



AGA
African Governance Architecture



CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

THEME:
RE-THINKING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE:
THE ROLE OF AFRICAN YOUTH IN SILENCING THE GUNS

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

26-27 NOVEMBER 2020
VIRTUAL

I. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The novel virus COVID-19 has devastated humanity, weakened institutions unveiling the flaws of democratic governance systems in Africa and globally. A public health crisis on the surface, it went beyond the call of duty to bring severe economic calamity, educational standstill, unemployment and socio-economic depressions. After the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Egypt on 14 February 2020, the continent is seeing an exponential increase of cases.¹ Effects of the pandemic are still not fully revealed but it is multifaceted nonetheless. COVID-19 continues to knock on every African's door bringing glaring realities of a fractured democratic governance system to the limelight by exposing the inability of states to support their citizens when they most need it. Restrictions in forms of shutdowns, state of emergency orders not only ushered in an economic disaster widening the gap between the haves and have nots but have adversely affected democratic governance. Since the wake of COVID-19, the continent has seen a large scale of mass movements, protests and uprisings in several countries, opposing systematic inequalities, mass corruption, the collapse of institutions, and breakdown of the rule of law further exasperating the compounding problem.

As we draw to a close of the year 2020, Silencing the Guns – the core continental aspiration is still distant with the continent hosting a significant number of global conflicts.² Peace has been elusive for Africa, violent conflicts remain at the core of Africa's stunted development. An effective and systematic response to Africa's violent conflicts requires a holistic understanding of structural drivers of conflict to address structural root causes of conflict. Providing symptomatic responses to systemic problems is falling for a *Superficial Solutions Trap* providing an answer to everything but giving a solution to none. Addressing the root causes of conflict also warrants an unearthing of the drivers of conflict. Deficits can be categorized into mainly three, a developmental deficit, a democratic governance deficit and peace deficit. Sitting at the core of structural root causes of conflict, democratic governance deficit compounds issues of developmental and peace deficit to a greater manifestation of frustration among the citizenry. Democratic governance deficit can be characterized by weak state institutions, lack of provision of public services, mismanagement of diversity, the politicization of ethnic identity, control of media and social media, corruption, lack of accountability, electoral injustices, human rights violations, shrinking of civic spaces, unconstitutional changes of government and terrorism. Failing to address the aforementioned root causes of conflict progressively culminate into conflicts that continue to kill, maim, and displace many Africans with far-reaching devastating effects.

Understanding the significance of addressing issues of democratic governance as a precursor to Silencing the Guns in the continent is enumerated in the myriad of normative and policy frameworks beginning with the 50th Anniversary of the solemn declaration during the golden jubilee celebration of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU). African leaders noted the importance of peace in the continent and expressed their '*determination to achieve a conflict-free Africa by ending all wars by the year 2020.*' An ambitious declaration but a declaration nonetheless, in which all countries of the continent pledged not to bequeath the burden of conflict to the next generation of Africans.³

¹ Africa CDC, <https://africacdc.org/>, Accessed Sept 13 2020

² Heidelberg Conflict barometer (HCB) -2019.

³ The Member States firmly committed to Strengthen democratic governance including through decentralized systems and inculcating a culture of human rights and the rule of law; Reject unconstitutional change of government, but recognized the right of African people to peacefully express their will against oppressive systems; Promote integrity, fight against corruption in the management of public affairs and promote leadership that is committed to the interests of the people; and Foster

Agenda 2063, the continental blueprint set Aspiration 3 and 4 as mutually reinforcing investing on an ‘Africa of good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law’ as a prerequisite to creating ‘a peaceful and secure Africa’. It is also noted that the African Governance Architecture (AGA)⁴ and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)⁵ and the implementation of AU Shared values instruments including African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance (ACDEG)⁶ as crucial instruments to reaching that goal.

The AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020 as well as the AU Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Frameworks (CSCPF) also exhibit the Union’s commitment to ensure notable steps are taken to silence the guns. It is in understanding the behemoth task ahead that during its 34th Ordinary Session held in Niamey, Niger in July 2019, the Executive Council of the African Union adopted a decision declaring 2020 as the year of “**Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development**” aiming to consolidate all efforts to achieving a conflict-free, integrated and prosperous Africa.

II. RATIONALE

Young people⁷ are unyielding for challenging the status quo, a characteristic that is a common tenor among many in Africa. Youth tend to think outside of the box, with the propensity to take bigger risks and transcend traditional thinking processes through innovation. Estimated to be over 70% of Africa’s population, young people’s demographic forte is still on the rise bringing questions of inequality, fairness and justice on democratic governance and socio-economic development to the fore. Beyond the demographic imprint, the search for a sustainable and durable solution for Africa’s peace and security problem must actively engage African youth. It has been stated, and rightly so, that ‘engaging youth in democratic governance processes in Africa could bring significant social, political and economic benefits’.⁸ The African Youth Charter⁹ also provides for a normative framework for engagement of the youth in the developmental agendas and decision-making processes.

The dividends of democracy and governance in Africa are yet to be unveiled fully. Democratic governance that functions well but most importantly a democracy that delivers on their basic needs is still under construction. Young people often ask – can democracy put food on the table? Can democracy ensure employment and livelihood? Ideally, yes, democratic governance through its intrinsic and instrumental values must accomplish exactly that. The reality is far from what democratic governance promises to deliver, increasing inequality, winner takes all politics that breeds contentious public discourse, nepotism, corruption, oppression and injustices.

the participation of African people through democratic elections and ensure accountability and transparency.

⁴ AGA – was established to give effect to the assembly decision on the Establishment of the Pan African Governance Architecture. The AGA was established as a platform for dialogue between the various stakeholders, who are mandated to promote and strengthen democratic governance in Africa in addition to translating the objectives of the legal and policy pronouncements in the AU shared values instruments.

⁵ APSA - is built around structures, objectives, principles and values, as well as decision-making processes relating to the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction and development in the continent.

⁶ Adopted on 30 January 2007 and came into force 15 February 2012, ACDEG sets out continental standards and norms on democratic governance, constitutionalism, rule of law, human rights, diversity management as well as transitional justice in Africa.

⁷ According to the African Youth Charter a young person is defined to be from 18-35 years of age.

⁸ Lauren Tracey & Edward Kahuthia, ‘Beyond rhetoric: Engaging Africa’s youth in democratic governance’, 2017.

⁹ African Youth Charter ; adopted in 2006 and underscores the importance of youth participation and involvement in the development of the continent as well as their rights and responsibilities

Re-thinking democracy, however, is a daunting task that comes with immense opportunity in revisiting old ideas, re-calibrating strengths and upholding elements that can bring about favourable results for all including youth. Re-thinking civic participation, Re-thinking social cohesion, Re-thinking public Service, Re-thinking Education, Re-thinking health services, Re-thinking politics as political markets shift to virtual space can be a few of the issues. Contrary to negative stereotypes, young people are powerful agents in building the culture of democracy, participation and contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa. Youth have played considerable roles in their community through establishing youth movements to promote social cohesion and they have found innovative ways to engage in deepening the culture of democracy in Africa through inclusive and participatory governance as well as building resilience to peace. This year alone, Young people across the continent, have been leading on the frontlines of change. Beyond going on the streets to voice frustrations, young people need to organize, strategize and revamp their efforts to build the conflict resilient communities they want to see, strive and work to take leadership roles, positions and places; find or create seats at the table or better yet build an inclusive table, exercise adaptive leadership through active citizenship, intensify their agency to build a democracy they want to see, one that can overcome challenges of social injustices, through engaging systems, institutions and technologies.

Young people have understood the gaps of democratic governance and attempted to provide solutions, in the most effective but rudimentary ways through innovations. Innovations¹⁰ on democracy and governance in Africa has been significantly increasing. These innovations range from innovations on real-time reporting of human rights violations; creating platforms for citizens to track and hold their political leader's accountable on their campaign promises; identification of public service deliveries and crowdsourcing platforms; fact-checking and verification platforms, public engagement platforms to innovations that brought data to life by visualization of publicly sourced data to visualizing political party manifestos.

In recognition of our changing democratic governance landscape and dire implications for peace, security and stability, amid the backdrop of the significant contributions by youth, a timely conversation on re-thinking democratic governance must happen. A conversation that identifies opportunities, initiatives that can inspire, revitalize and spring youth to action while utilizing young people's potential to create democratic governance that works for all. Silencing the guns can only be achieved if youth are meaningfully engaged as frontline leaders and implementers of democratic and peacebuilding interventions. It is on that note, that under the auspices of the AGA Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) spearheaded by the AGA Secretariat on behalf of the Platform is organizing the 2020 Continental Youth Consultation scheduled to take place virtually from **26-27 November 2020**.

III. GOAL

The main goal of the Continental Youth Consultation is to provide a collaborative, open and inclusive space to leverage and foster meaningful participation of youth in policy deliberations that contribute towards creating a different culture of democratic governance and building sustainable peace in Africa.

IV. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the Continental Youth Consultation are to:

¹⁰ Innovation refers to creating new ways, methods, ideas or products that are designed to be effective solutions to problems ranging from art, entrepreneurship to civic, political innovations that are that can have a major economic, social-cultural and political impact.

1. Create an understanding of normative and institutional frameworks relating to democratic governance, peace and security with a particular focus on youth;
2. Share evidence-based knowledge, aggregate perspectives, experiences of young people in contributing to deepening democratic culture as a way to silencing the guns on the continent; and
3. Provide a platform for youth to bring about their concrete strategies into the limelight and headline conversations on solutions towards silencing the guns in the context of COVID-19 in Africa.

V. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The following outcomes are envisaged from the discussions:

1. Increased understanding of normative and institutional frameworks relating to democratic governance and silencing the guns with a particular focus on youth;
2. Deepened understanding of the root causes of conflict, the potential to silencing the guns and the need for the enhanced role of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflict; and
3. Showcased practical innovations that have proven to contribute or have the potential to be scaled up to silencing the guns.

VI. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The following outputs will be derived from the Continental Youth Consultation:

- A compilation of Africa Talks sessions showcasing innovations;
- An outcome statement of the conversations;
- Proceedings report;
- Press Releases, Media Interviews and topical social media clips and sound bites will be provided; and
- Social Media Engagement (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)

VII. THEMATIC AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

1) THE LEARNING

- a) **Horizon Scanning of Democratic Governance, the role of youth in the continent** – This session focuses on providing a State of Play assessment of youth and Democratic Governance in Africa, Trends, Challenges and prospects. This session is expected to lay out the foundation of further discussion on the following discussions focusing on Democratic governance deficit as the main driver of conflict identifying opportunities for youth to spark change.
- b) **Normative and Institutional Frameworks on silencing the guns:** The session will provide an overview of normative frameworks on democratic governance, conflict prevention and peace and security. The discussion is expected to focus on normative focusing on youth at a regional and global level providing a clear reference point for following discussions.

2) PLAYING THE PART

- a) **Youth and Leadership - the pathway for change:** This session is intended to discuss the importance of youth leadership and agency in addressing issues of Democratic governance ultimately silencing the Guns
- b) **The Role of youth in Re-thinking Democratic Governance - Innovation on Democratic Governance in Africa.** The role of youth in Re-thinking democratic governance will be discussed on this specific theme. The session is intended to float different thoughts, experiences and practices on innovation that highlight new opportunities and out of the box ideas.

3) AFRICA TALKS

- a) **Showcasing youth innovation in Democratic Governance:** This session will provide a platform for young people to highlight their stories of struggle, resilience and leadership. The session is aimed to inspire, educate and initiate for change.

- 4) **INTERLUDE:** Interludes between sessions will be provided by sharing inspiring videos.

VIII. ABOUT THE CONTINENTAL CONSULTATION

As an institutionalized platform and a pre-event to the Annual High-Level Dialogue, the annual continental youth consultation is convened under the auspices of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Youth Engagement Strategy (YES). This conversation recalls the outcome of the 2014 Continental Youth Consultation on Silencing the Guns focusing on youth building a culture of Democracy and Peace in Arica. The consultation will present an open and safe space for young people to break outside of the box and engage in a conversation that can potentially provide practical solutions to deficits of democratic governance in Africa as their contribution to silencing the guns in Africa.

In furtherance, the outcomes of the consultations will be part of the deliberations of the 9th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human rights and Governance exploring trends, challenges and prospect. The consultation will also contribute to policy discussions on the theme of the year by different AU Policy Organs and Departments. As part of a consolidated effort to deliver as one, this consultation has also added its voice to “Youth Silencing the Guns campaign” that was launched in July 2020 by the African Union.

IX. METHODOLOGY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Continental Youth Consultation has gone virtual. The convening of the Continental Youth Consultation will use a combination of methodologies to facilitate deliberations. Discussions at the Consultation will be conducted through several interactive strategies including

- Panel Discussions;
- Deep dive conversations with high-profile individuals and experts;
- Intergenerational Conversations;
- Africa Talks; and
- Plenary forums.

The Consultation will feature robust social media engagement, informative threads on sessions and sound bites and other innovative means to spur debate during, before and after the virtual consultations.

X. PARTICIPATION

Participants at the Continental Youth Consultation will be identified through an online pre-registration process. Specifically, participants will be drawn from:

1. Youth-Led and Youth Oriented organizations working on democracy, governance, peace and security issues in general and specific thematic areas under consideration during this consultation;
2. The AU Member States, Including representatives of National Institutions, Agencies that focus on good governance, building the culture of democracy;
3. Selected Think Thanks and Academic Research institutions with experience on issues of democratic governance and peace and security;

4. Selected Media Practitioners;
5. Private Sector;
6. Representatives of the African Governance Platform Members;
7. International organisations, Development Partners and UN Agencies; and
8. Diaspora.

XI. DATES AND DETAILS

The youth continental consultations will be convened online from **26-27 November 2020**.

XII. DOCUMENTATION

The documentation for the Continental Youth Consultation will be shared electronically, while more information and updates will be available on:

- a) **Websites** – www.au.int/aga
- b) **Twitter Handles** – @AGA_Platform and AUC_DPA and @_AfricanUnion @STGinAfrica, @AU_PSDand @_AfricanUnion
- c) **Twitter Hashtags** – #DGTrends and #silencingtheguns #youthsilencingtheguns

XIII. PARTNERSHIP, INSTITUTIONAL AND MANAGEMENT

The Youth Consultations to the High-Level Dialogue is an institutionalized initiative of the African Governance Platform aimed at facilitating youth participation in policy deliberations on democracy, governance and human rights. The Continental Youth Consultation will be jointly convened by the Department of Political Affairs as the bureau of the African Governance Platform with the engagement of the Peace and Security Department as the lead entity for the AU theme of the year.

The consultation will be held in light of the current mainstreaming efforts of the AGA Youth Engagement strategy through a joint project between the AGA Secretariat and COMESA. Members of the Youth in Silencing the Guns campaign from the African Union, including the Departments of Peace and Security Department as the custodians of the theme of the year, Office of the Youth Envoy as the nucleus for youth issues, and Department of HRST as a focal point for youth in the commission will also be engaged.

XIV. WORKING LANGUAGES

The Meeting will be conducted in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese through simultaneous interpretation while working documents will be availed in English and French.

XV. CONTACT DETAILS

Amb. Salah Hammad
Ag. Head, AGA Secretariat
Department of Political Affairs
African Union Commission
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Email: HammadS@africa-union.org
+251-91-305-7711 (M)

Ms Makda Mikre Tessema
Democracy and Governance Expert
AGA Secretariat
Department of Political Affairs
African Union Commission
Email: MakdaM@africa-union.org
+251 – 911615083 (M)

