

COMMUNIQUE

PROMOTING THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE EAST AFRICA REGION

1. The representatives of the Governments of the Republic of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Republic of Kenya, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Republic of Uganda, national youth councils, youth led organisations, and youth delegates, met from 9 to 12 May 2023 in Bujumbura, Burundi, to discuss the role of governments, regional economic communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms (RMs) in promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in the East Africa region.
2. The meeting was convened by the African Union, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Save the Children, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the Horn of Africa Youth Network. Also in attendance were representatives from the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Standby Force (EASF).
3. **We, the youth present to H.E. Major General Évariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi and African Union Champion on Youth, Peace and Security, and ministers of foreign affairs and youth affairs of East Africa Region, the outcomes of the Third High-Level Ministerial Conference on the Role of Governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) in Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, held in the East Africa Region, in Bujumbura, Burundi, from 9 to 12 May 2023.**
4. **In line with the five pillars of the African Union Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security:**

5. **On participation**, the Conference agreed on the need to mainstream the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in member states, including the domestication of international, continental and regional youth, peace and security policies and legal frameworks; ensure the meaningful and inclusive representation of young people at different levels of government and decision making; resourcing youth-led and youth-focused peace and security initiatives.
6. **On prevention**, the Conference recognised the family as the basic building block of society, and called for a holistic approach to peace and security, including civic and peace education, sensitization and awareness campaigns, building on community engagements and mechanisms, which include the arts, sports, and media, to address the root and structural causes of conflict; a focus on entrepreneurship and job creation to reduce the risks of radicalisation; and support for youth peace ambassadors and peace clubs in peacebuilding.
7. **On protection**, the Conference acknowledged the existing protection mechanisms for young people, and urged member states to strengthen the capacities of law enforcement agencies to hold accountable the perpetrators of crimes and injustices; review and strengthen safeguarding and protection laws and provide safe spaces for youth to freely express themselves without fear of victimization and discrimination, including on online platforms; prioritize youth interests and needs in overcoming collective challenges and apply the triple nexus approach of sustainable development, peacebuilding and conflict mitigation, and humanitarian assistance to ensure the protection and wellbeing of affected youths.
8. **On partnerships and coordination**, the Conference highlighted the need to continue enhancing collaboration and strategic coordination among member states, local, national, regional, continental and international institutions, academia, the media, the private sector and young people, to leverage on their comparative strengths and resources in advancing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda; promote research, knowledge production, and dissemination to support youth advocacy efforts and address gaps in policy and implementation; establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess progress in the advancement of the Youth, Peace and

Security Agenda; increase networking opportunities through digital and physical spaces for experience sharing and peer learning.

9. **On Disengagement and Reintegration**, the Conference emphasized the need to strengthen programmes for the disengagement, reintegration and rehabilitation of returnees and victims through the establishment of scholarship programmes; vocational and technical training; quick impact projects; provide psychosocial support; break stereotypes and prejudice; provide sexual and reproductive health care for victims of sexual violence; promote inter-communal dialogues to facilitate integration and social cohesion.

10. Encouraged by progress made by the governments of the Republic of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Kenya and the Republic of Uganda in the development and operationalization of their National Action Plans, we, the young people present at this conference, call upon the countries that are yet to commence these processes to prioritise the development and implementation of National Action Plans for youth peace and security; establish, capacitate and resource national youth councils; include youth in decision-making processes; facilitate good working relationships between youth and other policymakers at different levels; regularly consult youth constituencies; and support young people in building a better future for their countries;

11. We, the young people, hereby commit to,
 - (i) Share the knowledge gained through this forum with our respective constituencies;
 - (ii) Promote the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and the spirit of patriotism in our communities;
 - (iii) Use our policy and decision-making powers to advance the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda; and
 - (iv) Take ownership of conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives in our respective communities to build social cohesion and promote peace and security.

12. **We, the young people in the East Africa region**, are deeply concerned about the ongoing violence in the Republic of Sudan and condemn the loss of lives, the destruction of property and the worsening humanitarian situation. We express our solidarity with the youth in the Republic of Sudan and call upon the African Union and the Region to prioritise an all-inclusive peace process that will ensure sustainable peace.

13. We **thank** the Government of the Republic of Burundi for its legendary hospitality, and to recognise and appreciate the African Union, COMESA, Save the Children, International IDEA, ACCORD, and the Horn of Africa Youth Network for successfully organising this conference in the country of milk and honey.