



Draft Concept Note

High Level Policy Dialogue on Conflict and Development for the Sahel, Horn and Great Lakes Regions

02 - 03 October 2015

Accra, Ghana

I. Introduction & Background

The African continent has during the past two decades registered impressive economic growth rates, resulting in its being considered as one of the fastest growing regions in the world. African countries' impressive economic growth rates have been possible, partly because of the equally remarkable progress that they have made in the areas of economic and political governance, as well as improvements in the peace and security. One of the key markers of Africa's relatively improved peace and security environment has been the considerable reduction in the numbers and scale of violent conflicts on the continent. This commendable progress has however remained largely unconsolidated and reversible. Some parts of the continent, such as the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa, which have witnessed some of the most violent and intractable conflicts, are yet to emerge as fully stable and peaceful areas despite long years of regional and global mediation, peacekeeping and peace building efforts. Moreover, the continent has in recent years seen the emergence of a number of new conflicts, such as the conflicts along the Sahel Belt of the continent and some parts of the Horn of Africa, which are led by completely new actors, who have tended to employ methods and tactics, including non-conventional warfare, that continue to target unarmed civilians. Needless to say the tactics employed in executing these new conflicts appear increasingly, to be beyond the scope of the continent's admittedly progressive peace and security architecture found within the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities.

Overall, the persistence of conflicts in some parts of the continent has had and would continue to have far reaching implications on the continent's aspirations to socio-economic transformation and sustainable development. The leadership of the continent, at all levels, has been acutely aware of the constraints that conflicts and associated instability have continued to impose on development efforts, including the negative impact that they are likely to have on efforts to actualize the continent's budding long-term development and transformation agenda – embodied in Agenda 2063.

It is against this background and within the framework of the longstanding strategic partnership between the African Union (AU) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), that the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, through the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Mr. Carlos Lopes, requested the ECA to consider undertaking in-depth research and analyses of the root causes of conflicts in some regions of the continent, particularly the Great Lakes, Sahel and Horn of Africa; as well as to assess the costs and consequences of these conflicts the development of countries of the regions and the broader African continent, including on its transformative agenda. Aside from contributing to the discourse on the nexus between conflict and development, it is envisioned that these studies would also assist in the articulation of clear strategies and policy recommendations that would contribute to ongoing regional, continental and global efforts to entrench long-term peace and stability on the continent, which is critical for sustainable economic growth and socio-economic transformation.

The Great Lakes, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel were chosen as the focus of three research studies, because on the one hand, they have been the theatres of intractable conflict on the continent over the years – the case of the Horn and the Great Lakes; and on the other hand, they constitute a new axis of conflict and instability – the case of the Sahel. The Governance and Human Security Cluster of ECA’s budding Capacity Development Division (CDD) was charged with the responsibility to execute this very important assignment, within the framework of the Division’s mandate to provide focused and coherent capacity development support to member states and Pan-African institutions such as the African Union.

The execution of this assignment has involved robust discussions, analysis and consultations at different levels and with experts both within ECA and from renowned academic and policy institutions. In course of these consultations and engagements, consensus emerged around the need to structure and execute these studies in a manner that would add value to existing research and literature on conflicts in Africa; as well as introduce new and unique perspectives, including on ongoing policy dialogues on the approaches to addressing the challenges posed by conflict to Africa’s development and transformation agenda. A deliberate and conscious decision was therefore made for the studies to focus on analyzing and unpacking the root causes of conflict and their development impact, with the ultimate goal of deepening understanding of the causes of war and informing strategies towards enduring solutions to conflicts in Africa and in particular these three regions.

II. Rationale

The three studies, on the Great Lakes region with a particular focus on the Democratic Republic of Congo, on the Horn of Africa and on the Sahel, respectively, have now been completed and have been subjected to validation by experts during various Expert Group Meetings, during which the documents were robustly engaged and further enriched.

Policy dialogues constitute one of six capacity development service lines through which ECA seeks to contribute to informed debates and advancements in regional integration and structural transformation, through well-articulated and targeted policy options based on

grounded and evidence-based research. This high level policy dialogue is being convened within the framework of CDD's and ECA's policy strategy of ensuring that the critical interphase between knowledge production and knowledge delivery is maintained.

The three studies would therefore be tabled to practitioners at the high level dialogue for discussion and with the ultimate goal of facilitating the uptake and implementations of the major findings and policy recommendations of the studies, as well as facilitating agreement on a comprehensive strategy to do so.

III. Objectives

The proposed high level policy dialogue aims to enable Member States to fully appreciate the findings of the studies, identify with the proposed policy options in the papers, and recognize gaps in current practices and approaches to conflicts on the continent; as well as hone in on the core elements of such policies that are pertinent to their efforts to prevent and manage conflict, including post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts.

More specifically, the High level policy dialogue is expected to among others:

- Improve understanding of the root causes of conflict and provide pointers to practitioners and policy makers on how to identify and address them
- Engender greater appreciation of the nexus between conflict and development, particularly the constraints that conflicts impose on Africa's socio-economic transformation agenda;
- Enhance understanding and knowledge about the design and implementation of policies for peace and security as critical pillars for development.
- Facilitate the exchange of views and country experiences (successes, challenges and lessons) in the design and implementation of policies on the impact and cost of conflict on development within and outside of Africa.
- Encourage engagement, interaction and sharing of experiences among high level officials (Permanent Secretaries, Foreign Affairs practitioners, peace and security practitioners)
- Inform the tailoring of advisory services based on the outcome of the discussions
- Serve as a platform for rebuilding a Pan-African network at the most senior technical level on conflict and development

IV. Structure of Dialogue

The deliberations and discussions during the High Level Dialogue will be structured around the titles/themes of the three research papers, as well as around key issues such as the root causes of conflict (structural; proximate, and conflict; conflict sustaining factors); the developmental consequences of conflict (economic, social, institutional etc); as well as the policy pathways to addressing the root causes of conflict and their development impact. It would be interactive in nature and would permit robust engagement with the findings of the studies and the experiences of the participants.

V. Participants

The High Level Policy Dialogue is aimed at Directors General or/and Permanent Secretaries in Ministries of Foreign Affairs. It will also benefit from the insights and experience of representatives of the African Union Commission (AUC); Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), African Capacity Building Foundation and African Development Bank, as well as a select number of representatives from Academic and research institutions with a policy bent.

VI. Dates and Venue

The High Level Policy Dialogue will be held in Accra, Ghana from 2 – 3 October 2015.

VII. Contact Persons/Addresses

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