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## Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security

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AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

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## Acronyms

ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance
ACHPR	Africa Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
AGA	African Governance Architecture
AGA-YES	AGA Youth Engagement Strategy
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AYC	African Youth Charter
AYD	African Youth Day
AYAP	African Youth Ambassador for Peace
AYV	AU Youth Volunteer
COMESA	Community of East and Southern Africa
CPMR	Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVE	Counter Violent Extremism
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DPA	Department for Political Affairs
DPoA	Decade Plan of Action
EAC	East African Community
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender Based Violence
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
PCRD	Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development
PSC	Peace and Security Council
PSD	Peace and Security Department
PSO	Peace Support Operations
QIPs	Quick Impact Projects
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations

UNFPA  
YPS  
Y4P

United Nations Population Fund  
Youth, Peace and Security  
Youth for Peace Africa

## I. Introduction

It is incontrovertible that the peace and security challenges experienced in Africa from the 1990s put continental and international attention on the key roles played by young men and women in episodes of armed conflict and insecurity. Successive wars and violations of formal peace agreements and processes across the continent further heightened the attention and concern of policy institutions to the participation of youth in armed conflicts and violence. Across the divide, young people continue to constitute the core of combatants, while also representing a significant number of those affected by armed conflicts, violent extremism, banditry, violent protests and gender-based violence in Africa. For instance, in addition to disruption of education and youth-sensitive socio-economic activities, “estimates of direct conflict deaths in 2015 suggest that more than 90 percent of all casualties involved young males.”<sup>1</sup>

Youth, Peace and Security refers to “conscious actions and processes to protect young people from participation in, and the ill effects of, violent conflicts and insecurity, and to promote and support their contributions to peace efforts in conflict and post-conflict situations.”<sup>2</sup> This acknowledges the need for institutionalised initiatives and targeted actions that reflects the needs and perspectives of youth in the prevention and recovery from armed conflicts and insecurities in Africa. It points to the key elements of protecting youth as part of broader civilian population from the effects of armed conflicts; prevent their participation in violence; ensure and acknowledge their participation in decision-making processes, especially in peace and security initiatives; partner and support young people’s initiatives in peacebuilding efforts; and promote the recovery of youth affected by violence.

As underlined by available research and policy initiatives, the participation of young people in armed conflicts in Africa and elsewhere reflects a variety of unmet needs.<sup>3</sup> The needs include socio-economic development and opportunities; good governance, rule of law, democracy, and human rights; justice and reconciliation; and meaningful representation and participation in decision-making processes.

The youthful demography of the African continent is also a defining factor as exponential increases in the population of young people (persons below the age of 35 are estimated to

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council/General Assembly (2018). “The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security”, A/72/761-S/2018/86, paragraph 8, available at [https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-03/Progress%20Study%20on%20Youth%2C%20Peace%20%26%20Security\\_A-72-761\\_S-2018-86\\_ENGLISH\\_0.pdf](https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-03/Progress%20Study%20on%20Youth%2C%20Peace%20%26%20Security_A-72-761_S-2018-86_ENGLISH_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> This definition is adapted from December 2015 UNSCR 2250, and the November 2018 AU-PSC’s Communique on Youth, Peace and Security.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Olawale Ismail & Funmi Olonisakin (2018) ‘Evaluation of Policy and Research Evidence on Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion and Violence in Africa’, IDRC, Kenya/Canada. See also, Olawale Ismail & Alao, C. (2007) “Youth in the Interface of Development and Security”, *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (April 2007), pp. 3-26.

account for three quarters of Africa's 1.2 billion population<sup>4</sup>) is a rare opportunity (development resource) as much as a challenge (increases the risk of violence) in the context of injustice, limited education and socio-economic opportunities, and exclusion from decision-making processes.

The importance of youth to socio-economic development, peace, and security in Africa is recognized by African institutions, including the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/Regional Mechanisms (RMs) and their Member States. In fact, the AU and RECs have a track record of policy action and commitment to promoting youth participation in democratisation, socio-economic development, peace and security. Since the 1990s, the AU and RECs have adopted several normative instruments, including Charters, Protocols, Declarations, Policies and programmes that address the needs of young people broadly and in relation to peace and security. The under-listed normative frameworks and policy initiatives collectively serve as the rationale for this framework.

## II. Foundations for Youth, Peace and Security in Africa

1. ***AU Constitutive Act (2000)***: Articles 3(f) and 3(g) of the AU's Constitutive Act highlights the promotion of peace, security, and stability on the continent and the promotion of democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance as core objectives. The declared principles governing the AU also underpin its commitments on youth, peace and security; Articles 4(c), (i) and (m) also call for the participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union; the promotion of gender equality; and respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance, respectively.
2. ***AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol***: The AU PSC Protocol under Article 3(a) notes as a key objective the promotion of peace, security and stability in order to guarantee the protection and preservation of life and property, the well-being of the African people and their environment, as well as the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development. Article 20 mandates the PSC to encourage non-governmental organizations, community-based groups and other civil society organizations, to participate actively in the efforts at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. In addition, the PSC at its 807th meeting in November 2018 convened the first open session on Youth, Peace and Security, wherein it called on Member States to develop national action plans and remove all structural barriers to youth participation in peace and security. The PSC also "requested the AU Commission to undertake a study on the role of the youth in promoting peace and

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<sup>4</sup> See United Nations, (not dated), 'Youth Empowerment', United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/youth.shtml>

security in Africa and to submit the findings of the study to Council for consideration and action as may be appropriate.<sup>5</sup>

3. ***The African Youth Charter (AYC) (2006)***: This specifies the rights, duties and freedoms of African youth and their constructive engagement in decision-making processes and the developmental aspirations of the continent. Article 11 of the AYC provides for youth participation in all spheres of society through active involvement in decision-making bodies and processes, the equal access of young men and women in decision-making, priority attention to marginalized youth, and the provision of technical and financial support to build the institutional capacity of youth organizations. Article 17 highlights the important role of youth in peace and security, through the strengthening of the capacity of young people and youth-led bodies in peacebuilding and conflict prevention; use of education among others to promote a culture of peace and tolerance among youth; and mobilize youth for post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation, reconciliation and development of affected areas.
4. ***Youth Division Programs***: In 2008, the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments declared 2009- 2018 the African Youth Decade and endorsed the African Youth Decade Plan of Action (DPoA) as the roadmap for implementation of the African Youth Charter. In 2017 The Assembly dedicated the theme to “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth” and a roadmap developed outlining key actions that needed to be undertaken to empower young people in Africa from 2017 and beyond. The 2017 AU theme built on existing frameworks and decisions, notably Agenda 2063. The AU’s Agenda 2063, Aspiration 4 calls for a Peaceful and Secure Africa based on functional mechanisms for peaceful prevention and resolution of conflicts, and the nurturing of a culture of peace and tolerance in Africa’s children and youth through peace education.<sup>6</sup> Aspiration 6 also states; An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children. This contains explicit commitments to the active involvement of young Africans in decision-making in all aspects (including peace and security); and the elimination of all forms of systemic inequalities, exploitation, marginalization and discrimination of young people; and the mainstreaming of youth issues in all development agendas. These frameworks and decisions serve as the basis for the African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (APAYE), the AU’s overarching programmatic document to guide and influence the efforts and contributions of key

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<sup>5</sup> See AU PSC (2018) ‘Communique: Peace and Security Council 807<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 08 November 2018, Addis Ababa’, PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCVII), paragraph 9. <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc.807.comm.psc.youth.peace.and.security.8.11.2018.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> African Union Commission (2015). Agenda 2063: THE AFRICA WE WANT, Addis Ababa: AUC, paragraph 32-39, available at [https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/3657-file-agenda2063\\_popular\\_version\\_en.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/3657-file-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf)

partners and stakeholders engaged in youth empowerment on the continent. APAYE seeks to bolster the foundations of youth development, catalyze action at Members States level and accelerate implementation of flagship programmes linked to the 1 Million By 2021 Initiative of which youth consultations is a critical part.

5. ***Silencing the Guns by 2020 Initiative:*** The commitment to a peaceful and secure Africa as declared under AU Agenda 2063 is operationalized through the Silencing the Guns (designed to end all wars in Africa by 2020). The consultation process and the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps on Silencing the Guns by the Year 2020, as part of the AU flagship project under Agenda 2063, which also recognised the role of young people and addressing the needs of youth in achieving the objective of ending all wars in Africa.<sup>7</sup>
6. ***AU's Engagement with Civil Society:*** The Youth, Peace and Security agenda is also a product of the AU commitment to engaging civil society groups in all aspects of its activities as expressed in the 2008 Livingstone Formula; the mechanism set up by the Constitutive Act of the African Union (Article 8 (10) (c)), and the Rules of Procedure 21 and 22 of the PSC allowing for the civil society participation in Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (CPMR), training and advocacy activities of the PSC.
7. ***AU Theme on Youth in 2017:*** The AU's robust commitment to youth issues crystallized with the adoption of a youth-focused theme for the year 2017; "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth." The theme and its associated roadmap highlighted the imperative of investment and key actions and deliverables in four priority areas that have positive implications on peace and security. This includes employment and entrepreneurship; education and skills development; health and well-being; and rights, governance and youth empowerment.<sup>8</sup>
8. ***The African Governance Architecture (AGA) Platform:*** The AGA was established in lieu of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance (ACDEG), which underlines the connection between the observance of democratic principles and peace. The AGA is a platform for dialogue between the various stakeholders who are mandated to promote and strengthen democratic governance in Africa, enhance popular participation and citizens' engagement on attainment of democracy, governance and human and people's rights. The African Governance

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<sup>7</sup> African Union (2016). African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to silence the Guns in Africa by year 2020 (Lusaka Roadmap 2016), available at <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/uploads/AU%20Roadmap%20Silencing%20Guns%202020%20pdf%20en.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> See AU Commission (2017) "AU Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth", AUC, Ethiopia, <https://wcaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/AU%202017%20DD%20ROADMAP%20Final%20-%20EN.pdf>



Platform adopted a five-year Youth Engagement Strategy (AGA-YES 2016-2020) in 2015 to promote meaningful youth participation in democratic governance processes; promote youth engagement in the AU shared values agenda; and enhance the capacity of youth and youth-led or youth-focused organisations/networks to meaningfully participate in democratic governance processes at all levels.

9. ***The Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa Program:*** The Y4P Africa initiative was launched by the AU Commission's Peace and Security Department in September 2018 with the cardinal objective of dissuading youth from violence and facilitating their meaningful participation in all spectrums of peace and security in tandem with Article 17 of the AYC and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 of December 2015 and 2419 of June 2018. The program, working through a five-year strategic plan (2020 to 2024), aims to facilitate the implementation of the program at continental, regional and national levels anchored on the priorities reflected in this framework.
10. ***Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism:*** This is a joint initiative by the AU Commission Directorate of Citizens and Diaspora Organization (AU-CIDO) and GIZ, designed to highlight and leverage the soft power of religion in preventing violent extremism in Africa. It is a youth-led initiative designed to foster intra- and inter-faith dialogue and mutual respect, use digital resources to counter the recruitment of youth into violent extremism, and evolve a countermovement to prevent violent extremism. It emphasizes the development of non-violent approaches to problem solving and the strengthening of social cohesion across religions and countries. It also provides support to young people's ideas and engagement (through a theme-based annual forum) to share experiences, and facilitate mutual learning on strategies for preventing violent extremism.<sup>9</sup>
11. ***The African Union Youth Envoy Action Plan 2019/2020:*** On 1st November 2018, H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, appointed the first Special Envoy on Youth with a mandate to serve as a representative of and advocate for the voices and interests of African youth to the relevant AU decision-making bodies; advocating for the implementation of the AYC and Agenda 2063.<sup>10</sup> The AU Office of the Youth Envoy (AU-OYE) is a Pan-African collaborative platform working with committed young leaders and AU Youth Advisory Council spearheading regional engagement. In October 2019, the AU Youth Envoy launched 2019/20 Action Plan by youth for youth, which outlines four Models of Action (1) Innovation Model (2) Advocacy Model (3) Intergenerational

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<sup>9</sup> See 'Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism (iDove)', [http://www.partner-religion-development.org/fileadmin/Dateien/Resources/Knowledge\\_Center/Factsheet\\_iDove\\_EN.pdf](http://www.partner-religion-development.org/fileadmin/Dateien/Resources/Knowledge_Center/Factsheet_iDove_EN.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> AU Commission (2018) "Communiqué on the appointment of an African Union Youth Envoy" <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181102/communique-appointment-african-union-youth-envoy>

and Policy Model and (4) Communication Model, mainly advocating for the youth, peace and development agenda.<sup>11</sup>

12. **The 1 Million By 2021 Initiative:** The AUC Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki launched this initiative in April 2019 to reach out to and create opportunities for young people in Africa to actively drive the realisation of Agenda 2063. It targets creating and expanding opportunities for young Africans in four priority areas of employment, entrepreneurship, education and engagement through 12 programmatic pathways. The initiative also seeks to leverage Africa's youthful demography by harnessing young people's potential by "building capacity for quality education and skills improvement, health and well-being, good governance, human rights and accountability, employment opportunities, leadership skills, empowerment and entrepreneurship."<sup>12</sup>
13. **National Initiatives:** In tandem with Article 12 of the AYC, several Member States of the Union have developed a national youth policy, which is cross sectoral in nature in view of the interrelated challenges confronting young people. National Youth Council (NYC) has equally been established to foster youth participation and coordinate the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies. Most of the national youth policies provide cardinal roles and responsibilities for young people in the field of governance, peace and security. Other programmes such as National Youth Services Schemes or Programmes are developed and implemented. The Youth Division has also initiated the Country Acceleration Strategy (CAS) as a commitment by Member States to take forward a set of priorities that contribute to youth empowerment on the continent. CAS is aimed at strengthening partnership with Member States to advance their national youth development agendas with high impact and scalable interventions and models in the areas of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement and also Mental Health. The ultimate goal is to have greater investments in these areas to enhance youth development outcomes and propel economic growth in the respective countries.
14. **Regional Initiatives:** RECs/RMs across Africa have also initiated a series of policies and programs on youth development or mainstreamed youth issues into their peace and security agendas. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has included youth empowerment among the priority areas in its Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF); the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mainstreamed youth into its Regional Strategy; the East African Community

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<sup>11</sup> AU Commission (2019), "Youth Envoy Action Plan 2019/2020" <https://au.int/documents/20191018/youth-envoy-action-plan-20192020>

<sup>12</sup> AU Commission (2019), "Launch of the "1 Million by 2021 Initiative" at the Pan African Youth Forum", 24-27 April 2019, <https://au.int/en/newsevents/20190424/launch-1-million-2021-initiative-pan-african-youth-forum>.

(EAC) launched a Youth Policy and instituted a Youth Ambassadors Program to promote youth engagement; the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) has also mainstreamed youth participation in policy, democracy and socio-economic development in its programming; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has developed a regional program to strengthen the capacities of young people in management of association, crisis and conflict prevention, and youth contribution to early warning for peace and security in Central Africa (PRCJMA). The General Secretariat of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) has developed a regional strategy for Engagement, Participation, and Advocacy to amplify youth voices for the promotion of peace, security and sustainable development. Its Strategy aims at facilitating the expansion of regional and country-level actions to address the priorities of young people in all their ramifications. In line with APSA IV (2020-2024), UMA has developed action plans to mainstream the role and contributions of young people to peace and security. In other instances, RECs/RMs have launched programs designed to address the underlying conditions associated with youth participation in violence, especially initiatives on youth empowerment and employment such as the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Youth Employment Promotion Policy.

15. **Global Policy Initiatives:** In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2250 that recognized and praised the contributions of young people in conflict prevention and peacebuilding across the world. It also emphasized the imperative of partnership with and support to youth groups and organizations in peace efforts, and the need to consider the needs of youth in the planning and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs. In 2018, the UN published the first Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security and passed Resolution 2419, which calls for ways to increase the representation of young people when negotiating and implementing peace agreements.<sup>13</sup> Recently, the UNSC adopted a Presidential Statement on 12 December 2019, encouraging Member States to comprehensively engage young people in fostering durable peace, building upon the initiative "Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020".

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<sup>13</sup> See United Nations Security Council/General Assembly (2018). "The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security", A/72/761-S/2018/86. See also, UNSC (2018), "Adopting Resolution 2419 (2018), Security Council Calls for Increasing Role of Youth in Negotiating, Implementing Peace Agreements", SC/13368,

### III. Objectives of the Framework

The overall objective of the framework is to facilitate the meaningful engagement and participation of African youth in all spectrums of peace and security at national, regional and continental levels. It envisions the mainstreaming of crosscutting issues including gender, capacity development, communication, inclusivity and knowledge management and up scaling of the contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa. The specific objectives of the framework are:

- Facilitate the recognition and appreciation of efforts of young Africans in peace and security;
- Enhance partnerships and collaboration among target audiences and stakeholders (youth including those in diaspora, Member States, RECs/RMs, AUC, civil society organizations, academia, media and private sector) on youth, peace and security;
- Facilitate the development of youth-led and youth-centred strategic plans, initiatives and programmes by AUC, RECs/RMs, Member States, and other stakeholders. This includes (but is not limited to) the development and implementation of national action plans on youth, peace and security that are aligned to national youth policies and development plans of Member States.

### IV. Gaps and Challenges of Youth in Peace and Security in Africa

Following the adoption of normative instruments and policy pronouncements, a number of youth initiatives relevant to peace and security in Africa have been launched by the AU such as the 2018 decision on gender parity and 35% youth quota in AU workforce by 2025 and full funding of the Youth Volunteer Program and the Junior Professionals Program from the regular budget of the Union<sup>14</sup>; and the appointment of an AU Youth Envoy and a Youth Advisory Council as the rallying point for African youth in AU decision-making processes. Others include the launch of the AGA Youth Engagement Strategy (2016-20); the implementation of the AU Youth Volunteer Program since 2010;<sup>15</sup> the AU Liaison Offices' implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in countries affected by armed conflict; the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa program;<sup>16</sup> preparation of a biennial State of African Youth Report by the AU Youth Division; and the launch of the Model African Union.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See African Union (2018). "Decision on the progress report on the status of implementation of Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.635(xxviii) on the institutional reform of the African Union," Doc. Assembly/AU/3(xxx), Assembly of the Union Thirtieth Ordinary Session 28 – 29 January 2018 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, paragraphs 4-11, [https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/33908-assembly\\_decisions\\_665\\_-\\_689\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/33908-assembly_decisions_665_-_689_e.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> This initiative enables the recruitment of up to 100 young Africans (under the age of 35) annually to work in the AU Commission for a one-year period.

<sup>16</sup> This is an inter-departmental initiative of the PSD aimed at mainstreaming youth in the Department's activities but also effectively consulting and ensuring active participation of youth in peace and security interventions at national, regional and continental levels

<sup>17</sup> This is a simulation of the African Union (AU), bringing together youth from across Africa to take on the roles of African leaders working to tackle issues affecting or influencing the continent.

Despite the range of commitments and the array of existing initiatives, the AU, youth groups and other institutional stakeholders working on peace and security in Africa are constrained by a variety of issues and tackling these constraints constitute the rationale of this Framework. The constraints include the following:

1. *Limited financial resources for youth initiatives:* few financial resources are available to and for youth-led groups and initiatives on peace and security in Africa and globally. A survey of 399 youth organizations working on peacebuilding globally indicated that about 50 per cent operated with less than \$5,000 per annum, and only 11 per cent operated with more than \$100,000.<sup>18</sup> This stunts the role of youth in peace and security arena, and precipitates intense competition for resources that result in inadequate collaboration and synergies amongst youth groups.
2. *Lack of coordination among stakeholders:* youth-related initiatives on peacebuilding in Africa suffer from limited platforms and mechanisms for inclusive engagement and coordination between and among youth groups, government and inter-governmental institutions, civil society organizations, private sector, development partners and media.
3. *Weak organizational and technical capacities of youth groups:* a majority of youth groups and associations lack the requisite institutional and technical capacities required to attract or access the limited financial and technical support available, and to effectively document, implement and evaluate the impact of their programs.
4. *Poor coordination and inclusivity among youth groups:* most youth networks suffer from poor coordination due to internal divisions and poor diversity management to the extent that the most vulnerable youth including women, persons with disability (PWDs) and special needs, as well as those based in remote (rural) communities are not adequately represented and /or their needs not properly mainstreamed into the advocacy agendas of most youth organizations.
5. *Limited awareness:* several young people are not fully aware of potential contributions they can make to national, regional and continental efforts aimed at promoting peace and security.
6. *Limited role and space for youth in formal peacebuilding initiatives:* youth groups have limited visibility and are poorly integrated and represented in formal peacebuilding processes. This includes limited participation of youth groups in peace talks, peace support operations, election observation missions, humanitarian relief operations, post-conflict reconstruction programs, and limited spaces for youth and youth-led initiatives in other official peace and security programs implemented at the national, regional and continental levels. This reflects underlying issues of trust and continued over-emphasis on the problematic roles of youth in violence, rather than a more comprehensive approach that recognizes,

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<sup>18</sup> See United Nations Security Council/General Assembly (2018). “The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security”, paragraph 23.

nurtures and supports their roles in conflict prevention and management, peace support operations and post-conflict reconstruction and development.

7. *Limited resources on youth programming*: this includes the dearth of technical resources on youth programming, such as operational guidance, toolkits and framework (until now) on how, where, when and which categories of youth to engage and mainstream into official peacebuilding programs.
8. *Lack of evidence-based approach*: in Africa and globally, there are evidence gaps in approaches to programming on youth, peace and security. There is a consensus as to the limited research, data, evaluation and evidence regarding approaches, types, scale and scope of formal (official, government-led) youth programs that contribute to the reduction of youth participation in violence and promote sustainable peace.

## V. Priorities of the Framework

The Framework is anchored on the belief that African youth are invaluable innovators and agents of positive change, that effectively contribute to the promotion of good governance and democracy, CPMR, PSO, defence and security issues as well as PCRDR. The AU's vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena is only possible when youth and their resources and contributions to Africa's governance, peace and security are actively solicited, supported, recognized and celebrated.

This Framework seeks to provide the normative guidance that will facilitate the effective and meaningful participation of youth in all spectrum of governance, peace and security. It is expected that on the 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the adoption of this continental framework, significant progress would be reported on its implementation and possibly a review to reflect the current realities and trends. However, a mid-term review is expected in 2025 to inform progress report on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 2250.

The Framework notes that youth working on peace and security issues is not a new phenomenon in Africa. Young men and women, individually and/or as part of civil society coalitions are working actively to prevent conflict as well as to promote peace and reconciliation. Young people in Africa contribute to early warning data, grassroots advocacy against all forms of violence (including sexual and gender-based violence), credible and peaceful elections and good governance, support prevention and countering of violent extremism, volunteering and initiating community-based development projects to complement the efforts of national governments. It envisions greater participation and visibility of youth and their co-ownership of the peace and security agenda of the AU, RECs and Member States.

This Framework seeks to promote the implementation of five (5) overarching priority areas in line with Articles 11 and 17 of the AYC and UNSCR 2250. The priorities areas are:

1. **Participation:** advocate and promote active and meaningful participation of youths at all levels, namely national, regional and continental in decision-making processes, policy formulation, implementation and monitoring of governance, peace agreements; support cross-sectoral cooperation as a holistic approach to youth issues and for elimination of structural barriers to youth participation; and support the development and implementation of national action plans to encourage young people's meaningful participation in peace and security through the promotion of exchanges and collaboration in existing national, regional and continental structures.
2. **Prevention:** promote the building and strengthening of youth capacity on prevention, including through peace education, fight against hate speech and positive use of social media, support to the establishment and implementation of peace architectures, and facilitate entry points for competent youth to undertake prevention activities including youth-led or support to dialogue and mediation processes. This will reinforce the potential of youth by canvassing support for the establishment of investments and funds that enable the inclusion of youth into different projects to ensure access to education, information, food and medical care for the most vulnerable youth, vocational training as well as employment opportunities, with a view to reducing youth unemployment and underemployment and their attendant vulnerabilities to exploitation, manipulation, radicalization and recruitment by extremist, criminal and armed groups.
3. **Protection:** advocate and promote the protection of youth in peace and conflict situations, particularly ensure compliance to international humanitarian and human rights law to guarantee the protection of young people during crisis/conflict and in post-conflict situations.
4. **Partnerships and Coordination:** facilitate effective communication, coordination and collaboration by creating mutual understanding between and among youth and relevant stakeholders (AUC, RECs/RMs and Member States) on common planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions to promote peace and security in tandem with national legislations on youth. This will promote increased and sustained political, financial and technical support to reinforce youth-led initiatives on peace and security. Facilitate the increased engagement between stakeholders and the media to promote peace education, advocacy and provide media coverage to highlight the positive contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa.
5. **Disengagement and Reintegration:** promote policies, legislations and programs aimed at effective repatriation, resettlement, disarmament, de-radicalization, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of youth disengaged from armed, criminal or extremist groups in tandem with national legislation; putting in place post-trauma counselling and psycho-social supports for youth, especially those disengaged from conflicts, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, returnees

and displaced persons. This will also promote training for youth to support reconstruction and stabilization activities of areas affected by war, ensuring that the specific needs of young women and men are met, and the capacities of youth to act as relief and recovery agents in conflict and post-conflict situations are strengthened and reinforced.

## **VI. Criteria for Effective Programming on Youth, Peace and Security**

Based on the AYC, ACDEG, PSC Protocol, 807<sup>th</sup> Communiqué of PSC on YPS, UNSCR 2250 and 2419, and the 2012 Report of the UN Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict, the following principles and criteria should guide the mainstreaming of youth into peace and security programming along the five priority areas:

- Encourage youth participation at all levels of programming for peace and security by recognizing and ensuring youth participation as an essential end and a means to successful, sustainable, and inclusive peacebuilding.
- Encourage relevant stakeholders to institutionalize affirmative actions on youth quota in peace and security by reviewing policies and practices that engender the shrinking of economic, civic and political spaces for youth.
- Recognize and nurture the majority of young people that are non-violent and support their resilience and peacebuilding initiatives; and provide strategic support to disengage those involved in violence.
- Take a sector-wide approach to programming on youth, peace and security by recognizing and linking youth participation in peace and security across all sectors, including social, economic, politics and governance, cultural and technological spheres.
- Acknowledge and facilitate youth roles as leaders, partners and beneficiaries in peace and security by exploring joint initiatives and activities with young people as stakeholders in building long-term partnerships.
- Undertake context analyses to uncover and use local meanings, definitions and identities of youth in each context of activities. Contextualising the meaning and identity of youth is central to working with the right set of people and to implementing activities that resonate with the authentic needs and views of youths.
- Identify and leverage the diversity of young people with awareness of variation in backgrounds, age, ethnicity, religion, culture and economic status. Design programs that cater for the needs of diverse youth, especially vulnerable and marginalized (hard to reach) young people in Africa.



- Acknowledge and cater for the needs of young people and communities that have experienced armed conflict and other forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence as well as harmful practice such as child marriage.
- Sensitivity to gender dynamics by avoiding stereotypical assumptions about the roles and experiences of young males and females; recognize the gendered impacts (vulnerabilities and grievances) of violence; and develop strategies to engage with and meet the needs of young women.
- Encourage the institutionalization of annual continental young peacebuilders awards to recognize and appreciate the efforts of young people in peace and security in Africa, as well as motivate them to be agents of peace.
- Enable youth ownership, leadership and accountability in peace and security by identifying and financially supporting youth-led initiatives; create opportunities for sustained engagement in peacebuilding across levels; foster joint and inclusive decision making process to enhance trust between youth groups and policymakers and institutions (especially AU, RECs and Member States); and facilitate and use feedback with youth groups to promote accountability.
- Do no harm by ensuring the physical and emotional safety of young people participating in peacebuilding activities; providing psychosocial support to youth affected by trauma arising from violence; sensitivity to internal dynamics (inequalities, rivalries divisions and tensions) among youth; observe high ethical standards; and conscious refrain from unintentionally raising expectations or give false hopes to young people.
- Engage youth in all stages of programming on peace and security through consultations, surveys, and calls for position papers. Use tailored approaches and avoid technical terms and jargons in consultations and engagement with youth to maximise their contributions to the design, implementation and evaluation of activities. Foster joint and inclusive decision making process and co-leadership to enhance trust between youth groups and policymakers and institutions.

## VII. Enabling Mechanisms

It is recognised that progress in realising the objectives of this framework will be contingent on implementing certain crosscutting issues as follows:

- a. *Capacity Building*: progress will require upping the capacities of stakeholders through dedicated training (skills and knowledge) and programming resources on youth, peace and security in Africa. Youth groups require training on knowledge and technical skills on formal peace and security initiatives (e.g. gaining training and qualifications to be rostered and

participate in mediation as well as peace support operations), and governmental and inter-governmental institutions (including the AU, RECs/RMs and national governments) require training and programming resources on working with and integrating youth into formal peacebuilding processes.

- b. *Inclusive Approach to Youth*: progress will be based on if and how all stakeholders adopt an all-inclusive approach to identifying, integrating and mainstreaming youth issues into peace and security agendas. This is to ensure that the advocacy agendas of youth groups, and interventions by government and inter-government institutions and civil society groups reflect and mainstream the needs and perspectives of the most vulnerable youth, including female, rural, and illiterate youth; young victims of physical and psychological violence; youth in stable, conflict and post-conflict societies; and young people living with disabilities.
- c. *Mainstreaming Gender*: progress will require integrating gender equality (parity) across all levels of programming and intervention on youth, peace and security. This is to prevent reproducing (by eliminating) hidden and open structural inequalities, and to ensure that interventions respond to the needs of all categories of youth in the way programs on youth, peace and security are designed and implemented.
- d. *Communication*: progress will be contingent on how this framework is presented and communicated between and among stakeholders, the way media reports and projects the contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa, and interactions between youth groups and other stakeholders. This will be crucial to rebuilding trust and engagement between and among youth, government and inter-governmental institutions, civil society groups, development partners, etc.
- e. *Knowledge Management*: progress will require consistent efforts to collect data and evidence on youth and youth programs; systematic documentation, and sharing of information on youth, peace and security initiatives at national, regional and continental levels; and conscious effort to use available data and evidence to inform policies and program designs on youth, peace and security.

## **VIII. Timeline and Review**

As part of mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the Framework, there shall be annual reports to the PSC. A mid-term review on the status of implementation of the framework will also be presented to the PSC during the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of

the Framework ahead of the Progress report to be submitted during the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Framework respectively.

## **IX. Conclusion**

This Framework reinforces the Call for Action on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa. Young people are Africa's greatest asset. Youth are the present and future of Africa in many ways, especially by their demography; Africa has about 420 million young people aged 15 to 35 and this number is expected to increase to 830 million by 2050. Youth Africans are major stakeholders in the realisation of Africa's dream of a conflict-free continent.

Young people are affected by conflict and insecurities with impacts on their well-being and safety, making it difficult for them to cope with disruptions to education employment and livelihood opportunities. Young people in volatile contexts in Africa face challenges in preventing, interrupting and disengagement (and reintegrating back into society) from conflicts and insecurity. The majority of young Africans not only advocate for non-violence, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, but also represent an important resource to be tapped by stakeholders through targeted initiatives to be guided by this Framework.

Harnessing Africa's youth has wider positive impacts for Africa, specifically in transforming the socio-economic, governance and security situation of Africa and Africans. Young people are central to the realisation of AU Agenda 2063, as well as the development-security goals of RECs/RMs, national governments and local communities.