



UN75 Regional Dialogue for Africa: Toward Innovation and Renewal of Global and Regional Governance

Dialogue Summary
30 March–10 May 2020

Co-sponsored by: The Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development; Stimson Center; Global Challenges Foundation; Together First; and UN2020



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Overview of the Regional Dialogue

The *UN75 Regional Dialogue for Africa: Toward Innovation and Renewal of Global and Regional Governance* (30 March–10 May 2020) served as a platform to encourage an Africa-wide conversation on improving the performance of today’s global institutions (including the United Nations, G20, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization) and African regional institutions (including the African Union, ECOWAS, and other sub-regional organizations) in addressing the critical issues of peace and security, climate governance, sustainable development, humanitarian action, and human rights. It was co-convened by the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy, and Development, the Stimson Center, the Global Challenges Foundation, the UN2020 Initiative, and the Together First Campaign.

In response to the postponement of the *UN75 Africa Dialogue* scheduled for 14-15 April in Abuja due to the coronavirus pandemic, the adopted online format allowed participants the flexibility to contribute to all three thematic segments of the e-consultation at their convenience. The objectives of the dialogue were to:

1. Assess the role of the United Nations in Africa and its interaction with the African Union and sub-regional organizations in Africa, as well as offer policy recommendations to strengthen the UN, African Union, and other actors within or engaging with the UN system. The timing is designed to feed ideas into the final months of preparations for the UN 75 Leaders Summit (21 September 2020) and to bring multi-stakeholder and regional perspectives to the Summit’s political declaration (to be finalized by June 2020).
2. Provide fresh ideas and perspectives, as well as help to build greater global support for on-going efforts from within, to strengthen the United Nations system, including the Secretary General’s three reform tracks of Peace and Security, Development and Management.
3. Inform the future in-person UN 75 Regional Dialogue for Africa: Toward Innovation and Renewal of Global and Regional Governance once it is deemed safe to do so.
4. Engage a broad network of organizations and individuals, committed to the growing of a coalition of states and non-state actors, interested in achieving critical global-regional governance partnership innovations for sustainable development and peace.

Format

The online dialogue was structured in three separate two-weeks segments. For each segment, designated co-facilitators introduced a particular theme and spurred a robust online discussion by posing two initial lead-off questions to the forum’s diverse participants from Africa and beyond the region (*see Annex I*). In addition to responding to and building upon select participants’

contribution, each segments' co-facilitators introduced a second round of questions at the mid-way point of each two-week interval in order to focus and provoke further debate and discussions. The main thematic areas explored were:

30 March - 12 April: Enhancing Security and Peacebuilding

Co-Facilitators: Ambassador Abdullahi Omaki, *The Savannah Centre*, Colonel Ademola Lawal (Rtd), *The Savannah Centre*, and Dr. Richard Ponzio, *The Stimson Center*

13 – 26 April: Climate Governance and Sustainable Development

Co-Facilitators: Ambassador Sani Bala, *The Savannah Centre*, and Dr. Magnus Jiborn, *Global Challenges Foundation*

27 April – 10 May: Promoting Human Rights, Justice, and Humanitarian Action

Co-Facilitators: Tinuola Makinde, *The Savannah Centre*, and Sara Gill, *Together First*

Online Regional Dialogue General Co-Moderators: Benard Ekobay, *The Savannah Centre*, and Banou Arjomand, *The Stimson Center*

Segment #1: Enhancing Security and Peacebuilding

Co-facilitators: Ambassador Abdullahi Omaki, The Savannah Centre, Colonel Ademola Lawal (Rtd,) The Savannah Centre, and Dr. Richard Ponzio, The Stimson Center

Overview

Segment #1 seeks to offer an African perspective for the future it wants and the United Nations the global community urgently needs, to address the multifaceted challenges of mankind, especially on matters of security and peacebuilding. Many concurrent and recurring intrastate conflicts are being exploited by international state and non-state actors, reversing the trend of global decline in political violence since the end of the Cold War and fueling human suffering, including in fragile African countries. However, at the same time, the growing roles of women, civil society organizations, and businesses offer new opportunities for effective peacebuilding and governance reform and renewal and transitional justice.

In reviewing the role of global, regional, and sub-regional institutions—including the United Nations, African Union, and sub-regional bodies such as ECOWAS in West Africa—in, promoting and safeguarding international peace and security, we note a similar pattern (as current global trends) of concurrent positive and negative trends. On the one hand, a skepticism—*if not outright rejection*—of international organizations has been a feature of many international populist movements. Recent actions of some major powers challenge the very fabric of a rules-based international order and can, at times, paralyze the UN Security Council. At the same time, a growing body of evidence is emerging on the need for truly comprehensive approaches to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and the UN and African Union are increasingly embracing questions of substantive reform that might improve the effectiveness of their work, both individually and in tandem. Therefore, it is critical to examine available tools and the possible international responses to address both old and emerging challenges to global and regional peace and security.

Summary of discussion

- 1) *In reviewing the closely intertwined issues of peace, security, and justice in Africa, what global and regional structures are utilized effectively within communities, and who are the main actors or players? How are these structures integrated for nationally-focused attention and attainment of effective security, peace and justice? How can such structures be innovated and promote genuine partnerships within a global-national rule-based*

system, that also embraces community and traditional structures for sustainable peace by employing a “whole of the society-approach” methodology? How has Africa benefited from UN-supported conflict management and peacebuilding? What gaps must be overcome to enhance security and peacebuilding across Africa?

In order to enhance peacebuilding and security in Africa, **initiatives advocated by the United Nations and regional bodies must be embraced and rooted within communities.** Elective democratic structures are sometimes perceived to end at the governmental level. There are no governments nor constitutions at the community level, and a local government may cover up to a hundred communities. Modern communities are no longer homogeneous and purely traditional. Many of their inhabitants wield enormous resources and political influence. As a result, there are two classifications of community: cultural community and political community.

Any community that seeks to develop must evolve into a political community that is structured to accommodate sometimes powerful, non-indigenous members. There is a need for “integrative community governance” too, which weaves together and welcomes the important contributions of local players, such as traditional institutions, civil society groups, business institutions, the professional class, women, youth, and artisanal associations. Effective community governance systems are formal, play by agreed rules, and are inclusive of the aforementioned key players. To enhance security and peacebuilding in Africa, **the United Nations, Africa Union, and sub-regional bodies across Africa should offer advice, financial, and technical resources to strengthen coordination between community, local, regional, state, and national governments.** The possibility of including this in the annual dialogue between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, as well as the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, should be explored. The Peacebuilding Commission’s conflict prevention capability should also be expanded, including through the introduction of a new “Peacebuilding Audit” tool modeled on the UN Human Rights Council’s successful Universal Periodic Review tool. The United Nations Security Council and AU Peace and Security Council should focus on a comprehensive approach to addressing operational, financial and bureaucratic challenges facing peace operations and other conflict management approaches. Strategic meetings should be geared towards delivering common guidelines and results through joint planning and implementation of peacekeeping operations.

The government should be structured to serve the people and be inclusive of all peoples. This is also vital to any community-level approaches for effective governance. In addition, **a country’s constitution is an important instrument for conflict prevention.** It should reflect the input of citizens (through their elected representatives) to promote national consensus. When groups in society, especially marginalized ones, feel included in either designing or amending a national constitution, they tend to be more willing to bestow legitimacy upon their government, and here too, global, regional, and sub-regional actors help provide knowledge and other forms of constructive support.

- 2) *What is the best (both global and regional) practices to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict in the region? What can we learn from practical experiences in Africa and elsewhere, with a view to more effective peacebuilding and sustaining peace in all their dimensions?*

There are traditional methods of conflict resolution/transformation that are peculiar to African communities. **These localized methods to better conflict management involve arbitration and reconciliation. They should be documented and widely shared**, especially as a way to contribute to the UN peacebuilding architecture. This could be in the form of training manuals or guiding principles. The AU and regional organizations should take the lead in this effort. The emphasis should be on highlighting the best practices across the continent. In addition, the UN-Africa relationship should focus more on preventative diplomacy and other mechanisms to prevent occurrences and escalations in conflicts.

At the community level, the United Nations, African Union, and sub-regional should collaborate on the training of “community development professionals.” Gaps in traditional approaches could be filled with effective peer or elder-youth mentoring. Good leadership and cooperation are also extremely important. **It is vital to keep local actors involved from the outset in negotiating agreements that affect themselves directly.** If the local population is consulted actively from the outset, they will identify positively with a peace process, especially if it includes traditional methods of conflict resolution. Peacebuilding methodologies should employ a society-driven bottom-up approach.

In addition, vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, disabled persons, and the elderly, need to be mainstreamed into globally or regionally supported conflict prevention, management, and/or resolution efforts. These groups are often most negatively impacted. **A community governance council integrated within formal government structures, for example, may be the way to achieve greater substantive participation by marginalized groups.** Inclusion is vital for community buy-in of any peacebuilding architecture at every level of governance.

External interference within peace mediation, if poorly undertaken and insensitive to the major stakeholders, can make a bad situation worse. **The only potential circumstance in which an external mediator should be allowed is if there is a stalemate in peace negotiations**, and only then when outside assistance is requested by all parties to a conflict.

- 3) *What was the African Union’s approach to UN interventions, and how has France become a dominant actor in Africa, some argued outside the framework of the UN? How are the UN and AU addressing how certain external powers are subverting African sovereignty?*

The best way to approach UN interventions is by including all affected governments and civil society organizations in UN decision-making processes. Even though the AU has funding issues, it can still engage in activities on a smaller scale to maintain influence and strengthen access

to local partners. To be more effective in enhancing security and peacebuilding across Africa, the AU should strengthen inclusivity in its decision-making and operational activities.

- 4) *What are 1-2 major recommendations for further innovating and strengthening the United Nations' collective security architecture from an African perspective (i.e., in particular, with respect to the unique roles of the Security Council, General Assembly, and Peacebuilding Commission)? Within Africa's peace and security context, where should the United Nations be more engaged, and how can the UN better collaborate with the African Union and Africa's five sub-regional bodies?*

In addition, the AU's *Agenda 2063* should be mainstreamed into the UN development agenda to reflect the desires of African nations and their citizens for development prioritization and **a dramatically reduced reliance on externally funded peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations in Africa.**

Though the UN Security Council holds primary responsibility for international peace and security, **it should support regional organizations, such as the AU, based on the principle of subsidiarity.** The UN should also be further democratized with further reforms regarding permanent membership of the UN Security Council and modifying the use of its permanent members' veto authority.

African States, the AU, and other sub-regional bodies need to explore how to achieve Africa's needs using existing UN-AU collaboration frameworks. The AU will need to support sub-regional groups in order to maximize the efficacy of these frameworks. UN-AU joint initiatives need to be strengthened further, especially Mediation and Good Offices Missions, Joint Assessment Missions, Implementation of the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) Agenda, the Role of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and support for electoral processes and peaceful transitions, as well as climate change, triggered conflicts.

Additional ideas that were shared during this first two-week segment on enhancing security and peacebuilding in Africa:

- Leaders at every level of governance need to give adequate budgetary allocation to neglected sectors like health, education, vulnerable peoples, security, and to create a special fund for pandemics like COVID-19. Migrants and refugees are particularly affected by COVID-19. Especially in this era of COVID-19, our perception of peace and security should be broadened to consider human security as well.

Segment #2: Climate Governance and Sustainable Development

Co-facilitators: Ambassador Sani Bala, The Savannah Centre, and Dr. Magnus Jiborn, Global Challenges Foundation

Overview

The current state of global economic governance for dealing with the socio-economic fallout from the present COVID-19 related crisis is shaped by a decades-old structure, overlapping sets of rules, and, not least, demonstrated economic inequalities and perceived inequities. Notwithstanding the recent emergence of new trade-related disputes, the structure of today's global economy is characterized largely by the increasing openness and integration of markets and transnational flows of trade, capital, and labor (economic globalization). This important phenomenon is further intensified by the technological advances of our time, including digital technologies and artificial intelligence, ensuring new opportunities, but also risks for global security and justice. The rules governing this sprawling economic architecture come from a hodgepodge of institutions, both formal and informal, including the International Monetary Fund, multilateral development banks at global and regional levels, Financial Stability Board and OECD, as well as the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO) and G20. They also engage important regional bodies, which in Africa includes, for example, the Africa Union (AU), IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority for Development), and ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States).

Summary of discussion

- 1) *The current pandemic crisis has resulted in a deep global economic crisis, and unprecedented governmental emergency packages to save jobs and businesses. The level of government intervention in the economy is likely to be substantial for a long time after the crisis. What can be done to avoid that economic subsidies are used to keep outdated fossil industries alive, and instead facilitate the necessary transition to a sustainable economic order?*

Governments will need to strike a balance between curbing job losses and business failures, on one hand, and ensuring that the socio-economic transition out of the crisis is also sustainable. **The key to doing this is to tie any economic rescue packages to transitioning to a more sustainable economic future, based primarily on renewable energy and environment-friendly policies and plans.** Governments can request that major businesses that benefit from public support submit

to regulatory authorities' transition plans with clear timelines and measurable sustainability outputs in exchange for this assistance.

Africa needs to aggressively pursue the use of alternative, clean, and renewable energy sources. A sizable proportion of available funds should be invested in the transition from outdated fossil industries to a sustainable New Economic Order (NEO), where renewable energy in many forms are adapted to the special needs of each African country. There is a need too for a strategic reassessment of domestic and foreign policies, which emphasize the need to gradually redirect the subsidies put into fossil fuels into renewable, green energy. **Local capacities and indigenous knowledge should also be encouraged in the field of renewable energy development, by helping inventors develop financially attractive prototypes.** Moreover, African countries should dedicate a reasonable percentage of their annual national budget to expanded improvements in the use and economic viability of renewable energy.

African nation-states should employ blueprints for the development of green energy consistent with and in harmony with local development realities. Political will demonstrated by national and local leaders are critical to success. **In addition, the African Union needs to adopt a crisis blueprint for renewable energy in support of its Member States.**

- 2) *To limit the average global temperature increase to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, global emissions of greenhouse gases must be cut by half every ten years, starting today. The discourse on how to achieve this has so far mainly focused on cutting emissions from existing sources. At the same time, to achieve other sustainable development goals, the economies of many developing countries must have room to grow rapidly, which implies increased energy demand. How can development efforts and climate mitigation efforts be better aligned to ensure that economic development does not lead to developing countries being locked into dependence on fossil fuels? What opportunities for the rapid growth of fossil-free solutions exist in Africa, and how can international institutions, such as the United Nations and regional bodies, support scaling up those solutions?*

The comparative advantage of Africa concerning renewable energy is solar and wind energy. The AU and the regional economic commissions, along with African governments, need to set out a policy and road map for developing solar energy and wind energy farms, and they need to begin to direct public investment and incentivize private investment, in this direction. **Each African country should identify its comparative advantage (drawing on indigenous knowledge) in the renewable energy mix and leverage their unique strengths, with support from regional and global bodies.**

A multiplicity of international stakeholders is needed to help transition to green energy. **Even while soliciting support from international agencies and other countries outside Africa, each African state needs to develop a strategy that conforms with their local realities.** Such

strategies would require the input of both government technocrats and the private sector. There should be a bottom-up approach to the consultations so that citizens will have a sense of ownership.

Solar, hydro (water), and wind are examples of renewable and sustainable energy, and there are other initiatives under development. **If each country has a guiding framework that is compatible with an African Union position and the contributions of Africa's many Regional Economic Communities, the continent could be set on the path to sustainable renewable energy**, despite the enormous challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This could launch Africa into a new and unprecedented green energy future.

On climate change governance, Africa is the continent where the sun's influence is the greatest. Africa should commit to building technology for capturing solar energy. Africans possess vast agricultural lands, upon which we can generate employment and feed ourselves.

3) *To what degree is the current level of institutional coordination between the IFIs, UN, WTO, and G20—alongside regional bodies in Africa (e.g., the Intergovernmental Authority on Development)—sufficient or insufficient to (1) avert or respond to future cross-border economic shocks on the scale of the 2008-9 global financial crisis or what we're currently witnessing due to the COVID-19 crisis, and (2) to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?*

The early warning and early response mechanisms for alerting international and regional bodies, as well as countries and their citizens, about impending pandemics should be strengthened. **Going forward, ensuring an adequate level of cooperation between international organizations and Africa's regional organizations needs to be addressed.**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 worldwide, ensuring that no one is left behind. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda was a landmark achievement, providing for a shared global vision towards sustainable development for all. **What is the real level of global cooperation to ensure that Africa is not left behind in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030?**

Segment #3: Promoting Human Rights, Justice, and Humanitarian Action

Co-Facilitators: Tinuola Makinde, The Savannah Centre, and Sara Gill, Together First/UNA-UK

Overview

The UN system has long been present within the African region, not only through its programs, funds, and agencies, but also through regional organizations such as the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). In turn, African states have been influential within the United Nations, whether individually or through collective action. Specifically, on human rights, the ACHPR and ACERWC have become innovative regional human rights systems, tackling emerging challenges that range from protecting civilians from indiscriminate abuse to promoting the rights of education and healthcare services for all. However, despite their longstanding presence, and the concerted efforts of both regional and global systems, there are significant challenges. Now with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, longstanding human rights issues are being magnified further through unequal access to institutions and resources, including adequate health care and food security. Homeless individuals, refugees and others are increasingly unable to protect themselves from the pandemic.

Summary of discussion

- 1) *What are the main challenges faced by the region concerning human rights? How is the global pandemic exacerbating these challenges, and what mechanisms are needed for the UN to strengthen its presence in the region through collaboration with ACHPR?*

The current pandemic is exposing and laying bare the scope and scale of inequality and unequal access to social services within the region of Africa. The gross disparity in the capacity of people to cope not only with the health effects of the pandemic but also with its wider impacts, between and within countries, has brought to the forefront the lessons repeatedly taught by past humanitarian emergencies: **the gaps in resilience between and within countries remain enormous.**

The biggest challenge posed by the pandemic and the response to it across Africa has been the exposure of the failure of governments concerning social service delivery. **Without universal access to healthcare or to clean potable water and public hygiene (including toilet facilities), it is nearly impossible to prevent infectious diseases from gaining epidemic and pandemic-**

level status. At the same time, it is not going to be easy to mitigate the impact, contain, and reverse the pandemic, including through the provision of effective treatments.

The pandemic is once again demonstrating the unifying nature, universality, and indivisibility of human rights. For instance, it is clear that universal access to clean water, as well as hygiene and toilet facilities, are a function of universal access to humane and affordable housing. **It is also becoming clear that all categories of human rights—whether civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights—are fundamental in nature; they should each be subject to trial in a court of law and serve as an effective foundation for equity and social inclusion in African societies.** It is important to begin to design instruments and mechanisms for ensuring that all human rights are observed equally. States must be held accountable for violations, including by giving regular progress reports on the protection and guarantee of the rights of their citizens and other inhabitants of a country.

Human rights are ordinarily viewed as positive concepts but still difficult to universalize. European governments and the United States see themselves as the defenders and enforcers of human rights standards, and they often talk to the rest of the world, including African countries, in a condescending manner. **Many African Presidents and their cohorts still struggle with the idea of democracy as a concept. They sometimes believe they have the authority to behave in absolute terms and, therefore, may forget to address the human rights of their citizens.** Many see the West's promotion of human rights as yet another excuse to interfere and control African countries while imposing their values. There has been some progress in the appreciation of first-generation rights (i.e. civil and political rights); however, more work is still needed in the areas of economic, social, and cultural rights.

There is also the issue of human rights infringing on community rights. The social fabric that holds African societies together is torn by the conflict between human rights and community rights. Early African politicians grappled with these contradictions, where, for example, leaders like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania called his governing “Ujamaa”, where family and clan were the basis for governance. **So human rights, justice, and humanitarian issues will continue to cause friction with traditional African society. How do we then blend the two: human rights and community rights?** Unless we find a true balance, conflict management in Africa will continue to be a challenge. We need to craft roles for the community, in facilitating both justice and conflict management, to ensure that there is a balance struck between human rights and community rights.

To strengthen UN presence in the work of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the following five areas of cooperation should be pursued:

- Exchange views and good practices on human rights norms and standards, international and regional human rights jurisprudence, and the practice of international/regional bodies.
- Promote collaboration in thematic and geographic areas of common interest, as well as institutional capacity building.
- Support joint actions between international human rights bodies and the ACHPR, for example in the area of applied research.
- Draw on the expertise of ACHPR Commissioners for Commissions of Inquiry.
- Engage jointly with the AU Peace & Security Council and the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council on country-specific or thematic issues of mutual concern, to contribute to early warning and prevention.

2) *What are the main challenges that the UN faces in promoting human rights in parts of Africa marked by conflict and insecurity? And how can the UN better work with civil society and the private sector to defend and uphold human rights in these regions? Are there any global governance reforms needed to address regional gaps in human rights?*

The main challenges faced by the UN in promoting human rights, especially in the context of African conflict-affected societies, have mainly to do with failed or failing governance, state fragility, the proliferation of ungoverned spaces, and the weakness or sometimes even nonexistence of civil society. The usage of the term “ungoverned spaces” here is not only about the inability of the central state to have an effective presence in far-flung territories of the state. It further denotes the complete absence or ineffective presence of formal local and community governance systems and institutions, or, where they are present, their complete disassociation with the constitutional state at higher levels of administration.

The task that is required now, therefore, is to develop protocols, guiding principles, binding foundational precepts, and other such instruments to enable holistic governance reforms to be undertaken by African states and their community-level governance structures that choose to do so. Specific protocols will be required to enhance the relationship and collaborative partnerships between the UN system and civil society at global, regional, national, and local levels.

For several decades, many African countries (including Nigeria), have experienced severe intra-state, rather than inter-state conflicts. Nigeria has witnessed the Niger Delta crisis over resource control, which led to the “Amnesty Programme” that brought relative peace to the area. There have been numerous communal conflicts over land, water, and other natural resources too. Today, many African countries are dealing with farmer-herder crises, the Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping, and rural banditry. If these developments were not challenging enough, the COVID-19 pandemic is now further complicating matters.

The peculiar situation of human rights abuses by government armed forces fighting insurgents across Africa needs to be revisited where the insurgents seem to have superior fire power and have been recording recent “successes” against national militaries. National militaries also have to contend with other constraints, such as corruption in the supply of equipment and emolument. How these developments can create conditions for greater human rights abuses need to be part of the Africa Dialogue at the United Nations.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) views non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as “those who declare themselves as such, according to existing national procedures” with a bar only on those using or publicly condoning violence or terrorism. The UN is still shying away from such a “frontal” definition. Some human rights NGOs are in “Consultative Status” with the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The important implication of this is that such NGOs can attend public meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. This is an important dialogue Africans should have during the seventy-fifth-anniversary commemoration of the United Nations (UN75): *how to identify more effective and efficient NGOs from each country to collaborate with and engage the UN?* **Space for civil society to operate through their NGOs should be opened up for more effective collaboration with the United Nations, the African Union, and the Regional Economic Communities of Africa.**

There are approximately 70 instruments associated with the International Bill of Human Rights. Africa sees Western countries’ stress on civil and political rights as insufficient, as this leaves out consideration of equally important economic, social, and cultural rights. This needs to be addressed in connection with further discussions on global governance reform. **A delicate balance should be struck, by the United Nations and African Union, between the complicated task of safeguarding basic human rights and respecting the sovereign independence of states.**

- 3) *How can African states tackle the challenge of COVID-19 without repeating the same human rights abuses witnessed during the era of Ebola and AIDS outbreaks, especially in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone? In particular, can the UN facilitate relationships between and among African countries by leveraging their comparative strengths for fighting the current global pandemic? For example, are the \$1 rapid test kit invented in Senegal and the locally invented ventilators in Rwanda workable, scalable, and sustainable?*

There have been several human rights abuses in African countries where the COVID-19 pandemic has spread. In enforcing national lockdowns, government security agencies are reported to have killed citizens who failed to comply with stay-at-home orders, and media outlets have also noted a rise of violations of press freedoms. As long as the lock-down remains, many women and girls, in particular, will be unable to feed themselves and, indeed, their families. Concerns have also arisen that government emergency measures that restrict their citizens’ movements in response to COVID-19 may not cease when the pandemic abates. **How do we, therefore, ensure that the**

human rights of citizens are not trampled upon while governments are responding to COVID-19 and in the pandemic's aftermath? Several suggestions from participants include:

- A human rights-based approach should be integrated into every COVID-19 response strategy.
- Prevent and mitigate violence against women who are locked down with abusive partners.
- There should be support for vulnerable populations during lockdowns and beyond until they can get back on their feet and earn a living. Social protection measures should be transparent and devoid of corruption. This is particularly important for women and girls, who may be subject to exploitation.
- Governments in Africa should be creative while addressing the shortage of national supplies and equipment to fight COVID-19.
- Leaders should commit themselves to mutually beneficial global partnerships and cooperation in the fight against COVID-19. **In this regard, the African Union should have a post-COVID-19 blueprint to safeguard human rights before, during, and after future pandemics.** Such a document should be adapted in accordance with the local realities in each country.
- Governments should partner with the Private Sector, CBOs, NGOs, and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in the fight against COVID-19.

All innovations coming out of Africa concerning COVID-19 should be tested and peer-reviewed on the African continent first. Then they can be subjected to further tests in the international arena. **This is where the UN comes in, by ensuring that the testing of innovations from Africa are transparently assessed. Such innovations could be passed from individual countries to the AU, for eventual handover to the UN.** The relevant agencies/affiliates of the UN should handle such tests. There is no point in Africans allowing themselves to die needlessly of COVID-19 if they can procure home-grown herbal remedies to keep their citizens alive. It should not matter if the Western world does not agree with Africans. Besides protecting COVID-19 intellectual property with respect to medical supplies, novel testing kits and vaccines must be shared to help Africa's private sector play its role in the response to the pandemic.

- 4) *How is COVID-19 affecting the assistance provided by UN agencies, such as UNHCR and UN Women? Using any country as a case study, could you suggest one or two good practices of potential multi-stakeholder partnerships that could improve regional and sub-regional responses to the particular urgent needs of refugees?*

Many international institutions, such as UNHCR, are constrained in their operations due to national lockdowns on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. Refugee camp management was a big issue

even before COVID-19, where facilities were often over-stretched for large numbers of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. **In such difficult conditions (e.g., where there are inadequate water supplies for continuous handwashing), it is predicted that IDPs and refugees are likely to suffer in high numbers.** These difficulties are compounded for women and girls given their specific hygiene needs. **UN Women is trying to protect women in refugee and IDP camps. However, in cases where there is inadequate perimeter fencing such efforts face an uphill task.** Women are vulnerable to rape in refugee and IDP camps. Sex for food might be even more rampant now in the COVID-19 era. Social or physical distancing is also near impossible in such camps. According to the UNHCR, African countries are taking on a disproportionate number of the refugee population worldwide. Refugees hosted in Africa put extreme pressure on water and health facilities in host communities.

Nigeria offers a case study on good practices in the deployment of multi-stakeholder partnerships for improving regional and sub-regional responses in support of refugees and IDPs. Nigeria set up the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants & Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMIDP), which replaced the former National Commission for Refugees (NCFR). **The NCRMIDP was established in response to the humanitarian crisis in the wake of the Boko Haram insurgency and other conflicts in Nigeria.** A National Commissioner is appointed to head NCRMIDP, where issues concerning the welfare of refugees, migrants, and IDPs are handled. The current pandemic has placed an extra burden at the doorstep of NCRMIDPs and its partners: UNHCR, UN Women, and other international agencies.

The NCRMIDPs facilitate the return of internally displaced Nigerians to their home states (provinces) and monitors their rehabilitation, return, and re-integration. Potential returnees are armed with relevant skills of their choice so that they can earn a livelihood on return to their home states. Similar kinds of support are provided to refugees too. **Through the Nigerian government, NCRMIDPs has established partnerships with ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN, as well as numerous non-governmental organization and private sector partners.**

5) What are the main challenges the UN and African Union face in promoting the rights of women and girls in the region? What institutional changes must be implemented to overcome these challenges?

Women's rights are fundamental to human security and sustainable peace. Since 2000, the United Nations and the African Union have changed the way the international community thinks about peace and security to include the role of women and to protect women and girls from violence. In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted UNSCR 1325, which addressed the impact of violent conflict on women, as well as the pivotal role women, should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. In 2003, the African Union adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. **The African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of**

Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) guarantees the rights and equality of women on the continent.

The UNSCR Resolution 1325 and the Maputo Protocol reaffirm the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiation, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and in post-conflict reconstruction, and they stress the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. **Despite the global Women, Peace, and Security agenda, in the African context—because of a basic undermining of their human rights in the lived reality of women on a daily basis—women’s insecurity is integrally linked to the broader continuum of violence that encompasses much more than strict definitions of conflict and post-conflict.**

The Maputo Protocol is a key continental instrument that recognizes the links between gender equality, women’s empowerment, and the achievement of sustainable peace in Africa. Its full and effective implementation is key. However, even though many African states have ratified the protocol, implementation has been severely restricted—if it has happened at all—by a lack of political will and an immense gap between high-level policy and awareness on the ground. It is imperative that the African Union and State Parties, working with civil society and grassroots organizations, find new and innovative ways to realize the full potential of this crucial instrument.

The first step in bridging the implementation gap is for State Parties to incorporate the protocol in domestic law to be implemented at the national level. Not all African countries have domesticated all aspects of the Maputo Protocol, meaning that this continental instrument—which meets the international standards of locating women’s rights within the ambit of fundamental human rights—is in danger of becoming a paper tiger, irrelevant to the lived reality of women. National Action Plans and Regional Action Plans must reflect the context and peculiarities of the roles that women play as peacebuilders, in not just formal peace processes but even more in the often-overlooked informal peace processes as well.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is the authoritative legal instrument on women's human rights and a binding source of international law for those states that have ratified it. **CEDAW sets out the meaning of internationally recognized norms and standards of non-discrimination based on sex and gender, as well as provisions with far-reaching human rights guarantees in the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural fields.** Many African states that have ratified CEDAW have refused or 'delayed' its domestication. Without domestication, CEDAW cannot be applied in the nation-state and local context.

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