/AU/Decl.(XVI)] on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government, adopted by the 16th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 27 to 28 May 2022; Decision AHG/Dec.141(XXXV) and AHG/Dec.142(XXXV), adopted by the 35th Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Algiers, Algeria, from 12 to 14 July 1999; the Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government, adopted by the 36th Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Lomé, Togo, from 10 to 12 July 2000 (the Lomé Declaration); and the Solemn Declaration of the 50th OAU/AU Anniversary adopted in Addis Ababa on 25 May 2013;

22. Participants condemned all forms of unconstitutional changes of government and re-affirmed the AU Zero Tolerance policy on any form of unconstitutional change of

government. In terms of responses to unconstitutional changes of government, participants noted that the AU has often applied one type of sanctions, namely, suspension of the affected Member State from participating in the activities of the Union and its Organs. Participants emphasized that sanctions were no longer effective as a deterrent against unconstitutional changes of government, due to a number of challenges, which include the disparities between the AU, the RECs/RMs and the United Nations in terms of responses to unconstitutional changes of government.

23. Other challenges, relate to the non-compliance by some Member States, particularly, the neighboring countries, with sanctions imposed by the AU, as well as with the other forms of punitive measures imposed by some RECs/RMs and endorsed by the PSC. All of these challenges are exacerbated by the fact that the AU still lacks enforcement mechanisms. In this regard, participants encouraged Member States to respect PSC decisions and called for closer coordination between AU, RECs/RMs, UN and the international community on the implementation of sanctions. Participants underscored the need to ensure that AU sanctions are more targeted (smart sanctions). They further underscored the need for:

- i) Member States to embrace, deepen and consolidate democracy, as well as to build strong, accountable and resilient State institutions;
- ii) Member States to redouble efforts in addressing governance deficits which are often cited as some of the fundamental root causes of unconstitutional changes of government; in this context, Member States, which have not yet done so, were encouraged to sign, ratify domesticate and comply with the fundamental democratic ideals enshrined in the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance;
- iii) Redoubling investments in preventive measures, such as early warning, preventive diplomacy, as well as robust response capacities;
- iv) Strengthening the AU Sanctions Regime and, in this respect, the need for the AU Commission to expedite the finalization of the comprehensive study on the structural root causes and impact of unconstitutional changes of government in Africa;
- v) Enhancing coordination, alignment/ coherence and complementarity of responses to unconstitutional changes of government between the AU, the RECs/RMs and the UN;
- vi) Encouraging countries in transition to respect the transition roadmaps and implement the decision of the PSC and their respective regional mechanisms, and in this regard, the need for the urgent operationalization of the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions to closely follow up on the implementation of the PSC decisions on sanctions. Participants further emphasized the imperative for all

- Member States to support the implementation of AU measures in response to unconstitutional change of government;
- vii) Ensuring the consistency of the PSC in its application of AU normative instruments and in this regard, participants called for the finalization of the development of guidelines for the implementation of AU Sanctions and requested the PSC Committee of Experts to consider the draft, as soon as possible;
 - viii) The Commission, working in coordination with Member States and RECs/RMs, develop modalities for recalling any Member of the A3, that experienced unconstitutional change of government while representing the Continent in the UNSC, as well as the need to prevent such A3 Member from participating in any forum as Africa's representative;
 - ix) Mobilizing stronger global partnerships with the wider international community, as well as with the private sector or quasi-private sector companies;
 - x) Ensuring that national defence and security forces remain professional and respect their constitutional mandates, as well as the need for improving civil-military relations;
 - xi) Bringing to justice the perpetrators of unconstitutional changes of government using existing African institutions such as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;
 - xii) Strengthening informal engagements between the PSC and Member States under AU sanctions, as one of the platforms for understanding their challenges, as well as proposing suggestions that could enable them to expedite the process of restoration of constitutional order;
 - xiii) The need to always provide for humanitarian corridors in order to ensure that ordinary citizens of the concerned country do not suffer disproportionately on account of the enforcement of sanctions; and
 - xiv) Organizing a Ministerial meeting of the PSC on the margins of the AU Executive Council meetings in 2024 that would be devoted to addressing issues relating to the scourge of unconstitutional change of government in Africa.

C. On the Update on the Draft United Nations Security Council Resolution on Financing of UN Authorized AU Peace Support Operations

24. The AU PSC and the A3 took note of the update on the progress in the negotiations on the Draft United National Security Council Resolution on Financing UN Authorized AU Peace Support Operations as presented by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security.

25. The PSC commended the A3, under the coordination of the Republic of Ghana for the sustained efforts and underlined the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. Participants emphasized that when the AU deploys peace support operations (PSOs) in Africa, it does so on behalf of the United Nations, in particularly very challenging security environments, with very limited capacity, but with the legitimate expectation that the UN will subsequently take over full responsibilities consistent with the provisions of the UN Charter. The PSC and the A3 noted the progress achieved thus far, towards the finalization of the Draft Security Council Resolution on Financing AU PSOs and underscored the importance of ensuring predictable, adequate and sustainable funding for all AU PSOs through UN Assessed Contributions. The PSC commended the A3 for the progress achieved thus far towards finalization of the Draft Security Council Resolution on Financing AU PSOs. In this connection, the PSC:

- (i) Emphasized the importance of ensuring that the AU common position is fully considered respected and incorporated into the resolution, particularly the principles of AU ownership and leadership (command and control) of all peace support operations on the African Continent;
- (ii) Also emphasized that the AU has already demonstrated its commitment towards burden and responsibility sharing, among others by providing financial support from the AU Peace Fund Crisis Reserve Facility towards: a) the financial needs of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS); b) the East African Community (EAC) Regional Force in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo; c) the peace process in Sudan; and d) the peace process in Northern Ethiopia;
- (iii) Underlined that the Draft Resolution should not make any references to any figures, particularly in terms of percentages and that the AU would not accept partial access to UN assessed contributions, it being understood that the UNSC has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and that whatever regional organizations such as the AU do, they do it for and on behalf of the UN;
- (iv) Encouraged the A3 to remain guided by the original position of the AU;
- (v) Underscored the need for the negotiations to be delayed until February 2024 when African Heads of State and Government would be briefed on the process to enable them pronounce themselves on the proposals by partners, particularly the proposal by the US for a maximum of 75% funding of AUPSOs from UN assessed contributions;
- (vi) Emphasized that any variance from the original position of the AU as enshrined in the AU Consensus Paper on Predictable, Adequate, and Sustainable Financing for African Union Peace and Security Activities should be submitted to the AU

Assembly of Heads of State and Government for further guidance and instruction;
and

- (vii) Stressed the need for Member States to continue to speak with one voice throughout the negotiation process.

D. On the Consideration of the Final Draft Manual on Modalities for Enhancing Coordination and Cooperation Between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3)

26. The PSC and A3 Members acknowledged the development of the Final Draft Manual on the Modalities for Enhancing Coordination and Cooperation between the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3) and, in this regard, commended the efforts deployed by the PSC Committee of Experts and the support of the AU Commission (PSC Secretariat) for finalizing the Draft at their level.

27. The PSC and A3 Members considered the Manual and, in this regard, requested the AU Commission to incorporate the additional contributions of Member States to the Manual for consideration and adoption by the PSC at ambassadorial level before submitting it for adoption by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

28. In concluding, participants noted, with satisfaction, the significant achievements registered by the A3 since the launch of the 1st High-Level Seminar in 2013, in Oran, Algeria and specifically commended the current A3 Members (Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique). They further commended in particular, the Republic of Ghana, for its exemplary contribution as A3 Coordinator as well as Gabon, the other outgoing A3 Member. They encouraged the incoming A3 (Algeria and Sierra Leone) to draw lessons, inspiration and best practices from the outgoing A3 and to continue, building on the existing momentum to also further strengthen the A3 cohesion, with a view to amplifying and spearheading the African voice and common position on African peace and security issues in the UN Security Council agenda;

VII. VOTE OF THANKS

29. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mozambique to the AU, H.E. Ambassador Ana Nemba Uaine, delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of all participants. She expressed gratitude to the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and, in particular, to the Oran authorities for the generous hospitality and for the excellent facilities that ensured the successful organization of the 10th High-Level Seminar. She also expressed gratitude to UNITAR, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland, for their continued support towards the successful organization of the High-Level Seminar and looked forward to the successful organization of the 11th High-Level Seminar, in Oran, Algeria, in December 2024.

VIII. CLOSING CEREMONY

30. During the Closing Ceremony, statements were received from H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security; H.E. Ahmed Attaf, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, as the host. H.E. Kwaku Ampra Twum-Sarpong, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana and Coordinator of African Members of the Security Council (A3), officially closed the High-Level Seminar on behalf of H.E. Dr. Mamadou Tangara, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad of the Republic of The Gambia and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of December 2023.

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي

UMOJA WA AFRICA



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

UNIÓN AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

**Assembly/AU/4(XXXVII)
Annex IV**

**MINISTERIAL AND HIGH-LEVEL OPEN SESSION ON THE PROMOTION AND
PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS
OF CONFLICT IN AFRICA**

4-5 DECEMBER 2023

BANJUL, THE GAMBIA

CONCLUSIONS (2023)

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The Members of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), and the representatives of the AU Member States, the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (AP-CAAC), AU Organs/institutions and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), as well as the representatives of partners, including the African Union Network of Think Tanks for Peace (NeTT4Peace), and African Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) community (hereafter referred to as the Participants) took part in the Ministerial and High-Level Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in situations of conflict in Africa, held in Banjul, Republic of The Gambia, from 4 to 5 December 2023.

The Ministerial and High-Level Open Session was officially opened by H.E. Dr. Mamadou Tangara, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad of the Republic of The Gambia and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of December 2023; with remarks by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Co-chair of the AP-CAAC. The Session was also inspiringly addressed by three children from Mozambique, Nigeria and South Sudan who shared their experiences in conflicts and how to prevent and address violations. Following extensive deliberations, Participants:

REAFFIRMED Africa's commitment to continue to take appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights and welfare of the African child, as per the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and other relevant universal human rights instruments and relevant Assembly and PSC decisions;

UNDERScoreD AU's commitment to the realisation of Agenda 2063 and the enshrined Aspirations, particularly 3, 4 and 6, as well as the flagship programme of Silencing the Guns by 2030.

EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN over the continued prevalence of violent conflicts in their various manifestations on the Continent, which undermine the fundamental rights and welfare of children.

COMMENDED Member States which have signed, ratified and domesticated the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and accordingly, **URGED** the remaining five (5) Member States which are yet to do so to sign, ratify and domesticate the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in order to make the Charter fully owned by the entire Member States of the AU;

THE PARTICIPANTS, ACCORDINGLY AGREED ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. The primary responsibility for the protection of children and implementation of the national, regional and continental frameworks, rests with Member States; in this

regard, AU Member States need to redouble efforts and prioritize local programmes which promote the rights and protection of children and anchor a culture of child protection both in peace time and conflict situations;

2. The need for firm commitments to support Member States and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) to facilitate comprehensive actions in favour of child protection in conflict situations; and prevent the grave violations against children's rights and welfare – wanton killing and maiming of children, recruitment or use of children in armed forces or armed groups, attacks on schools or hospitals, rape or other grave sexual violence, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access, including by promoting exchanges of lessons learned and best practices, fostering regular exchanges, and establishing or strengthening existing capacity-building efforts, including with the support of the United Nations as required;
3. Effective operationalization of relevant accountability frameworks for parties involved in armed conflict to unconditionally adhere to all international and regional conventions and respect for International Humanitarian law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and hold accountable all perpetrators for grave violations against children;
4. The imperative to develop a Continental Child Justice Framework addressing both punitive measures and, as well as the recourse and restitution elements for child survivors;
5. Child protection should be gender transformative and mainstreamed in all governance, peace and security mechanisms and processes, including early warning, conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace support operations, and post-conflict reconstruction and development;
6. The imperative of Member States to ensure sensitization on the rights of children in the communities and endorse, domesticate and implement the Safe Schools Declaration to ensure continuity of education in conflicts;
7. Member States are urged to redouble efforts in ensuring mental health and comprehensive psycho-social support programmes for children affected by conflict, including rehabilitation and integration in contextually relevant and age-appropriate cognitive development programmes;
8. Child protection should be mainstreamed in the processes of peacemaking and peacebuilding and children, including those with disabilities, need to be actively involved in development planning and peace processes at all levels of governance to ensure integration of their interests in policies, as well as ensure the implementation of those policies; the AUC should therefore ensure the participation of children in post-conflict reconstruction and development through mainstreaming of child protection in the revised AU draft policy on PCRD to assist RECs/RMs and Member States, within an overall umbrella of children's involvement in planning, policy making and implementation;

9. The AU Commission should mainstream child protection in the Continental Early Warning System and ensure the inclusion of child protection sensitive indicators in close cooperation and coordination with RECs/RMs.
10. Children's interests should meaningfully be considered in DDR to facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration into communities and effectively address the phenomenon of re-recruitment of children in situations of conflict, particularly in protracted conflicts;
11. Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) should enhance training programs for law enforcement, military personnel, and judicial officials to incorporate child protection laws and best practices in preventing, investigating, and prosecuting crimes against children in conflict situations;
12. The imperative of establishing a robust continental reporting, monitoring and evaluation framework with clearly defined indicators, in line with Assembly Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.718 (XXXII)], aimed at providing accurate, reliable and up-to-date data on the plight of children in situations of violent conflict and crisis;
13. Member States to facilitate the availability of sustainable and sufficient funding for child protection institutions at national level and call on partners and the international community to provide financial support to promote activities related to the promotion of child rights and protection;
14. The critical role of the media covering the situations of children in conflict areas, and emphasized the need to ensure that the identity of children is protected from the information broadcasted.
15. For the AU Commission to expedite the appointment of the AU Special Envoy for Children in Conflict Situations in Africa.
16. The need to prioritise the education and the protection of children in conflict situations activities in the 2024 AU theme of the year 'Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century: Building Resilient Education Systems for Increased Access to Inclusive, Life Long, Quality, and relevant Learning in Africa'.
17. The need for the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) under its promotion mandate, to continue building the capacity Member States and RECs/RMs on mainstreaming the protection of children in conflict situations and in collaboration with the AU Commission to strengthen the already existing AU roster of child protection experts.
18. The need to reinforce the partnership and create synergies between the African Union and the United Nations on the protection of children in conflict situations, within the Joint AU-UN Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed in

2017, and the AU-UN Joint Framework on Human Rights, signed in 2023, with the support of the Office of the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the UN Office to the African Union, and UNICEF, in line with the principles of complementarity and mutual respect and building on comparative advantages.

19. Furthermore, Participants:

20. **AGREED** to institutionalise the “Annual High-level Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa” and for it to be formalised as the ‘Banjul Process’, to be held, on a rotational basis, at a venue to be agreed upon. **REQUESTED** AP-CAAC to use this forum to report its annual activities and share experiences while exploring ways and means to address issues of children in conflict situations on the continent; **ALSO AGREED** that children should participate and actively take part at the Annual High-level Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa.
21. In this regard, the Banjul Process should serve as a continental community of practice on Children in conflict situations to facilitate lessons learning and sharing experiences consistently with AP-CAAC, Member States, RECs/RMs and CSOs; and **EMPHASIZED** the need for an annual publication on the state of children in conflicts on the Continent, highlighting lessons arising and policy gaps to timely and effectively respond;
22. **EXPRESSED GRATITUDE** to the Government and People of the Republic of The Gambia for graciously hosting the inaugural High-Level Open Session on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Children in Situations of Conflict in Africa.

Adopted on 5 December 2023 in Banjul, The Gambia

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الأفريقي
UMOJA WA AFRIKA



UNION AFRICAINE
UNIÃO AFRICANA
UNIÓN AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

Assembly/AU/4(XXXVII)
Annex V

**15TH RETREAT OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION
ON THE REVIEW OF ITS WORKING METHODS
25 TO 27 NOVEMBER 2023
TUNIS, TUNISIA**

PSC/Retreat.15(2023)

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) held its 15th Annual Retreat on the Review of its Working Methods from 25 to 27 November 2023, in Tunis, Tunisia. The Retreat was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Abdi Mahamoud Eybe, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to the AU, in his capacity as the PSC Chairperson for November 2023. H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), delivered a statement on behalf of the Chairperson of the AU Commission.

2. The retreat was officially opened by H.E. Nabil Ammar, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad of the Republic of Tunisia.

3. The Retreat observed a minute's silence (moment of silence) in solidarity and honour of all victims of the ongoing violent conflict in Gaza which has disproportionately affected women, children and the elderly.

II. PARTICIPATION

4. The Retreat was organized at the Ambassadorial level. All PSC Members, namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Djibouti, The Gambia, Ghana, Kingdom of Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe attended the Retreat, accompanied by the Members of the PSC Committee of Experts. The AU Commission was represented by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, who was accompanied by the Directors of the Conflict Management and Governance and Conflict Prevention Directorates, Head of the PSC Secretariat, representatives from the Cabinet of the Chairperson of the Commission, Office of the Legal Counsel and staff from the PAPS Department. The list of participants is attached as Annex A.

III. RATIONALE

5. The 15th Annual Retreat was organized as part of the steps to continuously strengthen the PSC working methods, with a view to enabling it to effectively discharge its mandate of promoting peace, security and stability in Africa, within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and African Governance Architecture (AGA), as embodied in the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (herein after referred to as 'PSC Protocol').

IV. FORMAT

6. The Retreat focused on three key issues, namely:

- i. Outcome of the Retreat of the PSC Committee of Experts held from 21 to 23 November 2023 which considered various working and policy documents to facilitate the deliberations of the Council;
- ii. PSC Working Methods including an assessment of the Annual Indicative Programme of Work for 2023 and budget ; and
- iii. Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCGs) on the Continent, with emphasis on the best ways and means of addressing them using the existing normative frameworks of the Union.

V. SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES

A) On the Report of the Retreat of the PSC Committee of Experts (CoE)

7. The PSC welcomed the Report of the Retreat of the PSC Committee of Experts that was organized from 21 to 23 November 2023, as presented by Ms. Wafa Kassim Ali, in her capacity as the Chairperson of the Committee of Experts for the month of November 2023. The Committee of Experts Retreat finalized the following two Draft Documents which are herewith attached as annexes B & C, respectively:

- a) The Draft Terms of Reference for the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions; and
- b) The Draft Modalities of Enhancing Coordination and Collaboration between the PSC and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3), also known as the 'Oran Process'.

8. Furthermore, the Committee of Experts developed its Indicative Annual Programme of Work for 2024, as well as the PSC Draft Indicative Annual Programme of Work for 2024. The Report of the Retreat of the Committee of Experts is also herewith attached as Annex D.

9. The PSC commended the Committee of Experts and underscored the need to institutionalize and regularize the Retreat of the Committee as an annual event to precede the PSC Annual Retreat on the Review of its Working Methods.

B) On the A3 Draft Resolution on Financing AU Peace Support Operations

10. The PSC took note of the Draft United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution on Financing AU Peace Support Operations that was circulated by the three elected African Members (the Republics of Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique), of the United Nations Security Council (A3), as presented by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security.

11. The PSC commended the A3, under the coordination of the Republic of Ghana, for the progress thus far and underscored the importance of ensuring predictable, adequate and sustainable funding for all AU Peace Support Operations through UN Assessed Contributions. The PSC underlined the importance of ensuring that AU

common positions are respected, namely: the principles of AU ownership and leadership (command and control) of all peace support operations on the African Continent. Furthermore, the PSC:

- (i) Emphasized that the AU has demonstrated its commitment towards burden and responsibility sharing, among others by providing financial support from the AU Peace Fund's Crisis Reserve Facility towards the financial needs of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS); the East African Community (EAC) Regional Force in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, support for the peace process in Sudan and implementation of the peace process in Northern Ethiopia;
- (ii) Underlined that the Draft should not make any references to any figures, particularly in terms of percentages;
- (iii) Stressed that Africa wants 100% funding from the UN-assessed contribution for AU-led PSOs;
- (iv) Underscored the need for the A3 and Africa as a whole to continue to speak with one voice towards expediting the adoption of the Draft Resolution by the UNSC;
- (v) Called on the PSC Members to urgently submit to the PAPS Department Secretariat their inputs to the draft resolution for onward transmission to the A3;
- (vi) Requests the A3 to keep the PSC constantly abreast throughout the process of the negotiation.

C) On PSC Working Methods

12. The PSC took note of the presentation by the Head of the PSC Secretariat, on the PSC Working Methods, whose scope included the status of implementation of the decisions of Council, the 2023 PSC Indicative Annual Programme of Work, challenges and recommendations on areas that require further improvements.

13. The PSC commended the PAPS Department for the sustained support being provided to the PSC, albeit with very limited institutional capacity. Consequently, the PSC made the following observations:

- a) The need to ensure follow-up on the implementation of the PSC decisions, with emphasis on effective tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of PSC Decisions;
- b) The need to dedicate two sessions annually to the assessment/evaluation of the status of implementation of PSC and Assembly decisions on peace and security in the Continent. For this purpose, the PSC mandated the PSC CoE with the

support of the PAPS Department to develop a matrix on the status of implementation of council decisions that include an impact assessment;

- c) In the interim, whenever a Concept/Briefing Note is prepared on a particular matter under consideration, the Secretariat shall attach a matrix indicating decisions taken on the same issues/themes in the past; the state of implementation of such decisions; and center of responsibility for its implementation, in order to ensure that Council avoids repetitions and detailed decisions on the matter and to promote effective monitoring and accountability;
- d) The importance of rationalizing the 2024 Annual Indicative Programme of Work of the Council, among others by limiting the frequency of meetings on thematic issues and where possible, by merging meetings on seemingly similar thematic issues;
- e) The need for the PAPS Department to continue to advise all incoming PSC Chairpersons to prioritize meetings on country-specific situations and to limit the number of meetings per month to ensure the devotion of more focused and sustained attention on existing and emerging conflict situations;
- f) The need for the PSC to ensure that the adoption of communiqués is guided by the weight of the matter discussed. As such, the PSC does not have to always issue communiqués for every meeting;
- g) The need to ensure that the draft Communiqués are processed expeditiously between the Secretariat and the Chair of the month so that the same can be submitted to PSC Members in a timely manner for consideration under the Silence Procedure preferably not later than 12 hours after the conclusion of a meeting. This will facilitate timely reporting on the outcome of the meeting;
- h) The importance of more consultations with Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) in addressing peace and security challenges on the continent. In this regard, agreed to engage the RECs/RMs on a regular basis in order to exchange views, complement efforts and share lessons, as well as expertise in addressing various peace and security issues on the continent;
- i) Bearing in mind the importance of enhancing collaboration with other international organizations, the PSC underscored the need for reviving the annual consultations with the Peace and Security Council of the League of Arab States (LAS) and mandated the AU Commission to engage the LAS Secretariat on how to revive the consultations;
- j) Underscoring the importance of improving early warning mechanisms, the PSC reiterated its call for regularizing the interactions between the Chairperson of the Commission and the Council. Such consultations would provide the Council with an opportunity to exchange views on matters which need urgent attention of the Council, pursuant to the Mombasa Retreat Conclusions; as well as to brief the

Council in situations where the Commission has deployed its good offices to ensure better coordinated efforts;

- k) With regard to preparations for this year's Oran Process, Council underscored the need for the host to adhere to the obligations of hosting AU statutory meetings. In this regard, the PSC mandated the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security to engage with the host country and report back to Council⁴;
- l) The need to ensure the full use of the PSC Troika System, in line with paragraph 75 of the PSC Manual on Working Methods including in preparations of the PSC monthly Provisional Programme of Work;
- m) While welcoming the efforts deployed in organizing the First Retreat of the Military Staff Committee (MSC), the PSC underscored the need to ensure that institutional capacity building programmes for the MSC are also incorporated in the activities of the PSC, including field missions;
- n) Requested the PAPS Department to closely coordinate with the PSC CoE on the budget of the Department and the PSC to enable PSC Members to support the budget during its presentation to the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Budgetary matters as well as the Committee of Fifteen Ministers of Finance (F-15);
- o) The need to urgently enhance the institutional capacity of the PSC Secretariat, among others by expediting the recruitment of regular staff, including dedicated interpreters, in order to optimize its support to Council;
- p) The need for the Commission to;
 - i. communicate to all PSC Member States the technical requirements and required support for the renovation of the PSC Chamber at the Nyerere Peace and Security Building,
 - ii. Furnish the office of the Chairperson of the PSC within the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Peace and Security Building, in order to enhance its utilization.
 - iii. name the plenary hall of the Nyerere Building as the "PSC Chamber"; and
 - iv. Communicate to PSC Members the technical requirements and required support for the procurement of a system to transcribe PSC Meetings verbatim for purposes of institutional memory.
- q) Welcomed the proposal from the PAPS Department to mark the 20th Anniversary of the PSC in May 2024 and, therefore, requested the Department to establish a committee for the organization of the Anniversary. The Committee composed of one delegation per region should meet at both the Ambassadorial and Experts level, and to commence its activities from January 2024.

⁴ On 29 November 2023, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, following his engagement with the Host, reported back to the Council that the concerns raised by the PSC Members have been resolved.

D) On Unpacking the AU Sanctions Regime for Unconstitutional Changes of Government and Similar Political Situations: Typology, Methodology and Procedure of Action:

14. The PSC took note of the presentation by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and acknowledged that the AU has a formidable number of sanctions normative frameworks and instruments.

15. The PSC noted that the AU has mostly applied one type of sanctions in response to cases of unconstitutional changes of government, namely, suspension of a Member State from participating in the activities of the Union and its Organs. However, the PSC acknowledged the challenges being faced in the implementation of AU sanction regimes, include:

- i. Disparities between the AU and some RECs/RMs on the application of sanctions regimes, which were undermining AU peace efforts. For example, whereas the AU had suspended Sudan, IGAD had not; whereas the AU had suspended Niger, ECOWAS had not and whereas the AU had suspended Gabon, it remains a member of the A3;
- ii. non-compliance by some neighbouring countries in the implementation of sanctions imposed by the AUPSC and/or those sanctions imposed by RECs/RMs and endorsed by the PSC;
- iii. Lack of enforcement mechanisms for AU sanctions; and
- iv. called on Member States to respect PSC decisions and for closer coordination between AU and the RECs/RMs on the implementation of sanctions.

16. Furthermore, the PSC emphasized the need to ensure that the ordinary citizens of the concerned country do not suffer disproportionately due to the enforcement of sanctions on a Member State. In this connection, it called for more targeted sanctions.

17. Among others the PSC proposed the following in order to enhance the efficacy of the AU sanctions regime:

- i) The need to review and consolidate the AU Sanctions Regime and, in that connection, mandated the AU Commission to undertake the review and brief the Council accordingly;
- ii) The importance of ensuring clarity, including the distinction between AU sanctions or punitive measures in response to unconstitutional changes of government and those sanctions and other forms of punitive measures imposed on Member States by other institutions and/or bilateral development partners;

- iii) Underscored the primary mandate of the PSC, in accordance with the protocol relating to its creation, in addressing peace and security matters on the Continent. The PSC called for an institutional mechanism or framework for enhancing coordination and complementarity of efforts in the implementation of sanctions measures, as well as the best ways and means of communicating accurately the AU Sanctions Decisions to all critical stakeholders, in particular the RECs/RMs;
- iv) With reference to article 16 of the PSC Protocol, the need to ensure alignment of responses/activities in the field of peace and security between the African Union and the RECs/RMs, bearing in mind that the PSC is the standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts on the Continent;
- v) The need to ensure support of the international community in the effective application of sanctions, in particular targeted sanctions, as well as the support of the private sector or quasi-private companies;
- vi) The need for the PSC to be consistent in the application of AU normative instruments;
- vii) The need for the development of guidelines for the implementation of AU Sanctions, in this regard, the Council mandated the PSC CoE to work with the PSC Secretariat on the draft and submit to the PSC for consideration by 31 January 2024;
- viii) The need to ensure that the perpetrators of unconstitutional changes of government face justice for their actions; in this regard, the Council underscored the imperative of leveraging existing institutions such as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- ix) The PSC welcomed the Draft Terms of Reference for the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions which will focus on the effective monitoring and evaluation of the status of implementation of sanctions imposed by the PSC. The Council directed the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions to immediately commence its operation, following the adoption of its terms of reference;
- x) The need for informal regular interactions between the PSC and AU Member States under AU sanctions, in order to expedite the process of restoration of constitutional order;
- xi) The Council encouraged all Member States to fully comply with, and consistently enforce, AU sanctions; and

- xii) The PSC Commended the PAPS Department for its ongoing assessment of the structural root causes/drivers and impact of UCGs in Africa and requested the Department to submit the findings of the study by 31 January 2024 to Council for consideration.

E) On Briefing on PAPS Institutional Development Matters; Progress Review of PAPS New Structure under Implementation of AU Institutional Reform

18. The PSC took note of the presentation, solely for information purposes, by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye on the PAPS institutional development matters within the context of ongoing AU Institutional Reforms. The presentation highlighted some mismatches and misalignments such as, the exclusion of the AU Border Programme in the PAPS Structure, as well as the efforts being deployed by the PAPS Department towards addressing them, including to ensure that the Unit on Urbanization is urgently transferred to the Department of Infrastructure and Energy where it fits more appropriately.

F) On Financing AU PAPS activities - Utilization and Evolving Impact Assessment of the AU Peace Fund and Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF)

19. The PSC took note of the briefing by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye on the status of the AU Peace Fund and the disbursements made from the Crisis Reserve Facility to ATMIS, EAC Regional Force, Sudan, and Ethiopia Peace Process.

VI. CONCLUSION

20. The PSC moved a vote of thanks that was delivered by H.E. Ambassador Edward Xolisa Makaya, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the AU, to the Government and People of Tunisia for the warm hospitality accorded to the PSC delegation and members of the AU Commission and for graciously hosting the Retreat.

21. The Council welcomed the pledges by the Republic of Djibouti to host the 2024 retreat on its working methods and by the Republic of Namibia to host the 2024 PSC induction in March 2024.

22. The Report of the 15th PSC Annual Retreat on the Review of its Working Methods and the Draft Terms of Reference for the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions will be submitted to the Council for consideration and adoption. However, before the approval by the PSC, the Draft Terms of Reference of the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions will be submitted to the PRC for further inputs and comments to ensure a universal and more inclusive validation process by the entire membership of the Union. The Draft Modalities of Enhancing Coordination and Collaboration between the PSC and the African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3), also known as the 'Oran Process' will be submitted to the PSC for consideration and adoption after inputs from the 10th High-Level Seminar.

**REVISED AFRICAN UNION POST-CONFLICT
RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT
POLICY (2024)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms

Foreword

Preface

Section I: Introduction

Objectives

Rationale

Definitions

Scope

Principles

Section II: Indicative Pillars

Pillar 1: Political Governance and Transition

Pillar 2: Security Governance

Pillar 3: Humanitarian Assistance

Pillar 4: Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development

Pillar 5: Women, Peace and Security

Pillar 6: Human Rights, Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

Pillar 7: Youth Inclusion

Pillar 8 : Child Protection

Pillar 9: Environmental Sustainability

Section III: Resource Mobilisation, Actors and Processes

Resource Mobilisation

Actors, Governance Mechanisms and Processes

ANNEXES

Benchmarks and standards

Pillar 1: Political Governance and Transition

Pillar 2: Security Governance

Pillar 3: Humanitarian Assistance

Pillar 4: Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development

Pillar 5: Women, Peace and Security

Pillar 6: Human Rights, Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

Pillar 7: Youth Inclusion

Pillar 8 : Child Protection

Pillar 9: Environmental Sustainability

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|---|
| AfCFTA | African Continental Free Trade Area |
| AfDB | African Development Bank |
| AGA | African Governance Architecture |
| ACHPR | African Commission on Human and Peoples' Right |
| AU | African Union |
| AUTJP | African Union Transitional Justice Policy |
| APSA | African Peace and Security Architecture |
| ASI | African Solidarity Initiative |
| AUTJP | African Union Transitional Justice Policy |
| CADSP | Common African Defence and Security Policy |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| DAG | Donor Assistance Group |
| DDRRR | Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation Reintegration and Reestablishment |
| ECOSOCC | Economic, Social and Cultural Council |
| HIPC | Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries |
| HIV/AIDS | Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced Persons |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| GBV | Gender-based Violence |
| GMOs | Genetically Modified Organisms |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organisations |
| PAPS | Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department |
| PBC | Peacebuilding Commission |
| PBSO | Peacebuilding Support Office |
| PCRD | Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development |
| PSC | Peace and Security Council |
| PSPs | Peace Strengthening Projects |

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------|
| QIPs | Quick Impact Project |
| RECs | Regional Economic Communities |
| RMs | Regional Mechanisms |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SALWs | Small Arms and Light Weapons |
| SSR | Security Sector Reform |
| TJ | Transitional Justice |
| UN | United Nations |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

FOREWORD

H.E. Abdelfattah el-Sisi

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
African Union Champion of Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development

It gives me great pleasure to write this foreword in my capacity as the African Union Champion on Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), in the context of the review of the African Union PCRD policy framework, which comes at an opportune moment and represents a significant milestone in the African Union's efforts to promote peace, security, and development in the continent.

Over the years, the continent has experienced numerous conflicts that have had far-reaching consequences on the political, social, and economic development of African countries. Experience has shown the imperative of a paradigm shift from crisis management to a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent response across the peace and development continuum, with peacebuilding as an integral part throughout.

For that purpose, I, as the Chair of the African Union in 2019, launched the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development in the same year, as an annual African platform to address the inseparable issues of peace and development on the continent. I trust that the review and implementation of the AU PCRD Policy will benefit from and build upon successive Aswan conclusions.

I recognize the importance of the revised policy in promoting stability and development in Africa and the realization of the African Union's Agenda 2063. In this regard, I would like to stress that Egypt remains committed to continue working closely with the African Union Commission, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms and Member States to promote the implementation of the policy, particularly through the full operationalisation of the African Union Centre for Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development in Cairo.

I commend the African Union Commission for its appreciated efforts in the review of the policy and urge all Member States to fully implement the recommendations put forth in the review.

I also call on all international partners to continue their support to enhance the continent's ownership of its peacebuilding efforts. It is through such homegrown efforts and sustained commitment from all stakeholders that we can create a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Africa that we all desire. Together, we can build a brighter future for Africa.

SOLIDARITY STATEMENT

H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat

Chairperson of the African Union Commission

I am delighted to present the revised AU Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy. It has been reframed within the framework of retooling PCRD efforts to foster peace, security and stability in the continent, as part of AU efforts to realise Agenda 2063. Key to the realisation of Agenda 2063 is the achievement of its Aspirations which propel the continent towards “An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law” and “A peaceful and secure Africa”.

These pivotal aspirations are actualised through the use of mechanisms that promote and support dialogue-centred strategies aimed at conflict prevention and resolution, including post-conflict reconstruction and development. As part of this effort, establishing a culture of good governance, democratic values, gender equality, and respect for human rights, justice, the rule of law, peace and tolerance in African countries emerging from conflict, remain critical. The unwavering commitment of the AU to these goals thus remain unambiguous.

This revised Policy stems from the realisation to reconsider and fill the gap experienced in the role of the AU in engaging with and responding to potential, active and post-conflict situations. The Policy was initially predicated on the existence of a post-conflict situation, which has become more of an exception than the norm. It addressed the need to harmonise approaches in the continent with stakeholders to ensure that the AU makes its contribution to global peace.

The Commission will redirect great efforts and continue to work with all stakeholders in a collective quest to consolidate peace in the continent. The joint effort of all AU entities will have far-reaching repercussions if the common objective of partnership and coordination is to propel the continent to Agenda 2063. An effective and efficient implementation of the revised Policy at the centre of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture presents a platform for enhancing the outcomes of peacebuilding and statebuilding.

It is, therefore, a document that should be studied closely by Regional Economic Communities, Regional Mechanisms, Member States, Civil Society Organisations, local authorities as well as other institutions and individuals, that want to play a positive role in the continent. In this regard, it is crucial that all concerned actors redouble their efforts to improve the lives of people and help governments and other institutions to interpret this Policy into concrete action on the ground.

To that end, I invite all Member States to implement the principles, programmes and initiatives as outlined in this Policy.

PREFACE

H.E Ambassador Bankole Adeoye
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security

Our continent's quest for peace remains critical as the African Union commemorates twenty years. In the last two decades, instability has proved to be a major impediment to economic and social development, especially in post-conflict situations. This calls for a reconsideration of the evolving peace and security contexts and how continental tools and mechanisms remain responsive and relevant.

This revised Policy thus establishes a more holistic working definition for post-conflict reconstruction and development, which draws upon peacemaking, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding best practices, where its focus is expanded beyond post-conflict contexts. This is necessary given the increasingly dynamic, non-linear nature of the contemporary peace and conflict landscape in the continent.

It is my strong belief that the revised Policy will enable the AU to leverage the agency of its citizens, as well as with existing partnerships to deliver and ensure peace in the continent. In this revised version, two new significant pillars i.e. Youth and Environmental Security, have been added, while other pillars have been updated and reinforced to better respond to the mutating nature of security issues in Africa. It will enable AU PCRD initiatives and programmes to respond to the twin core issues of demographic dividends and the impact of climate change in post-conflict contexts.

The revised Policy is also a guiding tool that renews the agency role of women, boys and girls in peacebuilding efforts. In doing so, it renews our commitment and ensures accelerated progress towards the achievement of the objectives of AU Agenda 2063 and the UN 2030 Agenda. The important role of African leadership and national/local ownership is strongly endorsed in this revised Policy to support efforts in reducing a country's risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national mechanisms and capacities for conflict prevention and management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

I count on your support in implementing this revised Policy and remain committed to partnering with you as we forge a collective path of peace, prosperity and stability in the continent.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Background, Conceptual and Contextual framework

1. Over the years, the nature of conflicts and other threats to peace, security and development in Africa has undergone significant changes, with increase in complexity, frequency and severity. This evolution has put to test the existing African policies and capacities and necessitated rethinking our approach and tools in response.

2. The AU PCRDR Policy, adopted in 2006, is no exception. It was originally underpinned by a linear conception of conflicts progressing from pre-conflict to post-conflict states. Based on this conception, PCRDR interventions are envisaged to come at the tail end of the process following the cessation of hostilities, and the conclusion of peace agreements. However, experiences gained in responding to conflicts on the continent reveal that contemporary conflicts are non-linear and require engagements/interventions along a peace continuum to ensure dynamic, sufficient and timely responses to the various stages of conflict. This is to prevent exacerbating fault lines and minimising the risks of relapse into conflict.

3. In response to this new reality, the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC), in its 1047th session held on 12 November 2021, called for the urgent review of the AU PCRDR Policy framework in order to ensure that it is re-aligned and adaptable to the emerging challenges in the continental peace and security landscape, and emphasized the criticality of widening the scope of AU PCRDR activities by incorporating a peacebuilding dimension to them, thus covering the entire conflict cycle phase, namely pre- conflict, conflict, and post-conflict.

4. This revised Policy represents a critical step towards the operationalization of the nexus between the APSA and AGA, particularly frameworks that have been established since the adoption of the AU PCRDR Policy in 2006. It is also aligned to the various AU instruments on peace and security aimed at creating a secure, peaceful and prosperous Africa.

5. It is also informed by the evolution of the international discourse on peacebuilding, which witnessed a shift from post-conflict peacebuilding to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, which is understood as a goal and a process that encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. This conceptual evolution at both the international and regional levels, recognises the imperative for working across the entire conflict spectrum, thus underpinning AU peacebuilding and PCRD endeavours. The shift is also critical in contributing to the development of a common strategic vision and understanding between the African Union, the United Nations and other existing and prospective partners to guide the development of a viable partnership for peacebuilding in Africa, with a view to enhancing complementarity, fostering concrete synergies where feasible and to leveraging comparative advantages of each side at scale.

6. Beyond providing guidance, this Policy is an opportunity to take transformative action in coordinating, designing and implementing comprehensive initiatives and programmes that seek to consolidate peace, promote sustainable development and pave the way for growth and regeneration in countries and regions emerging from conflict. It enables the continuity of peacebuilding interventions throughout the peace continuum including during peace support operations and stabilisation phases through programmes and initiatives that lead to long-term peacebuilding and development.

Approach, Format and Methodology of the Review Process

7. The format of reviewing the AU PCRD Policy embraced internal and external processes. In 2016, the ten-year anniversary workshop on the implementation of the AU PCRD Policy which sought to take stock of the policy's implementation, was designed to obtain inputs from a wide range of stakeholders for the conceptualisation of an action plan for the PCRD policy which has, since 2013, been aligned with and mainstreamed into Africa's strategic vision of 'Silencing the Guns' and Agenda 2063 that envisions a socio-economic transformation of Africa through sustained growth and development.

8. In commemorating fifteen years since the adoption of the AU PCRDR Policy, a High-Level Seminar on Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development was held on 9 November 2021. Focusing on the six pillars of the AU PCRDR Policy framework, it presented observations and recommendations on how to effectively implement PCRDR efforts.

9. In March 2022, the appointment of ten Experts and a Rapporteur by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security set an important milestone in the review process. Several meetings were held to undertake the review of the Policy which culminated in a high-level Expert workshop held in Accra, Ghana, in September 2022. In addition to the Experts, this workshop saw the participation of members of the Working Group on PCRDR and representatives from a REC, Organ, Member State and CSO. A second workshop was convened in Cairo, Egypt, in May/June 2023 to finalize the review of the AU PCRDR Policy in line with the directive of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in its 36th ordinary session held in February 2023. Discussions at the Accra and Cairo workshops and subsequent expert-level reflections shaped the finalised draft Policy. In particular, a workshop held in Dar es Salaam in August 2023 reviewed the document to ensure a gender lens. Thereafter, relevant AU Organs undertook its validation and endorsement in February 2024.

Objectives

10. The objective of this Policy is to foster coordination, effectiveness, and timeliness, of peacebuilding programmes and initiatives in countries and sub-regions of Africa seeking support in their quest for sustainable peace and development. It lays the foundation for sustainable peace and security, justice and development in line with Africa's vision of renewal and growth as articulated in Agenda 2063. The Policy is, therefore, conceived as a tool to:

- a) guide the AU Centre for PCRDR in devising tailored, context-specific and gender responsive peacebuilding strategies and programmes across the peace continuum, as well as to advise and advocate in this regard;

- b) consolidate peace, prevent relapse of conflict and address the root causes of conflict, violence and grievances paying special attention to women, youth, children and other vulnerable groups;
- c) enhance complementarities, coordination and where possible concrete synergies at scale between and among diverse actors engaged in PCRDR processes;
- d) encourage and fast-track planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and results-based reporting of reconstruction, stabilisation, and development programmes and initiatives.

11. It is imperative that PCRDR processes be viewed and used as an opportunity for the transformation of the conflict landscape on the continent and a step towards securing sustainable peace and development, with human security at the heart of all PCRDR programmes and initiatives. It is important that this Policy be pursued within the global context of the search for durable peace and security, and hence complement existing international initiatives.

Rationale

12. This Policy is a strategic and normative framework that sets the stage for elaborating in a comprehensive manner, thematic and activity areas that are crucial for the consolidation of peace. It will accordingly, require revised guidelines, result-based frameworks and action plans for PCRDR that empower affected countries and regions to take the lead in the reconstruction and development of their societies.

13. The Policy draws on lessons learned and best practices from new dynamics, past and ongoing peace and security reconstruction efforts in Africa. Taking this into account, there is a critical need for PCRDR processes to translate the commitment to peace into tangible benefits. This is dependent on the formulation of comprehensive integrated strategies and approaches that require substantial institutional and human capacities in the implementation of PCRDR.

14. The Policy seeks to reduce pressure on affected countries and regions by providing a consistent and coherent strategy that will fast-track the planning,

implementation and monitoring of reconstruction and development programmes and initiatives.

15. Finally, this Policy will provide measurable and actionable parameters to improve effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and coordination between state and other relevant stakeholders operating at local, national, regional or/and international levels, during all phases of PCRDR.

Definitions

16. For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions have been adopted:
- a. Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRDR)/ peacebuilding: a comprehensive set of measures that seek to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflicts through assessing and addressing the needs of countries and regions affected by conflicts, violence and instability, including the needs of affected populations. PCRDR is conceived within the African vision of renewal and sustainable development and while its programmes and initiatives are integrated, many must be pursued simultaneously. Peacebuilding programmes and initiatives should cover several immediate, medium- and long-term needs across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. The scope of these programmes and initiatives encompasses eight indicative pillars, namely: political governance and transition, security; humanitarian/ emergency assistance; socio-economic reconstruction and development; gender, peace and security, human rights, transitional justice and reconciliation, youth and environmental security.
 - b. Human Security is a multidimensional notion of security that goes beyond the traditional notion of state security. It encompasses freedom from fear, freedom from want and the right to live with dignity and participate fully in the process of governance. Human security should be based not only on political values but on social and economic imperatives as well. This multidimensional notion of security thus embraces such issues as human rights; the right to participate fully in the process of governance; the right to equal development as well as the right to have access to resources and the

basic necessities of life; the right to protection against poverty; the right to conducive education and health conditions; the right to protection against marginalisation on the basis of gender; protection against natural disasters, as well as ecological and environmental degradation.

- c. Socio-economic development is a multidimensional process that contributes to improved living conditions, improved ability to meet basic needs (such as health, education, and food), the eradication of poverty and inequality, and enhanced capacity of citizens to realise their potential.

Scope

17. The review is intended to provide for more clarity and an expanded scope of peacebuilding/ PCRDR by building on relevant African experiences. Previously, peacebuilding was mostly understood as post-conflict peacebuilding/PCRDR. However, practice has revealed that peacebuilding/PCRDR engagement is ultimately intended to reduce the risk of lapse or relapse into conflict. It can be seen as an aspirational goal, aiming at fostering the ability and capacity to look beyond crisis management, the immediate silencing of the gun and resolution of conflicts. This shift offers an opportunity to foster better focus by the AU on preventing conflicts, so that not only the symptoms, but also the root causes of conflicts are addressed. Hence, the Policy aims at tackling issues that may otherwise trigger and fuel new cycles of conflict.

18. Additionally, this Policy document is cognisant of the reality that there is non-linearity in conflict situations. Very few contemporary conflicts in the continent have reached the post-conflict stage, illustrating the limited viability of AU PCRDR/ peacebuilding interventions to commence once the post-conflict phase kicks in. Most contemporary contexts are in fact, in a pre-conflict or in-conflict rather than post-conflict. Accordingly, in this revised Policy, greater attention has been given to how PCRDR/ peacebuilding interventions respond to these more dynamic environments, on the one hand, while making clear provisions for how planned PCRDR processes can either be stalled or reoriented in scenarios in which there is a re-emergence of hostilities, on the other hand. The Policy would thus be applicable in pre-conflict, in-conflict and

post-conflict situations to address immediate imperatives such as the provision of basic (public) goods and services and reconstruction and development needs.

19. Scope of PCRDR: This Policy embraces a more holistic working definition for PCRDR, which draws upon peacemaking, conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacebuilding practices. This is necessary given the increasingly dynamic, non-linear nature of the contemporary conflict landscape in the continent. Implementing actors, including Member States, the AU particularly through its PCRDR Centre, RECs/RMs, CSOs and development partners, could address the needs for sustainable development throughout the different stages of conflict. Accordingly, PCRDR is a broad spectrum of efforts from conflict prevention and management, as well as stabilisation, recovery, to reconstruction and development, with a view to comprehensively supporting countries whether at risk of conflict, or in-conflict, or emerging from conflict, and prevent relapse back to the cycles of violence.⁵ It is important to stress that implementing the revised Policy in its currently expanded scope demands a commensurately robust peacebuilding and PCRDR architecture that allows for greater complementarity, coherence and synergy among key peacebuilding stakeholders. The PCRDR and peacebuilding architecture comprises continental, regional, national and community mechanisms, tools and approaches that play critical roles in consolidating peace. From the AU viewpoint, in undertaking initiatives and activities of the Policy, there is a need to ensure an AU-wide response with clear mandates, roles and responsibilities designated for all relevant entities.

20. While the policy is wide-ranging and all-encompassing in its aspiration to address the peacebuilding and PCRDR needs of affected communities, it needs to be acknowledged that its full implementation critically rests on the commitment of Member States to engage with the complimentary elements of the policy, including the signature, ratification, domestication and implementation of relevant norms,

⁵ Communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at its 958th meeting held on 23 October 2020, on Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development in Africa.

policies, and strategies.

21. The end state of PCRD is one where effective, responsive and functional state institutions are in place so that peace, law and order prevail; the humanitarian situation has stabilised and populations are able to meet their basic needs. Additionally, the end state should consider the provision of frameworks to protect human rights and assist those in vulnerable situations. The establishment and institutionalisation of political mechanisms to prevent and manage conflict through peaceful means to facilitate equitable participation including women and youth in political and socio-economic life; will further enhance the end state. Furthermore, policies, initiatives and programmes that promote broad-based sustainable development are being implemented; access to justice ensured and human rights are guaranteed and respected.

Principles

22. This Policy is underpinned by **five core principles**, that constitute the basic minimum values and standards which inform action across all peacebuilding/ PCRD programmes and initiatives. These principles are African leadership, national and local ownership, inclusiveness, equity and non-discrimination, cooperation, collaboration, coordination and cohesion, prioritising investment in conflict prevention including through capacity building for sustainability. In line with AU normative frameworks, all core principles adopt and mainstream women and youth with an objective of ensuring an inclusive continental PCRD and peacebuilding agenda. Additionally, the Do No Harm and conflict-sensitive approaches are encouraged in all aspects of implementation.

23. **African Leadership:** This principle is critical to ensure that the priorities, implementation, monitoring and oversight remain the responsibility of African governments, in partnership with RECs/RMs, CSOs, African citizens and affected communities in the spirit of “African Solutions to African Problems”:

- a. The AU Assembly and relevant policy organs provide strategic and political leadership and oversight of PCRD on the continent including resource mobilisation.
- b. The AUPCRD centre provides technical expertise as well as develops and implements relevant strategies and programming.
- c. RECs/RMs play a critical role in defining regional cross-border peacebuilding priorities and their implementation.
- d. Member States and relevant African mechanisms provide support and solidarity to countries in peacebuilding situations.
- e. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and African institutions, such as the Panel of the Wise, FemWise, Youth Wise among others provide support and solidarity to countries in peacebuilding situations.
- f. The AU Commission should work closely with the International Organizations and ad-hoc arrangements, within the framework of African leadership on peace and security issues in the continent and mindful of the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council, while insisting on the necessity of achieving the financial independence of the African Union as a strategic objective and, meanwhile, the necessity to benefitiate from the sustainable and predictable and financing of peacebuilding activities.

24. **National and Local Ownership:** This principle is critical to ensure that PCRD activities, programmes and initiatives are aligned to national and local needs and priorities, enhance a common understanding of a shared vision, maximise support for PCRD through the engagement/re-engagement of the population in their governance and guarantee sustainability of recovery efforts.

- a. PCRD has, as a central concern, the rebuilding of legitimate state authority and the enhancement of national ownership of the process, creating a new consensus in governance.
- b. National leadership applies to all aspects of PCRD from conceptualisation and planning, assessment, implementation to monitoring and evaluation.

- c. Partnerships, particularly at the national level, between beneficiaries and the government, state and non-state actors, are critical to successful PCRD.
- d. Prioritise local ownership and engagement with community-level in tandem with national peacebuilding efforts.

25. **Inclusiveness, Equity and Non-Discrimination:** This principle ensures that no one is left behind, and remains fundamental in addressing exclusion and inequitable distribution of power and wealth, which have traditionally been amongst the root causes of conflict. In this regard:

- a. An organic link between those managing PCRD and peacebuilding efforts and the general populace is an imperative.
- b. A fair and equitable distribution of power and wealth is key to the prevention of escalation of unresolved or new grievances.
- c. PCRD programmes and initiatives promote the participation, and address the needs, of those who are marginalised and/ or in vulnerable situations such as women and girls; the senior citizens; persons abled differently; and youth (especially children affected by conflict, violence and instability).
- d. Leverage the unique and diverse roles of CSOs in supporting efforts towards inclusivity and equity.
- e. Promote the participation of the Diaspora to secure their input in all PCRD processes.

26. **Prioritising investment in conflict prevention including through Capacity Building, Development and Utilisation is critical in peacebuilding.** Preventing conflicts is a proven and cost-effective investment. It requires, *inter alia*, building effective and responsive state capacities and institutions able to meet the needs of the population. All peacebuilding/PCRD efforts have as their goal the attainment of sustainable peace and should, as a matter of priority, build and/or strengthen national and local capacities.

27. The complex challenges of PCRDR, the pressure to deliver peace dividends, and the presence of a myriad of actors require cooperation and coherence to ensure that actors and programmes and initiatives respond to the needs and priorities of the affected country and peoples. In this regard, cooperation and coherence helps to:

- a. clarify, and define roles and responsibilities in ways that guarantee national ownership, African leadership, legitimacy and accountability.
- b. optimise the use of resources, increases effectiveness and efficiency, and improves timeliness of response.
- c. Promote transparency, mutual accountability, and shared objectives between the various local, national and international actors involved, which enhances trust.
- d. Enhance synergy of action, integrated planning and operations.
- e. Promote genuine partnerships and complementarity with the relevant international structures such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission and other relevant global and continental mechanisms.

28. **Capacity Building and Utilisation for Sustainability:** All peacebuilding/PCRDR efforts have as their goal the attainment of sustainable peace and should, as a matter of priority, build and/or strengthen national and local capacities. Therefore:

- a. All PCRDR activities need to involve capacity building, training and mentoring components that strengthen the capabilities of societies and communities to support and legitimise national processes.
- b. PCRDR programmes and initiatives ought to utilise local expertise; and where it is weak, leverage relevant African capacity at the regional and continental levels, as well as from the Diaspora.
- c. There is also the need to provide guidance on modalities of international engagement in building local capacity, based on African norms, values and belief systems.

SECTION II: INDICATIVE PILLARS OF THE POLICY

29. The theory of change underpinning the AU's PCRD policy framework highlights the need for a proactive and dynamic approach to peacebuilding, reflecting an understanding of conflict as a non-linear process. By recognising conflict as a continuum — from pre-conflict to conflict and post-conflict — the policy affirms the necessity of interventions at every stage. This revised perspective aims to reduce the likelihood of conflict emergence and re-emergence, aligning activities within the policy's eight indicative pillars: political governance and transition, security, socio-economic reconstruction and development, human rights, transitional justice and reconciliation, gender and women, humanitarian/emergency assistance, youth, and environment.

30. The goals and objectives are strategically intertwined, linking conflict prevention, peace consolidation, and sustainable development. Each pillar, while self-standing, overlaps and interacts with the others, reflecting the complex interdependencies in conflict situations and peacebuilding processes. For instance, promoting political governance and transition contributes to enhanced security, while socio-economic reconstruction and development support human rights, justice, and reconciliation. Similarly, gender equality and youth empowerment are vital for socioeconomic growth and political stability. Thus, these interventions — adapted to context-specific scenarios — collectively contribute to addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering sustainable peace.

31. The Policy embraces an inclusive approach, emphasising coordination among diverse actors engaged in national and local peacebuilding and PCRD processes while aligning with international peacebuilding norms and AU instruments. This approach acknowledges that the effectiveness of the policy depends on the synergistic efforts of various stakeholders. This integration and collaborative spirit ensure a more robust response to emerging peace and security challenges while continually striving towards Agenda 2063's vision of a peaceful, prosperous Africa.

32. This Policy allows for working in tandem with other relevant continental policies and has eight indicative pillars that are both self-standing and cross-cutting and that represent the pillars upon which all PCRD efforts should be developed and

sustained across the different phases of action, considering that the basic objective is to address and resolve the root causes of conflict. Importantly, the implementation must follow a comprehensive and multidimensional approach as a critical guiding instrument towards building, restoring and consolidating peace. The indicative pillars are:

- a. Political governance and transition;
- b. Security governance;
- c. Humanitarian assistance;
- d. Socio-economic reconstruction and development;
- e. Women, peace and security;
- f. Human rights, transitional justice and reconciliation;
- g. Youth inclusion;
- h. Child protection; and
- i. Environmental sustainability.

33. Each of these indicative pillars highlights the political objectives that must be pursued and the baseline actions needed to support constructive and comprehensive processes across all phases of PCRDR.

34. While presenting generic indicators, benchmarks and standards, overall, incremental improvements in all the pillars are markers of the successful implementation of this revised Policy. See **Annex A** for the benchmarks and standards of each pillar. In addition to the benchmarks annexed, toolkits and operational guidance notes may be developed for smooth implementation of the Policy.

35. Where applicable within respective institutional mandates, the Policy pillars will be pursued via integrated approaches with and by partners. For example, this includes but is not limited to close and continued collaboration with the relevant strategies on fragility and resilience, governance, gender, youth, private sector, climate change and other frameworks, strategies and policies applicable at the time.

PILLAR 1: POLITICAL GOVERNANCE AND TRANSITION

36. Political governance is the process through which the institutions for exercising authority are developed and implemented. It encompasses the promotion of good democratic governance and its core values, as called for in the preamble of the AU Constitutive Act, the commitments set out in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), the Declaration on the framework for an OAU response to unconstitutional changes of Government (2000); the Lomé Declaration on the Framework for the OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government, (2000), the 2002 OAU/AU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, the PSC Ezulwini Framework for the Enhancement of the Implementation of Measures of the African Union in Situations of Unconstitutional Changes of Government (2009), the Malabo Declaration on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa (2022) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

37. The core elements of good political governance include: political participation, transparency, accountability, separation of powers, creation of effective civil institutions, the rule of law and independent civil oversight, as provided for in the Declaration on Political, Economic and Corporate Governance (2002).

38. The foundations of governance and the elements for re-establishing the social contract in post-conflict societies are often agreed upon in the relevant political frameworks and diplomatic support that end the conflict, violence, and instability. Therefore, it is imperative to develop consensus on the critical considerations for (re)establishing governance in political agreements, taking into consideration the principles of equity and of leaving no one behind.

39. When violent conflict occurs, governance institutions and actors are among the first casualties as institutions of governance are attacked, and governance actors, including security, the rule of law, and legislative and executive actors, become direct targets of violence. Advancing political governance requires the strengthening of governance institutions, managing diversity and promoting inclusion and effective leadership and participation of women, and youth. In particular, it requires the effective implementation of the commitments outlined in Chapter 9 (Art. 27-43) of the ACDEG, the AGA Youth Engagement Strategy (2016-2020), 10-Year Implementation Plan for the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security

(YPS) 2020-2029, the Maputo Protocol, the AU Gender Policy and other relevant legal and policy frameworks for fostering popular meaningful leadership and effective participation in political governance.

40. Political governance should promote inclusive politics and pluralism in a manner that contributes positively to nation building. The focus of initiatives in this regard should be driven by a collective national vision that facilitates accountable and responsive leadership, as well as incremental and institutional approaches that deliver cohesive systems and structures of governance. In so doing, the role and effective participation of women, senior citizens, youth and differently abled persons, including their access to power and decision-making, needs to be particularly encouraged and strengthened.

41. Successful peacebuilding/ PCRDR is dependent on a revitalised social contract that draws from lessons learned and contextual realities. The social contract, therefore, becomes the platform for articulating frameworks for governance and pathways for transition.

42. To this end, the social contract should include, but not limited to:

- An agreed-upon framework (that includes formal and informal rules) for governance and co-existence;
- Existence of non-discrimination frameworks and equal opportunities for all to promote effective participation and access to justice, rule of law and security;
- Inclusive national dialogue platforms;
- Provision of basic social services;
- Facilitate the state's legitimate monopoly over the appropriate use of force and the development of political institutions, and consolidation of the state's security apparatus, including through the disarmament demobilization and reintegration of all armed groups; and
- Engender trust in accountable leadership, justice, the rule of law and security institutions.

43. For this reason, robust institutions and accountable leadership in societies emerging from conflict is a critical driver in the creation of good governance structures, determination of strategies for the equitable distribution of power, consolidation of peace and facilitation of transition from the

emergency to the development phases of its reconstruction. It encompasses the promotion of good democratic governance and its values. To do this, it involves the distribution of power from the national to the local level. In this way, the process of developing the collective national vision providing cohesive and responsive systems of governance is possible.

44. To implement this pillar, the following objectives should be pursued by conflict-affected countries:

a) Consensus building:

- i. (Re)-establish consensus of governance through the development of consultative processes that guarantee broad-based representative participation and leadership, allow for collective determination of needs and priorities, and enhance ownership of the reconstruction and development process;
- ii. Develop processes and frameworks for the adequate management of diversity particularly to end all forms of discrimination based on ethnicity, political or religious beliefs, affiliations and gender;
- iii. Commence a fair and inclusive process, at national, provincial and community levels for all sectors of the society, to determine national vision, national identity and establish and reinforce a legitimate state; and;
- iv. Establish a constitutional, democratic governance framework and inclusive government that guarantees periodic contestation for political office, based on the rule of law.

b) Policy development:

- i. Establish rules and realistic timetables for the interim government and authorities;
- ii. Adopt policies and legislation to address the challenges of corruption at the national, regional, continental and global levels;
- iii. Create checks and balances within public governance structures, and ensure the separation of power between the executive, judiciary and the legislature;
- iv. Initiate and support processes that fast-track comprehensive capacity building at the state and non-state levels, including encouraging the

- return of members of the Diaspora with skills relevant to the enhancement of good governance;
- v. Integrate continental and regional frameworks of governance into PCRD strategies;
 - vi. Encourage the ratification and domestication of relevant instruments of governance;
 - vii. Facilitate societal transformation in ways that reflect the interests of women, address their needs and aspirations, and consolidate any opportunities that emerge as a result of the challenges of conflict, to improve their lives; and
 - viii. Secure civic space from negative influences that may include indoctrination, manipulation, forced recruitment and related practices in areas of instability and violence. It is important to determine how the civic space would be protected and which entity provides this protection. In such situations, there is a need for further reflection on the role of governments.
- c) Decentralisation of governance:
- i. Facilitate the creation of mechanisms that decentralise and devolve power, decision-making, and the management of resources, to all levels of governance from the national to the community levels;
 - ii. Create mechanisms that allow and encourage inclusive broad-based participation of the population in their governance;
 - iii. Promote the engagement of local civil society organisations in democratic governance processes at all levels, and assure the role of local community leaders in a bottom-up approach to governance; and
 - iv. Encourage innovative forms of political governance such as autonomy to make administrative, legislative and judicial competencies transferred to local residents while respecting the integrity and sovereignty of the African nations, to, to foster smooth political transitions in conflict situations, taking into account national contexts and frameworks as enablers to reinforcing democracy and stability on the continent, as enablers to reinforcing democracy and stability.
- d) Institutional development:

- i. Promote the building of state capacity and the re-establishment of political systems as a process to mediate differences and manage pluralism;
 - ii. Facilitate the establishment and/or restoration of inclusive democratic public institutions and civil authorities, as well as legislative oversight capacity;
 - iii. Create mechanisms to ensure accountable, efficient and effective public and civil service; and
 - iv. Ensure administrative justice.
- e) Human resource and capacity development:
- i. Engage in rebuilding political process skills, such as mediation, negotiation and consensus building that are key to transformation of society, but which are often destroyed during conflict and instability;
 - ii. Bolster the capacity of non-state actors to participate in good democratic governance; and
 - iii. Establish civic education and other public campaigns to raise awareness and understanding of the new political structure and vision, especially among the youth.

PILLAR 2: SECURITY GOVERNANCE

45. The security pillar of this PCRD framework strives to build a secure and safe environment for the well-being of those who live in conflict affected communities, countries, and regions. It centres a human security and gender sensitive approach to security consistent with the AU Constitutive Act, Common Defence and Security Policy and the AU Security Sector Reform Policy framework. It furthermore seeks to re-establish and reform the security architecture of the state, including;

- Legal elements such as developing adopting and implementing gender transformative legal frameworks to ensure inclusive security;
- Re-establishing territorial integrity;
- State control over the means of coercion; and
- Security for the population.

46. Security policies should take into account the insecurity stemming from traditional and emerging threats of conflict such as armed groups, violent extremism,

organised crime, cybercrime, piracy, SGBV, health challenges and environmental issues including climate change. It shall ensure the inclusion of civil society, women, youth, senior citizens and differently abled persons in DDRRR and SSR processes to promote the adoption of common regional approaches⁶ in support of developing adequate security measures and policies.

47. The security component in a post-conflict context includes implementation of DDRRR mechanisms for non-state armed groups, as well as state SSR. As such, DDRRR and SSR are mutually reinforcing processes, with the objective of reforming and strengthening the governance of a legitimate and functional gender responsive security apparatus, operating under responsible and responsive civilian control and oversight.

48. Security Sector Reform activities should foster institutional and operational capacity building of effective, accountable and professional security sector, as well as shape a new vision of the country's trajectory which instils a human security approach and a culture of peace.

49. Strengthening regional DDR efforts in light of rising cross-border risks and threats remains critical. The DDR approach should include greater cross-border operations.

50. To implement this pillar, the following objectives should be pursued by conflict-affected countries:

a. Inclusive and effective DDRRR

51. DDRRR should address the immediate security needs of countries emerging from conflict through action in the following areas:

- i. Focusing DDR/RR and related actions on individuals, ex-combatants and communities (acknowledging the different ways in which women and youth participate)⁷ including focusing on groups affected by conflict such as women affected by and associated with armed conflict, children affected by and associated with armed conflict, operating at local, national and regional levels;

⁶ Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, art 3 (b).

⁷ These could include women associated with armed groups, children affected by armed conflict, children associated by armed conflict and women affected by armed conflict.

- ii. Improving and establishing enhanced capacity of national law enforcement, security agencies or bodies and the appropriate institutional infrastructure responsible for policy guidance, research and monitoring on all aspects of small arms and light weapons proliferation, control, circulation, trafficking, reduction⁸ demining, and landmine victims' assistance and ensuring the surrender and recovery of all illicit weapons and explosive remnants of war;
- iii. Ensuring that judicially seized and/or surrendered illicit weapons by their holders to the State find their way to defined agencies for disposal and/or destruction;
- iv. Improving or establishing, as applicable, the stockpile security, accountability and management in line with the regional and international voluntary guidelines, including the Modular Small-arms control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC) and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG)⁹ and use of security and defense weapons against abuse and misappropriation. Where appropriate, attention should be paid to storage, training and education of personnel in charge of management and custody, as well as strengthening surveillance capabilities of such facilities;
- v. Ensuring that state and civilian owned arms are marked in accordance with national, regional and international standards to foster tracing;
- vi. Ensuring that women and youth ex-combattants are part of DDRRR processes and programmes aimed at strengthening resilience and livelihood options;
- vii. Addressing the specific security concerns of survivors of sexual violence including dealing with trauma, medical and psychological healing and children born out of conflict as they require special attention, as well as protection from reintegrated perpetrators who may constitute a renewed threat to them;

⁸ Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, art 3 (a).

⁹ Communiqué of the 860th meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 18 July 2019 on illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

- viii. Implementing contextually appropriate, gender responsive and survivor-centred transitional justice processes in reconstruction planning to promote sustainable peace and achieve development goals;
- ix. Pursuing locally influenced integrated approaches to repatriation, reintegration, and resettlement of refugees, internally displaced persons, ex-combatants, and their families, with particular attention to women and girl survivors of violence;
- x. Supporting ex-combatants and their associates in the transition to civilian life and enhancing the absorptive capacity of beneficiary communities and authorities, including strengthening local governance structures, capacities and processes in post-conflict situation;
- xi. Fostering conditions that enable the disarmament and return of foreign combatants (foreign terrorist fighters) to their state of residency or citizenship in cooperation with relevant Member States;
- xii. Promoting RRR that is inclusive of the voices of survivors and communities with regard to the forms that they will take;
- xiii. Actions aimed at deradicalisation should be in compliance with International Human Rights Law and Humanitarian Law standards;
- xiv. Creating a coordination mechanism between all relevant actors, including local, national, regional and international stakeholders to sequentially manage ties between DDR/RR, SSR, transitional justice, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and economic recovery so that each process phase builds on and supports broader stabilisation and consolidation objectives involved in post-conflict situations; and
- xv. Strengthening regional DDR efforts in light of rising cross-border risks and threats. The DDR approach should include greater cross-border operations.

b. Survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and their children.

- i. Women and girl survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and their children born of rape face specific, life-long challenges. They are often perceived as affiliated with the parties to the conflict, provoking stigma and social exclusion, even within their families and communities. Survivors of rape and their immediate families suffer trauma and may

- reject children born of conflict-related rape leading to incidents of child neglect and abuse, infanticide, abandonment or other grave violations.
- ii. Survivors often suffer from a wide range of severe reproductive health problems, such as sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and vesicovaginal fistula and/or obstetric fistula.
 - iii. In many cases, survivors, who may be children themselves, and the children born of such violence have been rendered vulnerable to further sexual exploitation, a lack of access to livelihoods, and community social networks and support.
 - iv. In some countries, children born out conflict-related sexual violence may find it difficult to access birth certificates, education, and citizenship due to community rejection, unknown paternity, or association with “enemy”/terrorist forces.
 - v. The myriad exclusions and challenges increase the vulnerability of the survivors and their children to abduction, recruitment, re-recruitment, conflict-driven trafficking, and sexual exploitation. These abiding challenges deepen transgenerational grievances and have been shown to undermine social cohesion, which can in turn destabilise peace and development processes.
 - vi. Critical peace, justice and humanitarian interventions often overlook survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and their children born of conflict-related sexual violence.

c. Policy interventions

Countries emerging from conflict must develop and implement policies that aim to address the rights and needs of women and girl survivors or conflict-related sexual violence, and their children born of conflict-related rape. These include:

- i. Non-discriminatory access to health care, education justice and accountability, as well as the official recognition through registration of births and citizenship.
- ii. Develop, resource and implement policies and programmes to combat stigma and social exclusion; rehabilitation and reintegration for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence,

and their children born of conflict-related sexual violence.

- iii. Ensure the participation of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and children born out conflict-related sexual violence in the planning, and implementation of transitional justice and other accountability mechanisms.

d. Institutional and capacity building

- i. DDRRR processes should integrate adequate referral pathways to programmes and services that are equipped to address the distinct needs of survivors and children born of conflict related rape.

e. Coordinated and Sustainable SSR

SSR aims to promote more stable states and greater security for people, as well as legitimacy, good governance, integrity, and sustainability of security functions. To this end, the following are necessary:

- (i) Ensure security sector transformation addresses the specific needs and challenges faced by women, children, youth, senior citizens and minorities;
- (ii) Focus efforts on upgrading, professionalising, and improving the cohesion of defence and security forces;
- (iii) Prioritise the re-establishment and strengthening of security institution capacities, including defense, police, judiciary, border control and customs and informal mechanisms;
- (iv) Develop a gender responsive capacity building programme in the areas of law enforcement, intelligence, investigation, hostage rescue, demining, rescue, civil military coordination (CIMIC) actions, cyber repressive actions against online crime and terrorism, border surveillance and rapid intervention in support of civilian populations;
- (v) Include democratising civil/military relations on the SSR agenda to institutionalise the inclusion of relevant civil society organisations as partners in safety and security activities;
- (vi) Ensure that all DDR and SSR processes are coordinated to ensure accountability. A minimum standard should be set by oversight institutions for quality control;

- (vii) Support the inclusive, effective and meaningful participation of women and youth in DDR/RR/SSR processes and security governance;
- (viii) Ensure that women gain access to appropriate judicial and security services;
- (ix) Broaden SSR scope of action to include health and environmental issues in support of national and/or local authorities' response to epidemics and drought in specific contexts, while maintaining focus on security objectives;
- (x) Include long-term reinsertion activities within broader development programmes, addressing former combatant reinsertion needs;
- (xi) Include information security systems in policy planning to address emerging and changing cybercrime, cyberterrorism, and cyber-conflict;
- (xii) Strengthen effective governance on anti-corruption, anti-money laundering and terrorist financing.
- (xiii) Commission an independent body to evaluate and review DDR/RR and SSR processes administered by the national body in charge of programme implementation.

f. Security Sector Governance

52. The governance of the security sector in a manner consistent with democratic norms and values and the rule of law is essential for the legitimate, accountable, efficient, effective and gender responsive delivery of security services. Security Sector Governance (SSG) establishes democratic oversight of the security sector. Accordingly, SSG should be underpinned by:

- **Civilian Control over the Security Sector**
 - i. The management and oversight of the security sector should be under duly elected/appointed executive control. The executive authority is accountable to citizens through parliament, elections and judicial oversight;
 - ii. Parliament drafts and approves security legislation and budgets;
 - iii. Security sector reform processes should ensure effective civilian control over the security sector;
 - iv. Legal frameworks and policies for civilian oversight of the security sector should be drafted and adopted;

- v. Civil society, women's organisations, youth, media, researchers among others should be enabled to provide public scrutiny and oversight of the security sector;
- vi. Establish the necessary institutions and oversight committees, including parliamentary portfolio committees and ombudspersons;
- vii. Adopt a communication strategy for transparency in information on security sector governance and SSR processes;
- viii. Engage in regular reviews of the security sector; and
- ix. Capacitate civilians with the necessary security literacy for effective governance and oversight of the security sector.
 - **Enhanced human and institutional capacities**
 - i. Support authorities in charge of devising security defence policy, by means of training in policy and strategy planning at national level, enabling them to fulfil their mission, understand global and regional commitments, norms, and standards relevant to the security sector, define appropriate security objectives, deadlines, and means and resources. All stakeholders should be engaged, including legislative, executive, judicial, ombudsperson, human rights and civil society bodies, including women's organisations;
 - ii. Support the bodies in charge of implementing security and defence policies and strategies, through the provision of technical assistance, training and equipment and sufficient budget to enable them to act effectively; and
 - iii. Consolidate research and strategic intelligence capacities on comparative post-conflict reconstruction and development experiences in relation to security sector governance and security sector reform.

PILLAR 3: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

53. Humanitarian situations impact on women, men, girls, and boys differently. In many post-conflict contexts, humanitarian crises and situations have tended to exacerbate existing gendered inequalities. For women, children, the elderly and differently abled persons, humanitarian situations can limit their access to resources and services, which are needed for relief and recovery.

54. During humanitarian situations, women and girls are confronted with specific protection issues and challenges, including increased incidence of SGBV, and increased vulnerability to harmful practices such as child marriage, trafficking, among others.

55. Children are also disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises because of their inherent vulnerability, and they face challenges such as violence, neglect, sexual exploitation and abuse, early pregnancy, forced prostitution, dropping out of school as well as forced separation from family members. Against this background, during PCRDR processes, the protection of human rights, women's rights, and the rights of those most at risk is imperative.

56. Humanitarian assistance is a set of integrated and coordinated measures that seek to save and sustain lives, maintain basic human dignity, ensure the protection of civilians, support the return and reintegration of displaced populations, and help resuscitate socio-economic activity, particularly in the immediate post-war situation when state capacity is most limited.

57. Humanitarian/ assistance is an important and integral part of AU's long-term peace, security, and development agenda. The PSC Protocol provides for the Africa Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) to play an active part in coordinating humanitarian action in order to restore life to normalcy in the event of conflict, in post-conflict situations and during natural disasters.

58. The Malabo Declaration (2022) and its 10-year Implementation Plan¹⁰ calls for PCRDR activities to integrate humanitarian action into peace and security processes, ensuring that issues such as food security, pandemics, climate change and natural disasters are addressed. At the same time, the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness in Africa (2016) call for inclusive approaches towards addressing humanitarian issues, in addition to addressing root causes of vulnerability.

59. The Kampala Convention (2009) commits to respect and protect the rights of those that are internally displaced, including elimination of harmful practices that displace women and prevent their return. It supports access to justice and remedies for displaced women, in addition to supporting displaced women to escape poverty.

¹⁰ Adopted by the AU Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference on 27 May 2022.

60. In line with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN), the AU's approach to humanitarian action places emphasis on conflict prevention and the need to create synergies among political, peace, development, and humanitarian actors to achieve durable solutions to humanitarian issues in the continent.

61. To operationalise the norms, the AU's Humanitarian and Natural Disasters Support (HANDS) Policy and AU Humanitarian Policy Framework underline the importance of collaboration, coordination and partnerships in responding to humanitarian situations and complex emergencies.

62. In implementing this pillar, it is recognised that integrating humanitarian imperatives in PCRD processes is critical in ensuring the long-term restoration of peace and stability in affected countries and regions. This integration is aimed at preventing the recurrence of conflict by involving populations affected by humanitarian crises.

63. Successful PCRD processes should entail measures to address the structural challenges preventing the return, rehabilitation and reintegration of displaced populations, in line with Kampala Convention. In addressing the continuum from return to reconstruction and development, there is a need to take cognisance of different categories of displaced persons. These include refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, statelessness persons, ex-combatants, unaccompanied minors, and children. The principles in tackling humanitarian dimensions are laid out in various AU legal and policy instruments¹¹ highlights a continuum.

64. Within the context of PCRD, there is need to ensure that gender issues are integrated throughout the humanitarian cycle. This is designed to ensure that humanitarian interventions are inclusive, gender-responsive, relevant, effective, efficient, accountable, and adaptable to the changing needs and context of the affected population. The following stages can be discerned in the humanitarian dimensions of PCRD;

- a) **Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan:** A multi-sectoral approach to emergency and humanitarian preparedness is imperative at continental,

¹¹ The 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa; the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa ('Kampala Convention') and the African Union's Humanitarian Policy Framework (2016).

regional, national, local and community levels. It entails developing institutional guidelines for humanitarian and emergency responses. The participation of women, youth, the elderly, differently abled persons, children, in EPRPs should be institutionalised.

- b) The AU Centre for PCRD, the AU Humanitarian Agency, and the AU Development Agency (AUDA)/NEPAD should play a pivotal role in strengthening capacities at continental, regional and national levels, especially on mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action and PCRD activities.
- c) **Risk Monitoring:** Monitoring of the risks of disasters should include a focus on gendered drivers and impact of humanitarian crises. The interaction between the PCRD and humanitarian, political, peace and security actors, is critical. An Inter-departmental approach to monitoring is required. The collaboration between AU, RECs/RMs and Member States is pivotal. Effective participation of women, youth, the elderly, differently abled persons, children should be institutionalised through their existing associations, groups, and AU affiliated platforms such as ECOSOCC, GIMAC and community based early warning systems.
- d) **Needs Assessment:** This includes conducting gender-responsive and harmonized needs assessments to provide information and data for evidence-informed action. Needs assessment should identify the needs, gaps, capacities, risks, opportunities, and priorities of the affected population. This process will also examine the legal, political, social, economic, and environmental factors that influence the humanitarian response. There should be emphasis on collecting disaggregated data on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, economic status and other social indicators to identify the various needs and priorities of affected groups. The aim of this assessment should focus on medium- and long-term needs to facilitate the transition from humanitarian action to longer-term development.
- e) **Strategic Response Planning:** An integrated approach is required at continental, regional, national, local and community levels. The strategic humanitarian response planning process enables the development of more effective responses to the needs of the affected population. Strategic Humanitarian Response Planning (SHRP) is designed to ensure that

humanitarian activities have the necessary resources, including adequate budget, technical capacity, logistics and partnerships. Gender budgeting should be undertaken, as informed by gender-responsive guidelines and planning tools. This includes commitment and ringfencing humanitarian funds and resources towards vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, internally displaced persons, migrants, and refugees. Strategic response planning should include stakeholder consultations that consider the affected population, including women's groups. The SHRP should have gender indicators and outcomes.

- f) **Resource Mobilisation:** Resource mobilisation and allocation includes gender budgeting and developing financial tracking systems which are gender-responsive.
- g) **Implementation of the Humanitarian Intervention:** Humanitarian interventions in post-conflict contexts should aim to address the needs and priorities of the affected population. Implementation of humanitarian action should ensure that the needs of women are fully integrated into the programme design. The implementation of the humanitarian intervention should also adapt to the changing needs and context of the affected population, and should intentionally seek out the needs of women, girls, youth, the elderly, differently abled persons, and other vulnerable populations. The participation of women in emergency response decision-making platforms is critical.
- h) **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Develop gender-sensitive indicators and tools for monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring teams must be gender balanced in addition to having adequate gender expertise. Consult representatives of women's groups, networks, associations. Ensure that the data collected is gender disaggregated.
- i) **Overall Assessment:** This involves evaluating the humanitarian intervention to provide a systematic assessment of the value and significance of the humanitarian assistance to the affected population. Gender-responsive evaluation frameworks should be used to undertake the overall assessment.

The African Humanitarian Agency, established in the Common African Position as the main driver of AU's humanitarian action, has the mandate to a) provide assistance and ensure effective coordination of humanitarian action on the continent, while taking into account early warning, response, adaptation and building resilience. b) build and strengthen the capabilities and capacities of AU Member States, Regional Bodies and Mechanisms in preventing, responding, managing effectively, alleviating and contributing to resolving the humanitarian crises on the continent, and to enhance capacity of AU Member States, RECs and AU bodies in cooperation with other agencies to prevent and respond to humanitarian crises and to design with Member States strategies for building adaptation and resilience at the continental, regional and national levels for effective response to humanitarian crises in conflict-affected contexts.

Post-Emergency Phase: Developing and implementing legal and policy frameworks that are geared at protecting the rights of internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees, including providing access to justice services. This includes provision of legal aid to displaced women.

- a) **Voluntary repatriation:** the free and voluntary return of refugees to their country of origin in safety and dignity;
- b) **Reintegration:** the ability of returning refugees, internally displaced persons and others to secure the necessary political, economic, legal and social conditions to maintain their life, livelihood and dignity;
- c) **Rehabilitation:** This entails the restoration of social and economic infrastructure (e.g., schools, clinics, water points, public facilities and houses) destroyed during conflict in areas of return to enable communities to pursue sustainable livelihoods; or actions that enable the affected population to resume more or less 'normal' patterns of life. These actions constitute a transitional phase and can [occur] simultaneously with relief activities, as well as further recovery and reconstruction activities, and
- d) **Reconstruction:** the (re)establishment of political order, institutions and productive capacity to create a base for sustainable development. Developmental interventions that not only seek to build or repair the damage or return to the *status quo ante*, but also address medium- and long-term needs and improvements in policies, programmes, systems and capacities to

avert the recurrence of crisis and reach higher levels of employment and standards of living.

65. The following are also key facets of reintegration in relation to different phases of the humanitarian PCRD/peacebuilding continuum;

- **Legal:** Access to legal processes; legal support for ownership of property. There is the need to promote gender-responsive informal legal and justice systems and alternative dispute resolution processes, which are rooted in the contextual realities of the affected communities. Collaboration between formal and informal systems to facilitate cross-learning and sharing of experiences.
- **Political:** Stable government; full participation in political processes; gender equality in all aspects of political life; freedom of thought and expression; protection from persecution;
- **Economic:** Access to productive resources (e.g. land, agricultural inputs and livestock). There should be measures to ensure women's access to land and other productive assets.
- **Social:** Access to services; security; absence of discrimination; community-level dispute resolution, etc.

66. In post-emergency phase, there is a need to note that inclusion and sustainable return and reintegration have several parameters and indicators, such as the inclusion of displaced persons in regional and national development plans including poverty reduction strategies and improved quality of life of those that have been integrated, right to property, nationality, and overall economic inclusion.

67. Programmes and initiatives under this pillar must support the provision of lifesaving assistance to populations recovering from distress and support for the voluntary safe and dignified return of refugees, internally displaced persons and other conflict-affected populations. Support under this pillar must also address the effects of widespread fear, mistrust and trauma through psychosocial support as well as alcohol and substance abuse management. Furthermore, the commencement of recovery creates huge expectations for peace dividends, which, if not met, could seriously jeopardise the chances of progress towards peace and stability. These programmes and initiatives can also provide unique platforms to link the emergency/recovery, reconstruction and development phases. Thus, while focusing on urgent life-saving and life-sustaining assistance, humanitarian

assistance must link with the subsequent phases of post-conflict reconstruction and development. This link is enhanced by the fast-tracking of key development measures during the recovery phase.

68. To implement this element, the following objectives should be pursued by conflict-affected countries:

a. Prioritise preparedness at the national, regional and international levels, to enable the planning, launching and effective coordination of emergency humanitarian operations. This can be achieved through:

- i. Ensuring adequate, predictable and sustained resources for the AU Centre for PCRD and the African Humanitarian Agency to plan, launch and coordinate emergency humanitarian operations;
- ii. Encouraging partnership with national, regional, continental and international humanitarian and development actors that accelerates the transition from emergency to development;
- iii. Commencing development programmes at the early stages of the emergency phase; and
- iv. Engaging in programmes and initiatives that build and enhance African humanitarian capacity. Specifically, emphasis should be placed on the reinforcement of the capacity of African philanthropy, the private sector and humanitarian NGOs through capacity building, mentoring, resource mobilisation and other relevant activities, to enable them contribute meaningfully to humanitarian operations conducted in the continent.

b. Promote the application of AU and International Humanitarian Principles and International Human Rights Law.

- i. Respect of humanitarian principles and sanctity of humanitarian space and relief workers, including compliance of the following principles:
 - Humanitarian Principles: humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality;
 - State Responsibility: the primary role and responsibility of states to protect and assist affected populations within their territory;
 - Subsidiarity and Complementarity: between the AU Commission, other AU Organs, RECs and RMs, Member States, the UN and other actors and stakeholders; and

- Participation and Ownership: participation of affected populations/communities is the cornerstone of humanitarian action.
- ii. Ratification and domestication of AU and international instruments relevant to the protection and assistance of displaced populations
- c. Create an enabling political and legal environment for humanitarian action, including making provision for:**
- i. Securing an unimpeded access to civilian populations in need of emergency humanitarian assistance;
 - ii. The right to informed voluntary safe and dignified return; protection from attacks and non-discrimination;
 - iii. The rights of returnees, including property rights;
 - iv. The right to citizenship and identity/legal status, and family reunification;
 - v. Measures to ensure minimum security, such as amnesty laws; and
 - vi. Measures to address the needs of unaccompanied minors and child soldiers.
- d. Institutional measures for humanitarian assistance:**
- i. Rehabilitation of critical social services such as health, sanitation and education as well as administrative structures;
 - ii. Institute coordination mechanisms that optimise efficiency and effectiveness of programmes;
 - iii. Formulate short-term humanitarian and transition National Recovery Strategies prepared by governments or a transitional authority, and the Consolidated Appeals Process; and
 - iv. Macro-policy frameworks and global development targets, which encompass National Development Plans, including Sector-Wide Approaches and District Development Plans, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and International Development Targets, such as the SDGs.
- e. Delivery of sufficient and appropriate life-saving and life-sustaining assistance**
- i. Design and implement community-based quick impact projects and peace strengthening projects to facilitate quick recovery and

- reconciliation, harness the productive capacity and skills of populations, help the creation of social safety nets, enhance food security and resuscitate livelihood systems and coping mechanisms of affected communities;
- ii. Support the rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of vital infrastructure and physical facilities, including water and sanitation systems, hospitals/clinics, schools, police and other public administration centres, roads, bridges and other transportation and communication facilities;
 - iii. Develop programmes and initiatives that address the specific needs of women, girls, boys and the youth;
 - iv. Target groups with special needs such as women, children, returnees, senior citizens, differently abled persons and the sick as well as victims of sexual and gender-based violence for critical assistance;
 - v. Develop programmes for psychosocial support such as trauma counselling, legal support and family reunification;
 - vi. Develop strategies to prevent and manage preventable diseases and other communicable diseases and pandemics; and
 - vii. Provide training and skills development to facilitate the reintegration of affected populations such as unemployed youth, women, ex-combatants, refugees, internally displaced persons (even while still in exile/displacement) and differently abled persons.

69. The end state of an emergency phase in a successful PCRD process is marked by the following conditions: a significant improvement in the overall humanitarian situation as determined by various African and international standards; prevalence of general safety and security; protection and assistance to groups with special needs; improved access to basic needs among persons in vulnerable situations, as defined under Article 14(3) of the PSC Protocol; the return and reintegration of refugees, IDPs and other displaced populations; as well as resumption of normal livelihood and socio-economic activities.

PILLAR 4: SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

70. Socio-economic reconstruction and development is the multidimensional process that contributes to improved living conditions, improved ability to meet basic

needs, such as health, education, and food, and the reduction of poverty and inequalities. Conflict-affected countries face the challenge of addressing competing socio-economic demands necessary for stabilisation and conflict prevention. Addressing extreme poverty, with its related underpinnings such as inequitable access to and control of productive resources, provision of social infrastructure and basic goods and services, macro-economic stabilisation and job creation, becomes critical.

71. The long-term goal of PCRD is to place the affected country on the path of sustainable socio-economic development and to improve human development and gender equality indicators. The immediate objective is to accelerate socio-economic recovery by 'jumpstarting' livelihoods, creating enabling conditions for rehabilitation and development, and delivering peace dividends. Immediate objectives can be achieved and facilitated through the establishment of sustainable Quick Impact Projects and Peace Strengthening Projects based on locally identified needs, gender analysis and priorities. These immediate objectives can be achieved and facilitated through the establishment of sustainable Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Peace Strengthening Projects (PSPs) based on locally identified needs and priorities, in addition to receiving support through the African Solidarity Initiative (ASI). To avoid stalled peace, the wide range of socio-economic activities should be pursued in an integrated gender responsive approach that links relief, transition and development. Key to the pursuit of socio-economic reconstruction and development is the balance between growth and the provision of social goods/services, and the development of an appropriate technological base for sustainable recovery and reconstruction in the country emerging from conflict.

72. To develop this element, the following objectives should be pursued by conflict-affected countries:

- a) Undertake comprehensive institution-building to enhance good economic governance. This would include the creation and/or strengthening of:
 - i. Fiscal and financial management institutions, including revenue collection and banking systems and public procurement and assets disposal regulations;
 - ii. Structures that ensure accountability and transparency, such as the office of the independent Auditor General and other relevant

agencies including the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and anti-corruption structures;

- iii. Structures for oversight of the budget such as parliamentary committees and ombudspersons in regarding international financial agreements, expenditure and debt management; and
- iv. Gender sensitive frameworks that promote equitable and sustainable access to, management and exploitation of, natural resources.

b) Formulate policies that address social inequity and target people in vulnerable situations, during the transition, reconstruction and development phases.

These policies should:

- i. Address macro level issues, including investment, trade, fiscal and monetary policies;
- ii. Promote and protect socio-economic rights of the population, such as the right to food, shelter, water and development, as expressed in the Agenda 2063, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Common African Defence and Security Policy (para.6);
- iii. Transform economies that emerged during the conflict into regulated systems that contribute to broad-based and pro-poor economic growth and to the benefit of reconstruction;
- iv. Focus on micro level development, including the creation of social safety nets and the rebuilding of social capital;
- v. Address the challenge of preventable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS and other non-communicable diseases as well as pandemics;
- vi. Promote inclusion of differently abled persons in peace building processes by eradicating challenges hindering their effective participation;
- vii. Develop socio-economic programmes that target the women, youth for rehabilitation, decent job creation and income generating activities, in ways that bolster their capacities to participate in the reconstruction of their country;

- viii. Support the development of social protection programmes that are informed by gender assessments to assist the most vulnerable populations;
 - ix. National budget and procurement should include allocation for the implementation PCRD policies and programmes;
 - x. Ensure external support for PCRD/including the African Solidarity Initiative, aligned to national and local priorities; and
 - xi. Promote policies and programmes for the sustainable protection, usage and rehabilitation of the environment.
- c) Address the gap between relief and development:
- i. Target micro level activities with the greatest regenerative impact, ensuring that these are gender responsive, inclusive and equitable;
 - ii. Ensure enabling policy environment and address threats to livelihoods and income generation, including unemployment and lack of access to credit;
 - iii. Promote inclusive and equitable domestic economic recovery programmes that aim at eliminating extreme poverty, curb environmental degradation in order to foster sustainability and security;
 - xii. Re-establish and support climate smart and gender sensitive agricultural policy processing and storage to guarantee food security, and
 - xiii. Within the framework of the AfCFTA, promote and strengthen cross border economic and trade activities to reduce poverty and prevent relapse into conflict, taking into account the main challenges faced by women during these cross border economic and trade activities, e.g. sexual harassment.
- d) Build human resource capacity at local and national levels for policy development, needs assessment, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and activities:
- i. Determine existing capacity gaps by conducting a comprehensive capacity needs assessment at organizational, sectoral, and national levels;

- ii. Attract and retain relevant capacity for all aspects of socio-economic development, including from the Diaspora;
 - iii. Build capacity for data collection and analysis, in support of the planning, implementation and monitoring of socio-economic development programmes;
 - iv. Enhance capacity to accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA and to participate in international processes, such as WTO negotiations;
 - v. Encourage partnering of local and international organisations engaged in socio-economic development activities, to promote capacity building; and
 - vi. Fast-track the training and generation of local capacity in all aspects of development.
- e) Build a technology base to support reconstruction and development:
- i. Develop strategies to support the development and transfer of technology, including its human, technical, institutional and informational dimensions, while acknowledging the digital divide;
 - ii. Undertake technology transfer and technological skills development in a relevant, people-driven, and sustainable manner;
 - iii. Develop appropriate technologies for the rehabilitation and development of key social sectors such as housing, energy, water and sanitation, as well as for physical infrastructure; and
 - iv. Exploring artificial intelligence as a strategic catalyst for prosperity and a key driver for the strengthening of the digital economy in support of peace and stability on the continent, especially in countries undergoing transition.
- f) Develop physical infrastructure, including transport, communication, energy, water, health and sanitation, as follows:
- i. Prioritise the rehabilitation and reconstruction of physical infrastructure destroyed during the conflict; and
 - ii. Engage in the planning, budgeting and execution of infrastructure development in line with the long-term needs of the country.

- g) Strengthen the role and importance of continental conferences and forums, emphasizing the operational aspects of the nexus between peace, security, development, and the culture of peace in Africa. In this regard, it is crucial to reinforce the following conferences, recognized by the AU and organized annually.
- i. **The African Union Conference on the Nexus between Peace, Security, and Development “Tangier Process”** is held regularly in October, in Tangier, Kingdom of Morocco. This conference, with participation primarily reserved for the 15 members of the AU Peace and Security Council, may also invite other member states on a case-by-case basis, through mutual agreement among all partners and the host country. It should work closely with four partners, namely the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank). The objective is to implement development policies, primarily mega-projects referred to as "nexus projects," in African countries, regions, and border areas, aiming to achieve prosperity, stability, and lasting peace on the continent.
 - ii. **The Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development** provided the first of its kind platform to address these inseparable conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues. The Forum, to be held every year by Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA), in Egypt, should bring together heads of states and governments, leaders from national governments, regional and international organizations and financial institutions, the private sector, and civil society, as well as visionaries, scholars, and prominent experts for a context-specific, action-oriented, and forward looking discussion on the threats and challenges, as well as opportunities, ahead.
 - iii. **The Biennale of Luanda**, known as the "Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace in Africa," is organized by the Government of Angola in collaboration with the African Union and UNESCO. This significant

event takes place in Luanda, Republic of Angola, offering a unique platform for meaningful interaction and collective contemplation on the construction of peaceful and resilient societies in Africa—a continent adorned with a rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage. Hence, there exists a pressing demand for lifelong education to advance peace in the development of Africa. Educating the youth is deemed a societal duty, recognizing their role as key contributors to the sustained peace and prosperity of the continent.

PILLAR 5: WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

73. African countries emerging from conflict face the challenge of rebuilding their societies, infrastructure and socio-political and economic institutions. Women constitute over fifty percent of the population of countries undergoing PCRD and their collective insights, wisdom, experience, knowledge are pivotal to sustainable reconstruction and development. By prioritising women's participation, security, and equality, post-conflict reconstruction policies can contribute not only to sustainable development but also to sustainable peace and social justice across the continent. Through collaborative efforts and determined commitment, the continent can pave the way toward a future that values and empowers all its citizens, regardless of gender.
74. An integral aspect of successful post-conflict reconstruction is recognising and addressing the unique challenges faced by women, and girls while harnessing their capacities as agents of change.
75. Conflict has distinct and often disproportionate effect on different genders. Women and girls play multifaceted roles during the conflict and post conflict phases. They are often the first responders to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs of conflict affected communities. They intervene to mitigate the impact of violence and conflict, as caregivers, mediators and peacebuilders. Women are stakeholders in the conflict, including as community leaders, and combatants.
76. Women and girls frequently endure heightened vulnerabilities during conflicts, facing increased risks of sexual and gender-based violence such as rape, sexual slavery, abduction, forced marriage, forced pregnancy; trafficking; and displacement. They often assume the primary role as head of households and are

responsible for caregiving in conflict environments characterised by insecurity, the lack of access to basic services and loss of livelihoods.

77. Moreover, conflict can exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities, limiting their access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Men and boys are more likely to experience direct combat-related risks, they also contend with disrupted livelihoods, forced recruitment, displacement, and the psychological trauma of violence. The altered gender roles and differential impact of conflict on women, girls, men and boys have a significant effect on gender relations in the post-conflict era. Recognising these differentiated roles and impact is crucial for crafting inclusive post-conflict policies and frameworks that address the unique needs and contributions of all genders, and thereby fostering sustainable security, peace and development.

78. This pillar outlines the framework for promoting women's effective, participation and meaningful leadership in gender responsive processes of PCRD.

79. The UN Frameworks on gender equality and the UNSC Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security center the rights and leadership of women in conflict and post-conflict settings¹². In accordance with these resolutions, the AU has enshrined these rights and principles in its continental commitments.

80. These global normative commitments serve as a foundation for advancing gender equality, promoting women's meaningful participation, and addressing the unique challenges faced by women in conflict and post-conflict situations. They guide international efforts to ensure that women's perspectives and contributions are fully integrated into peace and security processes.¹³

¹² The Maputo Protocol (2003);The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004);The African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (2007);The AU Gender Policy (2009);The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2015);The African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020 (2017); The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) Decision 25 on Women, Peace, and Security (2018); The African Union's Continental Results Framework on Women, Peace, and Security (2019)

¹³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000); United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008); United Nations Security Council Resolution 1888 (2009); United Nations Security Council Resolution 1889 (2009); United Nations Security Council Resolution 1960 (2010); United Nations Security Council Resolution 2106 (2013); United Nations Security Council Resolution 2122 (2013);United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015);United Nations Security Council Resolution 2467 (2019); United Nations Security Council Resolution 2493 (2019).

81. The AU has demonstrated its commitment to advancing women, peace, and security through various policy instruments.

82. Accordingly, PCRD programmes and initiatives have to be gender sensitive and based on informed gender analysis. PCRD pillars, programmes and initiatives must mainstream gender and:

- i. Must recognise women's contributions, by acknowledging the multifaceted roles that women play during the conflict. Their experiences and insights must be valued and inform the reconstruction process;
- ii. Ensure that women are represented at all levels of decision-making in the reconstruction process, from continental, regional and national policy formulation to local community initiatives. Special attention should be given to the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable groups of women;
- iii. Establish mechanisms to address SGBV and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) in accordance with global and regional commitments, ensuring perpetrators are held accountable. This includes strengthening legal frameworks, creating specialized courts for SGBV cases, and providing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for survivors and affected communities;
- iv. Integrate gender perspectives into security sector reform efforts, ensuring that the police, military, judiciary, correctional services, customs, immigration, border agents and other security agencies, including traditional security and justice actors are trained to prevent and respond to CRSV;
- v. The recruitment, retention, promotion and advancement of women within these institutions should be a minimum standard for a legitimate, representative, effective and accountable security sector. Integrate gender mainstreaming objectives into the design of DDRRR programmes, ensuring that the needs of women ex-combatants, women associated with armed groups (WAAG), women affected by conflict (WAAC), children associated with armed

groups, (CAAG) children affected by conflict (CAAC) and children born out of conflict related sexual violence, are addressed;

- vi. Create avenues for women's economic empowerment by providing access to credit, markets, and skills training. Support women in diverse sectors such as agriculture, trade, and entrepreneurship. Provide vocational training and economic opportunities to facilitate their reintegration into society. Establish social safety nets that specifically address the vulnerabilities of women, including widows, single mothers, female-headed households and differently abled women. Ensure that these programmes prioritise women's economic resilience and well-being;
- vii. Ensure that girls and women have equal access to quality education, focusing on eradicating gender disparities in enrollment, retention, and progression and completion. Incorporate gender-sensitive curricula that promote values of equality and respect;
- viii. Strengthen health systems to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including maternal care, family planning, and access to health and reproductive rights. Address the impact of conflict-related trauma on women and girl's mental health;
- ix. Engage in comprehensive campaigns to challenge harmful gender norms that perpetuate discrimination and violence. Promote positive masculinity and engage men and boys as allies in the pursuit of gender equality;
- x. Create spaces for women to actively participate in reconciliation processes at local, national regional, and continental levels. Recognise their role in building social cohesion and sustainable peace; and
- xi. Post-conflict contexts are a unique opportunity for transformative change and therefore the following objectives should be pursued.

a. Policy Development

- ii. Conduct gender sensitive and responsive PCRDR needs assessment and analysis;

- iii. Mainstream gender in national policies in line with the PCRDR needs analysis and global and continental normative frameworks;
- iv. Employ gender-sensitive planning and budgeting to support effective implementation of the AU PCRDR Policy and approaches;
- v. Create a legal framework that ensures full enjoyment of women's and children rights and equitable access to and control over productive resources and basic social services;
- vi. Make provision for the equal and meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction based on the four pillars of UNSCR 1325 i.e. Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery;¹⁴
- vii. Develop, resource and implement WPS national action plans that are inclusive of emerging threats (e.g. violent extremism, climate change); and
- viii. Create a legal framework for transitional justice and reconciliation and set up mechanisms to address conflict-related injustices including SGBV.

b. Institution and Capacity Building

- i. Promote and guarantee women's equal representation in governance, peace negotiations full processes and their implementation as well as invest in women's local peacebuilding efforts and organisations;
- ii. Building on the opportunity for reconstruction, address power relations in the private and domestic sphere, when dealing with questions of power- and wealth-sharing, to ensure that women participate in decision-making processes and have equitable access to productive resources;
- iii. Foster and support civil society organisations, especially women's organisations, to champion the rights of people in vulnerable situations, particularly women and girls; and
- iv. Provide effective and impactful gender training, capacity building and sensitisation, especially for multidimensional actors engaged in peace support operations in post-conflict reconstruction situations

c. Partnerships, Cooperation and Coordination

¹⁴ S/RES/1325. Security Council Resolution on women and peace and security.

- i. Ensure coordination between gender focal points in all AU Departments, Liaison Offices and Field Missions and RECs/RMs at the national level mainstreamed through all PCRD activities and programmes;
- ii. Foster regional coordination and collaboration among Member States to share best practices, experiences, and resources in advancing women's roles in post-conflict reconstruction;
- iii. Ensure Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) and sustainable partnerships; and
- iv. Engage international partners, including UN agencies, development organisations, and civil society, to provide technical assistance, funding, and expertise in implementing gender-responsive reconstruction efforts.

d. Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Accountability

- i. Collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data to measure progress in various reconstruction sectors in order to foster evidence-based policies and interventions that address the specific needs of women;
- ii. Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender-sensitive policies, programs, and initiatives; and
- iii. Hold institutions and stakeholders accountable for their commitments to women's participation, peace, security, and equality.

PILLAR 6: HUMAN RIGHTS, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

83. It is imperative that peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes address issues of human rights abuse, transitional justice and reconciliation as these pillars are key to sustainable peacebuilding. The protection of human and peoples' rights and the respect for their dignity, are outlined in international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights guarantees the rights and freedoms of every individual without distinction on the basis of race, colour, class, ethnicity, sex, language, religion, nationality, or any other identity. The AU's Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) outlines holistic approaches for implementing victim-centred transitional justice and reconciliation at all levels.

84. The reintegration of ex-combatants and women and children associated with armed groups into communities also generates a fragile and fearful

situation. Finally, post-conflict situations are characterised by institutional breakdown and collapse of law and order and normative frameworks, which leaves people without any structures to mediate, resolve conflicts or deliver justice. Post-conflict societies must therefore establish structures, mechanisms and processes that will enable the protection of human rights, implement the rule of law and provide access to justice, as well as facilitate accountability for human rights violations and other injustices and promote reconciliation.

85. National policies should adequately address the issues of marginalisation, identity-based discrimination, and perceptions of injustice. In addition, such policies must also respect the rule of law, human and people's rights including the rights of women and children. In order to promote, deepen and sustained societal relations, peace and stability, measures must be taken to address physical and psychological trauma.

86. Transitional justice is an effective approach for enabling justice in post-conflict societies. It emphasises accountability, reconciliation, community participation, victim-centeredness, and restitution through both formal and informal structures and restorative and retributive processes. Tribunals, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, Peace Commissions, reparations and memorialisation are examples of transitional justice processes. According to the AUTJP it, refers to the "various (formal and traditional or non-formal) policy measures and institutional mechanisms that societies, through an inclusive consultative process, adopt in order to overcome past violations, divisions and inequalities and to create conditions for both security and democratic and socio-economic transformation."

87. Each community or society emerging from conflict has to make critical decisions about the use of restorative, retributive, reparative and distributive justice. These choices, though not mutually exclusive, have implications for the nature of the human rights, justice and reconciliation model a country adopts and for how it will deal with structural and social issues that require economic and gender justice. This requires the determination of a context-based approach to issues of human rights, justice and reconciliation, and the mobilisation of society's support for the model adopted.

88. To implement this pillar, the following objectives should be pursued by conflict-affected countries:

a. Human and Peoples' Rights:

- i. Restore constitutional and legal rights to sections of society that might have lost them during the conflict, such as displaced persons;
- ii. Guarantee and protect socio-economic rights, including the right to development, as defined in the ACHPR and CADSP;
- iii. Prioritise access to education, a fundamental right, particularly in view of the overwhelming preponderance of the youth among combatants, and the increase in the number of street children following conflicts;
- iv. Guarantee and protect women's rights and dignity and promote their participation in post-conflict reconstruction and development decision-making structures and in the political, social and economic spheres of societal life the political, social and economic spheres of life;
- v. Guarantee and protect women, youth children and minorities¹⁵ rights in accordance with relevant AU instruments in post-conflict reconstruction and development situations;
- vi. Establish and promote a holistic AU policy on psychosocial support needs of children, youth and adults in transitions, stabilisation and post-conflict situations. Such support should also extend to perpetrators of violence and human right abuses in order to foster individual and societal healing, facilitate their return as members of the society, and avert possibility of returning back to their violent past;
- vii. Promote institution-building of national structures mandated to promote and protect human rights, such as national commissions for the protection of human rights; and
- viii. Create space for CSOs to advance a human rights culture at all levels.

b. Transitional Justice:

- i. Establish an efficient justice system that is accessible to all sectors of society, and functioning correctional services, as well as appropriate rehabilitation programmes;

¹⁵ Minority rights under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

- ii. Ensure adherence to the principles of international humanitarian law, including with regard to prisoners of war and enforced disappearances;
- iii. Provide for the reform of the judiciary, guaranteeing its independence, professionalism, effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of justice;
- iv. Comprehensive investigation of grave and systematic human rights violations that occur pre-, during and post-conflict, and provide robust guarantees for ensuring the prevention of new violence against civilians;
- v. Ensure accountability for human rights violations, including those who perpetrated sexual violence during the conflict;
- vi. Establish one-stop centres for survivors of sexual violence and create mobile sexual offense courts where necessary in order to facilitate access to justice and ensure a holistic and multidisciplinary approach in provision of medical, legal/ investigative, psychosocial, security, and other needs;
- vii. Ensure transitional justice goals relating to human rights, reconciliation, accountability, trust building, social cohesion and ending impunity are included at all stages of the peace process; and
- viii. Recognise and support the contribution of positive traditional practices and customary norms in Africa that have proven to be useful and complement criminal prosecutions and that are compatible with national laws, the ACHPR and other human rights instruments.

c. Reconciliation:

- i. Total rejection of impunity, as expressed in Article 4(o) of the Constitutive Act; and
- ii. Adopt measures and programmes that promote social cohesion, peaceful co-existence, individual and societal healing and reconciliation at all levels and promote community-based institutions engagement in reconciliation.

d. Furthermore, there is need for policy development across the three elements (human rights, transitional justice and reconciliation), as follows:

- i. Develop mechanisms for dealing with past and ongoing grievances;

- ii. Provide for the enhancement of legislative mechanisms aimed at strengthening the rule of law, and incorporate human rights into all policy frameworks;
- iii. Consider reparations (financial and/or non-financial) to survivors of conflict, violence and injustice;
- iv. Develop strategies for the promotion of a culture of peace, including human rights, justice and reconciliation, through their inclusion in school curricula and other civic fora;
- v. Create an enabling environment for the participation of civil society organisations, including faith-based organisations and the media, in the promotion and protection of human rights, justice and reconciliation; and
- vi. Provide for the use of AU and international structures to reinforce the protection of human rights, justice and reconciliation as needed.

PILLAR 7: YOUTH INCLUSION

89. Youths are important contributors to post-conflict reconstruction and development and peacebuilding, as they are often considered as the primary actors in pre-, during and post-conflict situations. Over the years, the youth have increased capacity and demonstrated leadership in conflict prevention, attesting to the fact that youth potential can be harnessed for peacebuilding and development in conflict-affected contexts. In the context of enhancing the role of youth in peacebuilding, a great emphasis on harnessing their demographic dividend is thus placed in implementing this pillar.

90. This adopted approach of viewing the youth as peacebuilding actors provides a framework to harness their positive contribution, and seeks to effectively engage, involve and collaborate with young women and men as well as their organised groups in the promotion of peace. Given the limited opportunities that youth may experience during all phases of conflicts, education and skills development for transformation and innovation and ensuring sustained short-, medium-, and long-term links to markets remain central in implementing this pillar.

91. To implement this pillar, the following objectives should be pursued by conflict-affected countries:

a. Engagement

- i. Engage and actively promote meaningful participation of youth at all levels, namely national, regional and continental in decision-making processes, policy formulation, implementation and monitoring of PCRDR processes;
- ii. Support cross-sectoral cooperation as a holistic approach to address youth issues;
- iii. Encourage governments to engage in regular intergenerational and youth dialogue and interactions to provide a platform for youth to discuss issues of importance to them and their elders;
- iv. Eliminate structural barriers that hinder youth participation in PCRDR programmes and initiatives;
- v. Support initiatives that bring together African youth to enhance continental exchange and capacity building in the design, development and implementation of programmes to encourage youth's meaningful participation in PCRDR through the promotion of exchanges and collaboration in existing national, regional and continental structures;
- vi. Establish follow up mechanisms to ensure that commitments are translated into actions; and
- vii. Promote peace education in the education curriculum to promote a culture of peace.

b. Protection

- i. Advocate and promote the protection of youth in post-conflict situations, particularly ensuring compliance to International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law to guarantee their protection, safety, dignity and well-being; and
- ii. Investigate and prosecute those responsible for crimes against humanity.

c. Prevention

- i. Promote and strengthening of youth capacity in post-conflict contexts to prevent a relapse into violence and conflict;
- ii. Support the establishment and implementation of youth platforms, and facilitate entry points for competent youth to undertake prevention activities including youth-led or support to dialogue and mediation processes and related PCRDR processes; and

- iii. Promote and expand youth-led advocacy campaigns to prevent cyber violence on mainstream and social media.

d. Partnerships and Coordination

- i. Facilitate effective communication, coordination and collaboration by creating mutual understanding between and among youth and relevant stakeholders on planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions and promote peacebuilding in tandem with national legislations on youth, so as to foster and promote increased and sustained political, financial and technical support to reinforce youth-led initiatives on peace and security in general and PCRD in particular;
- ii. Establish and strengthen effective partnership and coordination mechanism to ensure policies and programmes are relevant and address the needs of the youth including promoting south-south cooperation;
- iii. Facilitate the increased engagement between stakeholders and the media to promote peace education, advocacy and provide media coverage to highlight the positive contributions and challenges faced by youth in post-conflict contexts; and
- iv. Partnership with the private sector, financial institutions and academic support for youth-led initiatives in crisis affected and post-conflict situations.

e. Disengagement and Reintegration

- i. Develop, implement, and promote standing charters or policies, legislations and programmes aimed at effective repatriation, resettlement, disarmament, deradicalisation, demobilisation, detraumatization, rehabilitation and reintegration of youth disengaged from armed, criminal or extremist groups in accordance with national legislation;
- ii. Provide post-trauma counselling and psychosocial support for youth, especially those disengaged from conflicts, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, alcohol and substance abuse management, returnees and displaced persons; and
- iii. Promote training, mentoring, placements and internships for youth to support reconstruction and development, ensuring that the specific needs of youth are met, and the capacities of youth in peacebuilding situations are strengthened and reinforced.

PILLAR 8: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

92. Child protection encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the child, in accordance with the law (international human rights law; international humanitarian law and refugee law; as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Protocols; and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child). Child protection includes the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. It also aims at strengthening the ability of individuals and communities to protect themselves and their children from future threats, laying the groundwork for lasting security and stability in a society.

93. Children in conflict situations in Africa are subjected to unimaginable suffering and are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises because of their inherent vulnerability. They are not just caught in the crossfire or treated by combatants as expendable collateral damage, but often deliberately and systematically targeted. They are killed, maimed, raped and separated from their families. They are bombed in their schools and their homes. They are abducted, tortured, and recruited by armed groups to fight and to work as porters, cooks and sex slaves. Children also suffer the indirect consequences of conflict. Children living in conflict-affected settings are less likely to be in school or have access to basic sanitation and clean water, and more likely to die in childhood due to under-nutrition and a lack of medical care, including vaccinations.

94. The six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict are killing and maiming; recruitment and use; abduction; rape and other sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access. Conflicts also disconnect children from traditional means of child protection and affect them emotionally, socially, economically and even spiritually.

95. This pillar outlines the framework for mainstreaming child protection in PCRD. Enhanced protection of African children in situations of conflict is a consistent and strategic priority of the African Union within the unity of effort to build a peaceful and secure continent. The African Union's commitment to protecting children in humanitarian situations, including situations of conflict in Africa, has been

demonstrated in a number of policy decisions at the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Peace and Security Council (PSC), and normative frameworks.

96. Legal frameworks for the protection of the rights of children particularly the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Policy for Mainstreaming Child Protection in the African Peace and Security Architecture call for mainstreaming child protection in post-conflict reconstruction processes.

97. Accordingly, PCRD programmes and initiatives have to be child rights-based and based on informed child protection analysis. PCRD pillars, programmes and initiatives must mainstream child protection :

- a. For inculcation of a culture of durable peace, an enabling and safe atmosphere must be provided where children will be able to express their views on matters that affect them. Further, child participation shall be fully integrated in designing and implementation of post-conflict reintegration programmes for children affected by armed conflicts. Child participation shall be also integrated into transitional justice, recovery and reconstruction of affected communities programmes.
- b. Ensure the provision of the different physiological, mental, emotional and social needs of boys and girls. A framework for reparations shall be instituted for child rights violations such as sexual abuse, violence and exploitation, which include rape, enforced pregnancies, forced marriages and forced prostitution, among others.
- c. Ensure that children involved in armed conflict are primarily considered victims, and appropriate steps to prevent the detention or prosecution of children for alleged involvement with armed groups, including all non-State armed groups and those designated as terrorist groups are taken as detention is contrary to the best interests of the child.

- d. Provide for the development of handover protocols to prevent detention and ensure that children taken into military custody are swiftly transferred to civilian child protection authorities for rehabilitation and community reintegration.
- e. Ensure that children associated with armed forces or armed groups are considered as a special group and undergo rehabilitation via Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes where they should be provided with psychosocial support, civic education, art therapy, hands-on skills training and vocational skills.
- f. An integral aspect of successful post-conflict reconstruction is recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by children while their views are being taken into consideration.
- g. Post-conflict contexts are a unique opportunity for transformative change and therefore the following objectives should be pursued.

a. Policy Development

- i. Conduct child protection PCRDR needs assessment and analysis;
- ii. Mainstream child protection in national policies in line with the PCRDR needs analysis and global and continental normative frameworks;
- iii. Employ child rights-based planning and budgeting to support effective implementation of PCRDR Policy and approaches;
- iv. Create a legal framework that ensures full enjoyment of children's rights and equitable access to basic social services;
- v. Make provision for the integration of the rights, protection and wellbeing of children into the preparation for, negotiations of and implementation of peace agreements as well as ceasefires and meaningful participation of children in peacebuilding. That is by ensuring child rights, protection and wellbeing issues shall include a prohibition on the recruitment and use of any person below the age of 18 and all other violations against children. This includes sexual violence; release, reintegration into families or community-based services and

the rehabilitation of children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups, taking into consideration the best interests of the child and child's views; and the prohibition of child marriage;

- vi. Develop, resource and implement protection of children in conflict situations national action plans that are inclusive of emerging threats (e.g. violent extremism, climate change); and
- vii. Create a legal framework for transitional justice and reconciliation and set up mechanisms to address conflict-related injustices including SGBV.

b. Institution and Capacity Building

- i. Promote and invest in child protection organisations;
- ii. Foster and support civil society organisations, especially child protection organisations, to champion the rights of children in vulnerable situations;
- iii. Provide effective and impactful child protection training, capacity building and sensitisation, especially for multi-dimensional actors engaged in peace support operations in post-conflict reconstruction situations.

c. Partnerships, Cooperation and Coordination

- i. Ensure coordination between child protection focal points in all AU Departments, Liaison Offices and Field Missions, RECs/RMs and at the national level in mainstreaming child protection through all PCRD activities and programmes;
- ii. Utilise the Child Protection Architecture which is a subset of the African Peace and Security Architecture to enhance coordination and collaboration among all key actors to share best practices, experiences, and resources in advancing the mainstreaming of child protection in post-conflict reconstruction.
- iii. Ensure Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) and sustainable partnerships.
- iv. Engage international partners, including UN agencies, development organizations, and civil society, to provide technical assistance, funding, and expertise in implementing child rights-based reconstruction efforts.

PILLAR 9: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

98. The main objective of the environmental security pillar is to facilitate effective

integration of an environmental security-sensitive and gender responsive approach in peacebuilding strategies for multi-actor engagement that cuts across all the indicative elements of the PCRDR. The pillar aims to enable communities and countries to become more secure in the face of stress resulting from reduced human, environmental, water, mobility, energy and food security which is being exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change.

99. Peacebuilding/ PCRDR responses should take into consideration the adverse effects of climate change, a key aspect of environmental security, as a threat multiplier. The drivers and stressors to the pathways of climate change and insecurity continue to undermine human security with the potential to cause a relapse into renewed violence or conflict. It would also ensure a climate secure environment in the affected country or regions and a resilient population by putting in place appropriate national, regional and continental policies, programmes and interventions. Addressing the impacts of climate change requires accountability of major global emitters and guaranteeing safety, addressing food and water security, mobility and protection of populations, curtailing environmental degradation and shocks, managing resource scarcity, respecting environmentally friendly indigenous practices, and providing access to social services; all to be guided by relevant national policies and institutions.

100. Programmes and initiatives relating to climate security should respond adequately to the prevention and adaptation to climate security-related risks and vulnerabilities, capacity building on the subject, technology transfer and development, climate financing, and mitigating Greenhouse Gas emissions and its effects. This will contribute to addressing the root causes of conflicts, deploy multiple mechanisms to address the drivers of climatic changing conditions, and consolidating peace. It will also require the implementation of environmental security protocols in particular those related to climate change at the national, regional and continental levels towards addressing forced displacement and migration (transhumance protocols), food and water insecurities, energy requirements, varying climatic conditions (droughts and floods), biodiversity, conflicts, terrorism and transnational organised crimes. State-centric frameworks and contexts aligned to post-conflict population who are directly and/or indirectly affected by climate change are required.

101. Africa's mineral wealth positions it to play a central role in the energy transition agenda in the era of climate change. The continent is part of the global value-chains for green minerals; however, this role is concentrated at the first phase of the value chain, exploration and extraction. The task ahead is to move towards value addition and the Africa Commodity Strategy will assist in this regard. To achieve the Africa We Want in the international context toward the use of the transitional materials and the minerals that contribute to the green energy transitions, Member States need to develop value chains and strategies for green minerals to take advantage of the energy transition that is an opportunity for Africa.

102. To implement this pillar, the following objectives should be pursued by countries at risk of lapsing into conflict or in-conflict or emerging from conflict:

- a. **Develop pathways to deepen the understanding of environmental challenges notably the climate change, peace, development, gender and humanitarian nexus, including, climate security-related risks, threats and vulnerabilities**
 - i. Support preventive measures in avoiding the direct and indirect impacts of climate change that lead to disasters, forced displacement, migration, and the suffering of loss and damage of livelihood;
 - ii. Develop regional and national level climate change indicators;
 - iii. Advocate for financing of climate change adaptation with predictable allocations, including from the AU Peace Fund;
 - iv. At national level, ensure that each ministry has a gender budget for the environment;
 - v. Put in place and reinforce climate-sensitive monitoring and early warning and response systems in recovery, reconstruction and peacebuilding phases as a means to reducing disasters, minimising loss and damage to lives and property. It will also engender conflict prevention measures, reinforce initiatives to silence the guns on the continent, and prevent a lapse/relapse into violence;
 - vi. Ensure adaptation to climate change impacts, given that the effects of climate change in post-conflict settings are worsening and require measures to build resilience and promote climate-smart livelihoods, particularly in the areas of

food and water insecurities, health, energy, technology transfer and other related special needs;

- vii. Women and youth are stakeholders in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Ensure the involvement, support and strengthening of women and youth led climate smart and green initiatives.
- viii. Facilitate mitigation measures towards reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions and global warming in pursuit of the green transformative agenda through, among others, afforestation and reforestation, such as through the Great Green Wall initiative, and implementing programmes and projects in the communities with a focus on alternatives to other sources of energy that are environmentally friendly; and
- ix. Ensure a just transition in the pursuit of alternative sources of clean and sustainable energy towards sustainable livelihoods in peacebuilding.
- x. Promote and strengthen effective participation of women and youth in the development of environmental and climate policies, structures and processes as part of PCRD.

b. Policy and institutional strategies to foster environment security cooperation

- i. Adopt integrated and comprehensive climate change and peacebuilding frameworks to address cross-sectoral issues in PCRD based on national ownership and context specificity;
- ii. Formulate and define specific policies and strategies that integrate specific environment security needs of persons in vulnerable situations, including women and children, youth and senior citizens;
- iii. Map out all national, sub-national policies and action plans that may be suitable for supporting post-conflict country-level actions in the area of environmental security and peacebuilding efforts like Nationally Determined Contributions;
- iv. Strengthen institutions that deal with climate change, peacebuilding and public financing to facilitate post-conflict social and physical infrastructures;
- v. Enhance and deploy the AU Continental Early Warning System to monitor emerging environmental security trends in peacebuilding contexts;

- vi. Mainstream the implementation of the AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032) including other relevant AU regional and national climate resilient strategies and action plans;
- vii. Support and promote gender responsive and socially inclusive indigenous knowledge and science in environmental management; and
- viii. Integration of locally sustainable practices with modern innovations to tackle African based climate insecurities to ensure effective participation with indigenous communities, centering active involvement of most vulnerable population categories based on gender, age and location.

c. Strengthen multi-level environmental peacebuilding participatory spaces

- i. Map out and strengthen all relevant multistakeholder platforms at national and sub-national levels that serve as a basis for integrating environmental security efforts on both climate action and peacebuilding strategies;
- ii. Pursue a multi-level climate sensitive peacebuilding mechanism that ensures effective participation and recognition of regional, national and community-level priorities for climate responses;
- iii. Initiate post-conflict agenda and clear terms of reference for the climate secure community of practice with clear post-conflict coordinating mandates, priority areas of action, mechanisms for collaboration and stakeholder capacity demands, channels for sharing experiences and information, and acknowledge management system that fosters capacity building at all network levels;

d. Adopt integrated and systematic programming for environmental security adaptation, mitigation and resilience:

- i. The AU Climate Change and Resilience Development Strategy and Action Plan should guide programmatic interventions in peacebuilding contexts in order to facilitate a holistic approach to addressing climate change impacts;
- ii. Leverage programmes under the climate change mechanisms, including the Clean Development Mechanisms, Joint Implementation Programmes and Emissions Trading in the peacebuilding contexts;
- iii. Support programmes that focus on strengthening post-conflict communities, coping mechanisms, addressing challenges of renewed conflict, promoting diversification of livelihoods, negotiating shrinking resource spaces and

adherence to peace agreements, community peace rituals, biodiversity and energy, and make provision for migration and transhumance activities.

e. Climate financing

- i. Climate financing is essential to support all initiatives in the areas of adaptation and mitigation of climate change impacts. Hence, countries will require capacity building in the areas of preparing targeted, actionable and well-budgeted Nationally Determined Contributions for accessing required funds for programmes and projects;
- ii. Countries should also benefit from climate funds to be established, promote public and private financing partnerships both internally and externally and enhance acquisition of grants and donor funding for climate-sensitive quick impacts projects and peace strengthening projects. These are meant to reduce climate security risks in communities, and countries;
- iii. Recall the obligation incumbent on AU partners to provide technical and financial support that is predictable, sufficient and in line with the strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions leading to carbon neutrality by 2050;
- iv. Recall the need to address the continent's needs in terms of adaptation to the negative impacts of climate change, including with regard to loss and damage due to climate hazards;
- v. Recognise the particular needs and circumstances of Africa in the face of global warming, in particular, countries emerging from conflict and small island states;
- vi. Operationalise the African Climate Change Fund to support African countries facing the adverse effects of climate change;
- vii. Expand on research to bridge evidence gaps;
- viii. Emphasise the need to rely on objective, documented and quantified studies in Africa, in particular, on the links between climate and security, with a view to developing an African position on the nexus between climate, peace and security;
- ix. Promote the integration of gender consideration in the climatic change negotiation process through strengthening the work of the African Women Group of Negotiators on Climatic Change;
- x. Recognise that climate change could be an aggravating factor in conflicts or their resurgence, in particular inter-community struggles around natural and water resources, while recalling that the root causes of conflicts are multidimensional

and complex and that it is important to avoid shortcuts and unilateral approaches reducing the causes of conflicts only to climatic hazards;

- xi. To reaffirm the rights of all peoples, countries and regions to security, well-being, development and sovereignty; and recalling the responsibility of the international community to protect all these rights, in accordance with the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the ACHPR;
- xii. An understanding of the environmental security, peace and development nexus would help to adequately address multiple and diverse conflict risks brought about by climate change factors that are resource-based, inter-ethnic and cross-border in nature. This includes responding to banditry and criminality, drug trafficking and organised crimes, terrorism and recruitment of non-state armed groups. It will also respond to issues of cross-border tensions and violence, illicit financial flows and arms smuggling, while also addressing risks associated with forced migration and transhumance;
- xiii. Advocate for gender analysis to investigate gender dimensions of climate to sustain peace and adopt the shifting rural and urban contexts;
- xiv. Explore more avenues of consistently adopting a gender responsive intersectoral approach to understanding risks and building resilience in response to climate-related security risks;
- xv. Undertake climate fragility risk assessments in order to produce context-specific climate security profiles for effective intervention, as well as to address new and emerging challenges that are often intertwined with climate risks, including transnational threats and terrorism, which relies on community voices that account for traditional coping strategies in post-conflict settings; and
- xvi. Expand current climate modelling capabilities to gain a better understanding of future risks and climate/conflict hazards that are essential to decision-making processes.

SECTION III: RESOURCE MOBILISATION, ACTORS AND PROCESSES

103. Securing adequate resources and sustained support, creating mechanisms for the transparent allocation and accountable management of resources, and establishing processes and mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of peacebuilding/ PCRDR are important preconditions for the realisation of the goals of

consolidating peace and long-term sustainable development.

104. The planning for resource mobilisation to engage in PCRDR should commence at early stages, even before hostilities have ceased or peace agreements signed. Besides providing an opportunity to kick-start stabilisation activities as opportunities arise, this early action could create an incentive for, and encourage, the parties to reach an agreement and cease hostilities.

Resource Mobilisation

105. The magnitude and complexity of challenges of PCRDR, weak capacity and shortage of resources limit the ability of local and national authorities and other actors to respond to the full spectrum of needs. This necessitates the mobilisation of financial, material, human and technical resources at the national, regional, continental and international levels. In order to effectively meet this challenge, conflict-affected countries need to have a comprehensive resource mobilisation strategy.

106. The continent continues to face increasingly complex and multifaceted threats, necessitating the availability of resources to address them. This context is matched with dwindling resources being allocated for the AU's PCRDR and peacebuilding initiatives, programmes and activities. Further complicating this scenario is the wide range and scope of PCRDR and peacebuilding mandates, initiatives and tasks required for sustainable peace. Adequate financing for PCRDR thus remains a critical success factor in consolidating peace in the continent, against the backdrop of complex and intractable conflicts on the continent, and the need to prioritize conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches. With a view to tackling these challenges, the AU's focus on conflict prevention must be matched by adequate, sustainable, and predictable funds from Member State contribution. In doing so, the AU's strategic policy direction will be underpinned by ownership of its PCRDR and peacebuilding mechanisms and processes which are largely financed by external partners.

107. At the 19th Ordinary Session of the policy organs of the African Union, in July 2012, the African Solidarity Initiative (ASI) was launched as an AU-led process for mobilising support from within the continent for countries emerging from conflict. A Decision – Assembly/ AU/Dec.425 (XIX) – on the ASI, was adopted, requesting the AUC, in close collaboration with the countries concerned and all other Member

States, RECs, and other relevant African institutions, to roll-out a full implementation plan, and to mobilise in-kind, capacity building, as well as financial contributions, to support post-conflict reconstruction activities and efforts in the continent.

108. The African Peace Fund¹⁶ covers Mediation and Preventive Diplomacy, Institutional Capacity and Peace Support Operations. PCRDR efforts can benefit from the three windows. However, given the capital-intensive nature of PCRDR initiatives, funding would need to be sought from other sources as well.

109. To attain this objective, the following actions should be undertaken at different levels of action from the national to the international level:

a. At the national level, conflict-affected countries should:

- i. Mobilise national resources, by attracting investment and seeking the return of resources that may have been inappropriately moved out of the country, for reconstruction and development that benefits all sections of the society;
- ii. Pursue strategies that enable them to access resources including financial assistance, capacity building and training, the provision of expertise, sharing of best practices, from the AU and its Member States;
- iii. Seek unconventional sources of financial and other support for PCRDR mechanisms and processes, e.g. through south-south and triangular cooperation;
- iv. Use AU institutions particularly the AU Centre for PCRDR and other pan-African partners, such as the African Development Bank, to mobilise and leverage resources for PCRDR;
- v. Specify modalities for engagement of international actors in PCRDR to ensure local capacity building and encourage use of local actors;
- vi. Encourage the private sector to participate in PCRDR and to build capacity and transfer skills, including through public-private partnerships, involvement of domestic enterprises, remittances and engagement of the Diaspora; and

¹⁶ Efforts to involve the private sector including African Business Councils, Chambers of Commerce etc. would need to be explored.

- vii. Prioritise the rehabilitation or creation of transparent financial systems and controls to manage resources effectively for post-conflict reconstruction and development, and inspire confidence on the part of the public.
- b. At the regional level,** actors should support PCRD in line with the designated role of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms as the building blocs for Africa's peace and security, and development agenda, and the regional character and impact of most conflicts:
- i. Provide technical support and expertise to post-conflict countries, including capacity building, training, mentoring and placement of especially the youth;
 - ii. Encourage the sharing of best practices and lessons learned by other countries in the region which have experienced conflict;
 - iii. Encourage the involvement of regional financial mechanisms, including development banks, in PCRD processes; and
 - iv. Offer solidarity and partnership in the consolidation of peace in the region.
- c. At continental level,** the AU, in pursuit of its strategic leadership, should leverage the role of the AU Centre for PCRD to create and/or improve existing mechanisms that:
- i. Address issues relating to the quantity and quality of support, including technical assistance and exchange, to ensure that support is determined by, and used in line with, coordinated and streamlined needs assessment and peacebuilding priorities of the country concerned;
 - ii. Ensure that support packages to countries emerging from conflict are provided under the most favourable terms and remains demand driven;
 - iii. Support negotiations with partners to simplify procedures and requirements for accessing funds, improve coordination, harmonisation and predictability of support, for PCRD and peacebuilding including through interaction with groups such as the Donor Coordination Review Forum, Donor Assistance Groups;

- iv. Encourage partners to promptly translate their commitments and pledges into concrete support and fast-track the disbursement of resources and expertise to cover immediate humanitarian and recovery needs during the transition period;
- v. Support affected countries to monitor the translation of pledges into concrete support;
- vi. Provide technical support to post-conflict countries in developing their national PCRDR/peacebuilding plans and resource mobilisation strategies;
- vii. Advocate debt cancellation for post-conflict countries that do not traditionally qualify under heavily-indebted poor country criteria and other debt relief initiatives;
- viii. Monitor debt cancellation for countries emerging from conflict, in line with its mandate for the socio-economic regeneration of the continent; and
- ix. Provide 'seed money' to kick-start PCRDR activities, while other sources of funding are being sought, including through public-private partnerships and harmonization of such partnerships across national, regional, continental, and international levels.

d. At the international level, actors need to:

- i. Recognise and provide support to cater for the special needs of countries and regions emerging from conflict, such as the lack of resources to finance the basic functioning of the state, including salaries and pensions for the civil service and security sector, as well as outstanding unpaid salaries and pensions, which have a critical impact on the stabilisation of the immediate post-conflict period situation;
- ii. Improve coordination, harmonisation and flexibility of support to post-conflict countries and regions, in line with the priorities determined in national and regional needs assessments;
- iii. Ensure that all support to conflict-affected countries and regions builds capacity and utilises local actors at all levels, while accounting for context specificity and conflict sensitivity;

- iv. Support PCRDR through sound investment, improved resource flows including official development assistance, debt relief particularly by conferring the status of heavily-indebted countries emerging from conflict, as well as improving trade conditions; and
- v. Foster partnerships with the AU Centre for PCRDR to fund peacebuilding activities in Africa. This can include exploring avenues to cooperating with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

Actors, Governance Mechanisms and Processes

110. The implementation of PCRDR is dependent on a range of state and non-state actors operating at the national, regional, continental and international levels. In recognition of the limited capacity in conflict-affected countries, actors at the continental level provide strategic leadership in PCRDR efforts, regional actors augment this leadership while affected countries implement the various PCRDR activities within their capabilities. These continental, regional and national efforts are supported by international actors and civil society. In line with this framework of cooperation, complementarity and subsidiarity, the activities of the myriad actors engaged in PCRDR should be coordinated by the country emerging from conflict, supported by regional organisations, with strategic leadership from the AU, in line with the underlying principles of this Policy.

111. Ensuring optimal performance of various actors undertaking PCRDR requires mechanisms and processes that ensure all activities are aligned with the needs and priorities of the country emerging from conflict, that they are pursued through the emergency, transition and development phases of reconstruction, and that they are comprehensive, ranging from needs assessment, implementation, monitoring, to impact assessment.

112. **At the continental level**, key actors are the AU Organs, such as the AU Commission including the AU Centre for PCRDR, the Peace and Security Council, the Pan African Parliament and the African Commission and Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, among others, all its specialised institutions, and other Pan African institutions, including the African Development Bank.

- a) At this level, the AU provides overall strategic political leadership in PCRDR and acts as a guarantor of PCRDR processes on the continent. In doing so, it shall:

- i. Avail this policy and template for adaptation by countries or regions emerging from conflict;
 - ii. Encourage RECs, Member States and relevant AU offices and specialised institutions to adopt and implement the revised AU PCRD Policy framework;
 - iii. Advocate and monitor international support to countries emerging from conflict;
 - iv. Monitor progress in the implementation of PCRD in affected countries and/or regions;
 - v. Leverage resources and support for the implementation of PCRD;
 - vi. Create and manage an active and effective database of African experts on various aspects of PCRD, to be deployed in, and backstop, affected countries and regions, as required; and
 - vii. Utilise its specialised agencies to provide training that creates human resource capacity in affected countries and regions.
- b) The key mechanisms to ensure that Africa remains seized with the PCRD of an affected country are the following which form an overall PCRD architecture:
- i. The AU Centre for PCRD to conduct conflict analysis and needs-based assessments in affected countries and regions (including joint analysis with relevant partners), and to design PCRD/peacebuilding activities and programmes, and pursue their implementation including through partnerships and mobilisation of required resources as well as through coordination with relevant actors at all levels to ensure complementarity and effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts.
 - ii. A PSC Standing Committee on PCRD to monitor the activities of all actors, provide support to affected countries and regions, and to review the state of reconstruction on the continent on a regular basis;
 - iii. A ministerial committee on the reconstruction of each post-conflict country or those undergoing political transition;
 - iv. An AU Commission Working Group on PCRD to effectively deliver, perform and coordinate PCRD activities of the Commission, AU liaison and regional offices, as well as specialised agencies of the AU; and

- v. A multidimensional AU Committee on PCRDR, to interact on a constant basis, with international actors including the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and ensure that Africa's vision and priorities are reflected in these structures and regional centres of excellence to incorporate the AU PCRDR Policy in their training curricula and CSOs to help with its dissemination.

113. **At the regional level:** The successful implementation of this Policy requires the active engagement of regional groupings and their institutions in order to take advantage of existing resources, mechanisms, processes and synergies. Owing to their proximity to and knowledge of countries emerging from conflict, RECs are well placed to serve as the regional focal point for PCRDR. Key actors at the regional level include RECs, RMs and other regional entities. These actors are also the link between the national and continental levels. These actors are also well positioned to inform the design of peacebuilding activities of the AU Centre for PCRDR.

- a) Regional actors and processes will:
 - i. Prioritise the adaptation of the AU PCRDR Policy framework and develop guidelines for its implementation, at regional level;
 - ii. Coordinate the harmonisation of national policies and legislation on PCRDR;
 - iii. Guide implementation of regional and cross-border and transnational programmes relating to PCRDR;
 - iv. Provide regular reporting on the state of PCRDR activities within their regions to the PSC, as per Art. 16(3) of the PSC Protocol; and
 - v. Ensure harmonisation, coordination and exchange of information on PCRDR with other RECs, called for in Art. 16 (4) of the PSC Protocol.
- b) To undertake these responsibilities, the following regional mechanisms are envisaged:
 - i. Regional guidelines, frameworks and plans of action for the implementation of PCRDR; and
 - ii. A regional focal point/mechanism to support PCRDR processes;

114. **At the national level:** The success of PCRDR will ultimately be determined by the political will, leadership and capacity of national and local actors in conflict-affected countries. Notwithstanding the weak capacity, which often characterises

post-conflict situations, national and local authorities and actors should take the lead in planning, implementation and monitoring all PCRD activities with support provided by the AU Centre for PCRD. National leadership of the process will ensure a broad-based sense of ownership and enhance the chances of sustainable PCRD.

- a) Actors at the national level will:
 - i. Develop policies and strategies, and put in place mechanisms, structures and processes that ensure comprehensive, integrated and coherent PCRD programmes;
 - ii. Promulgate enabling legislation, simplify administrative processes and eliminate obstacles to the implementation of PCRD activities;
 - iii. Provide leadership in the process of determining an inclusive national vision, and, as early as possible, clarifying the division of labour, roles and responsibilities of actors involved in PCRD;
 - iv. Lead, coordinate and monitor all PCRD activities; and
 - v. Seek, where needed, regional and international support for humanitarian assistance, recovery, rehabilitation and development, including capacity building.
- b) To undertake these responsibilities, the following mechanisms are envisaged:
 - i. A national focal point on PCRD to coordinate actors and monitor implementation of PCRD, ensuring alignment with the country's needs and priorities;
 - ii. Inter-departmental/ministerial committees to implement multisectoral programmes and activities in a coordinated fashion; and
 - iii. Mechanisms that ensure the participation of all relevant sectors of society including civil society organisations, women's organisations, and other national and local actors.

115. **At the international level:** While recognising that Africa takes the leadership and ownership of its reconstruction and development agenda, international multilateral organisations, to which Member States also belong, have a duty to support the successful implementation of PCRD in the continent. These organisations should, therefore, put at the disposal of the AU, the RECs, RMs and Member States, their expertise, experience and resources in the area of PCRD. These multilateral organisations include the UN system, the World Bank, IMF, and

other related institutions. The broader international community also includes multilateral and bilateral partners, with whom the AU and its Members already have relations.

- a) Actors at this level will:
 - i. Strengthen the relationship between the UN Peacebuilding Commission (UN PBC) and the AU, including through leveraging the annual consultative meetings between the AU PSC and the UN PBC, with regard to mobilising international support to peacebuilding and development activities conducted by the AU Centre for PCRD;
 - ii. Promote the twinning of non-African partner institutions with African institutions for effective capacity building of local actors; and
 - iii. Encourage participation of specialised technical agencies to support the reconstruction and development of conflict-affected countries.
- b) Mechanisms needed to fulfil the above objectives are:
 - i. Institutionalised partnership between the AU (the multidimensional committee on PCRD and the AU Centre for PCRD) and the UN Peacebuilding Commission and its Peacebuilding Support Office and Peacebuilding Fund, at the UN Secretariat and other concerned departments of the UN; and
 - ii. Strengthening of existing and creating new fora for dialogue between the AU and its development partners.

116. **Civil Society:** Art 20 of the PSC Protocol, which “encourages non-governmental organisations, community-based and other civil society organisations, particularly women’s organisations, to participate actively in the efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa”, provides a mandate for the engagement of non-state actors in PCRD processes and activities. Civil society actors, as defined by the ECOSOCC statute, should therefore be involved in PCRD activities at all levels, as a way of complementing the capacity of state actors.

- a) Actors at this level will:
 - i. Generate information and analysis to input into PCRD processes;
 - ii. Undertake, within their capability and expertise, PCRD activities as defined within the national framework;

- iii. Partner with national authorities in all aspects of PCRDR with a view to building and enhancing capacity and accelerating realisation of PCRDR objectives;
- iv. Engage in advocacy in support of the national PCRDR programme and activities;
- v. Mobilise resources for PCRDR;
- vi. Raise awareness and popularise the contents of PCRDR policies and strategies;
- vii. Ensure participation of CSOs, including the academia, private sector, among others in multilateral processes such as the PSC sessions on PCRDR; and
- viii. Partner with academic institutions and centres of excellence to develop peace curriculum and promote peace studies.

ANNEX A: BENCHMARKS AND STANDARDS¹⁷

PILLAR 1: POLITICAL GOVERNANCE AND TRANSITION

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Existence of opportunities and mechanisms that enhance popular participation in, and access to, the processes of constitution making, etc.;
- b. Decentralisation of power, authority and resources;
- c. Separation of power between the executive, judiciary and the legislature;
- d. Increased government transparency and accountability, and public confidence in governance structures;
- e. Existence of an enabling environment for meaningful popular participation in all forms and levels of governance;
- f. Existence of institutions that promote democracy such as electoral commissions, office of the ombudsperson, public protector's office, etc.;
- g. Flourishing of functioning national civil society organisations, and support for community-based organisations;
- h. Increased numbers of women in decision-making positions in public institutions as well as the private sector;
- i. Periodic, competitive, peaceful, free and fair elections;
- j. Existence of mechanisms to manage, prevent and resolve conflicts;
- k. Existence of effective and independent media that is protected within the constitution;
- l. Ratification or, accession to, domestication and implementation of, relevant African and international instruments for democracy and good governance, and relevant conventions relating to eradication of corruption and corrupt practices; and
- m. Congruence of national constitutions with the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

PILLAR 2: SECURITY GOVERNANCE

Benchmarks and standards:

¹⁷ The benchmarks and standards are not exhaustive.

- a. National implementation of the Common African Defence and Security Policy, including all common African positions such as the Windhoek Position on SALWs, as endorsed by the Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.255 (VIII) of 2006;
- b. Establishment of resource mobilisation mechanisms;
- c. Functional strategic coordination mechanisms;
- d. Right-sizing and professionalisation of the security forces;
- e. Civil oversight of the security sector;
- f. Compliance to International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law frameworks;
- g. Engagement of security sector in the reconstruction of the country; and
- h. Ratification of, accession to, domestication and implementation of, all African and international instruments relating to peace and security.

PILLAR 3: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Ratification and domestication of relevant AU and international instruments;
 - a. Lead roles played by Member States and local authorities supported by the AU Centre for PCRD and the African Humanitarian Agency;
 - b. Resolution of protracted situations of refugees and IDPs in the continent;
 - c. Sustainable return and reintegration in countries emerging out of conflict;
 - d. Integration of displaced populations in national socio-economic programmes;
 - e. Protection of all populations from attacks, harassment, abuse, exploitation, discrimination and deprivation of their human rights;
 - f. Adequate and appropriate basic welfare services, including food, clean water, basic health, sanitation, education and shelter;
 - g. Reunification of family members who were separated during conflict;
 - h. Mechanisms for registration and appropriate identification/ documentation of affected populations for themselves, their children, spouses, property, land and other possessions which might have been lost during the conflict;
 - i. Exercise of the right to return to their places of origin and/or live in other areas of their choice;

- j. Appropriate medical care, trauma and psychosocial counselling, assistance and legal redress for girls, women and other vulnerable groups;
- k. Re-establishment of reasonable means of livelihood including gainful employment;
- l. Guaranteed participation of women's groups, civil society organisations and other representatives of affected groups in reconstruction processes, including peace processes;
- m. Guaranteed access to civilian populations in need, for their protection and assistance;
- n. Increased awareness of prevention of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, and pandemics
- o. Strengthening of the capacity of African humanitarian NGOs and other relevant African institutions.

PILLAR 4: SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Improved human development indicators and progress towards the attainment of Agenda 2063 and SDGs and other indicators related to socio-economic development;
- b. Improved and sustained economic growth, evidenced by a stable socio-economic environment, including macro-economic stability and micro-economic growth, reduced unemployment and reduced inflation;
- c. Increased access of the population to social services such as housing, health, water, education, employment;
- d. Fiscal and budgetary discipline in the management of public resources;
- e. Sustainable management of the environment and natural resources; and
- f. Equity and inclusivity to address social, economic, recovery and development aspects.

PILLAR 5: WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Existence of gender sensitive and responsive legal frameworks and budgets;
- b. Effective implementation of constitutional provisions and laws that promote and protect the rights of women and girls;
- c. Full, meaningful and effective participation of women in all aspects of public life, particularly in the political and economic spheres;
- d. Increased number of women in decision-making positions and processes accompanied by gender-sensitive and responsive frameworks;
- e. Existence of gender expertise and capacities at the local, national, regional and continental levels responsive to current and emergent challenges;
- f. Compliance with the continental WPS agenda, Agenda 2063, “Silencing the Guns” reporting in the Continental Result framework on WPS “initiative and SDGs;
- g. Robust partnerships at national, regional, continental and international organisations that promote the WPS agenda, and build African capacities;
- h. Full enjoyment of rights by differently abled persons;
- i. Security and justice systems that are responsive to gender-based violence and the specific needs of women and girls;
- j. Gender equality in decision-making positions in public institutions and the private sector; and
- k. Ratification of, accession to, domestication and implementation of, the relevant AU instruments protecting the rights of women and girls, including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and other relevant international instruments such as the Convention to End all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the UN General

Assembly Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, amongst others.

PILLAR 6: HUMAN RIGHTS, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Context-specific approach in implementation of human rights, transitional justice and reconciliation;
- b. Institutional coherence and approach amongst relevant stakeholders;
- c. Equal protection for all under the law;
- d. Implementation of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights, and the African Union's Transitional Justice Policy;
- e. Existence of structures, mechanisms and programmes that deal with transitional justice, reconciliation, psychosocial support;
- f. Overall enjoyment and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in the country;
- g. Tolerance across political, social, religious, ethnic and cultural divides a community;
- h. Operational, well supported and effective institutions that protect human rights such as a National Human Rights Commission and Office of the Public Protector, that provide oversight and contribute to public awareness of human rights principles and the country's international human rights obligations;
- i. Independence of and public confidence in the judiciary – as indicated by the tenure of the judiciary and the availability of resources for its operations;
- j. Restorative justice measures are put in place including reparations for survivors of abuse; and
- k. Accession to, ratification, domestication and implementation of, international instruments guaranteeing respect for all human rights (social, economic, civil, cultural and political rights); and fulfilment of human rights reporting obligations.

PILLAR 7: YOUTH INCLUSION

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Existence of youth-sensitive policy frameworks, programmes and financing in national, regional and continental post-conflict reconstruction and development plans, in line with the line the AU Decade on Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion 2020-2030 and the Women and Youth Financial and Economic Inclusion (WYFEI 2030) initiative of the AU;
- b. Enhance public sector efficiency to respond to the demographic dividend;
- c. Stimulate solution-focused research and development, through youth innovation hubs;
- d. Entrepreneurship opportunities for Africa's youthful populations for improved socio-economic well-being;
- e. Meaningful and effective participation of youth in decision-making processes, policy formulation, implementation and monitoring of peace agreements;
- f. Policies, legislations and programmes aimed at effective repatriation, resettlement, disarmament, deradicalisation, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration of youth disengaged from armed, criminal or extremist groups in accordance with national, regional and continental legal frameworks;
- g. Post-trauma counselling, mental health and psychosocial support for youth, especially those disengaged from conflicts, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, returnees and displaced persons;
- h. Establishment/support of youth platforms, and facilitate entry points for youth to undertake prevention activities including youth-led or support to PCRD;
- i. Development and implementation of programmes to encourage youth leadership and meaningful participation in PCRD through the promotion of exchanges and collaboration in existing national, regional and continental structures;
- j. Establishment of investments and funds that enable the inclusion of youth into different projects in rebuilding, rehabilitation and reconstruction;

- k. Financing of quick impact projects and peace strengthening projects to empower youth through capacity building, training and skills development, mentoring, placements and related income generating employment initiatives;
- l. Capacity building and strengthening of youth participation in prevention and training for youth to support peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts, ensuring that the specific needs of youth are met, and the capacities of youth to act as providers and peacebuilders in post-conflict situations are strengthened and reinforced;
- m. Existence of employment opportunity to facilitate an increased understanding of youths as an ecosystem that ensures their full engagement in the job market (as employees and employers);
- n. Existence of education and training systems including key players and interventions in tertiary institutions, Technical and Vocational and Educational Training (TVET), private sector engagement and transitions to employment – issues of apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities including volunteerism, internships, mentorships and placements;
- o. Existence of tertiary education and TVET integration with economic recovery, enhancing resilience and possible contextualised package of priority interventions as a pathway to sustained peace;
- p. Access to education, information, food and medical care for the most vulnerable youth, vocational training as well as employment opportunities,
- q. Reduce youth unemployment and underemployment and their attendant incidence of vulnerabilities to exploitation, manipulation and radicalisation; and
- r. Youth participate in PCRD initiatives through the use of New Technology Information and Communication tools (Digital media).

PILLAR 8: CHILD PROTECTION

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Existence of child rights-based and responsive legal frameworks and budgets;

- b. Effective implementation of constitutional provisions and laws that promote and protect the rights and welfare of children;
- c. Existence of child protection expertise and capacities at the local, national, regional and continental levels responsive to current and emergent challenges;
- d. Compliance with the Agenda 2063 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
- e. Robust partnerships at national, regional, continental and international organisations that promote the protection of the rights and welfare of children in situations of conflict;
- f. Full enjoyment of rights by differently abled children;
- g. Security and justice systems that are responsive to child protection concerns for children;
- h. Ratification of, accession to, domestication and implementation of, the relevant AU instruments protecting the rights of children, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, Policy for Mainstreaming Child Protection in the African Peace and Security Architecture and other relevant international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, amongst others.

PILLAR 9: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Implementation of the AU Climate Change and Resilience Development Strategy and Action Plan;
- b. A Common African Position on Climate Change is developed and pursued towards prioritised interests, joint efforts and speaking with one voice;
- c. The African Adaptation Initiative Framework (2017-2020) sustained and improved holistically to cater for evolving integrated climate security initiatives;
- d. Communicate the importance of delivering on pledges and commitments made by developed countries towards enhancing adaptation and mitigation efforts on the continent and the direct effect of these pledges on continental peace and security;

- e. Encourage Member States to formulate and update their Nationally Determined Contributions according to the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- f. Just transition encouraged in building resilience towards sustainable livelihoods;
- g. Alternative sources of energy explored, developed and in use;
- h. Mechanisms established for addressing loss and damage, as well as special needs and circumstances; and
- i. African Climate Change Fund established and operationalised.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION, ACTORS AND PROCESSES

Resource Mobilisation

Benchmarks and standards:

- a. Inclusion of provisions for wealth-sharing and mobilisation of national resources in support of PCRD in peace agreements;
- b. Strategies that optimise both internal and external resources, and capacities for the benefit of PCRD;
- c. Systems in place for tracking of international commitments and pledges;
- d. AU and REC mechanisms that support the resource mobilisation strategies, capacities for project/programme management, negotiation for favourable arrangements with strategic partners, international and continental financial institutions, international and continental private enterprises, chambers of commerce, small and medium enterprises and trade organisations, of countries emerging conflict;
- e. Reduction in debt burden for countries emerging from conflict;
- f. Strengthened AU mechanism for coordination of support from Member States as well as donor/solidarity conferences for countries emerging from conflict;
- g. Utilisation of resources of the AU Peace Fund to provide seed money to jump-start and sustain PCRD activities;
- h. Simplified and improved coordination and accelerated disbursement of support to countries emerging from conflict;
- i. The ASI is operationalised through the implementation of its resource mobilisation strategy, the development of strategies and mechanisms to

- operationalise all aspects of the ASI (including identifying post-conflict needs, channelling funds, reporting and monitoring, etc.);
- j. A mechanism developed in the frame of the ASI to support Member States to engage with each other directly on addressing post-conflict needs, and the necessary capacities are to be established at the level of the AUC in order to keep the ASI operational; and
 - k. Needs of conflict-affected Member States are assessed regularly and systematically, and linked to resource mobilisation efforts.

ACTORS, GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS AND PROCESSES

Benchmarks and standards:

- i. The AU remains seized with and provides strategic leadership for each post-conflict situation;
- ii. The AU Centre for PCRD is fully operational, conducts conflict analysis and needs-based assessments in affected countries and regions, and designs peacebuilding activities and programmes and pursues their implementation including through partnerships and mobilisation of required resources as well as through coordination with all relevant actors
- iii. Regional frameworks, operational guidelines, plans of actions and budgets on PCRD;
- iv. Functional regional focal points on PCRD and adequately resourced mechanisms;
- v. Comprehensive national policy on, and functioning institutions to implement PCRD;
- vi. The synergy between the AU Centre for PCRD and the PCRD Unit, in the framework of the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department is the cornerstone to improve efficiency of PCRD programmes and activities. Coordination with other AU Departments is crucial. Therefore, the AUC Inter-Departmental Task Force will provide a robust coordination platform;
- vii. The establishment of a Working Group co-chaired by AU PAPS Commissioner and the CEO NEPAD to support the wide coordination efforts, notably in terms of mobilising funds and technical assistance;

- viii. The establishment of a Continental Framework of Practitioners and National Agencies of Development and International Cooperation to support the African endeavours of self-reliance and solidarity between Member States;
- ix. The AU Peace and Security Council is encouraged to establish Ministerial Committees on PCRDR in order to boost the engagement of African countries towards peacebuilding settings in Africa.
- x. Enhanced international support for PCRDR through respect for African leadership, national ownership, greater coherence and synergy of activities, in line with the needs of the country emerging from conflict;
- xi. Active engagement of civil society actors in PCRDR processes;
- xii. Member States, RECs, RMs, CSOs and all concerned stakeholders are encouraged to commemorate the *AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy Awareness Week* annually in November; and
- xiii. Number and quality of initiatives undertaken to promote the *PCRDR Awareness Week*.