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CONCEPT NOTE

Gender Pre-Forum

THEME:

**Silencing the Guns: Women in Democratization and Peace Building in
Africa**

Kigali, Rwanda

6-7 October 2014

1 Introduction

Africa continues to endure conflicts, most of which are armed and violent. Over the last two decades the continent has witnessed considerable decrease in interstate conflicts while giving way to protracted intra-state conflicts whose main victims are civilian populations especially women and children. These new types of conflicts inflict pain on civilians; erode institutions, destruct infrastructures and social structures, replacing them with institutionalized violence. Generally, conflicts have devastating consequences, including widening gender gaps which exacerbates women's vulnerability.

The mandate of the African Union (AU) includes among others promotion of peace, security and stability as well as democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance on the continent. There is renewed focus at the African Union to seek a holistic understanding of the vulnerability and challenges women face in conflict situations and their role in building democratic governance and peace on the continent. This is in part recognition of the fact that women suffer the most in times of conflict and yet they remain relegated at the periphery of initiatives aimed at building peace and democratic governance. In addition there is an acknowledgement that women are change agents with skills, capacity and ability to bring positive change in pre, during and post conflict situations. The AU is intent on enhancing effective participation of women in conflict resolution, peace building and strengthening democratic governance.

In order to ensure effective coordination, coherence and synergy of initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic governance in Africa the AU established the African Governance Architecture (AGA) as the overall continental framework for promoting, nurturing, strengthening and consolidating democracy and governance in Africa. The AGA seeks to achieve these objectives through among other initiatives facilitating constructive dialogue among Member States, African Union Organs, institutions, Regional Economic Communities, African citizens, civil society and other stakeholders on emerging trends, threats, challenges and opportunities on democratic governance and human rights in Africa.

The AGA convenes the Annual High Level Dialogues on Democratic Governance. The Annual High Level Dialogues provide a unique platform for frank, open and inclusive conversations among Member States, AU organs and institutions, Regional Economic Communities, African citizens, think tanks, civil society, media, women's organisations, and other stakeholders in order to share lessons and experience as well tease out best practices for improving governance, consolidating constitutional democracy and fostering effective realization of human and peoples' rights on the continent and in the process avoid humanitarian crises.

In 2014 the AGA will convene the Third Annual High Level Dialogue of this nature, with a focus on how democratic-developmental governance can be leveraged to silence Africa's blazing guns as envisaged by the AU Assembly 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration of May 2013 which marked the beginning of the year-long celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU. The Dialogue is scheduled to take place from 30 to 31 October, 2014 in Dakar, Senegal. It will be preceded by pre-forum consultative engagements, which shall include a Youth and Gender Pre-Forums.

The Gender Pre-Forum consultation is scheduled to take place from **6-7 October 2014** in Kigali, Rwanda. It will be an integral part of the High Level Dialogue. Keeping with the Dialogue's main theme and on the basis of participants' expertise, the pre-high level dialogue will focus on fostering a deeper understanding of the trends, challenges and opportunities for women in strengthening democratic governance towards silencing guns in Africa by 2020. It is also aimed at identifying practical initiatives and strategies by the AGA for enhancing women inclusion and engagement on peace building and democratisation processes in Africa.

2 Background

At the heart of Africa's violent conflicts lies the problem of democratic governance deficits mainly manifested through poor social economic and political governance, inadequate democracy, poverty and growing inequality, poor service delivery and mismanagement of natural resources, lack of respect for the rule of law, abuse of human rights, corruption, and lack of space for popular political participation. This has greatly undermined Africa's efforts to ensure long-term stability and economic progress for its peoples.

The AU is cognizant of the significant importance of democratic-developmental governance as a foundation for silencing the guns on the continent as enumerated in its various shared values instruments. In this regard, African leaders, in the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration proclaimed their determination to anchor African societies on respect for the rule of law, human rights and dignity, popular participation, the management of diversity, as well as inclusion in development and democracy. Specifically the leaders committed themselves to:

- i. Strengthen democratic governance including decentralised systems, the rule of law and capacities of national institutions to meet the aspirations of African peoples;
- ii. Reject unconstitutional changes of government, including through any attempts to seize power by force but recognise the right of peoples to peacefully express their will against oppressive systems;
- iii. Promote integrity, fight corruption in the management of public affairs and promote leadership that is committed to the interests of the people; and
- iv. Foster the participation of African peoples through democratic elections and ensure accountability and transparency.

In achieving these commitments, the roles of women and young girls cannot be overstated. At the regional level, it has been observed that, women's full participation in national and local politics, in the economy, in academia and the media is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace in all contexts - during peace, through conflict and post-conflict situations, and during political transitions. If a political system neglects women's participation and evades accountability for women's rights, it fails half of its citizens. Peace, stability and democracy are fundamental pre-conditions for sustainable human development.

In light of the above, the thematic focus on "silencing the guns in Africa" for the 2014 High Level Dialogue and the Gender Pre-Forum Event is in direct response to the 50th

Anniversary Solemn Declaration, where African leaders committed to ending “all wars in Africa by 2020”.

2.1 Policy and Legal Regime on Gender Equality

In an effort to provide durable solutions to conflicts in Africa and ensure participation of women in building democratic governance and peace, the AU has adopted various norms, institutions and strategies. These include the African Shared Values instruments especially the Constitutive Act, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; Protocol to the African Charter for Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the AU Gender Policy (2009).

The AGA framework identifies gender equality and participation of women in strengthening democracy and peace building as central to achieving sustainable peace and development in Africa.¹ Other specific strategies include the five year Gender Peace and Security Programme (GPSP) Strategy that is designed to serve as a framework for the work of the AUC in gender equality and women empowerment in the areas of prevention, participation, protection, capacity building and knowledge management.²

Other relevant global instruments that guide the work of the AU in this regard include the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which states in Article 7, that state parties are obliged to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in public life. The Beijing Declaration on Women takes this further by linking women’s participation in political processes to transparency and accountability in governance and sustainable development. In addition, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 addresses the inordinate impact of war on women, the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace. These policy documents and instruments emphasise the need for enhanced women’s participation in governance and development processes to ensure strong democratic and governance institutions/systems. They further recognize that women’s equal participation is essential to bringing about peace, stability and development on the continent, which are at the core of the AU agenda.

3 Rationale for the Gender Pre-Forum Event

Conflicts, particularly armed conflicts in Africa have had adverse effects on African people, specifically women who suffer disproportionately from these effects. Women, who frequently make up the majority of displaced and refugee populations, often have

¹ AU Constitutive Act Article 4 (1); AGA Framework, Revised 6 November 2013, guiding principle 6e. The African Governance Architecture (AGA) is the continental institutional framework aimed at connecting, empowering and building capacities of African peoples in strengthening governance and consolidating democracy in Africa.

² See <file:///C:/Users/USER/Desktop/Gener,%20peace%20and%20security/African%20Union%20launches%20five-year%20Gender%20Peace%20and%20Security%20Programme%202015-2020-African%20Union%20-%20Peace%20and%20Security%20Department.htm#sthash.REwfCcE8.dpuf> at:

fewer resources to protect themselves and are victims of severe forms of abuse during, and often after armed conflicts.³ Rape, forced pregnancies, abduction into sexual slavery and assault have also become deliberate instruments of war. Although women have led peace movements and driven community recovery after conflict, they often continue to be neglected during peace negotiations and democratic governance building activities. These exclusions have and continue to limit women's access to opportunities to recover from effects, get redress for human rights abuses, and participate in shaping reformed laws and public institutions.⁴

In addition, most recovery interventions have been gender blind and actions on the ground remain resistant to mainstreaming gender issues/perspectives to democratic governance initiatives. As a result, women and young girls continue to face various structural challenges in their struggle to meaningfully participate and contribute to building democratic governance, peace and stability on the continent⁵. The challenges are among others:

- i. Stereotypical attitudes towards the respective gender roles of women and men in conflict and peace building initiatives;
- ii. Limited space for effective participation and low levels of women's representation in political decision-making structures which negatively affects women's ability to derive full benefit from the political and democratization processes of their countries.
- iii. Absence of gender structures within relevant governance/democracy institutions;
- iv. Gender based violence against women and young girls;
- v. Absence of democratic culture that fosters gender inequality and lack of inclusive development.

According to statistics, women represent 52% of the population in Africa and their participation in building democratic governance is crucial. It is therefore imperative that attempts at building/strengthening democratic governance and managing violent conflicts pay particular attention and prioritise the concerns of women and children by bringing their voices to the process as not just victims but contributors and active participants in all stages of the management of political and democratic process. In this regard, the Gender Pre-Forum Engagement is one of the ways through which the AU intends to bring together experts on women issues so as to discuss and come up with strategies that shall be used to empower and build capacities of African peoples, particularly women in strengthening governance and consolidating democracy in Africa. Specifically, the forum shall provide stakeholders with a platform to discuss issues pertaining to vulnerability and challenges facing women in conflict situations as well as their role in building democratic governance and peace in Africa. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this event will not only feed into the discussions of the High Level Dialogue, but also facilitate the development of strategies and workable solutions to

³ M. Makumi, 1997. "Women and Children in Conflict Situations: The Culture of Rights as a Missing Link in Africa" : Nairobi: CCR-WLEA. University of Nairobi; P.5

⁴ UN Women Peace and Security Brief <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security#sthash.2WjkNyBU.dpuf>

⁵ Angela E.V. King, 2001. Keynote speech: Third International Conference on "*Women and Conflict Management in Africa*". See on file:///C:/Users/USER/Desktop/Gener,%20peace%20and%20security/Women%20and%20Conflict%20Management%20in%20Africa-%20Notable%20speech.htm

holistically address issues of gender equality as a precursor for building sustainable democratic governance and peace in Africa.

4 Goal and Objectives

4.1 Goal

Provide a platform through which vulnerability and challenges facing women in conflict situations shall be examined and recommendations made on policy measures and mechanisms aimed at improving the role of women in the process of strengthening democratic governance and addressing violent conflicts in Africa.

4.2 Specific Objectives

- i. Gather evidence-based information on the challenges facing women in conflict situations;
- ii. Establish ways through which the role of women in building/consolidating democratic-governance and peace in Africa can be enhanced;
- iii. Concretise strategies for mainstreaming gender into AGA programmes towards silencing the guns and building democratic governance in Africa;
- iv. Develop monitoring procedures and indicators for women to engage in the monitoring of the implementation of their national/regional democratic governance and peace building programmes; and
- v. Identify specific roles of different stakeholders (Member states, AU organs, RECs, CSOs and development partners) towards strengthening the role of women in building and consolidating democratic governance and silencing guns in Africa.

5 Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the Pre-Forum will include:

- i. Improved understanding of the conflict situation in Africa and the role of women in building democracy and peace in Africa;
- ii. Long term partnerships established with key partners dealing in women and democratic governance issues as well as conflict and post conflict issues;
- iii. Concrete recommendations and strategies on how to engender the AGA Programmes developed.
- iv. Strategies of engaging women in the process of democratic governance towards silencing guns developed.
- v. Identify tools to better engage women in the monitoring of democratic governance and peace building programmes

6 Methodology

The Pre-Forum will take the shape of a consultative engagement, which will entail comparable experience and lessons sharing, presentations, plenary sessions and parallel working groups to address specific issues as envisaged in the theme and objectives for the engagement. Each session will be facilitated by a leading expert (s) and sufficient time will be allocated for analytical dialogue and identification of

specific recommendations on how to address the challenges presented. (***See agenda for the Engagement attached***)

7 Partnerships, Institutional and Management Arrangements

The Gender Pre-Forum Event is convened by the African Union Commission in partnership and collaboration with UNDP Regional Regional Service Centre for Africa, UN Women, the Rwanda Governance Board and the Rwanda Ministry of Gender and Family promotion, the GIZ Regional Governance Programme support to the African Union and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies of the University of Addis Ababa.

8 Participation

Participants at the Pre-Forum are drawn from Gender Experts from AU Member States, AU Organs, and RECs, the private sector, development partners, CSO's, Philanthropists, the academia and think tanks across Africa. (***See list of proposed participants attached***)

9 Date and Venue

The consultation will be held at the Serena Hotel in Kigali, Rwanda, on 6-7 October 2014.

10 Working Languages

The Meeting will be conducted in English and French.

11 Contact Details of the Coordinating Team

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