

## Supporting Youth, Peace and Security in the renewed AU-EU Partnership

November 2017

### Introduction

The purpose of this statement is to provide suggestions to enhance the European Union's (EU) support to youth, peace and security (YPS) in the framework of the African Union (AU)-EU Partnership, in particular in the context of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy's (JAES) 'Peace and Security' priority area.

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) believes that an increased participation of civil society, including young men and women and youth-led organisations from Africa and Europe, in both policy formulation and the implementation of activities related to peacebuilding and conflict prevention, can make a significant contribution to the achievement of the JAES' objective of strengthening and promoting peace and security.<sup>1</sup>

### Supporting young people to prevent violence and to build peace

The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security in December 2015 marked a significant milestone in the recognition of the role which young women and young men can play in preventing violent conflict and in building and sustaining peace. Youth empowerment has repeatedly been proclaimed as an objective of the JAES,<sup>2</sup> and a growing body of evidence points to the positive contributions to sustainable peace which young men and women can make as constructive agents of change at the local, national and international levels.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, it is essential to provide them with opportunities (and the means) to participate in an inclusive, systematic and meaningful manner in political processes, and to pay attention to the different needs of young men and women of different ages from different social, economic, cultural and geographic backgrounds.

The EU's increased focus on the theme of YPS in recent years<sup>4</sup> indicates that it has heeded the repeated calls from civil society actors, including youth-led organisations, to regard young women and men as positive agents of peaceful change rather than as either (potential) troublemakers or passive victims of violence.<sup>5</sup> Given the increased recognition at the international level of the importance of the YPS agenda, the EU is well-positioned to be a leading voice in promoting and defending the diverse roles which young women and men can play in building sustainable peace. It

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<sup>1</sup> [The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: A Joint Africa-EU Strategy](#) (2007).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 56; Fourth EU-Africa Summit (2014), *Declaration*, par. 51.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: UN Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding (2016), *Young people's participation in peace building: A practice note*.

<sup>4</sup> For recent examples, see the Youth, Peace & Security European Regional Consultation that took place in Brussels on 25-27 September 2017, and the AU-EU Youth Plug-In Initiative: <http://aueuypii.org/en>.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, *Commission Implementing Decision of 27.5.2015 on the Annual Action Programme 2015 for the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace - Conflict prevention, peace-building and crisis preparedness component to be financed from the general budget of the European Union*, C(2015) 3453, p. 5.

could use the opportunity which is provided by the upcoming AU-EU Summit's focus on investing in youth to promote the voices and needs of young men and women, particularly from marginalised groups, in the framework of the AU-EU Partnership, and insist on their participation in implementing the JAES.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations focus on existing and possible future avenues for EU support to YPS in the framework of the AU-EU Partnership. In line with EPLO's mandate, they are only aimed at EU and joint AU-EU working mechanisms.

### 1. Putting young women and men at the centre of the EU's proposals for a renewed AU-EU Partnership

In May 2017, the European Commission (EC) and the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy (HR/VP) published their vision for how to 'reshape and deepen the Africa-EU partnership'.<sup>6</sup> The 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council for a renewed impetus of the AU-EU Partnership' included "flagship proposals" for new or transformed JAES structures and mechanisms. In order to achieve the stated objective of 'delivering a people-centred partnership',<sup>7</sup> it is essential that these structures include space for civil society actors, including young women and men in intergenerational associations and youth-led organisations (including informal organisations).

- One flagship proposal foresees the establishment of a 'Joint AU-EU high-level conference on electoral processes, democracy and governance in Africa and Europe'.<sup>8</sup> If it is set up, this conference should include geographic and thematic working groups whose work and results would be submitted to the relevant AU-EU bodies, including the EU's Political and Security Committee (EU PSC) and the AU's Peace and Security Council (AU PSC), so that its recommendations may directly influence policy. **Civil society actors, including young men and women and youth-led organisations, should be involved in its organisation and be given opportunities to address it, to participate in its work and to shape final outcome documents and/or recommendations.** The conference should also be held on a regular (e.g. annual) basis so that progress towards the implementation of its suggested reforms can be measured.
- Another flagship proposal relates to the establishment of a 'cooperation platform bringing together the UN, European, African and other international partners, to increase political dialogue, strategic discussions and joint actions in the field of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development'.<sup>9</sup> If this platform is created, **civil society, including young women and men and youth-led organisations, should either be directly represented on it or be given opportunities to provide it with regular briefings.**
- The flagship proposal to 'launch an African Youth facility' foresees an expansion of the scope of the Erasmus+ programme<sup>10</sup> and of support to education and training opportunities for young men and women. **Actions on education in the framework of the AU-EU Partnership should include support for peace education and dialogue and mediation initiatives,** which can play a crucial role in helping young women and men to develop their abilities to act as agents of peaceful change.

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<sup>6</sup> European Commission, HRVP/EEAS (2017), *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council for a renewed impetus of the AU-EU Partnership*, JOIN/2017/017 final, p. 3

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. For information on the Erasmus+ programme and cooperation with African universities, see: [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/news/erasmus-africa-and-eu-africa-strategy\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/news/erasmus-africa-and-eu-africa-strategy_en)

- The EU has put significant emphasis on the need to support ‘more and better jobs, especially for youth’ in the framework of the AU-EU Partnership.<sup>11</sup> **It is crucial that EU collaboration with the private sector and EU-funded projects in the area of decent job creation are all implemented in a conflict- and gender-sensitive manner, and sensitive to youth needs.** The EU and its partners in the private sector should follow a ‘do no harm’ approach in order to ensure that actions which are aimed at fostering equitable economic growth contribute to peaceful and sustainable development, and do not reinforce patterns of social exclusion (e.g. on grounds of sex, ethnicity, religion, etc.) or have other unintended consequences. **The EU should therefore conduct rigorous conflict analysis and resilience assessments which involve young men and women and youth-led organisations, and which fully integrate gender analysis,** in the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of such initiatives. Any engagement with the private sector should be based on enterprises’ abilities and commitments to make a positive contribution to peacebuilding efforts in a sustained and inclusive manner, in particular regarding their impacts on young women and men of different backgrounds.
- The EU and the AU should either commit to organising joint annual forums (JAFs),<sup>12</sup> starting in 2018, or set up a similar mechanism which will **allow experts, including civil society actors and especially youth-led organisations, to convene annually in order to assess the progress made in the implementation of the JAES Roadmap 2017-2020,** and to provide the relevant AU-EU bodies with recommendations for improvements. A specific working group for youth-led organisations should also be established within the mechanism to work on the JAES’ ‘Peace & Security’ priority area; it could be financed by the JAES Support Mechanism.

## 2. Formulating policy based on the needs of young people

The EU’s support to YPS in the framework of the AU-EU Partnership should be based on the principle of ownership and on the needs of young people as identified and defined by them. Based on their relevant expertise, young men and women from Africa and Europe should participate in defining EU priorities and in the development of EU actions on YPS, in particular regarding the AU-EU’s Partnership ‘Peace and Security’ priority area. Civil society actors, including young women and men and youth-led organisations, should be empowered to:

- **Brief members of the Council of the EU’s Africa Working Party (COAFR)**
- **Brief members of the EU PSC,** in particular in advance of the annual joint consultative meeting between it and the AU PSC, and in advance of and during joint field missions
- **Be invited to participate systematically in the design, implementation and M&E of EU actions** involving young men and women, especially those which are financed through the Pan-African Programme. In particular, they should be represented systematically in the meetings of the Consultative Committee of the Pan-African Programme.

## 3. Supporting young men’s and young women’s essential contributions to peace

In recent years, the EU has shown that it genuinely recognises the importance of good governance and open political processes for achieving peaceful societies and ensuring that development is sustainable. This is especially true of providing people, including young women and men, with opportunities and the means to participate in an inclusive, systematic and meaningful manner in political processes in their societies (including elections), and to hold their governments accountable.

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<sup>11</sup> European Commission, HRVP/EEAS (2017), *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council for a renewed impetus of the AU-EU Partnership*, pp. 14-23.

<sup>12</sup> In 2014, EU and African leaders decided that joint annual forums (JAFs) would replace the ‘Joint Task Force’ as the principal structure for assessing the implementation of the actions which were set out in the JAES Roadmap 2014-2017 and for promoting the participation of civil society actors. However, no JAFs were ever organised.

The linkages between the 'Peace and Security' and 'Democracy, Good Governance and Human Rights' strategic priorities of the AU-EU Partnership should therefore be further enhanced to reflect this interdependence.

- The **Pan-African Programme's** overall budget should be expanded in order to increase EU support to actions which are directed either entirely or in part (e.g. within broader support to civil society) towards **enhancing the role of young men and women in policymaking processes** in Africa at the continental level.<sup>13</sup> EU support to the operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) should **promote the linkages between the two and the participation of young women and men** in their institutions and decision-making processes.
- As part of its support to the operationalisation of the APSA, in particular through institutional capacity building actions financed through the **African Peace Facility (APF)**, the EU should **systematically address the theme of YPS** in its action documents. It should also ensure that the assistance which it provides to the AU includes suggestions to enhance the latter's engagement with civil society, including youth-led organisations.
- The EU should provide support for mechanisms aimed at **increasing the monitoring of JAES peace and security activities by civil society actors, including young men and women and youth-led organisations**. This should include possibilities (a) to participate (as a minimum as observers) in the APF Joint Coordination Committee's (JCC) discussions on the design and implementation of APF activities; and (b) to conduct independent M&E of the impact on peace and security of APF-funded activities, particularly peace support operations (PSOs),<sup>14</sup> and to present findings to the JCC.
- The EU should **organise informal dialogue meetings on YPS issues** between civil society actors, especially young women and men involved in broader civil society initiatives and youth-led organisations, and EU policymakers.<sup>15</sup>
- The EU should **provide more extensive and long-term support (notably through actions involving capacity building and direct financing) to peacebuilding initiatives engaging young men and women**, from the earliest ages possible, and youth-led organisations (including informal organisations). In doing so, the EU should **be flexible and adapt its support to their needs and their initiatives** as they design, manage and implement them. It should also follow the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) 'Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding'.<sup>16</sup>
- The EU should **provide more support for training on non-military aspects of PSOs** in the African training centres in peace and security which it assists through the APF, by encouraging greater inclusion of civilian expertise (e.g. from African civil society actors), and by insisting that programmes cover YPS issues in particular.
- The fifth AU-EU Summit Declaration should **include an explicit commitment to implement UNSCR 2250** and the JAES Roadmap 2017-2020 should **include concrete steps for its implementation**.

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<sup>13</sup> See for example the action entitled 'Enhancing civil society's role in pan-African issues', which was included in the Annual Action Programme 2015 for the Pan-African Programme and which paid 'special attention' to youth: *Action Document for "Enhancing civil society's role in Pan-African issues"*, Annex 3 of the Commission Implementing Decision on the Annual Action Programme 2015 of the DCI Pan-African Programme, DCI/PANAF/38025, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Including new ad hoc types of engagements such as the G5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

<sup>15</sup> This could be done within the framework of the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN), a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict.

<sup>16</sup> UN Interagency Network on Youth Development (2014), *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*. The EU should also take into account the forthcoming UN Progress Study on YPS: <https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy>.