



Celebrating 25 years of the Training for Peace programme



# YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

## TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS



Joint Policy Brief produced by the ISS and AU Office of the Youth Envoy with support from the Training for Peace Programme

Policy Brief | November 2020

### Summary

National action plans for youth, peace and security are essential for African Union (AU) member states to achieve their goal of Silencing the Guns. Their development requires a synergy with key normative frameworks from the AU, particularly, the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security. They are also a tool to bolster maximum youth inclusion and participation in peace processes. This policy brief highlights the prerequisites for the successful drafting of national action plans that are in line with the needs of Africa's youth demographic.

### Recommendations

- *Foster intergenerational co-leadership and dialogues at all levels of governance and peace processes.*
- *Increase awareness on the AU Continental Framework amongst AU member states, civil society organisations and youth groups and networks.*
- *Incorporate the AU Continental Framework into national education curricula.*
- *Normalise youth representation, particularly that of young women, in policy-making spaces.*
- *AU member states should earmark funding for national youth, peace and security initiatives.*
- *AU member states need to address the capacity-building needs of young people in peace and security.*
- *Additional research:*
  - Given that the YPS agenda is slowly becoming a well-researched topic, there is a need to integrate NAP development discussions with the needs of the YPS agenda. Such discussions should be captured and documented, and should form a basis for fieldwork to ascertain YPS needs on the continent.
  - It would also be beneficial for actors from regional and continental organisations to take part in national-level discussions. This will help ensure that NAPs accelerate the achievement of the AU Continental Framework objectives.

## Introduction

Over the past five years, Africa's youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda has gained momentum owing to a string of efforts by the African Union (AU)<sup>1</sup>. Commitments to increase youth inclusion and participation in peace processes have predominantly occurred through key decisions by the organisation's Peace and Security Council (AU PSC). Despite this progress, the effective implementation a successful YPS agenda remains a challenge, especially for AU member states.

There is increased awareness that effective youth inclusion and participation cannot be achieved until key youth-targeted frameworks – developed by the AU and its regional economic communities/regional mechanisms (RECs/RMs) – are domesticated; in other words, incorporated by member states into national legislation. For the YPS agenda in Africa to succeed, a comprehensive mechanism is required; one that incorporates existing AU/RECs/RMs-related frameworks, policies and guidelines into a broader strategy to mainstream youth in all peace and security initiatives. This is indeed the key approach and goal of the AU Continental Framework on YPS.<sup>2</sup> The framework provides a normative guideline to advise member states and RECs/RMs in their YPS efforts. The AU, as pointed out to the AU PSC by the Chairperson's Envoy on Youth, Ms Aya Chebbi, expects that the framework will, among others, guide the development of not only regional strategic plans, but also national action plans (NAPs) on YPS<sup>3</sup>.

There is increased awareness that effective youth inclusion and participation cannot be achieved until key youth-targeted frameworks are domesticated.

These are crucial, as NAPs provide a basis for the development of key policies and initiatives in support of youth inclusion and participation. NAPs are also critical in bringing together diverse actors who can ensure that Africa's peace and security challenges are mitigated in a way that keeps the continent's youth demographic at the core.

This policy brief has been developed in response to the AU's 2020 Youth Silencing the Guns campaign<sup>4</sup> aspiration, which promotes key actions that can be undertaken by youth to fast track the implementation of the broader Silencing the Guns in Africa agenda<sup>5</sup>. The report aims to contribute to the body of knowledge and support required by AU member states, RECs/RMs and youth groups and networks to establish NAPs.

These NAPs are not an end in themselves, nor do they constitute the only way for AU member states to make youth empowerment a central objective of existing and future peace and security plans and initiatives. However, these national plans can be a useful tool and starting point for the YPS agenda that benefits from the support and commitment of compound and multi-sectoral actors, especially the youth.

The policy brief is designed to:

- Ensure a common understanding of the process of developing NAPs for YPS in AU member states;
- Recommend key actors to be involved in NAP development;
- Suggest practical steps to ensure national ownership by the youth demographic, and
- Provide recommendations through which AU member states can pursue a common and sustainable approach to utilising the AU Continental Framework on YPS as a guide for NAP establishment and long-term success.

This brief is divided into three sections. The first contextualises the need for NAPs within Africa's growing YPS agenda. The second describes issues to be considered in the development of a NAP for YPS, and proposes phases to develop a NAP through an inclusive and participatory process that fosters increased youth ownership. The last section provides recommendations for AU member states to pursue a common and sustainable approach in the way they utilise the AU Continental Framework on YPS as a guide for NAP establishment.

*'The Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) and the 10 year implementation plan which will go a long way in implementing the YPS agenda through the development of national action plans'*

Aya Chebbi to AU PSC

## Methodology

In an effort to strengthen its mediation capacity On 25 August 2020, the Institute for Security Studies/Training for Peace Programme (ISS/TfP), in partnership with the AU Office of the Youth Envoy, convened a virtual roundtable themed 'Towards the development of National Action Plans for Youth, Peace and Security'. The roundtable provided a platform for African YPS experts to discuss ways of ushering in NAPs for YPS that are in line with the needs of young peacebuilders across the continent.<sup>6</sup> Participants included African YPS experts from academia, civil society organisations, national youth councils, youth groups/networks and the AU. The event relied on a co-design process<sup>7</sup> to allow inclusive engagement among participants.

Participants were divided into work groups, deliberately structured to enhance candid contribution to analysis and solution-generation

through a facilitated series of interactive exercises. Experts were encouraged to provide inputs based on personal experiences and their regions of operation.

## Understanding the AU YPS framework

This policy brief defines NAPs as operational documents that provide clear guidance for steering AU member state action on YPS based on the collective commitment of diverse local and national actors, especially young people. This brief proposes a process that calls for coherent approaches to YPS challenges through sustained and concerted action by multi-sectoral actors.

Inclusive participation and dialogue are a prerequisite to developing NAPs that meet context-specific needs. This report suggests that those who should be involved in the nationally owned process ought to be identified from start, matching specific roles to experience and expertise.

*'Identified actors need to be part of the process: from drafting the NAP to implementing it. They should have a mapped out and continuous role.'*

Roundtable participant

The recommendations in this brief are not meant to be absolute; rather, they highlight guidelines for the NAPs, which can be adjusted to suit the diverse national contexts of Africa's five geographic regions.

As mentioned, this brief also aims to discuss how NAPs both shape and are shaped by the AU Continental Framework on YPS and its implementation.

The framework is the first of its kind for Africa's nascent YPS agenda, and is designed to facilitate the development of youth-led and youth-centred strategic plans, initiatives and programmes by member states, RECs/RMs, AU and other stakeholders. Anchored in articles 11 and 17 of the Africa Youth Charter (AYC) of 2006, as well as the United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 2250 of 2015, the framework identifies five key priorities to promote youth inclusion in peace and security in Africa, namely participation; prevention; protection; partnerships and coordination; and disengagement and reintegration.

The key priorities of the framework are quoted in the box below:

The framework identifies five key priorities to promote youth inclusion in peace and security in Africa.



**Participation:** Advocates and promotes the active and meaningful participation of youth at all levels, namely national, regional and continental, in decision-making, policy formulation, implementation and the monitoring of peace agreements.



**Prevention:** Promotes the building and strengthening of youth capacity on conflict prevention including peace education, fighting against hate speech, the positive use of social media, support to the establishment and implementation of peace architectures, access to education and information, vocational training, as well as employment opportunities for young people to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation, manipulation, radicalisation and recruitment by extremist, criminal and armed groups.



**Protection:** Advocates and promotes the protection of youth in peace and conflict situations; particularly to promote compliance with international humanitarian and human-rights law to guarantee the protection of young people during armed conflicts.



**Partnerships and Coordination:** Facilitates effective communication and coordination between youth and relevant stakeholders (member states, RECs/RMs and AU Commission) on common planning and implementation in tandem with national legislations; promote increased political, financial and technical support to reinforce youth-led initiatives; as well as leverage the capacities of the media to highlight the positive contributions of youth in peace and security.



**Disengagement and Reintegration:** Promotes policies, legislations and programmes aimed at effective repatriation, resettlement, disarmament, de-radicalisation, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration of youth disengaged from armed, criminal or extremist groups in tandem with national legislation; as well as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Source: AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security

Section IV of the framework exposes some gaps and challenges that are yet to be effectively tackled by AU member states in enhancing the role of youth in peace and security.

These include:

- Limited technical resources on youth programming, including operational guidance, toolkits;
- Limited financial resources available to and for youth-led groups and initiatives on peace and security;
- Weak organisational capacities of youth groups, as many lack the requisite organisational capacities to attract or access the limited financial and technical support;
- Limited awareness by the youth on their potential contributions to complement national, regional and continental efforts to promote peace and security on the continent;
- Limited visibility and adequate documentation and evaluation of their contributions to peace and security;
- Lack of trust and or limited commitment and space for youth and youth-led initiatives in formal peace and security processes implemented at the national, regional and continental levels;
- Lack of evidence-based approach to programming on youth, peace and security.

These gaps and challenges are common with the youth, peace and security discourse in AU member states. They are the foundation to which the youth can hold their governments accountable, if NAPs are not developed in an inclusive manner or if resources are not made available to capacitate young people to play a visible role in their establishment.

In Figure 1, some key mechanisms to ensure the success of framework are highlighted:

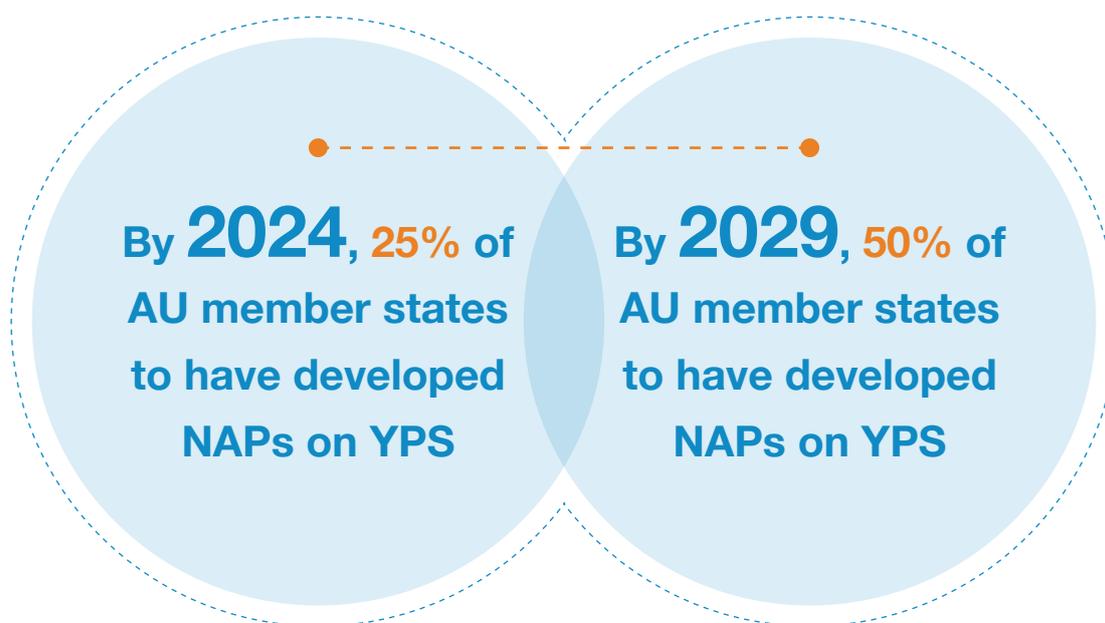
**Figure 1:** Enabling mechanisms for success of framework



Source: AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security

The Framework is accompanied by a 10-year implementation plan (2020–2029),<sup>8</sup> which critically highlights the importance of NAPs for the goals of the framework to be achieved (as illustrated below).

**Figure 2:** Targets of the framework for NAP development



Source: AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security 10-year implementation plan (2020–2029)

## Phases and key actors for NAP development

As mentioned, an inclusive approach to the development of a NAP requires the input of a diverse pool of local and national institutions and agents, as well as a clear outlining of responsibilities and overall expectations. Roundtable participants, when asked to identify and list key actors (in addition to the general youth population aged from 15 to 35 years old) who ought to participate in the development of NAPs, had the suggested the following:

- Youth and youth-led organisations,

- Think tanks, media,
- National security institutions,
- Existing policy/decision makers,
- National youth councils,
- Civil society organisations, as well as
- Traditional and religious leaders.

When asked who ought to lead in this process, participants were clear: it should be led by the youth.

*'If youth ministries want to spearhead the drafting, their focal points should be in the youth bracket.'*

Roundtable participant

Participants were asked to identify areas of concern in the development of NAPs for YPS. In this context, they mentioned the absence of innovative planning and implementing methodologies for youth interventions in governance and peace processes, which should guide the process of NAP development.

Participants agreed that the decision to develop a NAP should be backed, from the onset, by clear political will to empower young people within peace and security processes. The young YPS experts reflected on the importance of the state in legitimising both the role and the contributions of youth. They also acknowledged the role of the AU in bolstering political will from its member states:

*'A legitimate and youth-led coalition at the continental level (AU) is needed to prompt states to urgently develop NAPs. The same coalition could be empowered to monitor and evaluate progress on the development of these documents.'*

Roundtable participant

It was also suggested that before the drafting of a such a plan, there should be in-depth analysis of the local context in relation to peace and security and the responsibility of the youth demographic. Such analysis would be vital in identifying areas where key interventions are needed, especially involving young people. It was also suggested that this analysis should be conducted by local researchers who are knowledgeable on the nature of peace and conflict in their respective countries, and who have an in-depth understanding of the current position of youth in conflict-prevention, peacebuilding and related issues. Participants hoped that this analysis would be able to detect religious, racial or even tribal divides that could stand to impede a NAP process.

It was further suggested that the development of a NAP should be based on the availability of financial and technical resources to ensure its successful implementation. Participants shared that a lack of resources could easily delay the development and success of a NAP.

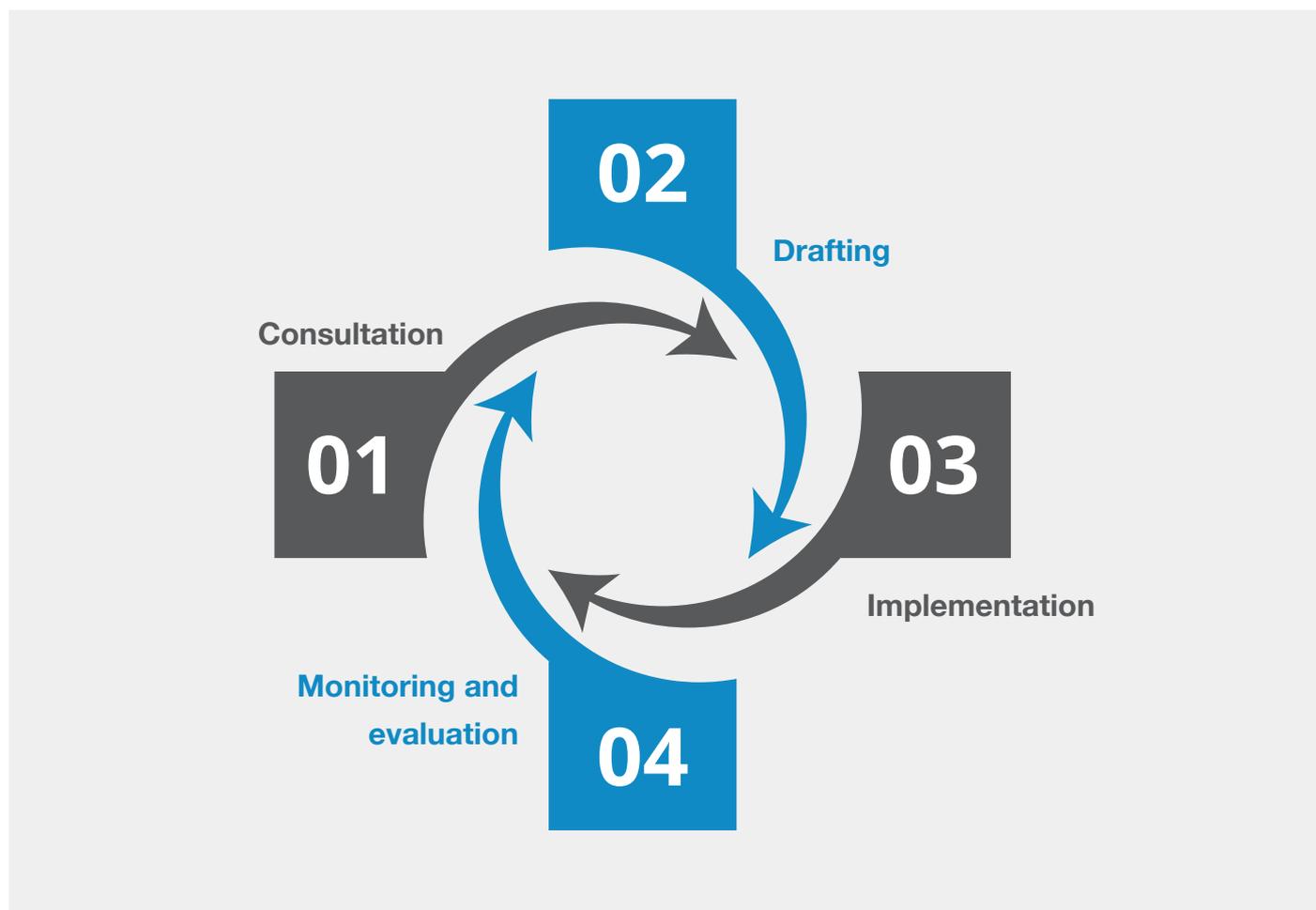
Finally, as highlighted earlier, a NAP is not an end in itself. Its success is highly dependent on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its priorities. A major concern raised by participants was the possible lack of impact, or of a NAP being shelved by policy- or decisionmakers.

Comprehensive recommendations were made towards the successful development of a NAP, taking the aforementioned concerns into consideration, namely that:

- The development of a NAP should conform with the values of existing national youth policies;
- Accountable, youth-led policy-driven bodies or implementing organisations (civil society organisations) should be engaged;
- Young women, in particular, should be given an equal and visible role in NAP development;
- Local YPS experts and advocates should be engaged;
- Vulnerable youth, such as those with disabilities or refugee status, should be engaged;
- Academia (students) should have a visible role in NAP development;
- The language used in the drafting of the NAP should be youth -friendly;
- NAPs should be sensitive towards religious and cultural beliefs;
- Youth should not only be represented during NAP development, but should lead the process, even at the implementation stage; and
- The process should ensure that the AU Continental Framework is popularised and domesticated locally to enable its use as a guiding document.

Participants suggested that the phases illustrated in the figure below are crucial for the lifecycle of a NAP on YPS:

**Figure 3:** Lifecycle of a NAP on YPS



Participants were very clear in describing the lifecycle of a NAP on YPS. Firstly, they stressed the need for consultations – particularly with young people – on the initiatives and platforms needed to increase youth inclusion in national peace and security sectors. It was stressed that such consultations take place locally, and culminate in an integrated national report to inform the drafting of the document.

Secondly, at the drafting stage, it was obvious for the participants that the state, civil society organisations and other development partners should be engaged to add value to the proposed goals of the NAP. These non-youth actors are perceived to contribute a perspective that would foster the creation of safer spaces for youth in peace and security. For instance, participants expressed that development partners could ensure secure funding for activities outlined in the NAP. Civil society organisations could facilitate capacity building to ensure that the youth are able to take ownership of the NAP and its activities, while the state, as recommended by the AU Continental Framework, would be obliged to guarantee the safety and recognition of local and national young peacebuilders.

Thirdly, they envisioned an implementation stage carried out by the same actors, but prioritising maximum impact on the grassroots communities. Lastly – and, significantly, linked to the implementation stage – is the monitoring and evaluation process. This success of the implementation is largely dependent on the quality and impact of implementation initiatives. Participants agreed that many well-crafted, well-intended mechanisms often fail during the implementation stage.

Participants expressed that development partners could ensure secure funding for activities outlined in the NAP.

*'Without youth ownership, the NAPs will fail. They should speak the language of the youth, while being mindful of religious, racial and cultural differences.'*

Roundtable participant

## Recommendations

Drawing on the discussions and findings of the roundtable, the following recommendations are proposed to ensure that the AU Continental Framework on YPS is drawn on to guide NAP development.

### 1. Increase awareness on the AU Continental Framework amongst AU member states, civil society organisations and youth groups and networks

- The AU, RECs/RMs and their member states should stress to national stakeholders the importance of disseminating the framework, especially to those operating at the grassroots. Nationwide campaigns should be launched on- and offline to ensure that the framework is widely read and acted upon.
- The AU, RECs/RMs and their member states should seize the opportunity of the mandate set forth in the framework and implement sweeping YPS programmes and initiatives to increase the buy-in of member states.

### 2. Incorporate the AU Continental Framework into national education curricula

- Though peace education is not common in AU member states' basic education curricula, it is advisable that it be prioritised.
- Young students should transition from childhood to adulthood in an education system that teaches them about the values of the framework and their perceived role in making peace on the continent a reality.

### 3. Normalise youth representation, particularly that of young women, in policy-making spaces

- Ahead of engaging youth in the NAP

development process, it is critical that AU member states conduct rigorous campaigns to encourage young people, especially young women, to participate in both governance and peace processes.

- There is a need to promote awareness among the youth demographic of entry points into policy-making platforms. Young people need to be aware of the opportunities that exist for them to engage the state and other key actors, particularly when it comes to peace processes.<sup>9</sup>

### 4. AU member states should earmark funding for national youth, peace and security initiatives

- African governments need to prioritise access to financial resources for YPS NAPs development. Governments can support YPS stakeholders to carry out activities outlined in the NAP. If young people are aware of this during NAP development, it would boost morale and increase ownership and enthusiasm.

### 5. AU member states need to address the capacity-building needs of young people in peace and security

- African governments, in partnership with civil society organisations and key development partners, can support the development of standardised training to provide youth groups with assistance for capacity building. The AU and RECs/RMs should also contribute to these initiatives.
- More support needs to be given to key stakeholders to mentor and coach youth in leadership positions within the peace and security sector to foster intergenerational leadership and dialogue. This can be achieved through a national YPS mentorship or coaching programme.

## Additional research

- Given that the YPS agenda is slowly becoming a well-researched topic, there is a need to integrate NAP development discussions with the needs of the YPS agenda. Such discussions should be captured and documented, and should form a basis for fieldwork to ascertain YPS needs on the continent.
- It would also be beneficial for actors from regional and continental organisations to take part in national-level discussions. This will help ensure that NAPs accelerate the achievement of the AU Continental Framework objectives.

## Conclusion

This policy brief captures the perspectives of young experts from Africa's five regions on the development of NAPs for YPS. The rich information gathered sheds light on where AU member states ought to focus their attention to attain the goals outlined in the Continental Framework on YPS. Although a relatively limited sample, this report contributes to an informed understanding of the key priorities to be considered in developing NAPs, taking into consideration diverse actors, and especially young people.

Given that the momentum for youth, peace and security is on the rise globally, it is important for African states to understand the benefits of partnering with the youth and civil society organisations to realise the goal of Silencing the Guns on the continent. Further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of normative frameworks for peace and security in Africa and how the youth can be empowered to not only contribute, but lead in achieving their goals.

This report contributes to an informed understanding of the key priorities to be considered in developing NAPs, taking into consideration diverse actors, and especially young people.

## Annex: Roundtable attendee list

Title	Name	Surname	Organisation
Ms.	Aya	Chebbi	African Union
Ms.	Karabo	Mokgonyana	African Union
Ms.	Ndahafa	Hapulile	Namibia Youth Council
Mr.	Vedhan	Singh	South Africa Hindu Youth Movement
Ms.	Chidi	Koldswat	African Youth Front on Coronavirus, Nigeria
Mr.	Patrick	Godi	South Sudan Peace Committee
Mr.	Hassan	Al Ghazally	African Youth Front on Coronavirus, Egypt
Ms.	Luanda	Mpungose	South Africa Institute for International Affairs/ APRM Youth Network
Ms.	Mbolatiana	Raveloarimisa	Radio for Peace, Madagascar
Mr.	Rafiu	Lawal	Building Blocks for Peace, Nigeria
Ms.	Menna	Mosbah	Egypt
Mr.	Constant	Admisse	African Youth Front on Coronavirus, Central African Republic
Mr.	Aloui	Nejmedinne	Tunisia
Ms.	Fernanda	Lobato	Olho do Cidadão, Mozambique
Ms.	Bella	Nshirimimana	African Youth Front on Coronavirus, Uganda
Mr.	James	Koryor	Federation of Liberian Youth, Liberia
Mr.	Nqobile	Moyo	GPPAC Southern Africa
Ms.	Jenny	Nortvedt	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs/TfP
Ms.	Muneinazvo	Kujeke	Institute for Security Studies
Ms.	Liezelle	Kumalo	Institute for Security Studies
Ms.	Annette	Leijenaar	Institute for Security Studies

## Notes

- 1 The YPS agenda refers to integrated goals of the AU and its organs, RECs/RMs as well as its member states to mainstream young people in peace processes.
- 2 Framework available at <https://au.int/en/documents/20200821/continental-framework-youth-peace-and-security.pdf>.
- 3 Read more of the AU Chairperson's Envoy on Youth's remarks to the AU PSC during the annual Open Session on Youth, Peace and Security [https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/39576-sp-au\\_youth\\_envoy\\_briefing\\_-\\_au\\_psc-.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/39576-sp-au_youth_envoy_briefing_-_au_psc-.pdf).
- 4 Read more about Youth Silencing the Guns Campaign <https://au.int/en/newsevents/20200724/launch-youth-silencing-guns-campaign-advancing-youth-roles-and-capacities>.
- 5 This campaign has also culminated in the development of a comprehensive report available at <https://au.int/en/documents/20201113/youth-silencing-guns-intergenerational-dialogues-policy-report-2020>.
- 6 At least 21 experts participated in the virtual roundtable (See Report Annex)
- 7 Co-design is a participatory, human-centred and action-oriented approach to solving complex problems by identifying key stakeholders to participate in a roundtable or workshop, and designing actionable solutions based upon their input. See S Reponen, Co-design Framework, <http://results.learning-layers.eu/methods/co-design/>.
- 8 AU Continental Framework on YPS 10-Year Action plan is available at <https://au.int/en/documents/20200821/10-year-implementation-plan-yps-2020-2029>.
- 9 See report on 'Greater Inclusion of African Youth in Public Service and Governance', <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39165-doc-greaterinclusionofafricanyouthreportaugust2020.pdf>.



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