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**4TH JOINT RETREAT OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND AFRICAN
PEER REVIEW MECHANISM**

7 – 8 APRIL 2025

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

PSC/APRM/Retreat.4 (2025)

CONCLUSIONS



**CONCLUSIONS OF THE FOURTH JOINT RETREAT OF THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY
COUNCIL AND THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) held their fourth Joint Retreat in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 7 to 8 April 2025, under the theme: ***“Enhancing the role of the APRM in early warning and in contributing towards conflict prevention and strengthening of good governance in accordance with AU normative instruments”***. The Fourth Joint Retreat was co-chaired by **H.E. Amb. Rebecca Amuge Otengo**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for April 2025, and **H.E. Amb Ali Ahmed Arita**, Vice-Chairperson of the African Peer Review (APR) Panel of Eminent Persons.

2. Noteworthy, the holding of the Fourth Joint Retreat took place when the APRM was celebrating its 22nd Anniversary. The retreat also coincided with the observation of the 31st Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide.

II. OPENING CEREMONY

3. On 7 April 2025, the Co-Chairs declared the Fourth Joint Retreat opened and delivered their opening statements. They outlined the purpose of the Fourth Joint Retreat pursuant to both Assembly and PSC Decisions. They underlined that the objective of the Retreat was to position good governance as a strategic pillar for conflict prevention and sustainable development, peace and security on the continent. Additionally, the Retreat focused on early warning and areas for further enhancing the role of the APRM in contributing towards conflict prevention and strengthening good governance in accordance with AU normative instruments. It was recalled that the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the Union, through [Assembly/AU/Dec.686 (XXX)], mandated the APRM to play the role of an early warning tool for conflict prevention.

4. The following dignitaries presented the welcome remarks: **Amb. Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre**, Chief Executive Officer of the Chief Executive Officer APRM Continental Secretariat, **H.E. André Nzapayeke** - Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in South Africa, **Ms. Patience Chiradza**, Director of Governance and Conflict Prevention, AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, on behalf of **Amb. Bankole Adeoye**, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and **Hon. Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi**, MP, Minister of Public Service and Administration and APRM Focal Point of the Republic of South Africa.

5. **H.E. Selma Bakhta Mansouri**, Secretary of State to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of African Affairs of the Republic of Algeria, Chairperson of APRM Focal Points Committee, declared the opening of the 4th PSC-APRM Joint Retreat.

6. Representatives of AU Institutions and Organs participated in the fourth Retreat: the African Diplomatic Corps, CISSA, COMESA, ECOWAS, SADC, PAP, NEPAD, UNDP, ACCORD, and KAS.

III. ORGANISATION

7. The agenda of the Fourth Joint Retreat focused on the following areas of discussion, namely:
- a) Opening Ceremony;
 - b) High-Level Panel Discussion on the Theme: “Good Governance: A Key Pillar for Conflict Prevention and Sustainable Peace and Security in Africa.”;
 - c) High-Level Panel Discussion II on the Theme: “Governance Challenges in Africa: Are We winning the Battle?”;
 - d) Session I: Presentation of a Synthesis Report on Early Warning for Conflict Prevention from the APRM Peer;
 - e) Session II: Presentation of the Findings of the African Governance Report 2025 on Natural Resources Governance;
 - f) Session III: Briefing on relevant activities undertaken by AGA-APSA Members and partners on conflict prevention and promotion of good governance on the continent;
 - g) Session IV: Presentation on implementation of the Conclusions of the Third PSC-APRM Annual Joint Retreat;
 - h) Session V: Presentation of the Draft Conclusions of the 4th Annual Joint Retreat ;
 - i) Closing Ceremony.

IV. HIGH-LEVEL PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE THEME: “GOOD GOVERNANCE: A KEY PILLAR FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA.”

8. In accordance with the theme of the Joint Retreat, a High-Level Panel Discussion was held on the Theme: “Good Governance: A Key Pillar for Conflict Prevention and Sustainable Peace and Security in Africa”. The objective of the session was to positioning good governance as a strategic pillar for conflict prevention and sustainable development, peace and security on the continent.

9. The High-Level panel comprised of Adv Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) as presenter and the following speakers: Hon. Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira, President of Pan African Parliament; Mr Jacskon V. Hamata, Executive Secretary of CISSA, H.E. Amb. Churchill Ewumbue Monono, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cameroon to the AU and PSC Member, and H.E Ambassador Ashraf Rashed, Chairperson of COMESA Committee of Elders.

10. Following extensive deliberations, the following observations and recommendations were made to mitigate diversity-related conflicts:

- i. Acknowledged that deficits/governance challenges are among the primary drivers of conflict in Africa and further underlined that the root causes of conflict are often founded in poor governance characterized by weak institutions, lack of transparency, absence of accountability, discriminatory or exclusive systems and human rights violation which lead to grievances that can escalate into conflict and violence; in this regard, the practice of

accommodating divergent views by incumbent governments could help to mitigate conflicts by fostering inclusive governance;

- ii. Highlighted the imperative to put forward good governance (anchored in AU's normative and institutional frameworks) as a key determinant of peace and sustainable development and to promote good governance and stability towards the development of our society which will serve as a tool to prevent conflicts in the continent;
- iii. Recognize that conflict prevention efforts should not be undermined by emerging threats that will lead to the potential risks of conflict escalation or relapse, as such, there is a need to enhance the tools of conflict prevention, including the necessary early warning systems and mechanisms;
- iv. The need to harness the benefits of the already existing plans, policies and institutions and programmes such as the PCRD, WPS, Youth Peace and Security, Elections, Transitional Justice, Children in Armed Conflict programmes, African Platform on Children in Armed Conflicts, policy dialogue with AU Organs, etc;
- v. Underlined the need to engage the private sector and relevant stakeholders to strengthen the accountability mechanism and social responsibility economic developments;
- vi. Highlight the importance of fully operationalizing early warning and structural vulnerability assessment tools, such as the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessments (CSVRA), to proactively identify and tackle the root causes of diversity-related tensions, including marginalization, exclusion, and poor governance, before they escalate into violent conflict;
- vii. Emphasized the need to further strengthen the link between early warning and early action, ensuring that recommendations from early warning systems and APRM reviews translate into concrete policy responses; in particular, Member States should be supported technically and financially to implement reforms that address exclusion, inequality, and institutional weaknesses—key drivers of diversity-related conflict;
- viii. Noted with appreciation the voluntary contribution of \$1 million USD by the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the APRM and encouraged other member states in a position to do so to follow suite, and to pay their outstanding contributions;
- ix. Appreciated the support of the Peace Fund in conflict prevention and encouraged the APRM to continue engaging with the fund on potential areas of collaboration;
- x. Encouraged the APRM to expedite the establishment and operationalisation of the APRM Governance Support Programme which will assist in the implementation of the recommendations from the review reports;
- xi. Agreed that the APRM should regularly interact with the PSC beyond the Annual Retreat to present key findings of its peer review reports related to early warning and to organize open sessions on relevant issues related to good governance and peace and security;

- xii. In the same vein, urged the APRM to briefing the PSC on their early warning reports during the consideration of the reports on Continental Early Warning system to be joined by CISSA, AFRIPOL, and the AU Counter Terrorism Centre;
- xiii. Emphasized the necessity of promoting inclusive governance and democratic practices beyond procedural elections to genuinely reflect the will and needs of diverse populations. This encompasses ensuring equal participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in decision-making processes, bolstering state legitimacy, and improving responsive service delivery in underserved regions;
- xiv. Encouraged greater synergy among the AU, RECs, and the APRM in implementing joint early warning and conflict prevention frameworks. This includes integrating governance indicators into peace and security assessments and conducting evidence-based dialogues with Member States to foster reforms that address identity-based grievances;
- xv. Underscored the importance of enhancing coordination between the APRM and the CEWS, particularly in ensuring that findings from APRM country reviews- especially those related to governance deficits, exclusion, and early signs of societal tension- are systematically integrated into the CEWS. This integration would enable more holistic risk assessments that reflect both the structural and political dimensions of diversity-related conflicts;
- xvi. The need to institutionalize mechanisms for regular information sharing and joint analysis between the APRM Secretariat and the AU CEWS team- through a harmonized reporting framework, shared indicators, and joint field assessments- remains crucial. This approach would help bridge the existing silos among various institutions and enhance the timeliness, relevance, and accuracy of early warning outputs used for conflict prevention and response;
- xvii. Encouraged Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the social contract by providing essential services such as education, healthcare, jobs, and justice to restore and strengthen public legitimacy while preventing the alienation of citizens, particularly in marginalized communities;
- xviii. Promote the fair beneficiation and distribution of natural resources to address long-standing grievances related to resource exploitation. Member States should establish transparent, mutually accountable agreements with investors, ensuring that local populations benefit directly from resource wealth;
- xix. Prioritize development policies focused on youth, including employment, entrepreneurship, and skills training. Leveraging tools like the AfCFTA and aligning financial systems with local realities will help integrate youth into productive economic sectors and reduce their vulnerability to radicalization.
- xx. Ensure public policy and security strategies are based on real-time, people-centered intelligence. Governments must align state security strategies with human security imperatives, addressing citizens' needs and grievances before they escalate into unrest or conflict;

- xxi. Establish a high-level continental response mechanism to tackle the increasing threats posed by foreign irregular private military actors, proxy conflicts, and resource capture. This initiative should include the PSC, APRM, CEWS, AfCFTA, RECs, and relevant entities to define a cohesive AU stance on safeguarding sovereignty, security, and the public interest;
- xxii. Establish mechanisms for mutual accountability with external actors in Africa's security and extractive sectors, ensuring transparency, justice, and local benefits. This should include joint AU-led monitoring of corporate conduct and adherence to governance and anti-corruption standards;
- xxiii. Encourage effective governance and share best practices in governance.

V. HIGH-LEVEL PANEL DISCUSSION II ON THE THEME: "GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES IN AFRICA: ARE WE WINNING THE BATTLE?"

11. The Third Joint Retreat included a theme reflecting on "Governance Challenges in Africa: Are We Winning the Battle?" The objective was to examine the core governance challenges currently undermining efforts for peace and security in Africa and to discuss how they can be systematically addressed. The session will also facilitate an exchange of views and share contextualized experiences regarding Africa's governance challenges, as well as propose recommendations.

12. Members of the High-Level Panel included Amb. Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre, Chief Executive Officer of the APRM Continental Secretariat, as the key presenter, along with the following high-level speakers: H.E. Dr. Abdoulie Jannah, member of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons and former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; H.E. Amb. Tebelelo Alfred Boang, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Botswana to the AU and PSC member; Mr. Constant Cocou GNACADJA, Head of Mediation and Coordination of Regional Political Affairs, Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, ECOWAS; Mr. Steven Gruz, Head of the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA); Adv. Sipho Mantula, lecturer at the Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs, UNISA; and Ms. Mpule Kgetsi, African Union Youth Ambassador for Peace, Southern Africa.

13. After extensive discussions, the subsequent observations and recommendations were made:
- i. Acknowledge that Africa continues to grapple with critical issues threatening democratic stability, sustainable development, and effective governance. Additionally, the integrity of democratic elections remains a significant concern, as do the challenges of state legitimacy and electoral processes frequently marred by irregularities, including vote tampering and lack of transparency, which undermine public trust and the legitimacy of elected officials;
 - ii. Development should be people-centered and anchored in human rights mechanisms, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Good Governance, and Elections;
 - iii. African nations continue to grapple with racial, ethnic, religious, and regional tensions, often worsened by challenges on governance structures that inadequately address these issues equitably. Human rights abuses, including restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, continue in several regions, underscoring the need for stronger protections and more inclusive policies that foster social cohesion and respect for all citizens;

- iv. Stressed the need to restore and strengthen the social contract between governments and citizens by ensuring the delivery of public services, inclusion, justice, and economic opportunities, particularly for youth and marginalized communities;
- v. Emphasized the importance of integrating structural prevention mechanisms, such as early warning tools and resilience assessments, into governance strategies at both national and continental levels, ensuring they inform public policy formulation and decision-making processes;
- vi. The need for bold, urgent, and prudent decisions to ensure that Africa's natural resources, particularly minerals, are processed and managed equitably to benefit citizens, generate domestic revenue, and strengthen state legitimacy;
- vii. Noted the disconnect between legal legitimacy and public legitimacy, where governments elected through democratic means may still lose citizens' trust due to poor performance, exclusion, or unresponsiveness;
- viii. Emphasized the significance of conceptual clarity in governance and the creation of measurable indicators to evaluate performance in service delivery, inclusion, anti-corruption, rule of law, and constitutionalism;
- ix. Called for improved coordination among AU organs, RECs, APRM, and Member States to tackle governance-related early warning indicators and to implement proactive and preventive joint responses;
- x. Recognized the vital role of the private sector and civil society in fostering accountable governance and security, and called for their organized involvement in AU peace and development frameworks;
- xi. Emphasized the necessity of integrating youth empowerment into peace and governance processes, connecting initiatives such as AfCFTA and agricultural transformation with youth employment and entrepreneurship;
- xii. Called for an urgent, AU-wide response to escalating geopolitical threats, including foreign private military involvement and resource exploitation, via a unified crisis response mechanism and reaffirming Africa's sovereign agency;
- xiii. Urged Member States to invest in governance systems that prioritize people, ensure transparency, and maintain accountability, complemented by strong implementation capacity and locally funded institutions.

VI. SESSIONS

A. Session I: Presentation of a Synthesis Report on Early Warning for Conflict Prevention from the APRM Peer

- 14. Recalled the Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.686 (XXX)] of the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the Union, which mandated the APRM as an early warning tool for conflict prevention and made the following recommendations:

- i. Noted the non-implementation of APRM indicators and recommendations that may lead to conflicts and social tensions, including political instability, post-election violence, restrictions on political participation, devastating economic impacts, and human rights violations contributing to violence;
- ii. Social and economic inequality, electoral governance challenges, inadequate delivery of social services, youth marginalization, unemployment, and ethnic and religious tensions can lead to social unrest and conflict;
- iii. Recognized that some Member States have developed early warning mechanisms, in addition to those at the regional and continental levels, which monitor and analyze conflict risks, including establishing community early warning systems;
- iv. Emphasized the need to develop an early warning hub, and peace infrastructure and enhance socio-economic inclusion, including identifying national and regional early warning systems as building blocks of the continental early warning system;
- v. Highlighted the need to develop National Early Warning Hubs, and encourage Member States to establish specialized centers to analyze conflict trends and coordinate responses;
- vi. Stressed the imperative to enhance Socio-Economic Inclusion in order to address inequality through targeted economic empowerment programs, skills development, and job creation initiatives so as to reorient the population away from the politics of identity to the politics of interests;
- vii. Called for strengthening electoral integrity and governance stability by enhancing political dialogue, promoting electoral transparency, and fostering inclusivity to reduce political tensions;
- viii. Emphasize the importance of enhancing service delivery and public accountability by implementing efficiency-driven reforms to address grievances related to poor governance;
- ix. Enhanced Community-Based Conflict Resolution: Strengthen local peace committees, mediation programmes, and traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms;
- x. Underlined the need to address xenophobia and ethnic divisions through the promotion of intercultural dialogue, inclusive policies, and educational programs to counter discrimination and social polarization;
- xi. Emphasized the importance of enhancing law enforcement and justice systems: Improve policing strategies, increase judicial efficiency, and build public trust in legal institutions;
- xii. Encourages the integration of climate change and conflict prevention strategies to tackle climate-related security risks through sustainable development policies.

B. Session II: Presentation of the Findings of the African Governance Report 2025 on Natural Resources Governance.

15. The development of the African Governance Report 2025 stems from the AU Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.9(XXXVII), made during the 37th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which took place from 17-18 February 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

This decision directed the APRM to develop, in collaboration with AGA, the theme and focus of the Fourth African Governance Report and to present the Report to the 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly scheduled for February 2025. In this regard, the PSC and APRM:

- i. Recognized that the increasing demand for access, use, and ownership of natural resources is a major cause of conflict in African countries. It also emphasizes that in the last 60 years, at least 40 percent of all interstate conflicts have been linked to natural resources, driven by climate-related resource scarcity, population growth, livelihood threats, and disputes over land and resources;
- ii. Underlined that the drivers of conflict can stem from increasing competition for natural resources (both internal and regional), unresolved structural issues, pressures from demands for development, and deficiencies in natural resource management;
- iii. Emphasized the necessity to develop, standardize, and harmonize inter-regional and inter-continental agreements to address the growing competition for natural resources;
- iv. Encouraged the development of legislative and policy frameworks to address the impact of colonial mining on unresolved structural causes;
- v. Highlighted the need to consider a human-rights-based approach to governing natural resources, especially in countries experiencing conflict;
- vi. Called for support, resource, and strengthen government institutions while addressing pressures from development demands;
- vii. Underscored the necessity to enhance the capabilities of tax administrators regarding natural resource management policies, programs, and projects;
- viii. Looked forward to the finalization of African Governance Report 2025 and the positive elements of best practices and lessons learned to benefit other Member States.

C. Session III: Briefing on relevant activities undertaken by AGA-APSA Members and partners on conflict prevention and promotion of good governance on the continent.

16. The session received a briefing from the representatives of KAS, ACCORD, COMESA, UNDP, and NEPAD and:

- i. Acknowledged the contributions of partners, AGA-APSA members, and RECs/RMS in implementing various activities to strengthen governance, peace, and security in Africa through initiatives such as youth engagement, capacity building, and promoting regional integration and data sharing;
- ii. Stressed the need to further strengthen the promotion of AGA-APSA synergy and partnership in areas such as information sharing, enhancing efficiency, achieving a paradigm shift in governance, improving coordination, and fostering citizens' participation.

D. Session IV: Presentation on implementation of the Conclusions of the Third PSC-APRM Annual Joint Retreat

17. Noted the implementation matrix of the third PSC-APRM Annual joint retreat and applauded the PSC and APRM Secretariat for monitoring and following up on the implementation of the conclusions.

18. Took note of the briefing on the progress of preparation by the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia of the 11th Tana Forum under the theme “Africa in an Evolving Global Order” and looks forward to its successful convening.

VII. CONCLUSION

19. The Fourth Joint Retreat was concluded following the closing remarks of the following: Amb. Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre, Chief Executive Officer of the APRM Continental Secretariat, Amb. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Amb. Rebecca Amuge Otengo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for April 2025, and H.E Amb Ali Ahmed Arita, Vice-Chairperson of APR Panel of Eminent Persons.

20. The participants commended the PSC Secretariat and APRM Continental Secretariat for the collective and successful organization of the Fourth Joint Retreat and looked forward to the 5th PSC – APRM Joint Retreat in 2026 at a date and venue to be jointly agreed upon.