

## Concept Note

### **Engagement with AU-Facing CSOs to Strengthen Afrobarometer Data Uptake in AU Policy and Decision Making**

#### **Background**

The African Union (AU) has become the leading multilateral body that offers African states and citizens to engage on a wide range of policy matters of continental and global significance. Through its institutions, norms and policy frameworks it has established a space to respond to the various challenges the continent is confronted with (as illustrated through AU's leadership role in mobilizing continental response to the COVID19 pandemic) and it has articulated bold commitments through the adoption of Agenda 2063 and the various flagship projects namely the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In areas of peace and security and governance, the AU provides such platform through the progressive norms and structures of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA).

Its wide range of norms, institutions and processes thus positioned the AU as a critical hub for advocacy and targeted policy action for promoting the implementation of democratic, human rights and peace and security norms and accountability. Of equal significance is the opportunity AU avails for enhancing the participation of non-state actors and African citizens in the discourse and policy actions on matters of continental importance. AU norms and policy instruments as well as some of its structures constitute the foundation both of legal and political legitimacy and of inspiration for active role of citizens and civil society in mobilizing at national and regional level to engage governments and AU's policy processes. AU norms and policy framework have also explicitly recognized the importance of connecting citizens with continental policy making structures. While there have been various mechanisms established to enhance this interface, there is a still a need for ensuring policies adequately meet the expectations of citizens.

The current trend that saw the revival of unconstitutional changes of government and the continuing democratic backsliding in the continent require an in-depth reflection to devise the best course of action. An important aspect in this regard is understanding the public perception of such changes and dynamics in the governance landscape of the continent. It is hence critical to assess the expectations and demands of citizens to further unpack the underlying factors and drivers of such changes across the continent.

Amani Africa as a leading institution that contributes to the continental aspiration enshrined in Agenda 2063, has worked actively towards promoting the meaningful participation of citizens and CSOs in the AU. Within this framework and to further bolster citizens engagement, Amani Africa is currently undertaking a project that aims at supporting the alignment of AU decision making with African citizens' needs and expectations. One way of capturing and reflecting public perception is through the use of quality survey data. By tapping into the ample resources of Afrobarometer (AB) as the leading source of such data, Amani Africa envisages to undertake consultations and convenings with a wide range of stakeholders and AU decisions making actors.

Within this framework, Amani Africa convened the first consultation in Nairobi, Kenya on 26 and 27 July 2023. The first convening served to bring together key AU policy actors from AGA and APSA Secretariat as well as other relevant departments and divisions of the AU Commission, to reflect on the various ways through which data sources such as AB can contribute to enhancing not only the quality of AU working documents, but also ultimately the decision and policymaking of AU institutions by presenting citizens' perceptions on aspects relevant to governance and peace and security.

Following from that engagement, Amani Africa is planning to convene a second consultation which aims to bring together actors in the civil society space, the media as well as think-tanks that work closely with the AU on peace and security, democratic governance and constitutional rule, and whose work is used by AU actors in their planning and policy deliberations.

### **Objectives of the convening**

The second convening, further to presenting the platform for exchanging experiences and good practices on how to enhance CSOs' support to AU's policy and decision-making processes, also avails the opportunity to reflect on how organisations such as AB can feed into the works of other CSOs by presenting primary data on citizen viewpoints.

To this end, a one day and a half convening is planned to take place which will bring together representatives of CSOs in Africa engaged in varied fields relevant to democratic governance, peace and security. The key expected outcomes of the convening are as follows:

- A comprehensive overview of AB data in areas related to peace and security, human rights, democratic governance and constitutional rule presented to representatives of CSOs that work closely with and on the AU;
- Reflections made and concrete approaches discussed on how to strengthen collaboration between AB and AU-facing CSOs to enable enhanced support to AU policymakers in their policy and decision-making processes;
- Best mechanisms discussed for advancing the influence of citizen voices in AU's decisions and policymaking processes, specifically through the use of data sources such as AB.

### **Date and Venue**

Date: 08 – 09 September, 2023

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia