STATEMENTS DELIVERED DURING THE VIRTUAL PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN SESSION ON YOUTH PEACE AND SECURITY
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I. AFRICAN UNION, COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND PEACE AND SECURITY

Statement by His Excellency Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs and Peace and Security, at the 1067th Virtual Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council Open Session on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa. (Draft)

Your Excellency Prof Mafa Sejanamane, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho and Chairperson of the AU PSC for March 2022,

Excellencies, Members of the Peace and Security Council,

Your Excellency Cessouma Minata Samate, AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development,

Excellencies Permanent Representatives of Member States,

The Representative of the UN Office to the African Union,

The Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission,

Representatives of RECs to the AU,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Kingdom of Lesotho, and, indeed, the entire PSC, for including this very important topic in the Programme of Work for the month of March, 2022. This points to the PSC’s commitment to implement its previous decisions on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), particularly in providing updates on the status of progress in the implementation of the 10-Year Implementation Plan of the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (CFYPS).

The session is also a reflection of the AU’s recognition of the important role that youth play in contributing to Africa’s peace, security and development at national, regional and continental levels, and even the global level. Through relevant organized youth groups and networking, a lot can be achieved by the youth in helping promote values underpinning a culture of peace and institutional resilience, from community all the way to the global levels.

To that end, while we welcome the second (d cohort of African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs) to begin their tenures, let me thank the first cohort for their demonstrated
commitment and worthwhile contributions to our shared agenda for peace, security and development. The AYAPs and the Office of the Youth Envoy play key roles in bridging the gap between the youth peacebuilders and policy-makers. This has helped produce positive results. For example, the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and its 10-Year Implementation Plan is the first ever continental strategic document for the purpose of advancing YPS and has become a model for other regions.

To further mainstream youth participation in peacebuilding, the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security is setting up YouthWise as a strategic complement of PanWise and FemWise in line with the decision of the just concluded 35th Ordinary Session of Heads of State and Government.

It is also important that we acknowledge and express gratitude to the youth who have made sacrifices towards promoting peace and security on the continent. While many made personal sacrifices during the highpoint of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, many responded positively through programming on the AU’s ‘Silencing the Guns’ flagship project. Others have continued to engage in initiatives ranging from advocacy, preventing and countering violent extremism, capacity building, post-conflict reconstruction and development and promoting peace processes.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS,

I would like at this juncture to share a quick overview of the Continental Framework on YPS based on its five key priorities.

- **Participation**: advocacy on the framework which included encouraging stakeholders to work towards developing National Action Plans (NAPs), was implemented in Mali, Uganda, Seychelles, Kenya, Nigeria, Liberia and Cameroon. And the RECs/RMs were actively involved. This year, these advocacy missions are priority deliverables of the AYAPs. To achieve the other elements in this category, I have approved a Young Peacebuilders Mentorship Programme aimed at developing youth leadership qualities and skill sets for peacebuilding. The modalities for financing and implementation are under preparation.

- **Prevention**: focused essentially on the enhancement of capacities, this is a continuous process which is based on our appreciation of knowledge, skills and experiences that our young women and men already possess. Central to the delivery in this key priority area is the focus on peer-to-peer and experiential learning. This approach was evident in the Inter-Generational Dialogues on the CFYPS; Training of Trainers on the 2021 Theme of the Year and follow-up training at the national level; and implementation of the favourite projects of the first cohort of AYAPs. These included online social
entrepreneurship trainings which culminated in a 5-day residency program in Southern Africa; training on conflict prevention and mediation in Central Africa, training on sexual and gender-based violence in East Africa, sensitization training of youth against radicalism, violent extremism, conflict prevention mitigation and response in West Africa and a sensitization workshop on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in North Africa.

- **Protection**: whereas efforts were made to build youth capacities relating to International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law in 2021, this year, the focus is now more on reaching those living with disabilities and displaced populations including refugees. A plan of action is being prepared to engage with camp authorities in Uganda, which hosts the largest refugee population, to integrate their young residents in AU-related activities. The emphasis will be on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

- **Disengagement and reintegration**: the program created platforms for the interaction of key stakeholders in order to enhance their voices and influence. The program also promoted policies, legislation and programmes of the AU aimed at effective repatriation, resettlement, disarmament, de-radicalization, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of youth through building their capacities.

- **Partnership and collaboration**: it is gratifying to note the increasing strategic partnerships with internal and external stakeholders on the YPS programme. This year we are also working with our partners under an AU PAPS/UNDP collaboration, to help prioritize and address complex political transitions in Africa. The AGA Youth Engagement Strategy especially in the area of giving youth their voice and influence in governance, will be leveraged in synergy with the Y4P programme. Details on this will be made available to the PSC later.

- Here, let me appreciate all our partners that have provided support to the Y4P Africa Program as we look to increase the resources at their disposal. In this regard, my office is also finalizing the modalities to ensure that the Youth also benefit from increased financing available through the utilization of the Peace Fund. Within this priority is the target to develop guidelines/toolkit for the implementation of the CFYPS. While this has reached its final technical stages, I will humbly request that the PSC, through its Committee of Experts, validates it as it did with the Framework.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,**

On this note, I would urge the PSC to also kindly:

- **Acknowledge** the key role of youth in peace and security in Africa.
o Reiterate the PSC’s commitment to effective mainstreaming of youth role in peace, security and development, including in the other key area of governance;

o Commit to continue prioritizing youth issues in the business of the PSC,

o Accordingly reaffirm support for the AGA Youth Strategy and YPS as two interconnected initiatives requiring synergy of action.

o Commit to promote youth roles in managing complex political transitions in Africa

o Commend the first cohort of Africa Youth Ambassadors for Peace for outstanding commitment and spirit of volunteerism,

o Welcome the second and new cohort and reassure them of continued support.

The Africa we want is essentially an Africa of the youth. May we continue to work with the youth in a healthy inter-generational synergy to keep our shared Vision on track.

I wish you successful deliberations.
II. REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA


Mr. Chairman

Thank you for giving my delegation the floor. Our delegation would also like to thank the presenters for their presentations. Our special thanks to the Youth Envoy for her presentation and for introducing the new Youth Ambassadors.

Mr. Chairman,

Currently in Namibia we have four (4) young people in our National Assembly, the youngest being a 23 year old member of parliament. Two from the ruling party of which one is a Deputy Minister and two from the opposition parties. Namibia also have a Presidential Youth Advisor in the office of the President to advise him on issues of Youth. Giving youth participation in parliaments and other decision-making bodies can assist the youth to become agents of peace and change.

I would also like to inform you that, this year’s budget tabled on 24 February 2022 in the Namibian National Assembly by the Honorable Minister of Finance was themed “Reimaging, a Better Future for the Youth and this shows how we taking the issue of youth empowerment serious.

It is important to give the youth platforms to be the change they want to see. Additionally, inclusion of young people in peacebuilding processes will facilitate peace in a society as the young people’s energies are redirected to the implementation of constructive peace projects. Peacebuilding efforts should not only be about signing agreements to stop violence but also involve a social change that can be brought about by formal and informal education; school to work transition, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, youth engagement, participation and empowerment and workforce development. In this regard, Namibia has various youth platforms influencing decision making namely the Children’s Parliament for High School children, the Youth Parliament for University students as well as the Youth Councilors at Municipality and local authority level. Namibia also have a National Youth Service that provide skills training and personal development programmes to the youth.
Despite this progress, the effective implementation a successful YPS agenda remains a challenge. There is increased awareness that effective youth inclusion and participation cannot be achieved until key youth-targeted frameworks, developed by the AU and its regional economic communities/regional mechanisms (RECs/RMs) are domesticated; in other words, incorporated by member states into national legislation.

I thank you.
III. EASTERN AFRICA STANDBY FORCE (EASF) SECRETARIAT

Statement by Brig Gen Getachew Shiferaw Fayisa, Director, EASF Secretariat

Your Excellency Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of African Union (AU)

Your Excellency Ambassador Prof. Mafa Sejanamane, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho to AU and Chairperson of Peace and Security Council of AU

Your Excellency Ambassador Cessoma Minata Samate, AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development

Your Excellency Ms. Chido Cleo Mpemba, Special Envoy of the Chairperson of AU Commission on the Youth

Excellencies, Distinguished Members of Peace and Security Council

Excellencies, Representatives of RECs/ RMs

Excellencies, All Participants:

1) EASF Secretariat wishes to convey its appreciation to the AU Commission for according us the opportunity to participate in this third open session organized with the theme ‘Youth, Peace and Security in Africa’. The African Union (AU) has shaped a continental agenda on the youth through a concerted effort to enhance the role of the African youth for peace and security on the Continent. In this connection, AU has shown its commitment by establishing various policy frameworks, by highlighting other global frameworks, and by initiating practical actions on the Continent. EASF commends the African Union for exhibiting an initiative to forge a peaceful and stable Africa through youth empowerment in its various documents including the AU Constitutive Act [Articles 3 (f) and (g), and 4 (c), (i), (m)], Article 20 of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of AU, and the African Youth Charter. As a result of such concerted efforts by the AU, the African Youth for Peace agenda has shown a remarkable progress. In particular, the inclusion of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda into the program of events of the PSC evidences Africa’s understanding and commitment to mainstream the role of the youth in building peace and security on the Continent.
2) Your Excellency, the decision by the 807th meeting of PSC of AU calls for the implementation of the provisions of UNSCR 2250, 2419 as well as other regional resolutions that enable young people to play their indispensable contributions and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

3) EASF has been working to realize this decision by enhancing youth empowerment and engagement in the prevention of conflicts and in peacebuilding endeavors in the Eastern Africa region and the Continent at large. In particular, EASF has showcased its commitment to the Youth, Peace and Security in Africa, inter alia, through:

a) The ‘Youth Dialogue on Peace and Security’ which is held on 20 September every year as part of activities to commemorate the International Peace Day. This activity engages participants from the youth and civil society organizations (CSOs), and hence serves as a venue for awareness creation on the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

b) EASF conducts the ‘Youth for Peace’ activities regularly in which it engages the youth in the Eastern Africa region in peace seminars, tree planting and environmental protection activities. These activities seek to sensitize young people on the essence of maintaining peace in the Eastern Africa region as well as on the entire African continent by dissuading the youth from violent actions and facilitating their meaningful participation in all spectrums of peace and security.

c) As part of its continuous effort to engage the youth, EASF has conducted the ‘Youth for Peace’ activities in July 2021 in Addis Ababa whereby youth leaders from 10 EASF Member States took part. EASF also held similar events in Seychelles, in December 2021 jointly with AU’s Youth for Peace team.

d) Signing of Peace Pledge by Youth from the Eastern Africa region, as a way for awareness creation on the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, among the young people and the general community.

4) However, we believe that we are yet to work more in order to ensure meaningful engagement of the youth in peace building as well as in conflict prevention and management.

5) Excellencies, we have also faced a number of challenges in our effort to mainstream the Youth, Peace and Security in Africa. The challenges include, among others, lack of continuous communication with the youth and shortage of funds to implement activities that help empower the youth and engage them in peacemaking. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has limited our efforts to reach the youth.

6) We believe that we can emerge successful in our concerted efforts to empower the young people as a means to ensure peace and security in the region. We also notice that this is the area where we have gaps. We can overcome our present challenges by addressing our
gaps, through common understanding and collaboration with our stakeholders and partners. The EASF hereby calls upon all agencies and individuals working to advance the Youth, Peace and Security agenda to collaborate with it by supporting the efforts it makes in order to realize our collective, global aspirations of creating a peaceful world for the present and coming generations by engaging and empowering the young people.

Finally, I wish to avail this opportunity to renew EASF’s assurance of highest consideration and commitment to collaborate with AU in promoting the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

I thank you.
IV. NORTH AFRICA REGIONAL CAPABILITY (NARC)


NARC and its member states attach great importance to the issue of youth, as member states have ministries and major institutions and organizations on youth which are engaged in major national programmes for engagement of youth at all levels. Indeed, some NARC member states such as Egypt hosted even international youth events.

As far as NARC is concerned, since the AU issued the Draft Continental Framework on Youth in Peace and Security, NARC worked to introduce the framework as well as many other initiatives adopted at AU level to NARC member states in a bid to enlighten them about the same and guide their experts to draft a regional framework for engaging youth in peace and security issues. Indeed, NARC organized two workshops on the same as follows:

1. **Drafting a Strategy for Engagement of Youth in Peace and Security Issues Workshop.**

The workshop was held virtually 13-14 December 2020, with the participation of experts from all member states and NARC PLANELM, North Africa Youth Ambassador, Mr. Mohamed Dabbar. The workshop produced the following documents and outcomes:
- The African Union Continental Framework, youth, Peace and Security, was reviewed and made use of in preparing a similar framework for engaging youth in peace and security issues in the region.
- Several African Union initiatives and programmes were reviewed and discussed.
- NARC was tasked to prepare annual activities in coordination with member states in line with the above-mentioned FRAMEWORK, as well as in line with NARC commitments towards the African common work with regard to the plan of action regarding the AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security.

2. **Workshop on Strategy for Engagement of Youth in Peace and Security.**

The workshop was convened virtually on 29-30 June 2021 and produced the following:
- Draft Regional Framework for Youth Engagement in Peace and Security Issues.
- Initiatives, programmes and projects on youth, peace and security at continental level were reviewed and discussed.
- Plans and practical steps to implement the African Union Framework on Youth, Peace and security were discussed.

3. NARC has also on its 2022 work plan some activities on engagement of youth in peace and security issues.

4. NARC also participated in AU APSA Junior Experts programme and it is in the process of recruiting one junior expert. NARC would continue in collaboration with member states to enhance the engagement of youth at national regional and continental levels.
V. ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)


LESSONS ON YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE ECOWAS REGION

ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework

ECOWAS COMMISSION
March 2022

CONTENT

- Introduction
- Consequences of Youth Exclusion
- Regional insecurity trends
- International Frameworks on YPS
- ECOWAS Protocols on YPS timeline
- YPS in ECOWAS: ECPF/Activities
- Lessons Learned
- Recommendations
Africa is the world’s youngest continent with almost 60% of Africans being under the age of 25 (2019).

Only 3 million formal jobs are created per year while 10 to 12 million young people enter the labour market annually.

High levels of unemployment in West Africa has been called “a Ticking Time-Bomb”.

Different Governments are willing to address youth issues however the reality on the ground is not changing too much.
CONSEQUENCES OF YOUTH EXCLUSION

Cause

- Unemployment/underemployment
- Poverty
- Lack of Education
- Marginalization from Governance

Consequence

- Drug abuse
- Political violence
- Criminal activities
- Terrorism
- Illegal migration

“Youth population without opportunity can lead to political instability or even conflict” – UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
REGIONAL INSECURITY TRENDS

Gender-based Violence

ARMED BANDITRY

VIOLENT EXTREMISM

FARMER-HERDER CLASHES

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

KIDNAPPING

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

INTERATIONAL FRAMEWORKS ON YPS

- UNSCR 2250 (2015) was the first Resolution on the role of youth in conflict resolution and peace building.
- UNSCR 2419 (2019) recognizes the positive role young people can play in negotiating and implementing peace agreements and conflict prevention.
- Member States are yet to adopt National Action Plans on YPS – (UNSCR 1325 has NAPs adopted in 13 out of 15 MS).
ECOWAS PROTOCOLS ON YPS TIMELINE

1993: ECOWAS Revised Treaty was adopted
Promotes youth and women's organizations and professional associations in integration process.

2001: Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was adopted
Recognizes the rights of youth to education and promotion of the welfare of women and youth.

2005: The ECOWAS Youth and Sports Development Centre in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso was established
Promotes youth development and empowerment and youth contribution to economic, social and cultural development.

2008: ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework was adopted
Includes Component on Youth Empowerment

2009: ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action was adopted (2009 – 2013)
Calls for youth participation in democratic processes, youth-driven socio-economic programs etc.

2019: Youth Empowerment Plan of Action (2018 – 2020) was launched
Promotes the socio-economic integration and employment of youth
YPS IN ECOWAS: ECOWAS CONFLICT PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

- A comprehensive operational conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy
- Seeks to strengthen the human security architecture in West Africa
- Sets practical guidance for cooperation between ECOWAS, Member States, civil society and Partners

ECPF COMPONENT 11: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

**Overall Objective:**
To develop self-reliant, responsible and socially accountable role players and to discourage behavior, actions and ventures that engender violence and insecurity in communities and within the region by adding value and building the capacities of young people.
From 2017 onwards, the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security and the ECOWAS Youth and Sports Development Centre jointly collaborated on several consultative workshops in Member States with youth CSOs.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Civil Society Sensitization Workshop on the implementation of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework</td>
<td>To develop strategies for effective youth empowerment and engagement in the ECOWAS peace and security processes</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Workshop on ECOWAS Engagement With Member States &amp; Youth on Conflict Transformation in West Africa</td>
<td>To provide a platform for Member States and the Youth to develop and adopt a strategy, implementation framework and roadmap for youth empowerment.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Youth and Private Sector Workshop on Conflict Prevention</td>
<td>To address the problem of youth unemployment and vulnerability during conflicts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Youth 4 Peace National Dialogue Nigeria &amp; Cote d'Ivoire</td>
<td>To serve as a forum for national dialogue between young peace builders and policy makers on the meaningful participation of youth in peace and security.</td>
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**YPS IN ECOWAS: PEACE BUILDING ACTIVITIES II**

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<td>5</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Youth Contribution Towards Conflict Prevention and Building Peace in West Africa</td>
<td>To train youth from Member States to interrogate the underlying factors of youth involvement in violent conflict in the region and provoke them to design strategies to build and foster a peace and secure future that they desire and deserve</td>
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**ECOWAS COLLABORATION WITH AU YOUTH FOR PEACE PROGRAM**

- ECOWAS participated in the Validation of the Study on the Role and Contribution of Youth to Peace and Security and the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security held in October 2019.
- In June 2020, the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security was adopted by the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC).
LESSONS LEARNED

◆ Gap between legal frameworks and ownership/implementation in MS (Lack of participation of youth in mediation efforts/peace agreements)

◆ National youth programs need to be inclusive of youth in rural areas (language, dialect, literacy, and internet accessibility)

LESSONS LEARNED II

◆ Lack of Member States political will to mainstream youth in governance

◆ Many youth organizations have developed robust programs but lack funding

◆ Greater advocacy on YPS is needed at the local, national and regional levels
LESSONS LEARNED III

◆ Cooperation Vs Competition between Youth groups

RECOMMENDATIONS

◆ For the Youth:
  ◆ Establish national/local youth networks.
  ◆ Advocate for development of NAPs on YPS
  ◆ Link local initiatives with international/continental/regional policies.
  ◆ Work with resources available - profile/experience will open doors.
  ◆ Mobilize resources: identify grants, call for proposals, fundraise, etc.
  ◆ Use social media to build awareness.
RECOMMENDATIONS

For ECOWAS:

- Mainstream youth inclusion in conflict mediation, resolution and peace-building strategies.
- Develop Regional Framework on Youth, Peace and Security.
- Foster partnerships with CSOs, development partners & private sector.
- Create awareness of regional, continental & international frameworks.

For the International Community:

- Establish partnerships with ECOWAS, Member States and youth-focused CSOs on YPS.
- Design regional/national programs based on NAPs/local priority areas & needs.
- Provide opportunities for YPS trainings/fellowships/scholarships/student exchange programs.
CONCLUSION

- The youth, peace and security agenda is time sensitive.
- We need to bridge the gap between political statements and meaningful inclusion of youth in peace processes.
- It is the responsibility of all regional stakeholders to take ownership and domesticate the youth, peace and security agenda.

THANK YOU
VI. UNITED NATIONS: SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE AFRICAN UNION

Statement by Hanna Tetteh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union: Briefing to the African Union Peace and Security Council Open Session on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa.

Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Peace and Security Council,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating the Permanent Representative of Lesotho, Ambassador Mafa Sejanamane, for assuming the Chairpersonship of the Peace and Security Council for the month of March and for convening this session on such a topic of great importance to us: youth, peace and security (YPS) in Africa.

We meet today in the midst of a major international crisis which poses a threat to the international order as we know it, as one permanent member of the Security Council is violating article 4 of the United Nations Charter, which states that “All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations”.

As we observe in numerous conflicts in Africa and beyond, innocent civilians overwhelmingly pay the price of war. Youth are among those most affected, including when they are forced to take up arms, and see their dreams and aspirations forever confiscated.

Chairperson,

The African Union is a true trailblazer by operationalizing the YPS agenda across the continent, grounded in evidence, strategic vision and sustained dedication. The United Nations applauds the high level of ambition set out in the Continental Framework on YPS and its 10-Year Implementation Plan 2020-2029, by aiming at 25 per cent of AU member States developing youth-led and -centered National Action Plans on YPS by 2024, and 50 per
Climate change and armed conflict, compounded by COVID-19, are putting young women and men at risk of being left behind in terms of education, economic opportunities, health and social protection.

There is also a primary responsibility of governments to refrain from engaging youth in war and to create the necessary political framework for a positive engagement of the youth in the country’s politics and economy.

In the Sahel, the youth need no longer be excluded from economic and political lives. In some cases, we observe that, due to frustration, young military officers toppling political elites are cheered on and supported by the youth.

Support to African youth also requires investments in human capital development, through greater access to education and digital resources. Policies aimed at promoting skills-based and technical and vocational education, particularly of young girls, should be scaled-up and promoted widely. Niger’s plan to invest nearly 20 percent of its budget in education is a step in the right direction.

The United Nations actively supports youth’s contributions to peacebuilding, including through the Youth Promotion Initiative of the Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund. From 2016 to 2021, the Initiative invested over US$ 74 million in Africa.

For instance, in Somalia, through the “Connecting across divides: Youth building peace in Somalia” project, 540 young Somalis engaged in 630 sustained dialogue sessions in Baidoa, Jowhar and Abduwak with the objective of building meaningful relationships among young men and women across diverse socio-economic, political, religious and clan identity lines.

Furthermore, in line with the African Union Lusaka Master Roadmap on silencing the guns in Africa, the United Nations provided in 2020 and 2021, online training for young leaders on peace education and unarmed approaches to civilian protection. It trained 120 youth leaders from ministries, armed forces and civil society in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan.

In April 2021, the United Nations also launched the “Youth, Peace and Security: A Programming Handbook”, to support the implementation of the YPS agenda and online training.

Chairperson,
On 20 and 21 January 2022, the High-Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes was held virtually. The Conference was co-hosted by the Governments of the State of Qatar, Finland and Colombia, and co-organized with civil society and United Nations partners.

More than 160 young peacebuilders from 74 countries joined discussions to explore opportunities for decision makers to support youth-led and youth-inclusive peace efforts. The meeting received valuable contributions from the African Union, including the Special Envoy on Youth, Ms. Chido Cleo Mpemba.

The event featured the launch of “A Guide for Public Officials in support of country-level operationalization of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda”, as well as a first-of-its-kind “Five-year Strategic Action Plan for Youth-inclusive Peace Processes”. The United Nations encourages African Member States to make use of these resources, which provide tools and examples to put the YPS agenda into practice, including when designing and implementing peace processes.

Recommendations, based on the key concerns and aspirations highlighted by the youth participants in the Conference, include the following:

First, we must foster the societal recognition that young people are necessary agents in the prevention of violence, political decision making, and the building foundations for peaceful societies.

Second, as highlighted by the AU Youth Envoy in the Conference, young people’s use of online technologies is a distinct feature of their peace efforts. We must work together to overcome inequality in internet connectivity, while strengthening young people’s safe access to digital spaces free from online restrictions, hate speech and surveillance.

Third, while the global youth population has never been bigger, “young people under age 30 constitute just over 2 per cent of the world’s parliamentarians” according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. There is an urgent need to institutionalize measures to ensure the meaningful participation of youth at all levels of decision making. In “Our Common Agenda”, Secretary-General António Guterres has proposed to create a “Youth in Politics” Index to remove barriers to political participation and measure progress.

And fourth, there is need to maintain and further strengthen the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union to support monitoring and accountability on the implementation of the YPS agenda.
Chairperson,

Younger generations are demanding an opening of the political space around the world. The United Nations remains strongly committed to working hand-in-hand with the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms, and African Member States on the implementation of the YPS agenda. It remains paramount to ensure that nationally owned, youth-led peace and security processes pave the way for the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Aspirations of Agenda 2063.

I thank you for your kind attention.
VII. UNITED NATIONS: UN WOMEN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO AU AND UNECA

Statement by Ms. Awa Ndiaye Seck, UN Women Special Representative to AU and UNECA at the 1067th Virtual Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council Open Session on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa.

Excellencies Representatives of the Council,

Excellences, ladies and Gentlemen,

UN Women would like to express gratitude for the opportunity to address this timely open session where youth, peace and security in Africa.

Young women in Africa continue to make significant contribution towards official peace processes. Young Africa women are also playing diverse roles to countering violent extremism such as including by creating counter-narratives focusing on peacebuilding and reconciliation. Across Africa, young women are demonstrating that peace is much more than the absence of violence. They are utilizing their spaces to influence positive transformation in societies including through the use of digital activism, art, music as well as other creative strategies to mobilize youth to engage in peacebuilding. Across the different parts of Africa, young women have often engaged in track II and III mediation platforms to advocate for the inclusion of human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment concerns and priorities during peace negotiations.

On the other hand, around the continent, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, acts of violent extremism are escalating, and women are increasingly being targeted. Women of all ages are increasingly becoming a target of extremist violence and terrorist acts, including sexual violence and slavery which undermine their essential freedoms and rights. Very often, attacks on women are being used as a strategy to intimidate the target population and to obtain financial gain. Furthermore, parties in conflict often leverage on traditional gender norms and dynamics within certain societies to enforce violence and perpetuate extremist acts.

They, therefore, have a vested interest ensuring that the youth, peace and security agenda responds to their needs and that they take active role including in the establishment of accountability mechanisms to ensure the full implementation of all relevant commitments. Currently, however, young women remain under-represented in peace and security related processes. To this date, there has not been a young women mediator who took part in formal peace processes in Africa as, mostly, they are restricted to activism, advocacy and the observation of formal peace processes.
Young women’s meaningful engagement in peace processes is largely hampered by lack of resources and, often, their grassroots organizations largely remain under-funded. Moreover, there is a dearth of systematic data on young women’s representation in peace processes, which limits the evidence available to demonstrate the link between young women’s participation in peace processes and the sustaining peace agenda.

UN Women commends the African Union’s efforts in promoting the Youth Peace and Security (YPS) and Women Peace and Security (WPS) agendas as central priorities of the AU Peace and Security Architecture. UN Women recognizes the notable contributions of the African Union led initiatives such as Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise) and the African Women’s Leadership Network (AWLN) to the enhancement of capacities of women peacebuilders. In addition, the Continental Result Framework on WPS led by the Office of the Special Envoy is a practical tool for advancing and monitoring the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in Africa. UN Women remains committed to continue its collaboration with AU and Members States for the full realisation of national, continental and global commitments including the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Continental Results Framework on WPS.

In conclusion, UN Women takes this opportunity to call upon the distinguished Council to consider the following key actions for prioritization by AU Member States and RECs/RMs:

- **Address discriminatory and harmful social norms and practices**: AU Member States are called upon to address discriminatory and harmful social norms and practices that sideline girls and young women from accessing education and participating in decision-making. To this end, Member States are called upon to launch sustained awareness raising, fast-track the implementation of actions to advance the human rights of young women to access education, and adequately invest in initiatives that build the capacities of young women.

- **Provide an enabling environment for young women’s participation**: AU Member States are called upon to provide an enabling environment to improve young women’s leadership, decision-making at all levels including in politics, public service and local governance. This includes prioritizing, identifying and developing regular channels for them to express their views at local national and continental levels.

- **Establish an urgent action fund for young women peacebuilders**: AU Member States are called upon to dedicate, within the AU Peace Fund, an urgent action fund to foster young women’s participation at all levels of peace processes, including in preventive diplomacy missions, election observations, mediation thematic consultative groups, as well as PCRD missions.

- **Develop an AU programme to strengthen the role of young women in peace processes**: AU Member States are called upon to endorse the development of a fully-fledged continental programme on youth, peace and security with a standalone pillar focusing on young women for multi-sectoral implementation by AU, RECS/RMs and relevant partners.
Member States are also called upon to adopt an accompanying AU Guidelines on Young Women’s Participation in Peace Processes.

- **Capacity-building and deployment of young women in peace processes:** AU and AU Member States are called upon to create opportunities for young women accredited to the African Women Leadership Network (AWLN), FemWise Africa and AU Youth4Peace Programme to be deployed to conflict and post-conflict peace processes led by the AU and RECs.

- **Monitor progress on young women’s participation in peace building and sustaining peace:** AU Member States and RECs/RMs are called upon to utilize the AU Continental Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security to strengthen the tracking, collection and documentation of data on young women’s participation in and contribution to peace processes. Member States are further called upon to ensure the inclusion of young women in monitoring mechanisms under the APSA and AGA.
Mr. Chairman, Members of the Peace and Security Council, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, the EU takes note of the Statement of the Chair of the African Union, H.E President Macky Sall and Chairperson of the AU Commission H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, on the situation in Ukraine in which “they call on the Russian Federation and any other regional or international actor to imperatively respect international law, the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Ukraine”. With crucial discussions ongoing in the UNGA and at the UN Human Rights Council, the EU calls on its partners to ally and unequivocally condemn Russia’s unprovoked and unlawful aggression against Ukraine in clear violation of all fundamental principles of the UN Charter. As stated in the joint declaration of the 6th EU-AU Summit of 18 February 2022, the AU and EU share a commitment to uphold effective multilateralism within the rules-based international order, with the UN at its core.

We are all united here today because we have one common objective: to give young people the power they deserve to influence our future, and in particular to positively contribute to peace and security in Africa. As the EU, we are committed to supporting young people’s meaningful participation in decision-making processes, in preventing conflict and in building sustainable peace in line with the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

At the 6th AU-EU Summit of Heads of State held in Brussels on 17-18 February 2022, leaders presented their joint vision for a renewed partnership for solidarity, security, peace and sustainable and sustained economic development and prosperity for our citizens and for our future generations, bringing together our people, regions and organisations. They announced a renewed and enhanced peace and security cooperation, including joint efforts to further promote the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. Following this recent high-level political endorsement, the EU looks forward to continue working hand-in-hand with the AU to foster youth participation and engagement.

The AU's commitment to further meaningful youth participation is long standing. It is enshrined in the African Youth Charter and embodied by the AUC Youth Envoy. In the field of peace and security, this priority has been clearly reaffirmed by the Continental Framework on
Youth, Peace and Security which provides a solid foundation, and reinforced by the nomination of African Youth Ambassadors for Peace. While development perspectives for youth have a positive impact on peace and security, a context of sustainable peace also positively influences young people’s future.

As the importance of meaningful youth participation gains ground and recognition, the EU is fully on board. 2022 is the European Year of Youth, and the first Youth Action Plan in EU External Relations is being prepared. Last year, the EU established the first Youth Sounding Board consisting of 25 motivated young people. It aims to create a real, long-lasting change in how the EU engages with young people in its development cooperation. Also, as expressed in the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, we need to harness young people’s motivation and energy for positive change. In the field of peace and security, the 2020 Council Conclusions on Youth in External Action recognised young people’s contribution to maintaining and promoting peace and security as well as the need to actively engage youth – without any discrimination – in efforts to build lasting peace, contribute to justice and reconciliation and counter violent extremism. In this context, the EU wants to further work on making sure that stereotypes around gender and age do not hinder young women’s participation as partners in the development of policies, norms and standards related to peace and security.

The EU is fully committed to supporting this youth engagement in Africa. Through the APSA IV support programme, the EU is strengthening the implementation of the AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security, the Regional Youth, Peace and Security forums and their partnership with RECs, RMs and CSOs. The EU also welcomes recent announcements by Commissioner Bankole on the work to establish an AU Youth Peace Mediation Corps, as youth are essential players in the prevention of conflicts and stabilisation. The EU stands ready to support this initiative, notably be identifying pilot cases.

At the same time, the EU recognizes that realizing ambitions on youth participation does not go without its challenges. While an increasing number of young people are finding spaces to engage with EU-AU discussions, their participation often falls short of being meaningful. Additionally, the young people participating are still too often from a very privileged part of society, and do not reflect the diversity of young communities across our continents. EU and AU Member States need to do better and go out of their way to ensure that our promises are turned into reality.

The EU therefore shares the commitment to meaningful youth participation and works with the AU to promote it in all fields. Young people have become the human faces of our cross-continental partnership thanks to the AU-EU Youth Track, bringing Africa and Europe closer together through people-to-people cooperation to tackle common challenges and aspirations. The Youth Track encompasses inter alia Youth Summits in the margins of AU-EU Heads of State Summits (the latest one took place during the Africa-Europe Week in February
2022), the AU-EU Youth Plug-In initiative and Youth Cooperation Hub. The Hub has a unique and innovative model of governance, whereby young experts develop and implement innovative pilot projects together with selected CSOs and hundreds of youth locally.

The new AU-EU Youth Programme 2022-2025 called the Youth Lab 3.0 should be finalised later this year. We want to take the AU-EU Youth Track to the next level, by testing new ideas and solutions, and enlarging participation to an inclusive spectrum of young actors. Most of all, we want the Lab to be youth led and driven.

These efforts are in synergy with other initiatives and tools to foster meaningful youth participation, such as the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and the African Youth Charter. They also contribute to the implementation of UNSC resolutions 2250 and 2419 on Youth, Peace and Security, of which we are strong proponents. We look forward to keep working together with youth in the context of our renewed trans-continental partnership.
IX. NORWEGIAN PERMANENT MISSION TO THE AFRICAN UNION


Norway welcomes the determination of the African Union and the Peace and Security Council to advance the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

The active leadership taken by the AU in mobilizing Member States and RECs is of immense value for the results on the ground.

We commend the AU-Commission for strengthening efforts to raise awareness about the role young people are already playing in peace and security, as well as its work to mobilize and engage youth in such efforts.

We want to pay tribute to initiatives such as the AU Youth Charter, the “Youth for Peace Program”, the “Youth Silencing the Guns Campaign” and the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace.

Not least, we want to underline the important role of the African Union Youth Envoy, Ms. Chido Cleopatra Mpemba, in empowering young people’s active participation and influence in matters that concern their lives on the continent.

Young people stand at the forefront mobilizing for global issues, such as climate and environmental action. Dialogue and mentorship can help bridge generation gaps, build trust and open doors for new and innovative solutions.

Young men and women are effective peacebuilders, and we need their leadership. Which makes it important to foster meaningful dialogue and partnerships between young people and other stakeholders. It is key to facilitate for an active civil society and close dialogue with youth-led organizations.

Youth are also too often at the frontline as soldiers in conflicts or exploited by violent extremist groups. Young people are also victims of conflict and crises.

It is a priority for Norway as an elected member of the Security Council, to highlight the vulnerability of youth in crisis situations and to contribute to their protection and influence in matters that impact their lives and future. We strive to engage young women and men in our work and we chair the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict where we include young people.

A long-term commitment from our side is the co-chairing of the UN Group of Friends of Preventing Violent Extremism with Jordan, where we share lessons learned and best practices for including youth and civil society in national strategies to prevent violent extremism.
The world is facing global challenges at a large scale, the Covid 19 pandemic, climate change and threats to peace and security.

To meet the challenges, we need to understand the peace and security needs of young women and men, and we rely on their active engagement. Young people are agents of change in their communities and on the world stage.
X. UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom welcomes the PSC’s convening of the fourth open session on youth, peace and security, a hugely important agenda for the continent of Africa and for the world. Young people have a vital role to play in promoting peace and preventing instability.

The United Kingdom also welcomes the second cohort of African Youth Ambassadors for Peace and the African Union’s work through the Youth for Peace Africa Programme, recalling the guiding principles of multilateral normative frameworks, including the African Union Constitutive Act and UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 and 2419.

Currently in over forty African countries, between fifty and sixty percent of the population are under the age of twenty, while by 2040, Africa will have the largest youth population in the world. With the right investments, these young people have the ability to power the continent’s prosperity, but only if they can access the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential. Young people need to be able to hold onto idealism. But that idealism can only be found through giving young people a genuine stake in society through education, community integration, a clear role in civic and political process and, critically, employment.

Job creation for young people is a defining development challenge of our era. Between now and 2035, African nations need to create 18 million new jobs every year just to keep pace with the continent’s rapidly growing population. Creating high quality jobs at this scale is in the interests of all of us but requires bold new thinking and partnerships.

In this regard, COVID-19 is threatening the progress of young Africans, with a disproportionate impact on the employment of young people, particularly in the informal sector. The indirect impacts of COVID-19, and decisions taken on how to respond, have particular impacts on youth – and it is crucial that they participate in decision-making on the response.

In 2020, alongside the AU Office of the Youth Envoy, the United Kingdom co-hosted a virtual policy dialogue series to amplify the voices of African youth. The series listened to young people’s experiences of COVID-19 and aimed to foster partnerships and create a network of institutions that will work together to help young people recover from the impact of the
pandemic and to fully realise their potential. This kind of cross-continental experience sharing is key to breaking down barriers and bridging the gap between youth and policymakers.

Supporting youth advocates goes beyond just giving them a platform. It’s about building capacity and providing education to ensure that all young people, including girls, can seize opportunities presented to them. It is for that reason that the United Kingdom’s Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, has put women and girls at the heart of the United Kingdom’s foreign and development policy, including new targets on girls’ education.

The United Kingdom looks forward to working with the African Union on the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security, as well as the African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment.
2022-03-03

Communiqué of the 1067th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council Held on 3 March 2022, on Youth Peace and Security in Africa.

Peace and Security Council
African Union Commission

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