



Africa Week 2015

Concept Note

**Briefing by African Regional Economic Communities to the
Member States of the United Nations on:**

***“Silencing the Guns in Africa:
The Nexus between Peace, Security, Governance and Development”***

Organizers:

**Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Chad to the United Nations**

Date: Monday, 12 October 2015

Venue: ECOSOC Chamber

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Time: 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm

I. Introduction:

As part of Africa Week 2015, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is convening the Annual High-Level Briefing by African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to Member States and Entities of the United Nations on the margins of the 70th Session of the General Assembly Debate on Africa. The briefing, which is jointly organized with the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Chad to the United Nations, is scheduled to take place on Monday, 12 October 2015, from 3:00pm to 6:00pm in the ECOSOC Chamber at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The briefing will be made by the Chief Executive Officers or Senior Representatives of seven RECs, namely: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The briefing will also feature interventions from the African Union, given its lead role in the development of the proposed continental framework on silencing the guns by 2020. In addition, senior United Nations officials will highlight perspectives from the United Nations on how to further enhance cooperation and support to the African Union and RECs in advancing the target on silencing the guns by 2020.

II. Background:

The African Union and its Member States as well as its regional and sub-regional organizations, with the support of the international community, continues to accelerate actions to achieve a conflict-free Africa and end all wars in Africa by 2020. This is in keeping with its vision and determination to build “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven and managed by its citizens, and representing a dynamic force in the international arena”, as emphasized in the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration of the Organization of African Unity/African Union. In order to realise this vision and objective, the African Union further adopted the historic Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023) that collectively outline a set of aspirations, goals, priority areas, milestones and targets for, *inter alia*, “Silencing the Guns by 2020”.

With only five remaining years to 2020, the African Union has accelerated efforts at particularly the continental and regional levels to address priority issues and concerns for the realization of this target to silence the guns in Africa by 2020. Given their proximity to the ground, the RECs have a crucial role to play, together with the African Union and international community, in ensuring concerted and coordinated efforts and actions at especially regional, sub-regional and national levels towards realising the goal of silencing the guns by 2020.

Agenda 2063 underscore the fundamental role of the RECs as building blocks and implementing arms of the African Union. As encapsulated in Agenda 2063, the RECs play an important role in generating evidence-based knowledge and analysis on the root causes and consequences of

conflicts; and this information is vital for the effective design, implementation and monitoring of targeted programmes and/or projects that is aimed at silencing the guns by 2020. The RECs also play a crucial role in supporting the efforts of Member States in the promotion of peace, security, governance and development. In this regard, the RECs will be equally instrumental for supporting Member States' efforts to achieve this ambitious target on silencing the guns by 2020, including by fostering regional and cross-border cooperation to *inter alia* effectively prevent and address armed conflicts, and combat terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organized crimes, including the illicit flows of arms.

It is however important to recognize that the RECs also have specific strategic and operational needs that will likely constrain their capacity to effectively contribute to the realization of this target on silencing the guns by 2020, if left unattended and unmet. For instance, at the strategic level, there is a need for greater cooperation, coordination and synergies between the AU and RECs on the one hand, and the UN-AU-RECs on the other, in developing and implementing joint strategies in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, ending the illicit flows of arms and supporting security sector reforms, among others, on the basis of their respective comparative advantages. There is also an important and urgent need to harmonize the anticipated continental framework for silencing all guns by 2020, Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan as well as the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the strategic and sectoral plans of the RECs. At the operational level, the technical and institutional capacities of the RECs need strengthening in the areas of integrated planning, monitoring and evaluation, among others, in order to effectively maximize their role in *inter alia* monitoring implementation of the continental framework on silencing all guns by 2020.

The African Union and the United Nations both recognise the significant role of the RECs for the realization of this imminent target on silencing the guns by 2020. At the continental level, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) held at its 430th meeting in April 2014 on the theme “*Silencing the Guns: Pre-requisites for Realizing a Conflict-free Africa by the Year 2020*”. The meeting, which featured the participation of the RECs, particularly called for practical measures to effectively address the illicit proliferation of small arms, light weapons and other types of weaponry, including the need for universal signature and ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty that entered into force in December 2014. The meeting also called for the naming and shaming of suppliers, financiers, facilitators, transit points and recipients of illicit weapons, with a view to stemming the phenomenon of the illicit proliferation of these weapons.

More recently, the AUPSC held a retreat in Abuja, Nigeria in September 2015 on the theme “*Enhancement of Cooperation between the AU Peace and Security Council and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) in the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa*”. The retreat explored ways and means of strengthening the collective effectiveness and efficiency of the AUPSC and the RECs/RMs, using their respective comparative advantages and capacities, within the context of subsidiarity, synergy building and complementarity in the areas of early warning and early action, conflict prevention, peacemaking, post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development, democracy and good governance, as well as in combating terrorism and violent extremism.

At the international level, the United Nations Security Council adopted a Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2014/27) on 16 December 2014 on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security, in which the Council welcomed the adoption of the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration and the pledge by African leaders to end all wars in Africa by 2020. In addition, the Council further expressed “its readiness to contribute” and called in particular on relevant United Nations entities “to help achieve this goal including by considering defining a concrete five-year actionable plan in support of the goal of achieving a conflict-free Africa by 2020”.

Similarly, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 69/291, noted “the ongoing efforts of the African Union, in collaboration with the RECs and development partners, including the United Nations system, to develop an action plan towards implementing the decision of the 2013 Solemn Declaration to silence the guns by 2020”. The resolution further called upon “Member States and the United Nations system, as appropriate, to intensify their support and cooperation with African countries, the African Union and the African RECs/RMs towards the timely realization of the goal of silencing the guns by 2020”. In addition, the United Nations continues to work closely with the African Union and RECs in implementing key initiatives and treaty documents, such as the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region to address the multidimensional root causes of armed conflicts in Africa. It is further envisaged that this cooperation between the UN-AU-RECs will be enhanced *inter alia* within the context of the framework for a “Renewed UN-AU Partnership for Africa’s Integration and Development Agenda (PAIDA)”, which was adopted by the 25th African Union summit to succeed the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme to the AU, on its expiry in 2016.

III. A Case for Accelerating Action towards Silencing the Guns by 2020 in the context of Agenda 2063’s First 10-Year Implementation Plan:

The goal of achieving a conflict-free Africa is not entirely new. In July 2005, the 5th African Union summit adopted a “Declaration on the Review of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, in which they resolved to achieve a conflict-free Africa by 2010”. Despite this, violent intra-state conflicts remain endemic across the continent. In addition, armed violence has increased as a result of persisting and new threats emanating *inter alia* from terrorism, violent extremism, criminality, electoral violence, xenophobic attacks, resource-based conflicts, domestic violence and the continued proliferation of illicit arms, among others. These have exerted untold human suffering on a vast majority of Africans, resulting in deaths, loss of livelihoods and massive displacements, among others.

Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan, as well as the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development provide new opportunities to mobilize support and accelerate actions at all levels - community, national, regional, continental and international - towards silencing the guns by 2020. These continental and global agendas are complementary and both underscore the inextricable linkages between peace, security, governance and sustainable development. These agendas also promote measures that aim at addressing the sources, consequences and root causes of armed conflicts, including curbing the illicit flow of arms, in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

With respect to silencing the guns by 2020, Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan outline specific measures and timelines for actions to be taken towards the realization of this goal. The agenda calls on the African Union Commission, in consultation with the RECs, to develop by 2015, a “continental framework for silencing all guns by 2020”. It also calls for consultations between the RECs and Member States on the continental framework for silencing all guns by 2016. In addition, it calls for the domestication and implementation of the continental framework for silencing the guns by 2017, as well as for the monitoring of implementation of the framework between 2018/20.

This timeframe for developing and domesticating the continental framework for silencing all guns by 2020 will leave only very limited time - precisely two years - for its actual implementation. Consequently, if Africa is to achieve the goal of silencing the guns by 2020, it is important that the development of the new continental framework is accompanied by critical reflection and evaluation of why the earlier target was unattained and of what needs to be done differently. In addition, the new target of silencing the guns by 2020 will require a careful diagnosis of the sources, dynamics and manifestations of armed conflicts, and specific priority quick-impact actions with time-bound benchmarks that address the proximate causes of armed conflicts. While structural root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, should be simultaneously addressed within this five-year period, these can only be successfully and realistically tackled within the medium and longer-term timelines of 2030 and 2063 respectively. In sum, there is an important need to identify the priority challenges in each sub-region for which urgent and accelerated action is required over the next five years, in order to achieve the continental goal of silencing all guns by 2020.

IV. Purpose of the High-Level Briefing:

This high-level briefing by African RECs to Member States and entities of the United Nations is being organized in line with the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations on fostering cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organisations and arrangements in maintaining international peace and security. It is also being organized in keeping with the United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2014/27) of 16 December 2014 and the United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/291 that called on the United Nations system to support the goal of achieving a conflict-free Africa by 2020.

The main purpose of the briefing is to highlight the specific role and measures of the RECs towards Silencing all Guns in Africa by 2020 and to discuss how the United Nations system can further strengthen its cooperation with, and mobilize international support for, the RECs towards achieving this important goal, in the context of implementation of Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan.

V. Specific Objectives:

- 1) To raise global awareness on the role of the RECs in Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 in the context of Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan.

- 2) To highlight specific priorities of, and concrete measures taken by the RECs towards Silencing the Guns by 2020.
- 3) To identify ways and means to further enhance UN-AU-RECs cooperation towards Silencing the Guns by 2020, including in the context of the continental Agenda 2063 and the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 4) To provide an opportunity for building new, and strengthening existing partnerships, between the RECs and international community in the areas of peace, security, governance and sustainable development towards silencing the guns by 2020.

VI. Guiding Questions:

- 1) Have we collectively properly analysed the sources, dynamics and manifestations of armed conflicts in Africa, as well as emerging threats, and elaborated appropriate tools, guidelines and time-bound benchmarks to address them?
- 2) What are the key priorities and specific measures taken by the RECs towards Silencing the Guns by 2020 in their respective geographic regions?
- 3) What can the RECs further contribute to accelerate implementation of the target on Silencing the Guns by 2020, including by strengthening all existing preventive mechanisms and improving good governance?
- 4) How can we concretely address the role of non-state actors, suppliers, financiers, facilitators, transit points and recipients of illicit weapons?
- 5) How can we enhance UN-AU-RECs cooperation with specific regards to Silencing the Guns by 2020, including in the context of the continental Agenda 2063, PAIDA and the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
- 6) How can the United Nations and international community further support specific efforts and measures of the RECs towards Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020?

VII. Expected Outcomes:

- 1) A summary report on the proceedings, with actionable recommendations, including on how the United Nations system can further support the RECs towards silencing the guns by 2020.
- 2) A briefing note to the AUC with key messages from the briefing for consideration in the development of the continental framework on silencing all guns by 2020.

VIII. Format:

The briefing will consist of three main sessions: an opening session, a briefing session and a thematic session. The opening session will feature welcoming and keynote remarks. The briefing

session will feature presentations by the Chief Executive Officers of the RECs or their senior representatives on the six guiding questions above. The thematic session will feature short presentations by senior officials of the AU Commission and the United Nations on ways and means to enhance UN-AU-RECs cooperation towards silencing the guns by 2020 in the context of the First 10-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063. The briefing will also feature an interactive segment, as to allow first-hand discussions between the RECs and participants. The briefing will be co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Mahamat Zene Cherif, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Chad to the United Nations in his capacity as the Chair of CEN-SAD, and Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa.

IX. Participants:

The event will be attended by African Regional Economic Communities, African Member States chairing the RECs, Member States of the United Nations, including the African Group, senior officials from the African Union, APRM, NEPAD, United Nations system entities and non-governmental organisations, particularly those working with RECs.

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