

UNITED STATES–AFRICA LEADERS SUMMIT 2022: ADVANCING PEACE, SECURITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

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1. Introduction

The US–Africa Leaders Summit was held in December 2022 for the first time since the inaugural event in 2014. What are the peace and security plans to keep an eye on as implementation of action plans gets off the ground? This OSF Policy Brief analyses some of the key points from

the Summit’s agenda and makes recommendations for the US, the African Union (AU) and African civil society. First, it is worthwhile taking a step back to consider the peace, security and governance issues and resolutions from the 2014 Summit.

2. Review of US–Africa Leaders Summit 2014

2.1 Peace and security

One of the striking peace and security trends in Africa is that parts of the continent have the longest running armed conflicts in the world. Both presidents Donald Trump (2016–2020) and Joe Biden inherited from President Barack Obama (2009–2017) several conflicts that have been ongoing for a long time. Table 1 overleaf shows a sample of ongoing African armed conflicts (2000 to present).

As Table 1 shows, there were at least 29 armed conflicts in Africa by the time of the first Summit. This is without counting other armed conflicts, such as clashes over elections that flare up from time to time in Kenya, clashes over livestock pastures in South Sudan and religious clashes in Nigeria, among others. An analysis of the 2014 Summit shows that the US had supported peace-keeping operations in the now post-conflict nations of Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia, which constitute success stories of the US support for peace and stability on the continent.

Table 1: Ongoing armed conflicts in Africa (compiled from various sources)

Country	Commencement date and nature
Burkina Faso	2022 (coups in January and September)
Sudan	2021 (coup)
Guinea	2021 (coup)
Mali	2021 (coup)
Mali	2020 (Coups)
Ethiopia	2020 (Tigray conflict)
Sudan	2019 (coup)
Cameroon	2017 (Anglophone crisis)
Mozambique	2017 (insurgency in Cabo Delgado)
Tunisia	2015 (ISIL insurgency)
Burkina Faso	2015 (Jihadist insurgency)
Cameroon	2014 (Boko Haram insurgency)
Egypt	2013 (insurgency in Egypt)
Central African Republic	2012 (civil war)
Mali	2012 (Northern Mali conflict)
Egypt	2011 (Arab Spring aftermath)
South Sudan	2011 (Civil war)
Libya	2011 (Arab Spring aftermath)
Sudan	2011 (Sudan-SRF conflict)
Somalia	2009 (War in Somalia)
Nigeria	2009 (Boko Haram insurgency)
Cameroon	2006 (Bakassi conflict)
Nigeria	2004 (Niger Delta conflict)
Democratic Republic of Congo	2004 (Kivu conflict)
Sudan	2003 (War in Darfur)
Chad	2002 (Maghreb insurgency)
Morocco	2002 (insurgency in the Maghreb)
Algeria	2002 (Insurgency in the Maghreb)
Mauritania	2002 (insurgency in the Maghreb)
Algeria	2002 (insurgency in the Maghreb)
Niger	2002 (insurgency in the Maghreb)
Somalia	2001 (war on terror)
Democratic Republic of Congo	1999 (Ituri conflict)
Somaliland	1998 (Puntland-Somaliland dispute)
Nigeria	1998 (Nigeria Sharia conflict)
Democratic Republic of Congo	1996 (ADF insurgency)
Ethiopia	1992 (Oromo conflict)
Somalia	1991 (civil war)
Democratic Republic of Congo	1987 (Lord's Resistance Army insurgency)
Sudan/South Sudan	1987 (Lord's Resistance Army insurgency)
Western Sahara/Morocco	1970 (Western Sahara conflict)

Although the ongoing conflicts cannot be entirely blamed on the US, the fact that several conflicts for which the US provided monetary and logistical peacekeeping support continue shows that these efforts have not been successful. At the 2014 Summit, US assistance was provided for the countries listed in Table 2 where armed conflicts are still raging.¹

The fact that armed conflicts are still going on in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan shows that the investments in the security sector at the 2014 Summit did not yield the desired results.

The security governance plans of the 2014 Summit were strategised through the Security Governance Initiative (SGI) with a commitment of USD 65 million towards six countries: Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia.² These countries were seen as focal points for 'regional and international security and stability' where the US sought to consolidate gains in governance, and showcase as African role models. The key features of the initiative included investing in judicial systems; addressing the environments under which instability occurs; countering terrorism; and promoting democratic governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The centrepiece of the initiative was to strengthen institutions responsible for the security-governance nexus in the respective countries.

Notably, of the six selected countries, only two – Ghana and Kenya – have experienced a modicum of stability. Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia have experienced high levels of violence, suggesting that the security governance investments have had only partial successes. In addition, conflicts have flared up in Burkina Faso, Tunisia, Mozambique, Cameroon, Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea since the 2014 Summit.

The key points that emerge from the data above are the following:

- It is difficult to end wars once they have started. For the AU and the US, investing in preventive strategies in African countries that show signs of fragilities and vulnerabilities should be employed to stem conflicts before they occur.
- The countries facing unrelenting armed conflicts are also the countries that suffer poor governance and civil liberty records. For civil society, it is important to factor in the monitoring of governance practices to stem conflicts before they occur.
- Most of the war-torn countries are also generally poor economically. Because poverty in all its manifestations is a major root cause of the conflicts,³ the AU, the US and other development partners should consider the daunting approach of heavy investments in economic support in addition to peace-keeping and peace-building initiatives. The US Marshall Plan towards Europe in the post-World War period and its interventions in the Balkans in the 1990s can provide templates for linking peace-building and peace-keeping with economic renewal.
- Looking at the 2022 Summit reports, it is evident that there was a gap between 2014 and 2022 in terms of reporting on US engagement in Africa's peace and security sector. This is consistent with the broader withdrawal of the US from engagement with Africa during the Donald Trump administration. For instance, Trump withdrew US peace-keeping forces from Somalia in 2020, an action reversed by the Biden administration in 2022.⁴ For the US government, it is apparent that policy on African security is inconsistent. The panacea is for putting in place a more consistent policy that is not subject to regime changes in the US. The AU should consider negotiating with the US for a longer-term investment in peace and security rather than short-term strategies.

1 The White House, 2014, 'Fact Sheet: US support for peacekeeping in Africa', <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/06/fact-sheet-us-support-peacekeeping-africa>

2 The White House, 2014, 'Fact Sheet: Security Governance Initiative', <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/06/fact-sheet-security-governance-initiative>

3 C.O. Okunlola and G.I. Okafor, 2022, 'Conflict-poverty relationship in Africa: A disaggregated approach', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, 34(1), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0260107920935726>

4 J. Pecquet, 2022, 'US: Biden reverses Trump's withdrawal of troops from Somalia', *The Africa Report*, 17 May, <https://www.theafricareport.com/204311/us-biden-reverses-trumps-withdrawal-of-troops-from-somalia/>

Table 2: US peace and security in 2014 (source: The White House)

Country	Amount of money pledged	Purpose of funding
Central African Republic (CAR)	USD 428 million (in addition to USD 100 million already spent)	AU-led International Support Mission to CAR (MISCA) and UN-led Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in CAR (MINUSCA)
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	No figures provided for the post 2014	UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO).
Mali	USD 173 million (in addition to USD 115 million already spent)	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)
Somalia	USD 512 million (in addition to USD 455 million in US contributions for the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA))	Support for the Somali Federal Government and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)
South Sudan	No figures provided for the post 2014 period (USD 635 contributions for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) between 2011 and 2014)	Unclear which arrangement or mission was to be supported
Sudan-Darfur/Abyei	No figures provided for the post 2014 period (USD 2.4 billion contributions from 2009 to 2014 for the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), and more than USD 182 contributions for the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)	Unclear which arrangements or mission was to be supported

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3. 2022 Summit perspectives

3.1 Armed and violent conflict vulnerabilities and fragilities

The data crunching organisation, Statista, shows that there were nearly 20,000 fatalities from Africa’s theatres of war in 2021, with Ethiopia recording the highest number of deaths at 8,600, followed by Somalia at 2,119.⁵ The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates the number of refugees

and displaced people at 32 million continentally with the highest concentration emanating from wars in the DRC, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, Burkina Faso and Mozambique.⁶

In response, the US proposed the ‘21st Century Partnership for African Security’ (21PAS) and several pledges.⁷ Table 3 shows the initiatives and monetary commitments.

Table 3: Pledges for the peace and security sector (source: The White House)

Initiative	Financial commitment	Description
21st Partnership for African Security (21PAS)	USD 100 million	Three-year continent-wide pilot programme for security-sector capacity-building and reforms
Civil Society Partnerships for Civilian Security	USD 2 million	Facilitates civil society engagement in the security sector
Supporting Peace and Stabilisation Efforts/Prevention and Stabilisation Fund	No figures provided (USD 58.5 million invested through the Global Fragility Act)	10-year peace-building and governance support for Mozambique, Libya, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Togo
Bolstering Peace, Security, Democracy, and Governance in the Sahel	USD 115 million (economic and development assistance); USD 60 million – Trans-Africa Counterterrorism Partnership)	Bolstering peace and security, democracy, and human rights programming
US Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS Strategy)	No figures provided	Inclusion of women and girls in peace and security Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the democratic Republic of Congo, Niger Nigeria and Sudan
Military and security assistance	No figures provided (USD 250 million already invested)	Military assistance through the US–Africa Command (AFRICOM) and the US Central Command (CENTCOM)
The US Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent and Respond to Atrocities	No figures provided	Identifying, preventing, and responding to early warning signs of atrocities

5 Statista, 2022, ‘Fatalities in state-based conflicts in Africa in 2021, by country and conflict detail’, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/298013/fatalities-in-state-based-conflicts-in-africa/>

6 Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021, ‘32 million Africans forcibly displaced by conflict and repression’, 17 June, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/32-million-africans-forcibly-displaced-by-conflict-and-repression/>

7 The White House, 2022, ‘Fact Sheet: US–Africa partnership in promoting peace, security, and democratic governance’, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/15/fact-sheet-u-s-africa-partnership-in-promoting-peace-security-and-democratic-governance/>

The 10-year plan (ostensibly 2022–2032) to promote reconciliation and make economic investments should be loaded given that several African conflicts are equally long-term in their careers. There is an opportunity for the AU to match this plan with its own Agenda 2063 ‘First Ten-Year Implementation Plan’,⁸ which prioritises work on ‘Institutional structure for AU Instruments on Peace and Security’. This AU plan ends in 2015 such that the new US commitments should catalyse an early review and forward planning. In planning ahead, the AU and the US should review the factors that led to the floundering of the ambitious ‘Silencing the Guns by 2020’⁹ and configure new plans in such a way that the drawbacks are innovatively addressed. The extensive African Peace and Security Architecture in which the AU’s Peace and Security Council plays a pivotal role provides a good entry point for US–Africa partnership in the sector. The US-led Prevention and Stabilisation Fund can be linked to the AU’s Peace Fund, with the AU matching the USD 58.5 million with its own commitments. During the Summit, Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi made the case for regional approaches to fighting international armed conflicts such as the terrorist insurgency.¹⁰ Mozambique has benefitted from US support in battlefield countering of terrorist attacks, but the game changer is, apparently, the troops assembled through the Southern African Development Community Military Mission (SAMIM). The AU should study why and how the Mozambican mission shows signs of success unlike other AU and UN missions in other war-prone regions.

Although the amount of money allocated to civil society is paltry, civil society organisations should seize the opportunity presented, particularly in the promise to establish civil society consortiums as drivers of solutions in the security, governance and human rights sectors on the continent. The Summit for Democracy event scheduled for March 2023 provides an opportunity for civil society, the US government and the AU to frame, structure and inaugurate the consortiums. One approach would be for the civil society consortiums to be established around countries experiencing conflicts. The other would be for the civil society coalitions to be established around fragile and vulnerable countries in danger of tipping over into full-blown conflicts.

Digital technology has risen as an important ‘networked’ driver of conflict. This is in recognition of the various ways in which digital technologies have been used for disinformation and propaganda by terrorist groups. Russia’s private military company, the Wagner Group, was specifically called out by Secretary Blinken as a destabilising actor with regards to disinformation and other human rights abuses in countries such as Mali, the Central African Republic, Mozambique and Libya. The Digital Transformation with Africa (DTA) initiative announced during the Summit aims to tackle these cybersecurity-related vulnerabilities. One of the pledges made was that US companies would work with African companies to ‘to provide cybersecurity services to make sure Africa’s digital environment is reliable and secure’.¹¹ An area in which civil society organisations could help with conflict-mitigation programmes is the emerging digital technology-driven security threats. The internet monitoring organisation, NetBlocks, for instance lists nearly 70 incidents of internet outages across the continent between 2018¹² and early 2023, many of these coinciding with elections and periods of heightened tensions such as coups and protests. Civil organisations are uniquely placed to call attention to the weaponisation of digital technologies because African governments can’t lead on this as they are often the perpetrators. Moreover, the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa has itself been a target of cyber-attacks, including an incident in March 2023.¹³ The sophistication and rise in tech-led wars on the continent suggest the need for a more elaborate response by the US and the AU. Civil society organisations can also be relevant in pushing for the disclosure of some of the gaps in reporting the amount of money allocated to the peace and security sector by the US government as evident in Table 3. Furthermore, civil society would be better placed to lead on the efforts that anticipate, prevent and respond to atrocities because these atrocities often occur in far-flung areas of countries where government agencies are absent or enfeebled.

8 African Union, 2015, *Agenda 2063: First Ten-Year Implementation Plan*, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-11_an_overview_of_agenda.pdf

9 African Union, undated, ‘Silencing the Guns 2020’, <https://au.int/flagships/silencing-guns-2020>

10 K.K. Klomegah, 2022, ‘Filipe Nyusi: Using regional military force the best way to enforce peace and stability in Africa’, *Modern Diplomacy*, 17 December, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/12/17/filipe-nyusi-using-regional-military-force-the-best-way-to-enforce-peace-and-stability-in-africa/>

11 The White House, 2022, ‘Remarks by President Biden at the US–Africa Business Forum’, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/12/14/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-u-s-africa-business-forum/>

12 NetBlocks, undated, ‘Africa’, <https://netblocks.org/tag/africa>

13 A. Endale, 2023, ‘“Massive” cyber-attack crashes African Union’s system’, *The Reporter*, 11 March, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/31984/>

Linkages between the drivers and consequences of instability were the subject of a session explicitly focused on peace and security and headlined by the presidents Mohamed Bazoum of Niger, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia, Filipe Nyusi of Mozambique, Africa Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat, and US officials including Secretary Blinken, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and USAID administrator Samantha Power. The consensus was that governance, development and conflict are inextricably tied, in what the US Secretary of Defense referred to as the ‘3D’ approach of development, diplomacy and defence. The US Strategy Toward Africa – unveiled in August 2022 – recognises that ‘military power is not the only tool in play’ and it must be ‘coupled with development’. Arguing that ‘you can’t solve every problem with a military solution’, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin espoused investments in democracy, human rights and good governance as a more sustainable approach to conflict resolution that would prevent using ‘more bullets’.¹⁴ Somalia President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud agreed, stating that ‘Shabaab, or terrorists anywhere they are, cannot be defeated militarily only’.¹⁵ For both the AU and the US, the issue of balance in focusing on the causes of conflict calls for research. The question is: Are the US and the AU investing more in military campaigns and less on development and governance? As argued elsewhere in this policy brief, this appears to be the case, and thus the need for more incisive studies. For civil society organisations, it would be important to study specific conflicts and produce data and knowledge on the issue of balance between these three factors.

“The question is: Are the US and the AU investing more in military campaigns and less on development and governance?”

- 14 C.T. Lopez, 2022, ‘Austin: Listening to African partners critical to development of productive relationships’, *US Department of Defense News*, 14 December, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3245689/austin-listening-to-african-partners-critical-to-development-of-productive-rela/>
- 15 K.K. Klomegah, 2022, ‘Filipe Nyusi: Using regional military force the best way to enforce peace and stability in Africa’, *Modern Diplomacy*, 17 December, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/12/17/filipe-nyusi-using-regional-military-force-the-best-way-to-enforce-peace-and-stability-in-africa/>

3.2 Responding to coups and cross-border conflicts

Coups and military takeovers are one form of armed and violent conflict. To send a strong message that coups would not be tolerated, countries currently under military rule – Mali, Burkina Faso, Sudan and Guinea – were not invited to the Summit in line with the AU’s policy of not recognising them. These countries would only benefit from the newfound US–Africa partnership when they restore democratic civilian governance. In the spirit of seeking African solutions to African problems, it was explained that the US was following the lead of African countries involved in mediation processes. In the DRC for instance, US agencies are working with Kenya, Angola and the East African Community to implement fledgling peace agreements. Interestingly, during the Summit, observers noted that DRC President Felix Tshisekedi had been accorded a higher level of engagement with US officials compared to Rwanda’s Paul Kagame. This potentially sent signals about the tensions between the US and Rwanda, with the US gravitating towards the DRC position. It has been alleged that Rwanda backs M23 rebels who are in combat with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). During the Summit, a defiant Kagame doubled down on criticism towards his leadership saying, ‘We’ve made it clear there isn’t anyone going to come from anywhere to bully us into something to do with our lives ... Maybe make an invasion and overrun the country – you can do that’.¹⁶

The bigger point is that the US and the AU are on the same page as far as intolerance to coups and one African country’s meddling in the security affairs of another is concerned. Because both parties are in concurrence on these issues, a consideration of the use of enhanced sanctions on the coup plotters and leaders who foment instability in other countries should be considered. Civil society organisations can provide early warnings on countries where factors that fuel instability are manifest.

3.3 Interconnectedness of peace and security issues

The US–Africa Leaders Summit recognised the intertwining of drivers of instability. Climate change was identified as a major underlying driver of instability and conflict, connected to dwindling agricultural and livestock resources leading to clashes between communities. Climate change-inspired mass migration within and outside national borders was also understood as caused by wars. Moreover, climate change has a knock-on effect on food insecurity which in turn provides an opportunity for violent armed groups and military coup plotters to step in, exploiting citizens’ grievances against governments.¹⁷ Food crises have in turn been compounded by the combination COVID-19 disruptions, a health vulnerability factor, and the Russia–Ukraine war, an external driver of instability, further accelerating the disaffection that feeds and fuels violent conflict and instability.

“The US and the AU are on the same page as far as intolerance to coups and one African country’s meddling in the security affairs of another is concerned.”

16 M. Crowley, 2022, ‘Rwanda’s president says the United States can’t “bully” him into releasing a political opponent’, *New York Times*, 14 December, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/14/us/politics/rwanda-president-kagame-rusesabagina.html>

17 US State Department, 2022, ‘Secretary Blinken at the Conservation, Climate Adaptation, and Just Energy Transition Forum’, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinken-at-the-conservation-climate-adaptation-and-just-energy-transition-forum/>

3.4 Climate change as conflict driver

The Summit took cognisance of the fact that 17 of the world's 20 most climate-vulnerable countries are on the African continent. In Somalia for instance, drought and famine have ravaged the whole country for four straight years, with a toll of over 18 million experiencing severe hunger. These conditions have been greatly exploited by the terrorist group, Al Shabaab. The key US intervention globally is dubbed the President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE), with over USD 150 million dedicated to climate adaptation in Africa, partly delivered through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).¹⁸ Further investments with potential to mitigate climate insecurity include a USD 369 million investment by the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC).¹⁹ USAID committed USD 100 million to support private-sector investments in climate change solutions through the Climate Action Infrastructure Facility initiative.²⁰

Linkages between climate insecurity and economic fragilities were discussed from the perspective of clean energy transition. While climate change is a key cause of conflict, Africa's potential in renewable energy sources such as wind, geothermal, solar and hydro, as well as critical minerals for manufacturing batteries, remains unexploited. Thus, at the Summit, the argument was that a just energy transition would be one in which Africans benefit from the vast untapped energy resources they possess. Access to electricity would greatly boost economic activity, thereby lessening the impact of the economic drivers of instability.

3.5 Economic and food security as drivers of conflict

Various factsheets and forward-looking action plans have centred poverty reduction strategies at the core of stemming the tide of economic drivers of conflict. These include investments in economic and trade projects to deny sponsors of violence – jihadists for example – opportunities to lure and use unemployed youth through persuasive ideologies and propaganda. Economic practices such as corruption and opaque procurement and contracting, it was stated, diminish the capacity of institutions and seeds grievances that spill over into conflict. Economic sanctions, whilst contentious in Africa and elsewhere, have been prioritised by the US as a strategy to ensure good governance in Africa. Among the strategies is the use of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) as an economic and trade tool for enforcing good governance and human rights with the aim of ultimately lessening African countries' vulnerability to instability.²¹ In nearly all the pledges and commitments that were made, the US saw economic renewal on the continent as the antidote to instability.

If it is incontestable that food security is a basic ingredient for peace and stability, the reverse is also true. It is estimated that of the 137 million people experiencing acute food insecurity, 73 percent are concentrated in eight countries experiencing extreme levels of violent conflicts: the DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Niger and Burkina Faso.²² In response, the US committed to aligning its food security programmes with the AU's climate-resilient food production plan under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).²³ Notable among the raft of initiatives is a pledge of USD 2 billion in emergency humanitarian assistance over and above the over USD 11 billion previously made towards humanitarian food security programmes globally, with Africa being the greatest beneficiary.²⁴ Delivered through USAID, this is one of the highest amounts of money for any single area of partnership helping to mitigate the impact of Africans displaced internally or living as refugees across borders.

18 The White House, 2022, 'US–Africa Leaders Summit: Strengthening partnerships to meet shared priorities', <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/15/u-s-africa-leaders-summit-strengthening-partnerships-to-meet-shared-priorities/>

19 The White House, 2022, 'Fact Sheet: US–Africa partnership in promoting two-way trade and investment in Africa', <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/14/fact-sheet-u-s-africa-partnership-in-promoting-two-way-trade-and-investment-in-africa/>

20 Ibid.

21 United States Trade Representative, 2022, 'Opening remarks by Ambassador Katherine Tai at the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Ministerial Meeting', <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/speeches-and-remarks/2022/december/opening-remarks-ambassador-katherine-tai-african-growth-and-opportunity-act-agoa-ministerial-meeting>

22 African Centre for Strategic Studies, 2022, 'Conflict remains the dominant driver of Africa's spiraling food crisis', <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/conflict-remains-the-dominant-driver-of-africas-spiraling-food-crisis/>

23 The White House, 2022, 'Remarks by President Biden at the US–Africa Leaders Summit: Closing session on promoting food security and food systems resilience', <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/12/15/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-u-s-africa-leaders-summit-closing-session-on-promoting-food-security-and-food-systems-resilience/>

24 The White House, 2022, 'US–Africa Leaders Summit: Strengthening partnerships to meet shared priorities', <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/15/u-s-africa-leaders-summit-strengthening-partnerships-to-meet-shared-priorities/>

For both the US and the AU, long-term planning should be informed by the need to wean the continent off unsustainable humanitarian assistance. Greater focus should be directed towards internal African food production with the CAADP initiative as a major driver.

3.6 Gender and conflict resolution

The US reiterated its commitments to gender equality and equity. The key argument is that women contribute far less to instability and yet are among the most affected by the devastations of armed conflict. For instance, several research reports show that most refugees in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel are women and children. The interventions put forth by the US include the involvement of women in peace and security processes under an umbrella strategy labelled Women, Peace and Security (WPS Strategy) as captured in Table 3. Under this framework, the US State Department announced USD 1.5 million to boost an initiative labelled Support Her Empowerment – Women’s Inclusion in New Security (SHE WINS) to boost women-led civil society organisations involved in peace reconciliation projects. The initial target countries are Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and the DRC.²⁵ Another initiative, the Peace Enhancement for Community Empowerment through Women Investing in more Secure Environments (PEACE-WISE), supports women in Niger, Nigeria and Sudan to play an active role in preventing and mitigating violence and conflict by engaging in their country’s political processes.

For the AU, the new pledges provide an opportunity for the co-option of aspects of the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2018–2028). Specifically, the AU should consider areas of convergence between pillar 2 of the gender policy, which proposes the implementation of the ‘Ending Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)’ programme. Civil society organisations working on gender and women projects should analyse pillar 4 of the AU gender policy with a view to enhancing leadership, voice and visibility in conflict-wracked regions.

“For both the US and the AU, long-term planning should be informed by the need to wean the continent off unsustainable humanitarian assistance.”

²⁵ The White House, 2022, ‘Fact Sheet: US–Africa partnerships in gender equality and women’s empowerment’, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/14/fact-sheet-u-s-africa-partnerships-in-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/>

4. Recommendations

In analysing the documents coming out of the Summit, it is evident that the great majority of the action plans are to be implemented by the US towards Africa rather than vice versa. Monetary commitments are offered by the US while Africa is seemingly happy to serve as a beneficiary in a donor-recipient relationship. Overall, the AU, regional economic communities and countries should apply the principle of African agency, sifting through the agreements to propose tangible ways in which Africa can be a true implementation partner for each peace and security issue and sector.

To address the nexus between the drivers of conflict, the AU should consider a holistic approach, drawing on its peace and security architecture. Thus, pillar 4 of the Agenda 2063, 'A Peaceful and Secure Africa', as seen in the Agenda's 10-year implementation plan,²⁶ should be infused into peace and security agreements. The US should encourage the AU, regional organisations and countries to re-interpret the agreements in such a way that the wholesome approach fits into African realities. Moreover, both the US and Africa should draw on the UN's Agenda 2030, particularly Goal 16 which focuses on peace and security. This perspective is currently missing in the plans against the background of the AU having set forth plans for linking Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 in a way that potentially addresses the linkages of the drivers of conflict.²⁷

A key proposal to address violent conflict is the '21st Century Partnership for African Security', which again appears to be more a US conception than a joint Africa-US plan. The AU and African leaders should consider inculcating the African Peace and Security Architecture into this Africa-US peace and security framework. This would allow the implementation of context-specific strategies developed by the African Union, including the 'Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons' and the 'Silencing the Guns' strategy. Notably, the Summit's plans on violent conflict are unclear on small arms and light weapons (SALW), an arms flow issue that is particularly deadly in

conflict-affected regions of Africa. Moreover, the peace and security plans do not take account of internal conflicts even in seemingly peaceful countries, with emphasis directed towards the larger regional wars in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Analogously, issues around internal migration and internally displaced persons should be given much more attention even as the issues of cross-border refugee issues are addressed. In addressing these issues, a greater involvement of the five regional economic communities – such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the East African Community and the Economic Community of West African States – should also be given a greater role, as in some instances they are much closer and more relevant to conflict situations than the AU.

The human rights and democracy dimensions of conflict are well understood and appreciated by both sides. The problem is that the elaborate plans on the African end – for instance through the African Peace and Security Architecture – face headwinds when it comes to implementation. The US invited some of the anti-liberal leaders known to be abusers of human rights, which in turn spill over into conflict. A recommendation to the US is that engagement with dictatorial leaders during the December 2022 Summit should be treated as a one-off strategy intended to bring them to the discussion table. Forthwith, such engagement should be based on adherence to the principles of good governance including respect for human rights. For the AU and regional organisations, an opportunity arises for the implementation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, both of which would serve to pre-empt conflicts before they occur. Both the US and African nations should drill down to the well-articulated principles in these documents as implementation of the agreements kicks in.


Overall, the African side should consider appointing an envoy to focus on the implementation of the peace and security areas of partnership, just as the US has done in appointing former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador Jonnie Carson.

26 African Union, 2015, *Agenda 2063: First Ten-Year Implementation Plan*, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-11_an_overview_of_agenda.pdf

27 African Union, undated, 'Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs', <https://au.int/agenda2063/sdgs>


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