



## **LAUNCH OF THE APRM YOUTH WEBINAR SERIES**

On The Impact Of Covid-19 On  
Political Governance, Peace &  
Security In Africa

**29 JULY 2020 | 10:00 - 12:30 (SAT)**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**SERIES ON**

**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE  
DRIVERS OF CONFLICTS AND STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITIES IN AFRICA**

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**THEME OF THE FIRST WEBINAR:**  
**“THE IMPACT OF COVID -19 ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLITICAL GOVERNANCE,  
PEACE & SECURITY”**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

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Africa's youth are confronted with an increasingly complex socio-economic and political context which is hindering their empowerment: extensive poverty, limited access to education, lack of employment opportunities, limited benefits from globalization, water scarcity, peace and security challenges, violent extremism, sexual violence, corruption, and forced migration, to name just a few. These challenges have been exacerbated by the advent of the new Covid-19 pandemic which emerged in late 2019 infecting more than seven hundred thousand persons in Africa and causing the death of approximately 15,000 in less than seven months, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) as 17 July 2020. The

effects of the pandemic, globally, have been felt beyond the health sector and Africa has not been spared in all the afore-mentioned sectors. This pandemic broke out at a time when Africa was grappling with the implementation the African Union (AU)'s annual theme 'Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development' against the backdrop of Agenda 2063, which articulates the pan-African vision of an 'integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa'. The Silencing the Guns programme of the African Union(AU) intended to dedicate the Year 2020 to tackling decisively the root causes of conflicts and accelerate the resolution of a number of peace processes, as well as solidify the resilience and capacity of

Member States to address vulnerabilities more comprehensively, efficiently and effectively. Needless to say, these ambitions have been slowed down with the pandemic due to the lids placed on movement, travel bans, etc.

Against the above background, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) will convene a series of webinars led by the APRM Youth Network to galvanize youth voices, their perspectives and to **assess the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on peace and security**; are there new causes that could create conflicts in Africa other than the traditionally accepted drivers? Are these amplified due to the pandemic? Are the eight root causes of conflicts identified in the AU Silencing the Guns Roadmaps persisting or have they transformed in their respective regions due to the pandemic? The webinars series will thus concurrently contribute to

***operationalizing of the African Youth Charter in APRM States’***. It should be recalled that the APRM, which is a self-monitoring instrument to which Member States of the African Union (AU) accede voluntarily, is also required, under Paragraph 25 of its Base Document, to advise the Peace and Security Council (PSC) on early warning related issues structural vulnerabilities in line with the Decision of the AU Assembly ***Assembly/AU/Dec.686(XXX)***





## II. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE DRIVERS OF CONFLICTS AND COVID 19 IN AFRICA

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The preamble of the “AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns by Year 2020” attributes crises and violent conflicts in Africa to: “**1) poverty, economic hardships, 2) violation or manipulation of constitutions, 3) violation of human rights, 4) exclusion, 5) inequalities, 6) marginalization and mismanagement of Africa’s rich ethnic diversity, as well as 7) relapses into the cycle of violence in some post-conflict settings and 8) external interference in African affairs**”.

The Roadmap further asserts confidently that ***these challenges can be overcome***, as long as the correct remedies are identified and are applied. Unfortunately, ***these remedies have become significantly challenging to apply with the advent of COVID-19***, in early 2020. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt quite quickly on international peace and security practitioners: the lockdown measures, which several Member States have implemented since early March 2020, have enabled parties in some conflicts

zones at liberty to accelerate exactions in their remote localities. Such were the cases in Libya, Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sahel, and Northern Mozambique, according to various sources including the weekly Africa Resilience Monitor report issued by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) which confirms that COVID-19 has acted as a **conflict multiplier** to some extent. Not only has the number of acts of violent extremism and insurgencies increased, but the number of Gender-based violence (GBV) have also spiked, while a few long-standing conflict situations have reduced in intensity due to the temporary lids placed by lockdown measures.

According to policy makers, peacemakers on the ground and researchers, the threats to peace and security amid a global pandemic, and in a post-COVID-19 context, are likely to be expanded and will include: ***a) a move towards authoritarianism in some countries, b) a rise in xenophobia, nationalism and populism as well as a rise of social conflicts, which in turn***

*will intensify c) tensions between states and citizens; challenges related to over urbanization (urban safety and*

*security); increased youth unemployment;*

### III. THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON SOUTHERN AFRICA SPECIFICALLY: POLITICAL TENSIONS, GOVERNANCE DEFICIT AND EXTERNAL INTERFERENCES

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While the Southern African region has emerged from the large-scale wars that, in some instances, dated back to the Cold War and the apartheid era, a few countries of the region continue to be affected by isolated armed conflicts: the 18 years long ongoing war against armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) , and smaller, low level, armed conflicts that erupt occasionally in both Angola and Mozambique. In Angola, the long-standing separatist struggle movement in the oil rich Cabinda region has, on occasion, disrupted extractive activities. As an enduring low-level insurgency, it may not have the potential to destabilize the central state, but it has led the Angolan government to maintain tight security in Cabinda and indeed the country.

In Mozambique the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) rebels took up arms in 2012 and, although they ***lacked the military capacity to rekindle a civil war***, peace will remain fragile until such time as the grievances over governance and economic marginalization are addressed and Renamo fighters are fully demobilised.

The most acute crises in the Southern African states in the past 10 years have been sparked by issues of governance, **including electoral disputes, government unaccountability and the abuse of state resources in a bid to hold onto power**. Constitutional crises resulting from the undermining of democratic institutions by authoritarian regimes and the military have been temporarily contained by the formation of transitional governments in Zimbabwe,

Madagascar and the DRC. But the enduring crisis of governance in Zimbabwe that witnessed the military getting involved a political transition. The DRC and Madagascar managed to conduct peaceful presidential elections and have restored the regular constitutional order. Meanwhile Swaziland is confronted with governance challenges and Lesotho continues to suffer from political instability and military interference in civilian politics. Governance deficits, political conflict and electoral violence even affect the consolidated democracy of South Africa, as well as otherwise peaceful states like Zambia.

While most Southern African states have made significant strides towards democratic types of regime, the degrees of democratisation varies from country to country, with manifestations of ***intrastate crises, electioneering disputes,***

***change of government, mismanagement of public affairs and tensions between state and citizenry, gender-based violence, etc. Governance deficits may therefore be said to constitute the most immediate threat to stability in Southern Africa,*** which emphasizes that democracy is neither a guarantee nor a prerequisite for peace.

Accordingly, there is a need to discuss whether the Global health pandemic is having an impact on the existing governance related tensions described above, or whether new threats to peace and stability have emerged or been amplified since March 2020. The webinar will therefore provide an opportunity to undertake a preliminary Regional Horizon-scanning Exercise & discuss in general terms the coping and resilience mechanisms.

## IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE YOUTH WEBINAR ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

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The APRM Youth Webinar on the Impact of Covid -19 on Southern Africa's Peace and Stability will take place on 29 July 2020. **It will contribute to the following processes:**

- a. Contribute to **updating the** APRM Early Warning Framework for Conflict prevention **as well as the** AU Silencing the Guns Master Roadmap, which will be discussed at the APRM-Peace and Security Council Retreat in October 2020;
- b. Feed into the Africa Governance Report,
- c. Promote the **domestication of the African Youth charter in APRM States'**, which is geared towards youth action towards their

development and government support for youth empowerment. As of 2020, 16 AU Member States have not yet ratified the charter, 13 of them have not signed since the AYC came into force 14 years ago. It is paramount for APRM States to universally accede to the AYC in the year of Silencing the Guns because the charter mandates the emancipation and empowerment of youth that is essential to youth-led conflict prevention and early warning.

- d. The webinar series will also assist in **building-up to the 2nd APRM International Youth Symposium** (i.e. the International Youth Symposium was held on 1-2 July 2019, in N'djamena, Chad, under the theme "The Youth as APRM driving force for good governance in Africa").



African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)  
230 15<sup>th</sup> Road, Randjespark  
Midrand, South Africa  
Tel: +27 (0) 11 256 3401

     
[www.aprm-au.org](http://www.aprm-au.org)