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ASWAN FORUM
FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
ملتقى اسوان للسلام والتنمية المستدامين

ASWAN FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT **PEACE. PROGRESS. PROSPERITY.**



Second Annual Meeting

“SHAPING AFRICA’S NEW NORMAL: RECOVERING STRONGER, REBUILDING BETTER”

1-5 March 2021

Draft Agenda¹

¹ This is a draft agenda and the information contained herein is subject to change. All timings are (GMT +2).

“Shaping Africa’s New Normal: Recovering Stronger, Rebuilding Better”

Time	1 March 2021
13:00 – 13:15	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Opening Session</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Keynote Speech H.E. Sameh Shoukry <i>Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt</i></p>
13:15 – 14:00	<p style="text-align: center;">Post COVID-19 Recovery: Strengthening Sustainable Peace and Development in Africa (Messages from African Leaders)</p>
14:00 – 15:30	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Recovering Stronger, Rebuilding Better: Pathways for a More Secure, Resilient and Prosperous Africa</i> <i>(High-Level Session)</i></p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic continues to bring to the fore unprecedented challenges on the global, regional and national levels. While Africa has experienced relatively lower numbers of COVID-19 cases, the health emergency has rapidly unraveled into a full-blown socioeconomic crisis. With a global financial contraction underway and an impending recession, there is a clear set back in development efforts across the continent. The pandemic has also magnified the underlying systemic risks and structural inequalities that far predate the crisis, most notably for vulnerable populations including women, children and displaced persons. At the same time, challenges to peace, security and development still persist as the continent continues to witness an upsurge in terrorism, transnational organized crime, and violent conflict.</p> <p>In response to these challenges, African leaders and the African Union (AU) have shown strong leadership in mitigating the immediate health impact of the pandemic and are currently striving to secure large scale access to COVID-19 vaccines for the continent. They are also seeking to lay a strong foundation for long-term reforms, resilience-building and inclusive governance which also contribute to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This multifaceted effort is centered around sustaining peace, fostering economic development and growth, strengthening healthcare systems, enhancing access to digital technologies, improving infrastructure, boosting trade, scaling-up renewable energy solutions, and advancing more robust partnerships. Accordingly, this session serves as a conversation starter to examine how pathways to recover stronger and rebuild better can support progress towards achieving the AU’s 2063 Agenda: the Africa We Want and the United Nations’ Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.</p>



15:45 – 17:15	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Terrorism in the Shadow of the Pandemic: A Pressing Need for Integrated Responses</i></p> <p>Terrorism is a multifaceted threat to peace and security, which has been further magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Across Africa, terrorist groups are strategically and operationally capitalizing on the pandemic, and its adverse implications on the lives and livelihoods of millions. They are seizing this opportunity to increase their operations, enhance territorial gains and augment recruitment efforts. In addition, the pandemic has heightened feelings of anxiety, fear and uncertainty, thus rendering individuals more susceptible to the radical ideologies of terrorist groups. As such, many of these groups are repositioning themselves as the more efficient service provider in their communities, particularly in light of the diversion of government attention and resources to combat the pandemic.</p> <p>This session is premised on the imperative of viewing the pandemic as a governance challenge necessitating the investment in a preventative approach that is based on inclusive governance and sustainable development. It will highlight the centrality of adopting both a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to ensure that responses on the national and local levels not only contribute to immediate recovery needs, but also strengthen the foundation for sustaining peace. As such, the session will examine lessons learned and best practices from peacebuilding efforts in Africa that aim to both capitalize on peace dividends and leverage pillars of resilience. In this context, understanding real and perceived grievances and vulnerabilities of communities is paramount to designing effective interventions that strengthen social contracts and cohesion, and address underlying drivers of fragility, violence and conflict, including radicalization and extremism conducive to terrorism.</p>
2 March 2021	
14:00 – 15:15	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>From the Sidelines to the Frontlines: Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda During the Pandemic and Beyond</i></p> <p>As the far-reaching health, political, economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to unravel, women are among those most adversely affected, bearing a disproportionate burden of this multidimensional crisis. The pandemic has magnified pre-existing socio-economic inequalities and grievances including those of women in armed conflict situations, exposing important implementation gaps in the pillars of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. As such, despite the reallocation of resources and changing priorities, national and continental instruments such as National Action Plans and FemWise-Africa continue to be critical in unlocking the transformational potential of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Furthermore, the pandemic reaffirms the imperative of integrating women’s needs and experiences in designing effective responses to crises in both peaceful and conflict-affected settings. It also brings new opportunities for strengthening the positive contribution of women at the frontline of conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, including through harnessing innovation and technology. Hence, this session will examine pathways for placing women at the core of funding priorities and national planning to advance inclusive recovery and peace efforts. It will also discuss means of leveraging the contributions of women as a powerful force for rebuilding better and achieving sustainable peace and development.</p>



<p>15:30 - 16:45</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Bridging the Gap Between Aspirations and the Reality on the Ground: Operationalizing the Structural Prevention Agenda</i></p> <p>To achieve a secure and prosperous Africa, a number of normative frameworks on preventing conflict and sustaining peace across the peace continuum have been put into place. While commendable steps have been taken to implement them, tangible progress on the ground remains limited. And now, with the outbreak of the pandemic, peace and development efforts have been further complicated. However, the crisis also provides an opportunity to reinforce the imperative for African countries to mainstream structural prevention in their policies, planning and implementation. This is in line with the widely recognized need to adopt a holistic approach across the humanitarian-development-peace-nexus, while systematically addressing the structural drivers of conflict and violence. Today more than ever, the continent must exert concerted efforts to address the lack of timely and effective preventative action in response to early warning indicators.</p> <p>Against this backdrop, this session will draw on lessons learned and best practices from African actors, in partnership with the UN and international financial institutions, in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating structural prevention efforts. It will zoom in on continental tools and mechanisms, such as the AU Continental Structural Prevention Framework, the AU Silencing the Guns Master Roadmap (extended to 2030), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), with a view to putting forward recommendations towards effectively operationalizing prevention on the ground. The discussion is intended to advance the operationalization of structural prevention as a core pillar for “rebuilding better”, including through innovative programming, coherent partnerships and sustained financing which corresponds to early warning signs and the needs of the most vulnerable.</p>
<p>17:00 – 18:15</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>From Rapid Economic Recovery to Structural Transformation: Africa’s Pathway Towards Sustainable Recovery and Development</i></p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a plethora of financial shocks, including the contraction of global GDP, the accumulation of debt, the collapse of investment and the disruption of economic activity worldwide. In Africa, the adverse economic impact of the pandemic has called for an urgent need for structural transformation that capitalizes on pockets of resilience and bolsters the continent’s ability to respond to crises. The engines of such transformation are sustainable energy, infrastructure, digitalization and adequate financing. Nonetheless, the continent continues to face major development challenges: approximately 600 million people lack access to energy, and only 28% of healthcare facilities have access to reliable electricity. Compounded with infrastructural gaps and a “digital divide”, with only 39% of the population having access to the internet, the continent needs to channel investment and financing opportunities to tap into its potential to build the resilience of African societies against disruptive shocks and accelerate their post-crisis recovery.</p> <p>This session will assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic growth and development progress in Africa. More specifically, it will discuss how to utilize financial mechanisms, flexible financing, as well as innovative and targeted investment to advance equitable COVID-19 recovery and long-term sustainable development to ensure the fulfillment of Africa’s true potential (given its rich abundance of human and natural resources.) It will also highlight means of building a greener, stronger, post-COVID economic environment to further develop sustainable energy, infrastructure and digitalization, which is key to advancing peace and prosperity on the continent.</p>



3 March 2021

14:00 – 15:15

Addressing Forced Displacement in National Planning and Peace Processes: Localizing the Paradigm Shift to Prevention in Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated existing vulnerabilities and disproportionately impacted forcibly displaced persons, especially those living in conflict-affected and fragile settings. This has tested the operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which aims to address the root causes of and find durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa. The reality on the ground continues to reflect persisting institutional silos; absence of integrated, multisectoral, and inclusive responses; fragmented funding; and exclusion of displacement-affected communities from peace processes and national planning. This leads to a plethora of short-term strategies that treat forcibly displaced persons merely as victims of displacement rather than as active agents of peace and development.

The AU theme for 2020 - ‘Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development’, highlighted the need to focus on conflict prevention and create synergies between political, peace, and development actors to find durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa and prevent a relapse into violent conflict. This session will examine how the inclusion of forced displacement issues in African peace agreements can provide a paramount opportunity to ensure the safe and voluntary repatriation and integration of forcibly displaced populations, while also harnessing the important role they play in post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) efforts. It will also consider how COVID-19 recovery efforts can contribute towards building resilience, strengthening prevention, and promoting inclusivity of forcibly displaced populations in line with the 2030 SDG pledge to “leave no one behind”.

15:30 – 16:45

A Comprehensive Approach to Protection Of Civilians Mandates in Peacekeeping Operations

From the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) Report to the 2020 Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), peacekeeping normative frameworks and policy documents reference the importance of people-centered approaches as a core element in ensuring more effective performance of peace operations. The integration of protection of civilians (POC) mandates in armed conflict into the Security Council agenda and their development through the adoption of more than 100 thematic resolutions addressing protection of civilians-related issues demonstrates the UN’s commitment towards making peace about the welfare of people. Today, six peacekeeping operations are mandated with protection of civilians. On the ground, they take an integrated; whole-of-mission approach to the implementation of these mandates, through the work of civilian, police and military personnel, supported by peacekeeping’s guiding principles. These efforts include numerous areas of engagement, from political advocacy, dialogue and mediation, to building capacity of state protection actors, to the provision of physical protection. With the measures put in place to restrict movement and limit direct contact between peacekeepers and the communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the “robust” approach of protecting civilians has been put to the test. This has further highlighted the importance of empowering “people” and fostering community resilience as a central objective of peacekeeping operations.

This session will emphasize the imperative of recalibrating the protection of civilians -related tasks of peacekeeping operations towards



	<p>empowering local communities, including women, youth, refugees and IDPs, by providing them with the necessary tools to mitigate threats and build resilience within the contours of broader national efforts and political processes. This should be mainstreamed in the long-term vision of their contributions to building and sustaining peace, and in preparation for their drawdown and exit.</p>
17:00 – 18:15	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sustainable Peace and Development Through Arts, Culture and Heritage</i></p> <p>The celebration of 2021 as the AU Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage provides a valuable opportunity to examine means of strengthening the contribution of arts and culture to sustaining peace and development in Africa. It is premised on the belief that a peaceful and secure Africa can only be attained by nurturing a “Culture of Peace” in the minds of its societies. In this regard, existing global frameworks and AU policy instruments, especially Agenda 2063 and the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006), underscore the importance of culture, arts and heritage in peacebuilding, reconciliation, conflict-prevention processes and preventing radicalization and extremism. When strategically harnessed with the goal of (re)building a peaceful society, these frameworks have the potential to become integral tools for sustaining peace.</p> <p>In addition to preventing conflict and sustaining peace, promoting a culture of peace also plays a pivotal role across the peace continuum. In situations where violence has already erupted, the Charter (2006) underlines the importance of protecting and preserving cultural heritage. This has acquired growing significance in recent years as non-state actors, notably terrorist groups, have been involved in the destruction of cultural heritage in conflict settings, further exacerbating conflict and hindering post-conflict reconciliation efforts. UN Security Council has also reflected this in its decision to include safeguarding cultural heritage as part of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) mandate. This is the first and only peacekeeping mission to be tasked with such a directive. Against this backdrop, the session will seek to discuss concrete measures that African states can adopt in order to strengthen the contribution of arts, culture and heritage to sustainable peace and development in the context of rebuilding better and recovering stronger.</p>
4 March 2021	
14:00 – 15:30	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sustaining Peace Through Effective Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development</i></p> <p>COVID-19 has brought forth significant challenges to peace processes on the African continent, threatening to erode hard won peacebuilding and development gains. African governments and their partners have struggled to adapt to the multi-layered implications of the pandemic. Nonetheless, Africa has also witnessed some progress in advancing peace processes in post-conflict settings. Such progress underscores the imperative for recalibrating international, continental and national efforts towards building and sustaining peace through concerted reconstruction and development engagements. It also provides an opportunity for strengthening national and local ownership of peacebuilding processes, which is made all the more pressing by significant cuts in peacebuilding funding.</p> <p>This session will take stock of lessons learned and best practices from peacebuilding efforts exerted by international, continental and national actors in African post-peace agreement settings. In that vein, it will discuss the potential role of the newly established AU Center for Post-</p>



Conflict Reconstruction and Development in Cairo (AUC PCRDC), as the provider of relevant expertise on policy and programming options to the AU, including its contribution towards strengthening coherence among relevant African actors and external partners, mobilizing funding, supporting capacity building and advancing innovative and evidence-based programming. To this end, the deliberations will address enhancing synergies and collaboration between the AU, the UN, including the peacebuilding architecture, international and regional financial institutions, and other partners, in support of the national priorities set out by the countries concerned.

Parallel Sessions

15:30 – 16:45

Harnessing Trade for a Peaceful and Prosperous Africa

Trade and investment can help advance peace, security and development in Africa at a time when the pandemic has resulted in a significant contraction in Africa's economy, including a slowdown in foreign direct investment and mounting debt burdens. The establishment of strong ties, forged by mutual trade and investment between African states can foster greater economic prosperity and more peaceful bilateral and regional relations on the continent. Through the creation of local and regional value chains and the diversification of the economy, trade and investment flows contribute to the expansion of African markets and the creation of job opportunities and can therefore be potent drivers of post-COVID recovery. In this context, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a timely and ambitious African initiative bringing together 54 African economies to form the world's largest trading bloc of 1.3 billion people, with a GDP worth USD 3.4 trillion and a potential to boost intra-African trade by 52.3%. In addition, the "Trade for Peace" through the World Trade Organization's Accessions Initiative brings together fragile and conflict-affected countries to mobilize trade and global economic integration as a tool to rebuild their economies and promote sustainable and inclusive peace.

Now more than ever, the necessity for rapid and efficient economic recovery through boosting trade is critical for Africa's structural transformation. Accordingly, this session will discuss means of harnessing trade to strengthen peace, security and resilience in the context of post-COVID recovery particularly in fragile countries and those emerging from conflicts.

15:30 – 17:00

From Intentions to Actions:

Catalyzing Regional Cooperation for Peace, Security & Development in the Red Sea (Closed Session)

The Red Sea region continues to witness a range of transnational threats and challenges including armed conflicts, terrorism, piracy, drugs and human trafficking and migrant smuggling. The COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic ramifications have further accentuated fragilities and the plight of vulnerable populations. Coordinated responses and collaborative frameworks are key to addressing such challenges as well as any new risks. However, several obstacles, stand in the way of their effective operationalization, including ongoing conflicts and asymmetries resulting from different political, economic and cultural systems and priorities. For too long, these dynamics have hindered any meaningful progress towards identifying common denominators for partnerships within the Red Sea region.



	<p>This session will provide an opportunity to advance a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the existing geo-political trends. It will also put forward concrete recommendations for innovative ideas and modalities to foster strategic collaboration through building trust and laying the foundation for sustainable peace and development in the region.</p>
5 March 2021	
14:00 – 15:15	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advancing Integrated Responses to Climate-Security Risks: Global and African Perspectives</i></p> <p>Across the African continent, the impacts of climate change and the related security and development risks have become more pronounced. In the Lake Chad Basin, climate change has intensified competition over scarce natural resources--undermining the livelihoods of five million people, increasing internal displacement and exacerbating the risk of violence and recruitment by terrorist organizations, namely Boko Haram. Concurrently, the Horn of Africa is grappling with overlapping crises, including COVID-19 and a locust infestation, which are aggravating food insecurity risks, the loss of livelihoods, and the resort to transnational organized crimes; all of which are challenging the ability of governments to respond effectively. These climate-security risks are further compounded by Africa’s relatively low national preparedness and community resilience, as well as the considerable financing gap it faces in addressing these issues and achieving sustainable development pathways.</p> <p>In response to the growing recognition of these devastating impacts, African governments and regional organizations have taken positive steps towards addressing the development and security implications of climate threats. For instance, the AU has established a ‘climate cluster’, bringing relevant departments under a common umbrella to better assess and address climate-security risks across the continent. However, the scale of action falls dramatically short of the increasing need. This accentuates the urgency for accelerating efforts towards climate adaptation and integrating climate-related security and development risks into national planning, peacebuilding and climate-targeted programs. Accordingly, this session will highlight the systemic and interactive nature of climate threats and take stock of preventive, inclusive and integrated climate policies and responses in Africa, and the role of international support. It will discuss the opportunities and challenges of integrating and addressing climate-related security risks in development planning, conflict prevention and peacebuilding at multiple levels.</p>
15:30 – 16:45	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Compounded Threats, Fragmented Responses: Is the Sahel Experiencing a Worsening Crisis?</i></p> <p>The Sahel region faces a set of overlapping peace, security and development threats and challenges. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the region has witnessed a stark increase in inter-communal conflict and an upsurge in terrorist attacks, with terrorist groups expanding their territorial foothold at an alarming rate. Response measures to curb the spread of the pandemic are jeopardizing the jobs and livelihoods of populations in the Sahel, most notably the informal sector. These compounded threats have together resulted in an increasingly worsened humanitarian situation, with rising food insecurity and large-scale displacement; creating life-threatening conditions for the region’s millions of inhabitants of the region.</p>



In the face of such challenges, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the Sahel region is in dire need of a new modus operandi. To date, the plethora of strategies launched by the various actors at the different governance levels have been insufficient in capturing and addressing the complex realities on the ground. Now more than ever, Sahelian states must strive to promote interlinkages and synergies, both among themselves and with international, regional and sub-regional organizations. Accordingly, this session will take stock of how the pandemic has affected international and continental peace and development efforts in the Sahel region. It will discuss the need for reassessing priorities in the Sahel region on the short, medium, and long terms, as well as the need for coherent partnerships and coordination; most importantly the integration of approaches (including programming and funding) with the goal of relief, recovery and resilience building.

Closing Session

17:00 – 17:30

Chartering Africa's Way Forward: Recovering Stronger and Rebuilding Better *"The Aswan Conclusions on Sustainable Peace and Development"*

The COVID-19 pandemic is a double-edged sword in the African context; despite its far-reaching impact on peace, security and development in the continent, the pandemic also provides a unique opportunity for accelerating the paradigm shifts that have emerged over the past years. From managing crises to strengthening prevention and resilience; from designing short-term fragmented responses to developing joint long-term integrated analysis, planning and programming; and from elaborating policies and strategies to operationalizing them in a coherent and holistic manner. The pandemic is a catalyst for humanitarian, development, peace and security actors to push for integrated approaches that transcend the traditional mindset of sequenced, siloed interventions in favor of strengthening community resilience, preventing conflicts and sustaining peace.

Through the "Aswan Conclusions", prominent policymakers and experts will develop context-specific and action-oriented recommendations for Africa to recover stronger from the pandemic and rebuild better. With a view to advancing sustainable peace and development, Africa's national, regional and continental stakeholders, together with global partners, should join forces to ensure that the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic do not impede the achievement of "The Africa We Want".