



ASWAN FORUM

## **THE ASWAN CONCLUSIONS ON SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA – THIRD EDITION**

21-22 June 2022

*Cairo, Egypt*

On 21 and 22 June 2022, Egypt hosted the third edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development titled, “*Africa in an Era of Cascading Risks and Climate Vulnerability: Pathways for a Peaceful, Resilient, and Sustainable Continent.*” The forum witnessed rich discussions and in-depth deliberations with the participation of high-level officials from African countries, development partners, international and regional organizations, international and regional financial institutions, representatives from civil society, think tanks, and the private sector.

Held against the backdrop of heightened geopolitical tensions, a global economic downturn, a looming food crisis, increased climate change impacts, and the continued health and socio-economic reverberations of the COVID-19 pandemic, the forum focused on how Africa can advance a green, transformative recovery agenda that strengthens the continent’s ability to address this cascade of multi-faceted risks as it navigates the post-COVID-19 world to achieve sustainable peace and development, and a climate-safe future. It also examined how climate change acts as a potential threat multiplier and magnifier of inherent structural vulnerabilities, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. These developments are taking place while Africa continues to witness protracted armed conflicts and violence, a surge in terrorism, and large-scale displacement—all of which are pushing more people to live in dire humanitarian conditions.

Building on the conclusions of the first and second editions of the Aswan Forum, the third edition contributed to advancing the operationalization of the interlinkages between interventions across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDPN), bearing in mind the increasing adverse impact of climate change and the additional challenges it brings. In this regard, the forum underscored the need to pivot the narrative on climate and security, from focusing on threats and conflict, towards advancing peace, resilience, and sustainable development. To achieve this, the forum brought together members of the climate change and peacebuilding communities to pursue integrated and contextualized responses and a bold action agenda in the lead up to COP27, addressing, in this context, a range of topics on the aforementioned interlinkages, including climate-adaptation and peacebuilding, the climate-displacement



nexus, climate impacts on the water-food-energy ecosystems nexus, and climate financing for sustaining peace. The forum emphasized the importance of tackling these issues in the context of accelerating the implementation of global climate commitments and pledges, as well as scaling up support to African countries in addressing climate change, noting that while Africa, contributes the least to the climate crisis, with only 4 percent of global carbon emissions, it remains the most vulnerable continent to its devastating consequences.

The conclusions below encapsulate the outcomes of extensive deliberations held prior to and during the third edition of the Aswan Forum. They outline the parameters of a comprehensive framework anchored in the sustaining peace and sustainable development agendas to shape action towards strengthening prevention efforts and resilience of states and communities, especially those affected by violent conflict, reinforced by regional and international cooperation that is more attuned to the evolving global landscape.

### *Reinforcing Institutional and Community Resilience in the Face of Cascading Risks*

The future of African states and communities will continue to be susceptible to concurrent shocks and crises so long as responses remain focused on short-term mitigation strategies. In this regard, building institutional and community resilience at all levels is essential to strengthening the long-term resilience of African countries and reinforcing their capacity to respond to and recover from complex and interconnected shocks and crises. With that in mind, African governments, the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), as well as their international partners are invited to:

- **adapt institution-building policies, frameworks, and tools to strengthen the capacities of African states in crisis prevention, response, and adaptation.** This includes supporting institutions on the regional, national, and local levels, mainly through designing and implementing context-specific responses geared with integrated and gender-sensitive analysis, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings
- **prioritize institution-building in the newly launched African Union Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development's (AUC-PCRD) programs and interventions.** This includes overcoming challenges of sequencing and prioritization as well as ensuring consistency in long-term resilience building, with a view towards enabling African countries to take full ownership and leadership of their peacebuilding agendas. Additionally, AUC-PCRD and Regional Security Arrangements should undertake joint analysis, planning, design, and implementation in order to integrate PCRD efforts into mission mandates
- **adopt community-centered development approaches to bolster the long-term resilience of communities in the face of cascading risks,** including as reiterated in the African Development Bank's 3<sup>rd</sup> Strategy for Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa. This includes empowering women and youth to contribute to climate and peacebuilding programming

### *Recalibrating Partnerships to a Shifting Global Landscape*

To effectively address cascading risks and interconnected crises, there is a need to redesign and recalibrate partnerships to be more fit for purpose. In this regard, these modalities of partnerships need to be better attuned and aligned with national and local priorities and needs. In that context, Africa and its international partners should:

- **adopt holistic and integrated responses to the multiplicity of crises, while amplifying African voices in global governance and multilateralism**
- **promote equitable development, regional cooperation, and inter-state dialogue for collective action within the framework of the multilateral system**
- **develop more integrated engagements with partners, including in the context of collaboration with the AU and REC/RMs**, to ensure coordinated responses and greater impact, particularly in post-conflict settings, and advance such an approach through the upcoming AU partnerships strategy and policy framework

### *Mobilizing Financing in an Era of Cascading Risks*

Financing for peace, security, and development in Africa should remain a top priority on the global agenda. Financing should be reoriented to advance holistic and inclusive responses to cascading risks, including across the HDPN, while continuing to prioritize strengthening sustainable peace and development in Africa. With that in mind, African governments, the AU and their regional and international partners, including financial institutions, are invited to:

- **ensure predictable, flexible, and long-term financing for peacebuilding, including by encouraging multi-year commitments, assessed contributions, and innovative financing to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and maximize utilization of flexible financing instruments for pooling resources for fragile contexts in Africa such as the Transition Support Facility (TSF)**. This also includes efforts to further strengthen the partnerships and coordination between the AU, RECs, UN PBC and international financial institutions to address the financial cliff in transition contexts
- **scale up predictable, concessional, and long-term finance for climate adaptation, mitigation, and building resilience in Africa**, including a more pragmatic modus operandi for greater accessibility at scale by African low-income countries, to bring about the structural and catalytic reforms needed to foster and leverage peace dividends, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings
- **increase financing to support African countries in addressing the ongoing food crisis, given its adverse effects on stability in the continent**, including through initiatives such as the African

Development Bank's \$1.5 billion African Emergency Food Production Facility and a strong 16<sup>th</sup> replenishment of the African Development Fund

- **ensure adequate, predictable, and sustained funding for African peace support operations**, particularly from assessed contributions including through consideration by the UN Security Council, in line with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security
- **operationalize the AU Peace Fund to ensure predictable and sustainable resources for peace and security efforts**, in line with AU institutional and financial reforms
- **enable flexible and sustainable financing for women and youth-led initiatives aiming to address peace, security, and climate change risks**, towards building economic resilience
- **incentivize private sector financing for humanitarian, peace, and development efforts**

#### *Addressing Climate-related Risks on Peace, Stability, and Development*

Although climate change is not a direct cause of conflict, it is a potential risk multiplier and fragility amplifier, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings, which can hinder efforts to advance sustainable peace and development. As such, there is a growing need to reconceptualize climate and security debates towards pathways of sustainable peace and development, that focus in particular on strengthening prevention and resilience, while being grounded in context-specificity and national ownership. In this regard, African governments, the AU, RECs/RMs, as well as their international partners are advised to:

- **accelerate climate-responsive national planning and programming to better prevent, reduce, and mitigate security and development risks related to the impacts of climate change.** Inclusive and integrated climate planning can yield development gains, while alleviating projected climate-related risks on peace, stability, and development
- **advance the implementation of the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)**, which addresses the role of climate change as a potential threat multiplier while highlighting the importance of context-based and localized solutions
- **strengthen African capacities through capacity building, training, research, and experience-sharing activities--which leverage the role of young men and women as key agents of change--to advance integrated responses and holistic African perspectives on the implications of climate change on peace, stability and development**

- **adhere to the Common African Position, as guided by the Committee of the African Heads of States and Governments (CAHOSCC), and to the AU Peace and Security Council Communiques 984<sup>1</sup>, 1051<sup>2</sup> and 1079<sup>3</sup>**
- **invest in early warning and forecast models to help prepare for and prevent extreme weather events and climate-related natural disasters as well as reinforce community resilience** in the face of emerging disaster risks
- **strengthen trans-boundary cooperation on natural resources**, including pastoral lands, forests, wildlife, rivers, and lake basins, on the policy and operational levels to address increased climate change risks and impacts based on the community of interest and equality of rights, and the applicable international law

### *Addressing Structural Weaknesses and Root Causes of Climate Vulnerability in Africa*

Existing structural weaknesses, including underlying tensions and vulnerabilities, coincide with exposure, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings, to the adverse impacts of climate change, leading to exacerbated risks to livelihood, water, and food security, with disproportionate impacts on women rendering them more susceptible to such risks. In response, African governments, the AU, and their partners are invited to:

- **invest in climate adaptation efforts in the agriculture sector, and diversify economic opportunities** to mitigate the risks associated with livelihood loss, including the resort to illegal coping mechanisms, among other risks
- **advance a transformative adaptation agenda** in a manner that also addresses structural vulnerabilities of women, including through enabling their role at the center of the transition to green economy, creating employment opportunities, and enhancing economic resilience
- **address root causes of conflicts, pre-existing tensions and grievances**, that when coupled with climate impacts can destabilize communities and fuel tensions and violence

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<sup>1</sup> Communique of the 984th meeting of the PSC held at the level of Heads of State and Government held on 9 March 2021 on the theme: Sustainable Peace in Africa: Climate Change and its Effects on Peace and Security in the Continent - <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-984th-meeting-of-the-psc-held-at-the-level-of-heads-of-state-and-government-on-9-march-2021-on-the-theme-sustainable-peace-in-africa-climate-change-and-its-effects-on-peace-and-security-in-the-continent>

<sup>2</sup> Communique of the 1051st meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) held on 26 November 2021 on the theme: Climate Change and Peace and Security: The need for an Informed Climate-Security-Development nexus for Africa - <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-1051th-meeting-of-the-au-peace-and-security-council-psc-held-on-26-november-2021-on-the-theme-climate-change-and-peace-and-security-the-need-for-an-informed-climate-security-development-nexus-for-africa>

<sup>3</sup> Communique of the 1079th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) held on 21 April 2022 on Climate Change and Peace and Security in Africa - <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-1079th-meeting-of-the-psc-held-on-21-april-2022-on-climate-change-peace-and-security-in-africa>

- **support youth-led initiatives for climate action, and address the structural barriers and inequalities** limiting the potential of young women and men to participate in decision making for climate adaptation and peacebuilding
- **address the effects of climate change on water, food, and energy security** through sustainable infrastructure development, digitalization, strengthening food systems, and investing in climate-smart agriculture, hydraulics, and sustainable energy

### *Leveraging Climate Adaptation for Peacebuilding*

Climate adaptation and natural resource management are strong entry points for peacebuilding benefits, if designed in a peace positive manner. Leveraging climate adaptation for peacebuilding calls for a strategic recalibration of the existing architecture of policies, institutions, and partnerships in these two areas. Accordingly, African governments, the AU, RECs/RMs, as well as their international partners should:

- **ensure that peacemaking and peacebuilding (including PCRD) processes in fragile and conflict-affected settings are gender and climate-sensitive, and grounded in context-specificity and national ownership**
- **incorporate peacebuilding efforts, within national climate policies and strategies**, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) as well as the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), while ensuring gender-responsiveness
- **strengthen coordination efforts between relevant AU departments** to better address the peace and stability risks associated with climate impacts
- **undertake climate risk and resilience assessments**, on the regional and continental levels, to enhance synergies between climate, peace, and security programming
- **leverage the crucial role of women in resilience-building**, including through advancing their meaningful participation in decision making in climate action and peacebuilding efforts
- **doubling financing for climate adaptation in line with global climate commitments and pledges** and harness co-benefits for peacebuilding activities

*Advancing Durable Solutions to Address the Climate-Displacement Nexus and Sustaining Peace in Africa*

The confluence of conflict, climate change, natural disasters, and environmental degradation is a growing and pressing challenge across Africa, displacing millions in search of safety and better livelihood opportunities. Mitigating the impact of this nexus between climate change, conflict, and displacement calls for the urgent investment of African governments in durable responses, with the support of the international community and development partners. This can contribute to reducing vulnerabilities, managing fragility, and strengthening peace and security across the continent. In this regard, African governments, the AU, RECs/RMs, as well as their international partners across the HDPN, are encouraged to:

- **prioritize a preventative approach when tackling climate displacement** through the urgent implementation of global commitments and pledges, in particular climate-related ones, in order to prevent further displacement
- **integrate displacement challenges in climate adaptation strategies and disaster risk reduction policies** at the national and regional levels
- **enhance regular migration pathways** to alleviate the socioeconomic impact of climate change and create opportunities for those displaced due to climate change
- **invest in research and knowledge production tools** to leverage evidence-based, early identification of possible displacement trends linked to disasters and climate-related hazards, and to enable improved foresight of potential conflict hotspots where peace can be undermined
- **ensure the protection and conservation of existing community assets** to minimize the drastic losses associated with climate-related events, but also leverage the power of local knowledge, local communities, and grassroots organizations in building local economic resilience and promoting self-reliance within displaced communities
- **invest in community stabilization activities and in rebuilding social cohesion** within and between host and displaced communities, while taking into consideration the importance of local facilitators in defusing potential tension arising from the depletion of natural resources and associated displacement dynamics
- **scale up sustainable finance for adaptation plans** that invest in climate-smart agricultural practices, nature-based solutions, innovation in food production and effective water resource management—all of which can mitigate the negative impacts of climate risks on both host and displaced communities, particularly women and children



### *Aswan in Practice: Advancing the Implementation of the Aswan Conclusions*

**Building on the example set forth by CCCPA’s field study to Nigeria and the ensuing report based on it<sup>4</sup>, efforts will continue to be made to take forward the Aswan implementation cycle through capacity building, research and policy engagement, in collaboration with a broad range of partners.** The Aswan Forum Cycle entails a preparatory process that feeds into the forum, followed by the implementation of the Aswan Forum Conclusions through various activities, emphasizing the importance of ensuring national ownership, investing in prevention efforts and resilience-building, as well as the imperative of adopting holistic, whole-of-government, and whole-of-society approaches, including in the context of curbing the spread of terrorism across Africa.

### *Building-up Momentum Towards COP27*

**Adapting to climate change and building resilience to its adverse impacts is a priority for African countries. COP27 will focus on concrete steps to address the finance gap affecting developing countries, especially in Africa, and the need to speed up implementing commitments and pledges on mitigation and adaptation, beyond doubling adaptation finance. The upcoming COP27 presidency has also identified climate, peace, and development as a priority area. Based on the deliberations of the third edition of the Aswan Forum, further action might be envisioned by it, including considering the possibility of an initiative in this area at COP27 to advance holistic and integrated responses, bearing in mind African priorities and grounded in context-specificity and national ownership.** Such an initiative would be taken forward in an inclusive manner in collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders and partners, with the overall aim to contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the AU Agenda 2063. In support of amplifying the voices of African youth and of integrating their needs and priorities in peace, security, and climate action, the key messages of the Aswan Forum Youth Dialogue, “*Empowering African Youth Voices for a Peaceful and Climate-Resilient Future*,” (enclosed) will be presented at the upcoming Conference of the Youth (COY17) in the lead-up to COP27.

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<sup>4</sup> CCCPA, *Advancing Holistic and Comprehensive Efforts to Confront Africa’s Growing Terrorism Challenge: A Nigerian Case Study on Developing Sustainable Pathways Out of Extremism for Individuals Formerly Associated with Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)*, June 2022 - <https://www.cccpa-eg.org/publications-details/1042>

## **Aswan Youth Dialogue**

### **Empowering African Youth Voices for a Peaceful and Climate-Resilient Future**

#### **Key Messages**

##### *Addressing Implications of Climate-related Risks on Young African Populations through Inclusive and Effective Responses*

African youth are confronted with a range of cascading risks and multiple crises, which limit their socio-economic opportunities and ability to envisage a peaceful and climate-resilient future. For responses to be effective, African governments, the AU, RECs/RMs, as well as their international partners are invited to:

- invest in research and analysis to better understand the increasing implications of climate change on the continent's peace and security landscape, and particularly on youth
- raise awareness among young people of the interlinkages between climate change, peace, resilience, and development
- enable youth's access to sustainable livelihoods through better resource allocation and job creation, particularly given their economic vulnerability in fragile and conflict-affected settings
- enhance peacebuilding efforts to be inclusive, gender-and climate-sensitive
- leverage the role of youth to help build resilience and reduce vulnerabilities and risks, particularly in urban and rural communities
- strengthen gender-sensitive early warning systems to better anticipate and respond to potential climate-related disasters

##### *Empowering Youth-led Initiatives Towards a Climate-Resilient Africa*

Youth constitute key pillars of resilience in any society; therefore, youth-led initiatives are of key importance in providing effective responses to strengthen peace, security, and climate action. In this regard, African governments, the AU, RECs/RMs, as well as their international partners are invited to:

- strengthen the capacities of youth-led organizations working on climate-related issues, including adaptation and mitigation, to sustain their advocacy at the local, national, and regional levels towards establishing initiatives that address climate related risks
- enhance inclusive disaster risk reduction, including through promoting youth-led programs
- ensure long-term, predictable, and stable financing for youth-led initiatives
- capitalize on the positive and meaningful agency of young men and women in building resilient societies, including through enhancing capacity building opportunities



### *Advancing Inclusive Climate Action for Sustainable Peace and Development*

While the impacts of climate change on youth are recognized, the potential of youth contributing to climate action is yet to be leveraged. Accordingly, it is recommended that African governments, the AU, RECs/RMs, as well as their relevant international partners:

- ensure meaningful youth participation in the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of climate-responsive initiatives and programs
- promote integrated responses and climate action towards a future of peaceful, healthy, resilient, and sustainable communities
- enhance experience-sharing among African youth on the interconnected risks of climate change, such as increased climate-induced displacement, disruption of livelihoods, and the reversal of peace and security gains
- integrate youth voices and needs within climate as well as peace and security related decision-making and policy engagement processes