POSITION PAPER: Synergising Positions on Crisis Prevention and Peace

An Introduction Guide to the African Peace and Security Architecture and Crisis Prevention Efforts by the EU and the AU on the African Continent

By Oluseye Eniola Oladipo & Vincent Tadday (One Hour for Europe/Y-IDEA)

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1.The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) - 2. The role of regional associations in pursuing security policy for the African continent - 3. What role does the European Union play in the crisis prevention on the African continent? - 4. Conclusion

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Introduction

In this paper, we introduce key concepts and stakeholders which play a vital role in the discourse towards a shared position on crisis prevention by the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU). Therefore, we first introduce the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and its mechanisms regarding crisis prevention. Secondly, we discuss the role of regional associations in pursuing security policy for the African continent. We then examine the EU's position on EU-AU crisis prevention and its future. This introduction guide should not be seen as a highly academic paper but more as an overview, a brief introduction, to the efforts already made by the EU and the AU regarding crisis prevention. It should serve the reader to understand the mechanisms, challenges, and opportunities that arise within EU-AU collaborations on this topic.

Strategies to effectively prevent crises are needed to establish long-lasting peace and secure environments where the economy and development can flourish. In the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), established in Lisbon in 2008, the EU and the AU recognize peace and security as joint preconditions for economic, political, and social development. Crisis management regarding the security structure on the African continent is by far not a new topic. However, the focus is often on dealing with an acute crisis instead of preventing them in the first place. Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that the best crisis is the one that is prevented before it harms anyone. In crisis prevention, we understand the civil and military processes of the EU and the AU implementing concrete strategies and procedures designed to circumvent defined disasters and emergencies. In the past, these scenarios were

often described in classic military terms, while with a new understanding of security, we also have to think beyond the traditional definitions.

In a very interconnected world, it does not necessarily need weapon force to trigger a security crisis. Food and energy security, as well as natural disasters, are concerning many people on the African and European continents. Moreover, asymmetrical warfare and a rising lethality of small groups present new challenges to bilateral organizations, state institutions, and individual citizens.

1. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

APSA is the umbrella term for the fundamental AU mechanisms for promoting peace, security, and stability on the African continent. The pillars of APSA are the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF), and the Peace Fund. Additional components of APSA are the Military Staff Committee, a subsidiary body of the PSC, and the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution.

The APSA evolved in the late 1990s when the African continent was confronted with severe crises such as the civil war in Somalia, which had been ongoing since 1991, and the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. At the same time, the statutes of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) did not allow an intervention in the internal affairs of another state. In order to be able to intervene in situations of severe human rights violations, the member states of the OAU decided to establish the African Union (AU) in 2002. Two years later, the decision to establish the APSA was taken. The signature of the constitutive act of the AU marked a turning point in inter-African relations. Article 4 (h) and (j) of the constitutive act allow AU member states to intervene in a third state even against the will of the respective government in case of crimes against humanity, such as war crimes and genocide. Therefore, the AU constitutive act is the first treaty under international law, which includes the right to militarily intervene in a third state based on humanitarian reasons, often called humanitarian intervention. This normative shift increased when the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) founding protocol was enacted on 26 December 2003. The protocol defines a broad agenda for peace and security, including central elements such as conflict prevention, early warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict management, peace-making, and peacebuilding, as well as support for and development of democratic policies, humanitarian actions, and conflict management. Consequently, the PSC founding protocol can be seen as the basis for the APSA. The APSA aims to provide the AU, the RECs, and the RMs with all the instruments necessary to fulfill the tasks and mandates relating to the AU's constitutive act and the PSC's founding protocol.

In the following, we describe the different bodies and functions of the APSA with a particular focus on crisis prevention:

The Peace & Security Council

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is the standing decision-making organ of the AU for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts. It is a collective security and early warning arrangement intended to facilitate timely and efficient responses to African conflict and crises. It is also the critical pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which is the framework for promoting peace, security, and stability in Africa. The Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council was adopted on 9 July 2002 in Durban, South Africa, and entered into force in December 2003. The PSC became fully operational in early 2004. The PSC Protocol, the PSC Rules of Procedure, the AU Constitutive Act, and various PSC retreats' conclusions provide operational guidance to PSC activities.

The powers of the PSC, in conjunction with the Chairperson of the AU Commission, include to following:

- Anticipate and prevent disputes and conflicts, as well as policies, which may lead to genocide and crimes against humanity;
- Undertake peace-making and peacebuilding functions to resolve conflicts where they have occurred;
- Authorize the mounting and deployment of peace support missions, and lay down general guidelines for the conduct of such missions, including the mandate;
- Recommend to the Assembly, according to Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act, intervention, on behalf of the Union, in a Member State in respect of grave circumstances, namely, war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity as defined in relevant international instruments;
- Institute sanctions whenever an unconstitutional change of government takes place in a Member State;
- Implement the AU's standard defense policy;
- Ensure implementation of fundamental conventions and instruments to combat international terrorism;
- Promote harmonization and coordination of efforts between the regional mechanisms and the AU in the promotion of peace, security, and stability in Africa;
- Follow-up promotion of democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and respect for the sanctity of human life and international humanitarian law;
- Promote and encourage the implementation of conventions and treaties on arms control and disarmament;

- Examine and take action in situations where the national independence and sovereignty of a Member State are threatened by acts of aggression, including by mercenaries;
- Support and facilitate humanitarian action in situations of armed conflicts or significant natural disasters.

Structure: The PSC has 15 members with equal voting powers. All members are elected by the AU Executive Council and endorsed by the AU Assembly during ordinary sessions. For continuity, five members are elected for three-year terms and 10 for two-year terms. While there are no permanent members, the PSC Protocol does not prevent any Member States from seeking immediate re-election.

PSC members are elected according to equitable regional representation and rotation principles:

- Central Africa: three seats
- Eastern Africa: three seats
- Northern Africa: two seats
- Southern Africa: three seats
- Western Africa: four seats

Article 5(2) of the PSC Protocol lists criteria used in electing PSC members, including contribution to the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in Africa; participation in conflict resolution, peace-making, and peacebuilding at regional and continental levels; willingness and ability to take up responsibility for regional and continental conflict resolution initiatives; contribution to the Peace Fund and/or Special Fund; respect for constitutional governance, the rule of law and human rights; and commitment to AU financial obligations.

The PSC Secretariat provides direct operational support to the PSC and is housed within the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission. The PSC is assisted by the AUC, Continental Early Warning System, Panel of the Wise, African Standby Force, and the Peace Fund. The PSC also works in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution; the UN Security Council and other similar international organizations; civil society organizations; and other AU organs, including the Pan-African Parliament and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The Military Staff Committee advises and assists the PSC in all questions relating to military and security requirements for promoting and maintaining peace and security in Africa. The protocol provides for the Committee to comprise senior military representatives from the 15 PSC Member States, chaired by the military/defense attaché of the Member State chairing the PSC in any given month.

The Committee can invite any AU Member State to its meetings to assist with its work. Rules of Procedure for the Committee are yet to be adopted.

The Committee of Experts assists the PSC in elaborating its draft documents, including PSC decisions. The Committee comprises 15 designated experts, each representing a PSC Member State and two PSC Secretariat officers. The Committee is expected to meet before each PSC meeting to prepare working documents for decisions.

Panel of the Wise

The Panel of the Wise supports the PSC and the Chairperson of the AUC in promoting and maintaining peace, security, and stability in Africa, particularly in preventive diplomacy and mediation. It is supported by the Department of Peace and Security's Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division through the Panel's Secretariat, in line with the PSC-adopted Modalities for the Functioning of the Panel of the Wise. Under the Modalities, the Panel's mandate includes advising the PSC and Chairperson; undertaking all such actions deemed appropriate to support the efforts of the PSC and Chairperson for preventing conflict; making pronouncements on any issue relating to the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa; and acting at the request of the Council or Chairperson, or on its initiative. The Modalities also provide for the Panel's role to include facilitating channels of communication between the PSC or the Chairperson of the Commission and parties involved in the conflict, undertaking mediation actions and advising mediation teams, and carrying out fact-finding missions.

During the July 2010 AU Summit in Kampala, Uganda, the Assembly supported enhancing the Panel's capacity by establishing a team of 'Friends of the Panel of the Wise' (Assembly/ AU/Dec.310(XV)). The Friends of the Wise Panel comprises the Wise's outgoing members. They are tasked to support the incoming Panel in its activities, such as fact-finding missions, engagement in formal negotiations, and follow-up on recommendations. The Friends enjoy the same privileges and entitlements as the Panel members.

Structure:
- The Panel has five members. Under Article 11(2) of the PSC Protocol, members must be "highly respected African personalities of high integrity and independence who have made outstanding contributions to Africa in peace, security, and development."
- Members cannot hold political office at the time of their appointment or during their term on the Panel.
- Members are appointed by the AU Assembly, on the recommendation of the Chairperson of the Commission, for three years. Terms can be renewed, depending on the availability of the members. Pending selection of members, the existing Panel continues to work, often leading to extended mandates for the members. Each member is drawn from one of the AU's five regional

groups. Under the Modalities for the Functioning of the Panel of the Wise, the office of the Chairperson should rotate between members every year. In practice, this position has not rotated.

- The Panel meets when required or at the request of the PSC or Chairperson of the AU Commission. It is required to meet at least three times a year.

Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise)

The Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise) brings the Panel of the Wise together with regional counterparts with complementary responsibilities. PanWise aims to strengthen, coordinate and harmonize conflict prevention and peace-making efforts in Africa under a single umbrella. PanWise undertakes mediation, conciliation, and fact-finding missions; promotes democratic principles, human rights, and international humanitarian law; joint research with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs); workshops to share best practices and lessons learned; and joint training and capacity-building initiatives. The modalities for meetings are still under discussion.

PanWise core members:
- AU Panel of the Wise/Friends and their sub-regional counterparts
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Council of the Wise
- Southern African Development Community's (SADC's) Mediation Reference Group and Panel of Elders
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa's (COMESA's) Committee of Elders Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD's) Mediation Contact Group Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
- East African Community (EAC) Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)
- Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN–SAD)

PanWise associate members:
- Forum of Former African Heads of State (Africa Leadership Forum) African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA)
- National infrastructures for peace National mediation councils
- Relevant African mediation associations/institutions All Africa Council of Churches

African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation (FemWise–Africa)

FemWise–Africa launched operations by providing technical and mediation support to four ongoing peace processes in Africa. It was mandated in July 2017 by the Chairperson of the Commission to undertake efforts to operationalize fully. FemWise–Africa is a subsidiary body of the Panel of the Wise following recommendations by the Panel. The Panel's report Mitigating Vulnerabilities of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts in Africa advocated for at least four key actions to be taken by the AU Commission: the appointment of a permanent Office

for Women, Peace, and Security; formulation and launch of an AU Gender Peace and Security Programme (GPSP); establishment of a permanent Open Session of the Council on Women, Peace, and Security; and the launch of FemWise–Africa. FemWise–Africa will focus on strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation in the context of APSA by providing a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity building, and networking. It will aim to ensure that African peace processes are shaped with the contribution of women's leadership and participation.

Continental Early Warning System (CEWS)
The Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) is one of the pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and its main objective is to anticipate and prevent conflicts on the continent and to provide timely information about evolving violent conflicts based on specifically developed indicators.

CEWS consists of the following:
- Situation Room, located in the Peace and Security Department
- Observation and Monitoring Centres of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

The Situation Room, the hub of CEWS, operates 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays. Its main task is information monitoring and data collection on simmering, potential, actual and post-conflict initiatives and African activities. The Situation Room monitors and reports information to facilitate timely and informed decision-making.

The PSC Protocol, article 12, also provides coordination and collaboration with international organizations, research centers, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to facilitate the functioning of CEWS. The Framework for the Operationalisation of CEWS, adopted by the Executive Council in 2008, stresses the importance of collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) and stresses conflict prevention as a prerequisite to achieving peace, security, and stability in Africa.

Peace Fund
The role of the Peace Fund is to provide "the necessary financial resources for peace support missions and other operational activities related to peace and security." The PSC Protocol provides for the Fund to be made up of financial appropriations from the regular AU budget, voluntary contributions from the Member States, international partners, and other sources, such as the private sector, civil society, and individuals through fund-raising activities. The Chairperson of the AUC is mandated to raise and accept voluntary contributions from sources outside Africa in conformity with the AU's objectives and principles.
The PSC Protocol also envisaged a trust fund within the broader Peace Fund that would provide a standing reserve for specific projects in case of emergencies and

unforeseen priorities. The level of funding required in the trust fund is determined by the relevant AU policy organs on recommendation by the PSC.

African Standby Force (ASF)
The PSC Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council provides for an African Standby Force to be established to enable the PSC to perform its responsibilities concerning the deployment of peace support missions and intervention.

The PSC Protocol provides for the ASF to perform:
- Observation and monitoring missions
- Other types of peace support missions
- Intervention in a Member State in respect of grave circumstances or at the request of a Member State in order to restore peace and security
- Prevention of a dispute or conflict from escalating
- Peacebuilding, including post-conflict disarmament and demobilization
- Humanitarian assistance
- Any other functions mandated by the PSC or AU Assembly.

The PSC Protocol further provides that the ASF shall be composed of multidisciplinary standby contingents, with civilian and military components in their countries of origin, ready for rapid deployment. As of September 2017, the ASF was composed of pledged capabilities in five Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), Planning Elements (PLANELMs) in Regional Headquarters in each of the five regions, a Continental Logistics Base (CLB) in Douala, Cameroon, and five Regional Logistics Depots (RLDs) under initial operationalization. A Regional Standby Force six-month rostering system (in the English alphabetical order) began on 1 January 2017, in line with the Declaration of the Ninth Ordinary Session of the Specialised Technical Committee on Defence, Safety, and Security in June 2016. The five ASF RECs/RMs are: the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Standby Force, Eastern African Standby Force (EASF), North African Regional Capability (NARC) Standby Force, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Standby force, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Standby Force.

Criticism and flaws/room to improve
The APSA is an excellent policy designed to anticipate, prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa with the sole purpose of protecting every African while respecting individual differences and upholding human rights without prejudice. However, it is not perfect in its design or implementation. Therefore, there has to be a continuous iteration of its aspects considering the current realities and expectations of the member states and the communities.

The following areas where the AU/APSA needs to improve to be able to implement peace and security on the continent effectively are:

Information Dissemination: The AU lacks in-depth conflict analysis and management capacity, and mechanisms for disseminating information about AU decisions and operations.

Collaboration: To date, AU/APSA has not utilized working collaboratively with nongovernmental and international organizations, specialists, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and research centers.

Political Interest: Different political interest of member states places a constraint that hampers AU's decisions and effective implementation of the pillars of APSA in African countries.
Financial/Funding Constraints: There are also financial and personnel constraints. For example, mustering enough troops to fulfill a mandate can be challenging. And then there is the question of financing, training, and equipping them. This is a common problem for the AU's mission in Somalia. Today, the APSA heavily depends on external sources for its funding which is still insufficient.

Personnel and Capacity constraints: The APSA is a good initiative on paper, yet the implementation has been hit hard due to the inadequate capacity and personnel required to carry out its peace-building and conflict prevention operations. A good example is the delayed function of the Continental Early Warning System due to a lack of personnel in capacity and staff strength. In addition, there has been an external influence and undermining of the Council's attempts at conflict resolution. A case in point was NATO's intervention in Libya, which was parallel to the AU's mediation efforts.

2. The role of regional associations in pursuing security policy for the African continent

The **New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)** was built at the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the OAU in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2001, as a socioeconomic program of the AU. The fundamental aims of NEPAD were "to eradicate poverty; place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development; halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process; accelerate the empowerment of women, and fully integrate Africa into the global economy."

The second body, the **African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)**, was created within NEPAD at the sixth Summit of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) of NEPAD in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2003. The main aim of the APRM was to help African governments improve their government system. The members of the AU can voluntarily become members of the APRM, which has 29 members. Whereas the new regional organization of Africa addresses Africa's social, economic, and political problems, it also makes efforts to reinforce its security policy.

The **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)** is a regional organization in East Africa, established on the 21st of March 1996 as a successor to the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), created in January 1986 by six Eastern African countries. Its head office is located in the city of Djibouti in the Republic of Djibouti, and it currently has seven members, namely Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Uganda. The IGADD aimed to combat famine, drought, economic issues, and ecological degradation in East Africa. Its objectives were widened in 1996 and included social, economic, and political developments in East Africa. Since the establishment of the IGAD, creating an effective security policy among the member states has been its primary aim. The IGAD's main objectives are: to retain peace, security, and stability and to accomplish prosperity and regional integration among the member states. The IGAD's security policy towards East Africa is stated in Article 18A of the IGAD Charter: (1) To act collectively to preserve peace, security, and stability, which are essential prerequisites for economic development and social progress; (2) To take effective collective measures to eliminate threats to regional cooperation peace and stability; (3) To establish an effective mechanism of consultation and cooperation for the pacific settlement of differences and disputes and (4) To deal with disputes between member states within this sub-regional mechanism before they are referred to other regional or international organizations.

The **ECOWAS's Security Policy towards West Africa**: The leaders of the fifteen West African countries signed the Treaty of Lagos in Nigeria on the 28th of May 1975 to establish the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional organization in West Africa and one of the most prominent pillars of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa, with headquarters in the city of Abuja, Nigeria. Article 58 of the Treaty of ECOWAS contains strategies and policies regarding peace and security in West Africa:

(1) Member states undertake to work to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability, and security within the region, and
(2) In pursuit of these objectives, member states cooperate with the community to establish and strengthen appropriate mechanisms for the timely prevention and resolution of intra-state and inter-state conflicts.

The leaders of the West African countries recognized that without economic integration in the region, political and social developments would not exist, so the notion of economic partnership emerged as a precondition in West Africa for raising the living standards of African people.

The SADC's Security Policy towards Southern Africa: The main objectives of SADC are to "achieve development and economic growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration." The most important protocol of the SADC regarding its peace and security policy is Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation adopted in Blantyre, Malawi, on the 14th of August, 2001. The protocol institutionalizes SADC's peace and security policies and strategies. Significantly, it established the organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, the main objectives of which are to: (1) protect the people and safeguard the development of the region against instability arising from the breakdown of law and order, intra-state conflict, interstate conflict and aggression; (2) promote political cooperation among State Parties and the evolution of shared political values and institutions; (3) prevent, contain and resolve inter-and intrastate conflict by peaceful means; (4) promote the development of democratic institutions and practices within the territories of state parties and encourage the observance of universal human rights as provided for in the Charters and Conventions of the Organisation of African Unity and United Nations respectively; (5) observe, and encourage state parties to implement UN, AU and other international conventions and treaties on arms control, disarmament and peaceful relations between states and (6) develop peacekeeping capacity of national defence forces and co-ordinate the participation of state parties in international and regional peacekeeping operations. Schoeman points out that SADC approached the definition of security from only a military perspective. SADC approaches it from societal, economic, environmental, and psychological perspectives.

3. What role does the European Union play in the crisis prevention on the African continent?

In the efforts by the African Union to establish peace and security on the continent, the EU is one of their key partners. Africa and the EU cooperate through frameworks such as the Cotonou agreement and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). The latter contains a framework with clear priorities and new opportunities for future collaborations, especially in the field of peace and security (Vervaeke, 2009). The JAES is not the first joint strategy to address African security issues but the first one formulated on the principles of partnership and African ownership.

In May 2018, an AU-EU Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed as another pillar of the two Unions' partnership on peace and security (EEAS Website, 2021). The MoU states that the two partners increase their joint efforts to approach and prevent crises by focusing on synergizing development, humanitarian, governance, and peace-building activities. Another critical element of the cooperation between the continents towards peace and security is the annual meeting between the EU Political and Security Committee (EU PSC) and the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) in Brussels or Addis Ababa.

There are two necessary fields of cooperation between the EU and the AU regarding crisis prevention on the African continent. The first one is the financial support for the African Union and regional associations in pursuing peace and security policy in the EU. From 2004 to 2021, the EU already provided more than 3,2 billion euros via the African Peace Facility (APF), especially for Capacity Building, Peace Support Operations (PSO), and Early Response Mechanisms (ERM). Additionally, the EU supported the above-mentioned African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) with contracts whose total value exceeded 100 million Euros (European Court of Auditors, 2018). However, in 2018 the European Court of Auditors concluded that "the EU's support for the APSA had a poor effect and needed refocusing" (p.2). Mainly because the quality of the capacities financed with EU support varied considerably. With that in mind, the former High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, presented her proposal for a European Peace Facility (EPF) in June 2018.

The new instrument took effect on the 1st of July 2021 and allows the financing of all Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Therefore, it replaces the African Peace Facility and focuses even more on financing the military component of the Peace Support Operations (PSO). This leads us to the second field of cooperation between the EU and the AU, the military. Since 2003, the EU has deployed nearly 40 civilian and military missions or operations (van der Lijn et al., 2022). Currently, four of the EU military missions are still in place. The European Union Training Missions (EUTMs) in Somalia, Mali, Mozambique, and the Central African Republic (CAR) are essential steps towards a joint position on crisis prevention between the EU and the AU since they support the set-up, restructuring, and training of strong armed forces, which can be seen as strengthening security within the rule of law and strong institutions. Both are needed to create a stable environment that prevents crises and makes economic development possible. Besides EUTMs, being generally considered legitimate and credible missions, so far, the broader security sector reform (SSR) and defense sector reform (DSR) efforts have been bogged down because of the political nature of the missions. In the Central African Republic and Mali, the EU already suspended their training missions over the presence of the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company. The EU must overcome challenges like this in cooperation with the AU, regional organizations, and national governments to ensure further steps towards synergizing crisis prevention strategies.

4. Conclusion

'There can be no sustainable development without peace, without security and without stability' - Thabo Mbeki

Conflict prevention is a diplomatic approach that refers to various activities and strategies deployed within peacebuilding fields to pre-empt and subsequently neutralize potential triggers to widespread violent conflict. Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld first articulated the concept of conflict prevention half a century ago. Since its inception, the concept has grown in popularity in fields of diplomacy as crucial actors and institutions have increasingly shifted from a culture of reaction to prevention in their approach to violent conflict.

A peace and security policy in Africa, like any other continent in the world, is not an easy task to accomplish due to the dynamic nature of the political and cultural landscape with challenges such as external and internal vested political interests, diversity in culture, and tradition, poverty, unemployment, natural and man-made disasters, mismanagement of wealth and natural resources, conflicts, territoriality, poor governance, corruption and lack of transparency and accountability. However, the security of the African continent is necessary for achieving sustainable development and the continent's objectives of a common market, economic, and trade union. Safe to say that economic growth and human capital development are not exclusive to peace and security. The more peaceful a community feels, the more secure it is in its development and economic prosperity. Evidence has proven that anticipation and prevention of conflicts have a more significant positive impact on communities and their people. One should not shy away from the wise saying of the elders that "prevention is better than cure."

Furthermore, any violent conflict's detrimental humanitarian and economic effects rarely reside within national boundaries. Once conflict has broken out, the costly security and humanitarian interventions often result in the international community placing their citizens at risk – both directly and indirectly – and placing a huge financial burden upon the international community.

Above other Peace and Security Policy pillars, conflict prevention needs to be prioritized. It remains a significant task to strengthen the existing frameworks concerning conflict prevention. In the long run, they aim to reduce the financial implications of maintaining peace and security on the continent.