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CONCEPT NOTE ON THE THEME AND SUB-THEMES OF THE
AFRICAN DAY OF DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
(ADD), 2020 edition

THEME: « THE CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO CONFLICT PREVENTION AND
PEACEKEEPING ON THE CONTINENT»

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS -(CUA)
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INTRODUCTION

Since 2013, the African Union (AU) has set itself development objectives that are recorded in several continental or international agendas. On the whole, the AU promotes the implementation of strong actions aimed, on the one hand, at establishing security and the free movement of people and goods throughout the continent and, on the other hand, at improving the quality of life of people in Africa on the basis of the judicious exploitation and management of their natural resources as well as the benefits of technological progress.

Agenda 2063, "the Africa we want", places African people at the center of all efforts to ensure their participation in the structural transformation on the continent and building of peaceful and more inclusive human societies. Emphasis is placed on the empowerment of women in all areas of human endeavor and on the creation of an enabling environment for Africa's children and youth.

Agenda 2030 commits the international community to focus on three major areas, namely the fight against: (1) inequalities, exclusion and injustice; (2) climate change; (3) and finally, extreme poverty, all of the ills that still challenge Africa despite the progress made so far.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change limits the increase in global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100. To this end, all levels of government, including national and sub-national governments, regional and local authorities, must work together to establish measures that will enable people to better adapt to the new climate context.

Finally, the New Urban Agenda commits the international community to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 11, which aims to provide Africa with healthy, safe, inclusive and sustainable cities and human settlements. In this sense, access to transport systems, housing, sanitation, adequate, safe, accessible, sustainable and affordable basic services, including in slums neighborhoods are challenges to be met. In addition, all countries need to build capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable planning and management of human settlements in order to achieve sustainable urbanization for all.

On the other hand, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 16, which aims at reducing violence, child abuse and exploitation, preventing crime, and combating corruption, strengthening the rule of law and access to justice. These measures contained in SDG 16 aim at respect for human rights, protection of the most vulnerable, the rule of law and strengthening national and subnational institutions.

The fulfilment of these commitments calls for Africa to silence the weapons on the continent with a view to achieving a conflict-free Africa where living in peace is a reality for all. An Africa that prevents genocide, gets rid of violent conflicts and wars, fights against human rights violations and humanitarian disasters.

BACKGROUND

At the advent of the African Union, the Heads of State and Government adopted the 2007 Accra Declaration on the Government of the Union as the leitmotif of their common actions, which highlights the imperative "*need to involve the African people and the African Diaspora in the process of economic and political integration of our continent so that the African Union is a Union of peoples and not just a "Union of States and Governments"*". For the leaders of the African States, it is a question of instituting the effective participation of the populations at the grassroots level in the definition and implementation of development

programs, in particular by relying on local and regional authorities as public actors at all sub-national levels of governance.

In this regard, the Heads of State and Government meeting at their Summit in Malabo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea in June 2014, adopted the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development.

This Charter is a genuine unifying legal instrument adopted by the leaders of African States at the highest level, with a view to encouraging the adoption of decentralized management of public affairs to guarantee democratic governance, and to define the modalities for its implementation, in accordance with the fundamental values and rules that are unanimously shared.

Finally, this Charter confirms local and regional authorities as privileged partners of national governments in promoting the well-being of grassroots populations. This Charter contributes to a better understanding of the partnership and collaboration to be established between national governments and local and regional authorities to:

- the promotion of local economic development and the mobilization of resources to eradicate poverty in Africa;
- the understanding of a vision shared by Member States, issues of decentralization, local governance and local development, as well as an appreciation of the diversity of representation;
- the consideration of local and regional authorities as the space and strategic level of governance where the impact of public policies and development on the lives of populations can be measured;
- account taking of multi-actor dialogue (integrating civil society and the private sector) at the level of local and regional authorities, and multi-level governance dialogue to territorialize public policies and the implementation of major continental and international agendas, in particular the African Union's Agenda 2063, the United Nations' Agenda 2030, or the Paris Agenda on climate change.

OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE OF the African Day of Decentralization and Local Development (ADD)

The provisions of the Charter are therefore resolutely consistent with the African Union's agenda for action, and make it possible to envisage how local and regional authorities must play their full part in implementing the priorities for political action defined by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in order to ensure that the policies defined at continental level have a concrete impact on the populations where they live, i.e. at the level of cities and territories.

The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, in its Article 20 paragraph 4, institutes the commemoration of the African Day of Decentralization and Local Development (ADD) on August 10 of each year. The celebration of the ADD by all States of the continent is organized under the authority of the Sub-Committee on Decentralization and Local Development of the Specialized Technical Committee No. 8 (STC No.8) of the African Union.

The theme chosen for the celebration of the ADD is based on the major problem of the year around which the Heads of State and Government of the African Union are urging Africans to reflect with a view to making their contribution and remedy it as much as possible.

The objective pursued by the celebration of the ADD is to:

- sensitize, inform and train the general public;
- share positive experiences and good practices among Member States; but also
- recognize and encourage excellence in the field of decentralization, local governance and local development.

For 2020, the African Union has chosen as its theme of the year "Silencing the Guns: Creating the conducive Conditions for Africa's Development".

This theme of the year, chosen in reference to the major project of Silencing the Guns in 2020 'aims to achieve a conflict-free Africa, prevent genocide, make peace a reality for all and get the continent rid of war, violent conflict, human rights violations and humanitarian disasters.

In line with the theme of the year 2020 proposed by the African Union, it is proposed to adopt as the theme for the celebration of the 2020 ADD: "***The contribution of local authorities to conflict prevention and peacekeeping on the Continent***".

JUSTIFICATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE SUB-THEMES

Local and regional authorities, because of their proximity to the population, are often on the front line in the management of disasters or conflicts. They are also the place where tensions between social groups are demonstrated prior to their rise in the form of crises, open conflicts, or even wars. Experience also shows that in post-conflict situations, the return to peace and harmony between communities requires a local approach, conducted with the participation of local elected officials, i.e. the public authorities closest to the populations, and therefore often having their trust.

It must also be taken into account that local and regional authorities have a general mandate to improve the living conditions and environment of the populations living in their constituencies, including migrants, displaced persons and refugees. Local and regional authorities are therefore called upon to become increasingly involved in conflicts resolution. Indeed, these conflicts very often result from the multiple frustrations, marginalization and distortions experienced by some communities in one local authority before spreading to several other local authorities in the same country or in neighboring countries.

Local and regional governments located in or close to conflict zones are the destination of large contingents of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants whose reception and integration into resident communities require careful management so as not to create tensions that are detrimental to living together.

For an Africa in lasting peace, sharing values such as social inclusion and cohesion, better living together in harmony, equal rights for all to have access to basic public services, and the opportunity for all to achieve their full potential where they live, local and regional governments should among other be contributing to the creation of wealth and employment, especially for young people and women. It is clear that these are the necessary conditions for

reducing the conditions for the emergence of tensions within and between local communities, conditions that are devolved to local authorities by decentralization laws.

It is for this reason that it is proposed to break down the main theme of the ADD into the two sub-themes below:

Sub-theme 1: The participation of local and regional authorities in Africa in the African Union's early warning system on conflicts.

Sub-theme 2: The contribution of local and regional authorities in Africa to the reconstruction of peace and harmony between communities in post-conflict situations.

The celebration of the ADD in the Member States of the African Union is organized according to programs that take into account national context. Particular emphasis is placed on the importance of involving local populations in the identification of the problems to be overcome, and in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the proposals put forward to improve the contribution of local and regional authorities in each of the sub-themes mentioned above.

It is hoped that a report on the organization and conduct of the JAD celebration will be prepared and transmitted by the different Member States within two months following the celebration, and no later than 12 October 2020, to the STC No 8 Secretariat:

African Union Commission

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