

## Silencing the Guns in Africa: An Analytical Approach

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### Abstract:

This study examines the "Silencing the Guns in Africa" initiative as a comprehensive approach to promoting regional peace and security across the continent. It focuses on the role of the African Union's institutional mechanisms in addressing internal conflicts through peaceful means, avoiding violence and the use of weapons. The study also explores how this initiative contributes to strengthening regional integration and security cooperation among African states. These efforts align with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which aims to end wars and violent conflicts and enhance dialogue mechanisms to prevent and resolve disputes by 2030.

**Keywords:** silencing the Guns; Africa; peace.

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### Introduction:

Armed conflicts remain one of the major challenges facing Africa, as many countries suffer from civil wars and internal strife that hinder development and stability. In response, the African Union launched the "Silencing the Guns" initiative as part of Agenda 2063, aiming to end wars, enhance dialogue mechanisms, and resolve conflicts peacefully. The initiative is based on several key pillars, including conflict prevention, mediation enhancement, post-conflict reconstruction support, and the promotion of sustainable economic development. These aspects are essential to ensuring the success of African efforts in building a lasting peace framework.

This paper seeks to analyze the core aspects of the initiative and the efforts made to implement it on the ground. To what extent have African efforts succeeded in this regard? What challenges hinder the effective realization of this initiative?

### I. General Framework of the "Silencing the Guns" Initiative and Its Institutional Structures:

#### 1-The Emergence of the Initiative:

The "Silencing the Guns in Africa" initiative represents a comprehensive African approach to strengthening the regional peace and security system in Africa, while enhancing the African response framework for preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts through institutional mechanisms under the African peace and security

architecture. The initiative was introduced during the African Union Summit in May 2013, which marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Organization of African Unity. It was incorporated into the fundamental principles of Agenda 2063, "The Africa We Want," a strategic plan aimed at achieving sustainable development across the continent<sup>1</sup>.

Through the first ten-year implementation plan (2013-2023), the initiative sought to end wars and civil conflicts, silence guns across Africa, and provide solutions to violence, gender-based discrimination, and genocide. The "African Human Security Index" was established to measure progress in these areas.

In 2016, the African Union adopted the "Roadmap for Silencing the Guns," which outlined 54 practical steps and 100 action strategies to address political, economic, social, environmental, and legal challenges threatening peace efforts. Political challenges include the illicit flow of arms and terrorism, while economic challenges encompass poverty and money laundering. Social challenges include violence against women and children. Implementation of the initiative involves various stakeholders from within and beyond Africa, including African Union bodies, member states, the United Nations, and the European Union.

The roadmap also identified funding sources necessary to achieve the initiative's objectives, including internal African sources such as the African Union Commission and external partners like the United Nations and international donors<sup>2</sup>.

To support implementation, the African Union appointed key figures, including:

- Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra as the AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns.

- Ambassador Hadiza Mustapha as Advisor to the AU Commission Chairperson on Peace, Security, and Governance.

- Ambassador Osman Kei Kamara as Special Advisor to the Commissioner for Peace and Security on Silencing the Guns.

- Special envoys and representatives for conflicts in South Sudan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Tunisia, and Western Sahara.

- A Special Envoy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) in January 2014 to amplify women's voices in conflict prevention and resolution<sup>3</sup>.

## **2-Strengthening External Partnerships for Peace and Stability in Africa:**

To enhance the implementation of "Silencing the Guns in Africa," the African Union has strengthened diplomatic engagement and built strategic partnerships with key international actors such as the United Nations and the European Union.

With the United Nations, a "Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security" was signed in 2017, focusing on conflict prevention, sustainable peace mediation, and effective responses to conflicts and their root causes. Cooperation with the European Union has also been reinforced through annual meetings since 2017, building on a long history of engagement dating back to the Africa-EU Summit of 2000, which aimed to improve political relations and security cooperation<sup>4</sup>.

## **II. Achievements of the "Silencing the Guns" Initiative:**

Since its launch in 2013, the initiative has made some progress, though achievements remain limited compared to its original 2020 timeline. Key institutional successes include the establishment of a Coordination Unit within the AU Chairperson's Office to oversee implementation and guide member states. Additionally, AU liaison offices have been set up in various African countries, including Algeria, Burundi, and South Sudan, to strengthen intergovernmental coordination<sup>5</sup>.

Other notable achievements include the creation of the African Women's Network on Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise), which enhances women's roles in conflict prevention and peace mediation<sup>6</sup>. The network was established by an AU Summit resolution in 2017. Furthermore, the AU Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (AU PCRD) was founded, with its headquarters in Egypt, following a hosting agreement signed in December 2019, marking a crucial step in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in Africa<sup>7</sup>.

## **III. Evaluation of Conflict Management and Resolution in Africa:**

The initiative has contributed to some peace agreements, such as:

- The Ethiopia-Eritrea Peace Agreement (2018), ending tensions that had persisted since 2000.
- The formation of South Sudan's transitional government (2020), following a peace agreement between the government and opposition.
- The AU's peacekeeping missions, including AMISOM in Somalia and UNAMID in Darfur.
- Regional security frameworks like the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram and the G5 Sahel Joint Force against terrorism<sup>8</sup>.

## **IV. Challenges Facing the "Silencing the Guns" Initiative:**

Despite its efforts, the initiative faces multiple challenges:

### **1-Operational and Economic Challenges:**

- Difficulties in continuous monitoring and evaluation.
- Lack of data on national measures and peace agreements.
  - Limited financial resources, as contributions to the Peace Fund remain insufficient.
- Economic instability affecting peace and security efforts<sup>9</sup>.

## **2-Institutional Challenges:**

- Delayed activation of key institutional mechanisms like the African Standby Force and Early Warning System.
- Over-reliance on informal mediation mechanisms<sup>10</sup>.

## **3-Political Challenges:**

- Weak rule of law and governance in some states.
- Fragile states suffering from chronic instability<sup>11</sup>.
- Limited political will among some AU member states.
- External interventions undermining sustainable peace efforts<sup>12</sup>.

## **4-Military Challenges:**

- The continued proliferation of illicit small and light weapons.
- Increased foreign military presence, complicating African-led peace initiatives<sup>13</sup>.

## **Conclusion:**

The "Silencing the Guns" initiative is a crucial step toward sustainable peace in Africa, yet its success requires addressing political, economic, and social obstacles. By strengthening regional and international cooperation and developing sustainable conflict resolution strategies, Africa can achieve long-term stability aligned with Agenda 2063.

While ambitious, the initiative has faced significant challenges. Moving forward, the African Union must adopt African-led solutions to reduce external dependency. The timeline should be reassessed, breaking down the initiative into manageable sub-projects targeting key threats, such as arms proliferation. Africa needs both short- and long-term strategies to tackle geopolitical crises and insecurity, ensuring the continent's aspirations under Agenda 2063 are realized.

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