

# SILENCING THE GUNS

Nov'19  
Jan'20

# NEWSLETTER



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Cover Page: Burning Weapons, Photo: ©PSCU Kenya (President's Strategic Communication Unit)

Back Page: African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Photo©AU

## WELCOME

# Message by Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security



Photo©AUC

At its meeting in Niamey, Niger, in July 2019, the Executive Council of the African Union (AU), decided that the AU theme of the year for 2020 would be 'Silencing the Guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa's development'. This will contribute to ongoing efforts to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters, violent conflicts and to prevent genocide.

The selection of 'Silencing the Guns' as the AU's theme for 2020 will serve as an opportunity to streamline collective efforts into an action plan to address the numerous challenges for the attainment of a peaceful and prosperous Africa, beyond 2020.

In 2017, the Assembly of the Union adopted a strategic document referred to as the 'AU Master Roadmap (AUMR) Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020'. Since the adoption of the Master

Roadmap, the Peace and Security Council, the AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations (UN), African institutions/organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs) and partners have been facilitating its implementation.

We need to harness the immense potentials of the continent's rich resources and create the enabling environment for socio-economic development by implementing measures designed to address governance deficits and eradicate economic and social disparities, which culminated in the adoption of the OAU/AU 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration on 25th May 2013, in which our leaders pledge not to bequeath the "current state of affairs" to the next generation of Africans.

In this context, it is critical to focus all efforts towards consolidating the gains accomplished thus far, identify the challenges encountered, rationalize practical responses into tangible action plans towards realizing a conflict-free Africa.

**Message from His Excellency Ramtane Lamamra, the AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa**

## **Happy New Year!**



Photo©AUC

I welcome you all to the second edition of Silencing the Guns newsletter. A new decade is upon us and with it a need to exploit our innate abilities and comparative advantages to end Africa's recurring conflicts.

We have an enormous responsibility on our hands, to make lasting change in this new decade. The year 2020 is especially significant, as it is the year that the African Union and indeed all African citizens, are duty bound to change the status quo, by actionable deeds geared towards ending all violent conflicts on the continent. We must re-commit and re-dedicate our efforts to silence the guns, in order to realise a more peaceful and prosperous continent.

In the past year, we took part in several activities aimed at bolstering our campaign. My Office continues to engage different stakeholders involved in this highly critical initiative, in order to fast-track actions aimed at creating lasting peace.

African Union (AU) member states are bound by a shared destiny, and to this end – a collective responsibility on the continent's security should be pursued, through a common framework and prevention mechanism.

Last October, I interacted with some of our key stakeholders and partners at the 10th High-Level Retreat for AU Special Representatives and Envoys in Djibouti. I was highly impressed by their commitment to finding lasting solutions to the upheavals bedeviling the continent. The Djibouti meeting highlighted security sector reform and governance, as a prerequisite to peace and security. Such reforms ultimately play a role in promoting stability and lasting peace on the continent.

I also engaged with and shared ideas with peace and security stakeholders at the sixth Dakar Forum on Peace and Security, held in Senegal last November; and hosted a high-level workshop on Silencing the Guns in Aswan, Egypt, attended by some of Africa's eminent leaders, peace and security experts; and civil society representatives in December 2019. As we usher in the new year, collaborative efforts with our partners is giving impetus to our campaign to silence the guns.

The AU believes that peace, security and socio-economic development should be pursued simultaneously. In order to create effective linkages, the Silencing the Guns Unit, which coordinates all activities related to Silencing the Guns, concluded a series of workshops and events last year, which were aimed at streamlining activities of all relevant AU departments and hence implement the "Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020". This is an important document for all stakeholders.

We look forward to implementing the goals set out in the Master Roadmap.

**Happy reading!**



## **2020 Critical in Firming up Multilateral Efforts to Silence the Guns**



Amb. Fatima K. Mohammad, AU Permanent Representative to the UN at the High-Level Workshop on Silencing the Guns in Aswan, Egypt, 2019, Photo©Artisan Prod

As the world ushers in a new decade, Africa is looking up to its leaders to get the continent out of a quandary of conflict, poverty, disease and corruption that is threatening to regress its growth.

Despite progress made over the years in containing violent conflicts, lasting peace remains elusive in parts of Africa as a result of new and emerging threats. To recommit and rededicate efforts at keeping conflicts at bay, the African Union (AU) is devoting the year 2020 to silence the guns on the continent, through a multiplicity of actions involving AU member states, regional economic communities and mechanisms, the private sector, civil society and other key stakeholders.

*“Silencing the guns is a complex, yet noble responsibility of the African Union, its member states, its Regional Economic Communities, and Regional Mechanisms, and indeed all African citizens,”* explained H.E Smail Chergui, AU’s Commissioner for Peace and Security, at a high-level workshop on Silencing the Guns, held in the Egyptian resort city of Aswan in December 2019.

Acknowledging that the goal of peace is a shared responsibility amongst African governments, regional institutions, Africa’s partners, African citizens, the private sector, youth, women and other special groups; and that peace can be attainable through tolerance, conflict resolution and prevention, good governance and democracy - the workshop agreed on deliberate actions that should be taken, to promote peace and create conducive conditions for Africa’s development.

The Aswan meet was critical in intensifying multi-lateral coordination and collaborative efforts, for effective harmonization of policies and actions on silencing the guns in Africa. The nexus between peace and development was a key feature at the forum, where participants noted that AU member states, as primary custodians for public security, have the ultimate responsibility to develop policies and actions necessary to stem the spiraling



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## **SILENCING THE GUNS:**

Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development

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2020 Theme of the Year, Logo©AUC

violence, especially across the Sahel region, the Chad basin, parts of the Horn, North and West Africa.

*“Giving a theme to the year 2020 is merely the beginning. The urgency in implementing the priorities we have decided upon, require that we harness and concentrate all possible efforts,”* notes H.E Ramtane Lamamra, the AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa. Ambassador Lamamra is leading efforts to fast track the campaign to silence the guns on the continent and harmonise activities related to the initiative.

The African Union Commission is placing emphasis on member states’ role in making the campaign a success. The 55-nation body argues that African countries are bound by a shared destiny and therefore, have a collective responsibility on the continent’s security.

*“My commitment to the pursuit of an Africa free from conflict is resolute. In my view, an impactful Action Plan reflecting the specific situations of individual member states would set the trajectory to rid the continent of the root causes of instability and violent armed conflicts”* said Amb. Chergui.

As part of its Agenda 2063 framework, the AU heads of state and government adopted an ambitious initiative, to silence the guns in Africa by 2020.

## KEY HIGHLIGHT

While good progress has been made in reducing state-driven conflicts, the persistence of ethno-religious, resource and politically driven conflicts continue, especially in fragile regions, and remains one of the biggest threats to Africa's socio-economic development.

The African Union developed and is implementing a Master Roadmap on Practical Steps to Silence the Guns - which seeks to end the cycle of violent conflicts and disruptive crises on the continent. The continental body is expected to formally launch the slogan – *“Silencing the Guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa's development”* – as the AU theme of the year 2020, at its heads of state Summit in February, formally rolling out a plethora of carefully curated plans and activities dedicated at the continent's pacification.

*“Two proposals in particular strongly resonated with me, namely, that we should conceive of Silencing the Guns as a decade-long endeavour and,*

*due to its cross-cutting nature, the urgent need to integrate and make the best use of the outstanding contributions of women and the youth,”* Amb. Lamamra stated, at the conclusion of the December 2019 two-day Aswan high-level workshop on Silencing the Guns.

The role of Africa's youth in silencing the guns will be critical in a continent where young people bear the brunt of violent conflicts and are often manipulated by warring parties, both state and non-state actors into taking up arms.

While the continent's total population is expected to increase to 1.6 billion in 2030, and three billion in 2065, young people in Africa will total 531 million by 2065 – which will be approximately 30.2% of Africa's total population, according to UN estimates. The African Union is looking up to this demographic dividend to change the course of the continent's future.



Amr Moussa, Panel of the Wise and Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security at the High-Level Workshop on Silencing the Guns in Aswan Egypt, 2019, Photo: Egypt©Artisan Prod



# Making Silencing the Guns a priority on the agendas of African parliamentarians



Participants at the Pan-African Parliamentarians Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 2019, Photo©AUC

On 28th-29th November 2019, the African Union’s Silencing the Guns Unit, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, organized a joint workshop with the PanAfrican Parliament in preparation for the theme of the year 2020 **“Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development”**. Parliamentarians from over 20 African countries, the Youth and Women Caucus as well as civil society came together for the two-day workshop, which was held in the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa.

During the workshop, the participants learnt more about the ‘Silencing the Guns’ Campaign, discussed issues surrounding the role of women and youth in peace, and were able to share their perspective and experiences from their own countries. The High-level representative for Silencing the Guns, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra moderated the workshop and was joined by high-level experts, such as the AU Special Envoy for Youth, Aya Chebbi, in the different focus sessions.

As a result, the parliamentarians; as representatives of African people, can now assume their role in advancing Africa’s peace agenda and contribute towards ‘Silencing the Guns by 2020’ – the theme of the year. They are equipped to advocate and mobilize their national parliaments and constituencies to take action, to develop and implement National ‘Silencing the Guns’ Programmes, fully committing to ending all wars in Africa.



Civil Society Representative at the Pan-African Parliamentarians Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 2019, Photo©AUC

## NEWS FROM THE UNIT

# Djibouti Hosts Security Sector Reform and Governance Forum parliamentarians



Panelists at the Security Sector Reform and Governance Forum, Djibouti City, Djibouti, 2019,  
Photo©STG/PSD/AUC

The 10th African Union (AU) High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa was held in Djibouti City, Djibouti at the end of October 2019.

Under the theme, *“Security Sector Reform and Governance in Africa: Evolving Principles and Practices from Prevention, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding Interventions”*, the retreat reviewed the AU’s existing Security Sector Reform/Governance instruments and partnerships, and their effectiveness in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. The Retreat attended by AU’s Special Representatives and Envoys looked into the challenges of incorporating security sector reform/governance dimensions into conflict prevention, mediation and the effective implementation of

peace agreements. The two days deliberation acknowledged promising progress at institutional level, while highlighting the fact that security sector reforms and governance is yet to be fully integrated into the continent’s conflict prevention and resolution discourse.

The forum, which was officially opened by H.E. Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, the President of the Republic of Djibouti, brought together high-ranking AU officials among them the AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, H.E. Amb. Smail Chergui – the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Amb. Ramtane Lamamra – African Union’s High Representative for Silencing the Guns, the AU Panel of the Wise, key African Union partners, Researchers, representatives from the

academia and non-governmental organisations, among others. *“This discussion on Security Sector Reform and governance is timely. We have to expedite our efforts in this regard,”* said President Guelleh in his opening remarks.

H.E. Amb. Smail Chergui, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, acknowledged the challenges facing many African in reforming the security sector and inculcating governance. He stated, *“The AU Master Roadmap for Silencing the Guns emphasizes the challenges of transforming African forces into professional and disciplined national armies”*. This, he added often led to *“eruption or relapse into conflict”*.

Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, the African Union’s High Representative for Silencing the Guns underscored the importance of the High-Level Retreat. He said security sector reform and governance served both as a conflict resolution tool, and also as a longer-term conflict prevention endeavor that translates into silencing the guns on the continent. He urged AU member states to be on the forefront of actions aimed at pacifying Africa.

## Sixth Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security

The AU High Representative on Silencing the Guns, Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, addressed the Sixth Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, in Senegal on 19 November 2019. The two-day forum brought together African heads of state and governments and international partners in peace and security issues. Amb. Lamamra’s talking points focused on Silencing the Guns

*“Silencing the Guns initiative is premised on a belief that the African Union Commission owns the campaign, with support from the UN and Regional Economic Communities. That perception is misplaced,”* Amb. Lamamra noted.

*“It is important to note, that the ownership and implementation of this critical undertaking and its programmes, lies squarely with the AU Member States. It is the responsibility of Member States to spearhead this initiative, while the AU Commission, the Regional Economic Communities, the UN and other key partners join in, as a support function,”* he explained.

The two-day High-Level Retreat which showcased the linkage between silencing the guns and the evolving principles and practices of prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding interventions, ended with a strong commitment from participants to advance security sector and governance reforms.



Forum International de Dakar  
sur la Paix et la Sécurité en Afrique

Dakar International Forum  
on Peace and Security in Africa

Logo©CEIS

in Africa initiative and efforts being undertaken to pacify the continent.

The annual Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa was launched at the Elysee Summit in France in 2014, under the patronage of the President of Senegal, H.E Macky SALL and provides a platform for the continent’s leaders and partners, to discuss issues related to peace and security on the continent.

# Building and perpetuating peace in Africa

The first edition of the bi-annual **“Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace”**, was organised under the overall theme of **“Building and perpetuating peace in Africa: a multi-stakeholder movement”**. Jointly organised by UNESCO, the African Union and the Angolan Government from 18th to 22nd of September 2019, the Biennale attracted over 800 participants from all over the continent and beyond to Angola’s capital Luanda in order to discuss and promote an overarching **“culture of peace”** in Africa.

Official country delegations, activists, journalists, artists, youth ambassadors, participants from academia and the private sector, as well as high-level representatives of different International Organizations and institutions, joined the various discussions on topics ranging from the state of peace and conflict prevention in Africa, over ecolog-

ical issues and innovative entrepreneurship to the participation of youth and women in peace-building and other areas of social and political life.

The Head of the **“Silencing the Guns”**– Unit, Mrs. Aïssatou Hayatou attended the Biennale with the aim of setting the next steps towards initiating the awareness-raising campaign under this memorable topic which will also be the AU Theme of the Year 2020. The reception of the call for action was overwhelming and many, especially young and female participants, demonstrated strong interest in contributing to the campaign with their own activities within their home communities or organizations.





# Commemorative book recognising Women's Contribution to Peace and Security Agenda



Participants at the Women, Peace and Security in Africa Event, Dakar, Senegal, 2019, Photo: 2019©Artisan Prod

In its policies and allocation of resources, the AU shows commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In fact, it is a crucial goal and part of the strategy to realise the Agenda 2063 and Aspiration 6, which puts women's participation in the center of Africa's development.

Hence, it is not surprising, that the AU particularly advocates for the participation and leadership of women as a key factor in achieving silencing the guns by 2020 through the promotion of peace and enhancement of good governance.

African women are already active peace-builders and to honour their work on conflict prevention and resolution and peacekeeping, the AU together with the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU)

have decided to publish their stories and achievements in a Commemorative Book. Within each of the stories, there will also be a chapter on their contribution towards the Agenda 2063 initiative to silence the guns.

With this book, the AU hopes to encourage women across the continent and the world to participate in peacebuilding, and motivate those that are already involved in mediation, peacebuilding and peacekeeping activities.

To read the full article on the Commemorative Book, please visit [www.theeastafrican.co.ke/Sponsored/African-women-contribution-to-the-peace-and-security-agenda/4358802-5225188-29orfqz/index.html](http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/Sponsored/African-women-contribution-to-the-peace-and-security-agenda/4358802-5225188-29orfqz/index.html)

## WOMAN AND YOUTH

# Journalist Wins Grant to Produce Stories on Silencing the Guns in Africa



Mary Mwendwa (third from the left), winner of the StG Award, and participants at the AWiM Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, 2019, Photo©African Women in the Media

*“The pen is mightier than the sword and in the digital era, the keyboard is the new high tech pen and should be used effectively and with purpose, to ensure that Africa’s stories, and, especially stories of African women and girls are no longer relegated to the footnote of history or current affairs,”* said AU’s Director of Information and Communication, Ms. Leslie Richer, during a ceremony held to award the grants.

In July 2019, Kenyan journalist Mary Mwendwa won a grant from the African Union and the

German Technical Cooperation – GIZ – for her story proposal on Silencing the Guns in Africa. Mary received the grant in Kenya’s capital Nairobi, at the end of a three-day conference for women in the media, organised by African Women in Media (AWiM) and the African Union’s Directorate of Information and Communication, supported by GIZ. She is dedicated to research the different roles of women in extremist groups, such as Al Shabaab.

She compiled her research in an article, which will be published in the next Newsletter edition.

# Youth and Silencing the Guns



Aya Chebbi, AU Youth Envoy, and participants at the Youth and StG Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, 2019, Photo©Neil Maliliwe

As part of the Silencing the Guns Initiative, ensuring youth assumes an important role in achieving the objectives is essential. In order to gather the youth, discuss how they can be involved in the activities and how to ensure their voices are heard, a side event on the role of the African youth in Silencing the Guns was organized as part of the Africa Regional High-Level Conference on “Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremisms Conductive to Terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, in July.

The event created a space for over 50 youth activists, high-level representatives as well as members of think tanks and consulting firms to discuss their role in Silencing the Guns. Together, they proposed several possible actions led by youth to be carried out in 2019 and 2020. Among them were activities that are attractive to youth and allow for concrete expression of their diversity and opinion, such as in areas of sports, arts, civic and peace education, vocational and entrepreneurship skills, as well as data collection or advocacy.

# Integrating Silencing the Guns in the works of the AU Youth Envoy



Participants at the AU Youth Envoy Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, 2019  
Photo©AU Youth Envoy

In December, Aya Chebbi, the AU Youth Envoy, and her team met in Nairobi to work on how to best integrate Silencing the Guns into their workplan and communication strategy.

With this, the involvement of the youth in Silencing the Guns, especially with regards to the theme of the year 2020, can be ensured, which is essential in achieving the objectives of the initiative.



## **Kenya's President Burns Stockpile of Weapons in the Fight Against Illegal Firearms**



Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta burning a stockpile of weapons, Photo©PSCU Kenya (President's Strategic Communication Unit)

On 19 November 2019, Kenya made a bold move in its efforts to rid the country of illegal firearms. Kenya's president H.E Uhuru Kenyatta set ablaze a stockpile of 8,700 illegal firearms and 366-thousand assorted ammunition, recovered from illegal possession.

As one of the strongest proponents of international action against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, President Kenyatta at the same time, warned those in continued possession of illegal firearms that they will be dealt with firmly, by law enforcement agencies – a demonstration of the country's commitment to strengthening regional and global peace and security.

The exemplary action by Kenya is a big boost to efforts at silencing the guns in Africa. Although the drivers of violence, crimes and conflict on the continent vary - the use of small arms is a common feature across Africa. Widespread availability and abuse of weapons promotes the continent's volatility, giving little chance for development.

The razing down of the stockpile of illegal weapons is therefore in line with the aspirations of the African Union. In the OAU/AU Solemn Declaration, adopted by the AU Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, on 26 May 2013, the leaders express their "determination to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality, for all our people and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters and violent conflicts, and to prevent genocide. *"Further, the heads of state and government committed not to bequeath the burden of conflict to the next generation of Africans"* and to undertake measures to end all wars in Africa by 2020.



## Gun Policy in Kenya:

- Regulation of guns/firearms is considered restrictive.
- Law does not guarantee the right to private gun ownership.
- Private possession of handguns (pistols and revolvers) is permitted under license.
- Licenses are granted with genuine reason, such as personal protection. The minimum age for gun ownership is 12 years for miniature rifles and up to 20 gauge shotguns, or 14 years for other permitted firearms.
- Where a past history, or apprehended likelihood of family violence exists, a gun license should be denied or revoked.

For more information on Kenya's gun policy, visit: [www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/kenya](http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/kenya)



# Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra



Ramtane Lamamra, Photo©Artisan Prod

Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra was appointed by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat as his High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa, in October 2017. In this capacity, Amb. Lamamra, in close collaboration with all concerned stakeholders, assists the Commission to galvanize support towards ending violence and sustaining peace on the continent, and is leading efforts to fast track the campaign to silence the guns in Africa and harmonise activities related to the initiative.

The objective to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020 was adopted by the African heads of state and government in their 25 May 2013 Solemn Declaration marking the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU. Silencing the Guns in Africa is part of the flagship projects and programmes of Agenda 2063, Africa's blueprint for its long-term socioeconomic and integrative transformation.

Amb. Lamamra has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the area of peace and security, including mediation and conflict prevention; and had previously worked with the African Union as the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security from 2008 to 2013.

From 2013 to 2017, he served his country Algeria as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. He also served as Permanent Secretary of the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005–2007), Ambassador to Portugal (2004–2005), Ambassador to the USA (1996–1999), Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN in New York (1993–1996), Ambassador to Austria, and Permanent Representative to the UN Office, IAEA and UNIDO in Vienna (1992– 1993). From 1989 to 1991, he was Ambassador to Ethiopia and to Djibouti, and Permanent Representative to the OAU and to the UNECA.



# 33rd AU Summit in Addis Abeba:

**21 – 22  
January 2020:**

39th Ordinary Session  
of the Permanent  
Representatives'  
Committee (PRC).

**6 – 7  
February 2020:**

36th Ordinary Session  
of the Executive Council  
(Ministerial)

**9 – 10  
February 2020:**

33rd Ordinary Session  
of the Assembly of the  
Heads of State and  
Government of the  
African Union

A special Newsletter covering the activities and outcomes from the AU Summit will be published after the Summit.

# IMPRINT

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