



26 January 2021

H.E. Mahamat Moussa Faki
The Chairperson
African Union Commission
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CALL TO MAINTAIN FOCUS ON PEACE AND SECURITY DURING THE 34TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION

Your Excellency

We, a group of Regional Think Tanks and Civil Society Organisations working in support of the African Union's agenda of Silencing the Guns, present our compliments to the African Union Commission on the occasion of its preparations for the upcoming 34th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union.

Your Excellency allow us firstly to express our congratulations to your good offices together with the Government of the Republic of South Africa for your combined stewardship over the affairs of the African Union last year. Under your collective leadership the African Union made notable achievements such as: the coordinated response to COVID-19 (which included the procurement of medical supplies and equipment as well as a joint effort at economic mobilization to address debt and economic assistance from Africa's development partners); the operationalization of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); the continued focus on various peace efforts around the continent and most importantly, the extension (by the 14th Extraordinary Session of the Union) of the Silencing the Guns flagship project and its roadmap by 10 years.

Your Excellency, we look with anticipation to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) assuming the Chairperson function of the Union at the conclusion of the upcoming Summit. The DRC assumes this critical role at a time of several ongoing concerns. Across the continent countries are battling the COVID-19 pandemic, the instability arising from its socioeconomic impacts and the need to ensure that vaccines are both accessible and affordable to citizens. There are several sustained and emerging armed conflicts resulting in the killing, maiming and displacement of a growing number of civilians, including children. All this in the context of persisting governance gaps and approaches to elections which themselves result in conflict. *In this regard, it is our hope that the upcoming 34th AU Summit will acknowledge the weightiness of these issues, deliberate on and lay out a clear agenda for the pursuit of these priority concerns in 2021.*

In this context, we note that the AU Heads of State and Government declared the year 2021 as "The AU Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage". We view this as not only an opportunity to reinvigorate the spirit of Pan-Africanism but also an opportunity *to entrench the culture of peace and tolerance as envisaged under Agenda 2063's aspiration of a peaceful and secure Africa (Aspiration 4)*. It is for this reason that we applaud and welcome the extension of the AU Master-Roadmap on Silencing the Guns (AUMR) into a 10-year programme aimed at addressing insecurity and entrenching peace on the continent.

It is our hope that through this theme of the year and the extension of the AUMR, Africa will see the facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogues at the regional and local levels on realizing the culture of peace and tolerance anchored on constitutionalism, human rights and the rule of law. We also look forward to an expanded space for consultation and effective participation in the AU's deliberations on peace and security with a view to realizing a people-driven agenda on silencing the guns.

Your Excellency our organisations remain available as constructive partners to help in taking stock of the gains and gaps withing the Silencing the Guns agenda thus far and in helping to articulate actionable priorities and tangible milestones which can be jointly implemented over the coming 10 years.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of our highest regards.

Signed by:

All Africa Council of Churches (AACC)
Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)
Life Peace Institute
Oxfam International
Plan International
Save the Children International
The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR)
West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

With copy to:

H.E. Ambassador Edward Xolisa Makaya, Chairperson, Permanent Representative Committee
H.E. Ambassador Baye Moctoar Diop, Chairperson, Peace and Security Council
H.E. Ambassador Jean-Leon Ngandu Ilunga, Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Congo
H.E. Ambassador Fafre Camara, Ambassador of the Republic of Mali