

Amani Africa appeals to the Peace and Security Council to uphold the principle of non-indifference by taking concrete measures in the face of the worsening humanitarian crises including in Sudan

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Your excellency Ambassador Churchil Monono, Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for the Month of September 2023

Your excellencies, members of the Peace and Security Council

We at Amani Africa Media and Research Services have the pleasure of addressing this premier peace and security decision-making body of our Union on this timely and pressing theme.

The Malabo Extraordinary Summit is a key milestone in Africa's long journey towards putting in place mechanisms for effectively responding to and addressing humanitarian crises on the continent since the OAU's 1969 Convention Governing Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problems in Africa.

With the establishment of the African Humanitarian Agency, the Summit enabled the AU to be equipped with the institutional arrangement that helps facilitate in the implementation of the Union's normative and policy instruments from the 1969 Refugee Convention to the Kampala Convention on the Protection of IDPs.

Excellencies,

One of the unique attributes of the AU is the fact that it is founded on *the principle of non-indifference*. As an expression of the African world view 'I am because you are', Ubuntu, this principle commits the African Union to come to the protection of people who are caught up in humanitarian crises and not to stand by and watch as they endure massacre, forced displacement and starvation.

The outcomes of the Malabo Summit including the African Humanitarian Agency are critical to giving expression in practical terms to this AU's founding principle of non-indifference. The implication of this is that the **AU, including through the leadership of the PSC, will and should be the first to engage** in mobilizing responses to the needs of people caught up in humanitarian crises.

While part of the provision of response to humanitarian needs involves contributing to the raising of the funds and mobilizing humanitarian assistance required to meet such needs on the continent, AU's role including through the African Humanitarian Agency will not *primarily* be to become the main funder and provider of humanitarian assistance on the continent.

Considering the well-developed capacities and instruments at the disposal of various humanitarian actors including UN humanitarian agencies like the UNHCR or ICRC, AU's comparative advantage, on account of its unique attributes, lies mobilizing solidarity, political action, coordination and

diplomacy. AU's role thus first relates to **coordination of humanitarian action** for which the AU, through the African Humanitarian Agency, needs to engage in the tracking of the humanitarian situation and the collection of data on trends in and dynamics of the humanitarian situation on the continent. This additionally entails the identification of the needs of and mobilization of support to countries and communities in their effort to mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises.

The Second concerns **the creation of space and the provision of support for mobilization of public opinion and action** on humanitarian needs and for the organization and effective functioning of local humanitarian actors. As part of giving recognition to the enormous burden that host communities and countries bear as first responders, this should not only tap into the role of African non-state actors but also support the development and organization of indigenous entities engaged in supporting humanitarian action.

Third and perhaps the most significant role and contribution that is particularly befitting to the attributes of the AU involves **humanitarian diplomacy**. Considering its diplomatic and political profile, the AU is best placed to use the African Humanitarian Agency as the vehicle for mobilizing and engaging in humanitarian diplomacy. With the Agency, the AU has come to have a much-needed tool, as part of its peace and security and humanitarian action toolbox, critical to effectively developing AU's capacity in humanitarian diplomacy.

It is therefore Amani Africa's submission that particular attention is given in the building AU's role in humanitarian action to humanitarian diplomacy. AU's humanitarian diplomacy is best mobilized and organized around, among others,

- a. advocating for the mobilization of support for people in humanitarian crisis and the recognition and support of national and local humanitarian actors in their effort

- to support those affected by humanitarian crises;
- b. the deployment of diplomatic missions for facilitating unhindered humanitarian access;
- c. securing guarantee from conflict parties for safe, free and voluntary passage for civilians in conflict settings to areas where they can access assistance; and
- d. promoting respect for and full cooperation by conflict parties with humanitarian actors;
- e. monitor and advocate for compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law standards as well as humanitarian principles;

Excellencies and distinguished participants,

When Africa faced major humanitarian crises as a result of conflicts and insecurity in the 1990s, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) pointed out in the Declaration Establishing the OAU mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution that 'conflicts have forced millions of our people, including women and children, into a drifting life as refugees and internally displaced persons, deprived of their means of livelihood, human dignity and hope'. These same powerful words are restated in the preamble to the PSC protocol.

In recent years, we have unfortunately experienced continuing deterioration in the humanitarian situation on the continent. The refugee and displacement crisis on our continent is currently at record high. As a result, today there are more people on our continent today than in the 1990s 'who are forced into a drifting life as refugees and IDPs, deprived of their dignity and hope'.

The number of people forcibly displaced, mostly as a result of war and conflicts, have reached more than 40 million. This, your excellencies, is more than double the number of forcibly displaced people in 2016.

That such a staggering number of people on our continent are 'forced to live a drifting life as refugees and IDPs deprived of their dignity and hope' far more than in the 1990s is an ***indictment for all of us and particularly the AU and this august body.***

In the light of the continually deteriorating humanitarian situation on the continent and in order to avail the PSC a mechanism for a more effective engagement in humanitarian action, **it is therefore our submission that the PSC establishes an African platform on humanitarian action along the lines** of the African Platform on Children Affected by Conflict – this platform on humanitarian action like the one on Children can be co-chaired by PSC member(s) that champion(s) this theme, interested members of the PSC, PAPS department and technical entities like UNHCR and research organizations like Amani Africa that provide the technical backstopping.

The urgency for humanitarian action in Sudan

Currently, the most heart wrenching manifestation of the gravity of the forced displacement crisis on the continent is the raging war in Sudan. The humanitarian situation has become so concerning so much so that the UN humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths, who did not mince his words in stating that the war in Sudan is fuelling a humanitarian emergency of epic proportions, sounded the alarm with the [extraordinary warning](#) that 'war and hunger could destroy Sudan.'

Excellencies,

On the 15th day of this month, the war in Sudan marked its fifth months. During this period, nearly six million people have been forcibly displaced, with one million of them crossing into neighbouring countries as refugees and asylum seekers and the remaining displaced internally.

This means that this war forcibly displaced over a million people every month.

One of the world's fast-growing displacement crises is also unfortunately accompanied by other no less severe humanitarian crisis including but not limited to

- severe challenges to humanitarian access (humanitarian actors are able to reach only 19 percent of the 18 million people in need of humanitarian assistance) and
- other forms of humanitarian emergencies including complete breakdown of the health system in Sudan, with nearly 80 percent of health services not functioning as a result of the indiscriminate attacks that warring parties perpetrated on civilian infrastructure in the country and with more than 6 million including hundreds of thousands of children facing emergency levels of acute food insecurity.

Excellencies,

As I conclude, I would like to state that *the principle of non-indifference*, which is the golden standard for the effective functioning of AU's role in peace and security and humanitarian action, requires this august body ***not to be a bystander as Sudan faces the risk of not only humanitarian disaster but also collapse.***

As Amani Africa we therefore submit that the PSC establishes a taskforce for monitoring, documenting and reporting on the humanitarian situation and protection of civilians in Sudan as well as for engaging in humanitarian diplomacy efforts focusing on

- the mobilization of support from within the continent in expression of solidarity with the people of Sudan;
- Ensuring that the conflict parties commit to and unconditionally stop indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure;

- securing guarantee from conflict parties to ensure for safe, free and voluntary passage for civilians in conflict settings to areas where they can access assistance; and
- promoting respect for and full cooperation by conflict parties with humanitarian actors
- Ensuring compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law standards.

Thank you for your attention!