MAKE PEACE HAPPEN: STRENGTHENING POLITICAL GOVERNANCE FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFRICA

A research report based on the AU High-level Retreat held in Cairo, Egypt,
from 4–5 September 2011, organised by the African Union Peace and
Security Department in cooperation with the Government of Egypt,
the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes,
the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Cairo Regional Centre
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ACCORD is a civil society institution working throughout Africa to bring creative African solutions to the challenges posted by conflict on the continent. ACCORD's primary aim is to influence political developments by bringing conflict resolution, dialogue and institutional development to the forefront as an alternative to armed violence and protracted conflict.

The retreat

Through sharing experiences, challenges and possible solutions, the retreat aimed at strengthening African peacemaking efforts in relation to conflicts that emerge from issues related to governance.

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List of acronyms

ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
AfDB	African Development Bank
AfriMAP	Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project
AGR	African Governance Report
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CCCPA	Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa
CSO(s)	Civil society organisation(s)
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation, UN
HD Centre	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
HDI	Human Development Index
ICGLR	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
ICT	Information communication technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LDCs	Least developed countries
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development

NGO(s)	Non-governmental organisation(s)
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
PCRD	Post-conflict reconstruction and development
PoW	Panel of the Wise
PSC	Peace and Security Council, AU
REC(s)	Regional economic community(ies)
RM(s)	Regional mechanism(s)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SodNet	Social Network of Development, Kenya
SSR	Security sector reform
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Executive summary

From 4–5 September 2011, the African Union (AU) convened its second High-level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa in Cairo, Egypt. The AU Retreat was convened in collaboration with the host country, Egypt; the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD); the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) and the Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA). The overall theme of the 2011 AU Retreat was 'Strengthening political governance for peace, security and stability in Africa', primarily as an opportunity to respond to governance-related challenges to the peace and security landscape in Africa.

The AU Retreat took place against the background of unprecedented developments and unrests in North Africa. It brought together approximately 150 participants, including senior officials and special envoys/representatives of the AU, regional economic communities (RECs)/regional mechanisms (RMs), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the League of Arab States, the International Organisation of La Francophonie, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, research institutes and think tanks, and experienced private mediators. Through sharing experiences, challenges and possible solutions, the retreat aimed to strengthen African peacemaking efforts in relation to conflicts that emerge from governance-related issues.

Through both plenary and break-out sessions, the AU Retreat provided the opportunity to exchange perspectives on the following topics:

1. trends, challenges and prospects for political governance in Africa

2. the role of governance in preventing conflicts, including leadership and accountability

3. the restoration of peace when governance breaks down, with a focus on election-related conflicts, constitutional crises, security sector reform (SSR) and the management of national resources.

The imperative for good governance on the African continent cannot be overemphasised. This is due to the intricate connection between governance and other socio-economic issues including economic growth, development, security and democracy. In the African context, the governance of public office is prominent in discussions of good governance, hence the use of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) definition, which conceptualises governance as the "exercise of power or authority to manage a country's resources and affairs. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences" (UNDP, 1997). Good governance emphasises values such as participation, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness and respect for the rule of law.

Since its establishment, the AU has undertaken new commitments in the field of good governance, expanding on earlier pledges made by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The Constitutive Act (AU, 2002) confirmed the AU's determination "to promote and protect human and peoples' rights, consolidate democratic institutions and culture, and to ensure good governance and the rule of law". In July 2002, the AU supplemented the Constitutive Act and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) with a Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance, which states that member states "believe in just, honest, transparent, accountable and participatory government and probity in public life" (NEPAD, 2002).

While every country faces the challenge of developing its national infrastructure and putting in place functioning governance mechanisms, the governance environment in Africa must be understood in terms of the pressing socio-economic conditions that characterise much of the continent. Despite the achievements that have been registered in a number of African countries, the majority of the countries classified by the UN as 'least developed countries' (LDCs) are found in Africa. This reality underscores the importance of improved governance to realise the needs of society, and contextualises the challenging context in which governance structures operate. It is against this backdrop that, in recent years, several efforts have been initiated to assess and measure the quality of governance of countries around the world – including those with a particular focus in Africa.

Measuring and comparing governance across different countries is a controversial and political exercise, which is by definition an extremely challenging undertaking. That said, governance measures such as the NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the African Governance Report (AGR), the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, the African Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP) and the Human Development Index do still yield powerful comparative assessment tools capable of capturing the societal conditions that drive governance efforts. Developing statistical tools for comparisons between countries allows for the ability to monitor change, identify problems and contribute to priority setting and policy formulation – thereby revealing in a country an understanding of the governance environment that would otherwise be invisible.

In recent years, there have been a number of initiatives and interventions intended to enhance governance in Africa. A key initiative was the adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance at the 8th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, held in Addis Ababa on 30 January 2007. This charter highlights the commitment by member states to the universal values and principles of democracy, good governance, human rights and the right to development. It is intended to provide member states with a reference point to measure reform and to improve governance processes.

Some of the prospects and opportunities for Africa's governance that were discussed by stakeholders at the retreat included:

- *The role of social media and technologies* – Governments in both the developed and developing world continue to make huge strides in using new technologies to bridge

the gap between the state and its citizens, and to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.

· *The strengthening of governance architecture and norms in Africa* – Strengthening governance architectures and norms in Africa speaks to how states are made accountable in promoting and implementing the principles of good governance.

· *Strengthening the role of regional organisations* – Regional organisations play a significant role in calling for and advocating fair, credible and non-violent elections, and providing opportunities for engagement among member states to increase their efforts in enhancing good governance.

· *The gender dimension of governance* – Governance from a gender perspective means not only creating the spaces for women to engage and actively participate, but that they are seen as legitimate actors in governance processes.

Challenges of governance in Africa that were discussed by stakeholders at the retreat included:

· *Poverty, underdevelopment, food insecurity* – Inefficient and ineffective governance is experienced daily by a great number of Africans who become affected by poverty, underdevelopment and food insecurity.

· *The democracy deficit and election-related violence* – The inability of many African states to exercise effective and truly inclusive democracies, including conducting free and fair elections, remains a leading governance concern.

· *Weak institutions and leadership* – Weak institutions are considered a fundamental reason for poor governance, and the absence of strong institutions can lend itself to a lack of accountability and poor leadership.

· *Entrenched structures of poor governance* – Weak or poor governance finds its expression through the absence of rule of law, limits to democracy, lack of accountability and transparency, and multifaceted corruption. Across different states, these issues are engrained in state structures, undermining the very concept of governance.

· *Security sector reform* – The failure of African security organisations in the past has often stemmed from poor governance of the state and, in particular, the security sector – making this a key factor in developing strategies and mechanisms for improved governance on the continent.

· *The impact of natural resources and climate change on governance* – The ability of a state to benefit from the presence of natural resources within its borders is often a function of its governance strengths or weaknesses. Also, the majority of people in Africa depend on agriculture for food production, which relies heavily on a predictable climate. As global warming alters climatic conditions, leading to threats to food security, the large-scale displacement of people and the possibility of conflict, concern

is heightened as communities struggle over access to dwindling resources – a real challenge for governance globally, and more specifically in Africa.

- *The 'youth bulge'* – Youth unemployment will likely pose a threat to durable peace on the continent and will serve as a conflict driver, since they can be more susceptible to armed violence and militarisation. The capacity of African governments to engage the youth meaningfully will, therefore, continue to be a challenge.

During the deliberations, participants stressed the need not only to strengthen existing frameworks of good governance, but also to call for the operationalisation of existing instruments. The conclusion of the AU Retreat witnessed a call to the AU to support ongoing transition processes in North Africa fully, to ensure that the quest for democracy and good governance is met. A key outcome of the AU Retreat was the Cairo Declaration (AU, 2011), which reiterated the need for renewed efforts by different actors and stakeholders in governance to address implementation gaps. In addition, the following recommendations emerged:

- The AU and regional organisations should enhance the tripartite partnership of government, civil society and the private sector to augment the development–governance nexus. The private sector should partner with government and civil society in enhancing good governance through the support of institution-building initiatives and economic growth endeavours, as well as through the creation or maintenance of socio-economic capital among citizens. There is also a need to enhance efforts towards inclusive development and decision making to facilitate democratic governance in public-sector agencies.

- Civil society should play a role in highlighting gaps or failures of government and the private sector, especially in promoting good governance, which includes transparency and accountability in policy-making and the expenditure of state resources.

- There is a need for regional organisations, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector to promote youth-focused and women-focussed initiatives in promoting good governance.

- The AU and RECs should consolidate and fully operationalise the non-indifference policy on governance in member states, by taking a stand on those who disrespect constitutionalism and the rule of law. Innovative monitoring and evaluation tools – such as the APRM, AGR and the Ibrahim Index of African Governance – should be fully utilised by the AU, RECs and member states to promote accountability, facilitate transparent economic management and, ultimately, consolidate good governance and democracy.

In addition to the above recommendations, participants called for the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) to exercise its powers fully under Article 7(m) of the PSC Protocol. This stipulates that the PSC, in collaboration with the Chairperson of the Commission, shall "follow up, within the framework of its conflict prevention responsibilities, the progress

towards the promotion of democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the sanctity of human life by member states". Greater involvement of the AU Panel of the Wise (PoW), the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) and the African Union Commission (AUC) on Human and People's Rights were also encouraged towards the overall efforts to promote good governance.

1. Introduction

The imperative for good governance on the African continent cannot be overemphasised. This is due to the intricate connection between governance and other socio-economic issues including economic growth, development, security and democracy. Speaking to the nexus between governance and development, the president of the African Development Bank (AfDB) asserted that "good governance is not only a worthy goal but also a prerequisite for sustainable development and poverty reduction in the longer term" (Kabbaj, 2003). Similarly, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) posited that "good governance is essential for the political and economic transformation of Africa" (Amoako, 2000).

Good governance has become a critical pillar of the emerging African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The African Union (AU) Constitutive Act (2002) expressed commitment to the regional intergovernmental organisation's emerging respect for governance, democracy, human rights and human security. Furthermore, the creation by the AU of institutions – such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC); the Pan-African Parliament (PAP); the African Union Commission (AUC); the Economic, Social and Cultural Council; and the African Court of Justice – is a reflection of the shift towards the promotion of broad-based governance machineries with extrajudicial mandates. In addition, African regional organisations have made significant headway in promoting good governance in member states through instruments such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD) African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Institutions such as the Panel of the Wise (PoW) have engaged in preventive diplomacy and peacemaking activities to support good governance in situations where this is under threat.

The theme of the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, held on 30–31 January 2011, was 'Towards greater unity and integration through shared values' (AU, 2011a). One of the outcomes was a call issued for the AUC to ensure greater synergy between peace and security matters and governance and democracy, thereby ensuring that developments in the terrain of shared values feature prominently in the PSC. When considering the broader political environment in many parts of Africa, the need for greater peace, security and stability is apparent and a vital aspect in achieving this is the need to strengthen political governance structures; not only to assist in realising improved stability and security, but in ensuring a meaningful and sustainable peace. Strengthening political governance to achieve improved peace and security can, therefore, be understood as the effective use of political authority in the management of national resources for social and economic development. This involves state institutions, decision-making processes, policy-making, information flows and the leadership responsible for allocating resources and power within society. Thus, whatever the conflict manifestations, improved political governance remains a critical component of the broader enabling environment that is conducive to peace, security and stability.

In respect of the significance of governance on the African continent, the AU, in cooperation with the host country, Egypt, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) and the Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA), hosted a high-level retreat on governance in Cairo from 3–5 September 2011.

1.1 Objectives of the high-level retreat

The AU High-level Retreat (hereafter referred to as the 'retreat') was convened with the broad objective of understanding the role of governance in the context of threats to peace and security on the continent. When considering the broader political environment in many regions of Africa, failures and weaknesses in governance structures often coincide with or result in violent conflict. Functioning democratic governance structures are vital, not only to assist in realising stability and security but also to ensure a meaningful and sustainable peace. The retreat therefore sought to strengthen African peacemaking efforts, with a particular focus on the role of governance through sharing experiences and challenges and identifying possible solutions.

In this regard, the retreat identified the following key objectives:

- to define parameters for governance to enhance peace, security and stability

- to examine the implications of poor governance to peace, security and stability

- to identify opportunities for promoting and strengthening governance, peace and security

- to identify and develop mechanisms for addressing governance challenges

- to formulate policy recommendations that will strengthen governance on the continent

- to enhance regional and international responses to governance-related conflicts.

Through both the plenary and break-out sessions, the AU Retreat provided an opportunity to exchange on the following topics:

1. Political governance in Africa

- *Political governance in Africa* – This was a general overview of governance and its implications on peace and security to set the stage for the remainder of the retreat. The session focused on prospects, opportunities and achievements in promoting good governance, and drew attention to setbacks to good governance in Africa.

- *How to measure and monitor governance efficiently?* – This session provided an assessment of the contribution of indexes and mechanisms, such as the Ibrahim Index of African Governance and the APRM, in measuring and monitoring governance.

2. The role of governance in preventing conflicts

- *New technologies and social media tools* – This session assessed how new technologies and social media have connected and mobilised society to identify and overcome governance-related challenges. It also examined how governments can use and adapt new technologies to improve governance and service delivery to their citizens significantly, despite limited resources.

- *Leadership and accountability* – This session looked at the potential of leadership in transforming societies. It discussed how leaders can be held accountable for their action and inaction, and how to inspire leaders to reform the public sector for better governance.

- *The role of civil society* – This session examined the contribution of civil society and the press as key actors supporting responsible governance.

- *The role of the private sector* – This session examined the added value of a vibrant private sector in promoting good governance.

3. The uprisings in North Africa

- *The uprisings in North Africa: a new dawn for governance?* – This session provided an opportunity to reflect critically on how the international community can support transformation from autocratic to democratic societies. Looking at the recent popular uprisings in North Africa and international responses to these uprisings, participants discussed the remaining challenges and how they can be addressed.

4. Restoring peace when governance breaks down

- *Election-related conflicts* – This session examined the phenomenon of election-related and political violence, identifying options to deal with and resolve these conflicts, and to help re-establish the credibility of the democratic process.

- *Responding to constitutional crisis* – This session assessed recent cases of constitutional impasse and identified options to address these. Participants looked at the factors that usually lead to political breakdown and discussed how constitutional institutions and processes can be strengthened to protect African states from *coups d'état*.

- *Transformation of security sectors* – This session examined how a dysfunctional security sector can be effectively subjected to democratic control, and how it can actively promote the rule of law and strengthen political governance.

- *Management of natural resources* – This session focused on possible responses and solutions to situations where the mismanagement of natural resources has triggered, exacerbated or sustained violent conflict.

5. Inspire change: strengthening political governance

- *Strengthening political governance* – Distinguished African figures reflected on past experiences, challenges and prospects for good governance on the continent.

This report captures the key trends, prospects and challenges relating to governance in Africa, including recommendations towards strengthening political governance for peace, security and stability on the continent.

2. Governance: towards conceptual clarity

Governance is an integral aspect of every society. The concept of governance involves the exercise of authority, and also denotes the manner in which responsibility is discharged. Authority is acquired through various means, including election, appointment and delegation. Chibba (2009: 79) simply defines governance as "all aspects of the way a nation is governed, including its institutions, policies, laws, regulations, processes and oversight mechanisms". In the African context, the governance of public office is prominent in discussions of good governance, hence the use of the broader United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) definition, which conceptualises governance as the "exercise of power or authority to manage a country's resources and affairs. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences" (UNDP, 1997). Good governance emphasises values such as participation, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness and respect for the rule of law.

Matters of governance were particularly highlighted in international development discourse during the 1990s. In 1996, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) underscored good governance as a priority for realising development. Nonetheless, the Bretton Woods Institutions' role in governance matters is limited largely to policies and interventions that can have a macroeconomic impact. In 2000, the UN formulated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which not only reiterated the nexus between political and economic forces but also called upon states to improve governance. The World Bank and the United Nations (UN), as well as other international agencies such as the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID), agree that good governance is pivotal to sustained socio-economic advancement, sustainable development and political stability. Indeed, the global consensus on governance provided impetus to mainstream the subject matter in development discourses at regional and national levels.

Since its establishment, the AU has undertaken new commitments in the field of good governance, expanding on earlier commitments made by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The Constitutive Act (2002) confirmed the AU's determination "to promote and protect human and peoples' rights, consolidate democratic institutions and culture, and to ensure good governance and the rule of law". In July 2002, the AU supplemented the Constitutive Act and the NEPAD with a Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic

and Corporate Governance, which states that member states "believe in just, honest, transparent, accountable and participatory government and probity in public life" (NEPAD, 2002). The declaration further commits participating states to establish an APRM through which a country's fulfilment of its government commitments is reviewed by peers. There are a host of governance monitoring initiatives that are being carried out by different actors across the continent. Some are externally driven, while others have organically evolved in response to perceived needs. Monitoring initiatives at global, regional and national levels include the Ibrahim Index of African Governance; the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index; the Center for Public Integrity's Global Integrity Index; UNECA's Governance Report, AfroBarometer; the Open Society Foundations' Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP); and others. These will be discussed in more detail below.

2.1 Assessing the governance environment in Africa

While every country faces the challenge of developing its national infrastructure and putting in place functioning governance mechanisms, the governance environment in Africa must be understood in terms of the pressing socio-economic conditions that characterise much of the continent. Despite the achievements that have been registered in a number of African countries, the majority of the countries classified by the UN as 'least developed countries' (LDCs) are found in Africa. Whichever yardstick is applied – income, nutrition, access to health services, access to potable water, life expectancy, access to education, human physical security (Kauzy, 2007) – many African countries fair very poorly in relation to the rest of the world. This reality underscores the importance of improved governance to realise the needs of society, and contextualises the challenging context in which governance structures operate.

It is against this backdrop that, in recent years, several efforts have been initiated to assess and measure the quality of governance of countries around the world – including those with a particular focus in Africa. It is, therefore, important to make a clear distinction between external assessments, peer assessments and self-assessment that may be undertaken by a government, civil society actors, or other stakeholders at a national level.

Measuring and comparing governance across different countries is a controversial and political exercise that is, by definition, extremely challenging. Measuring issues of governance pose unique challenges, because unlike economic growth or primary school enrolment, it is much more difficult to find and agree upon indicators of political macro phenomena such as governance or political rights (Court, Hyden & Mease, 2002). Many of the tools of measurement are designed for cross-country comparability and do not recognise adequately the particularities of individual countries and the lack of available data in some, while the accuracy and methods used in sourcing governance data may also vary between countries. Thus, attempting to summarise a complex system such as governance in a single metric creates a number of empirical challenges – from the quality of the data to the selection and rating of the various indicators. Yet beyond the data itself, it can be argued

that ranking countries on a measure of governance will not reveal an understanding of the factors that drive improvements over time or cause governments to implement poor policy.

That said, despite these challenges, the types of governance measures identified below do still yield a powerful comparative assessment tool capable of capturing the societal conditions that drive governance efforts. Developing statistical tools for comparisons between countries allows for the ability to monitor change, identify problems and contribute to priority setting and policy formulation – thereby revealing in a country an understanding of the governance environment that would otherwise be invisible.

2.2 Indicators and principles of governance

Indicators of governance are essentially measures that represent a complex reality; indicators simplify and quantify multi-layered complex information. They play a number of distinct roles: scientific (by describing the state of governance), political (by identifying priorities and evaluating the performances of actors involved), and social (by facilitating communication and pointing actions in the right direction) (François, 2009).

Measures of governance performance in Africa are developed in a variety of ways – from surveys of perception to empirical data analysis and the development of numerical governance indicators. It should be noted that there are a number of challenges associated with measures of governance. Without a normative concept or unifying single theory underlying our understanding of 'good governance', it is difficult to discriminate between good or bad governance approaches – for example, when are regulatory controls deemed desirable or necessary, and when are they an expression of poor governance?

However, while the approaches and methodologies to developing a measure of governance may differ, they do offer a useful snapshot of the general governance environment within a country. For the purposes of this report, we will understand the term 'governance' to comprise a broad measure of core components. These components include economic growth, sustainable development, human development, human security (which includes access to education, health and welfare). Good governance, therefore, can be understood to manifest as a respect for human rights and the rule of law, the participation of the population in influencing policy and political processes, and a separation of powers between the main arms of government. Stability and national security are also core components of governance.

2.3 Measuring governance: examples of initiatives

In recent years, the emphasis on improved and accountable governance has been a common theme in policy debates across the continent – from the AU to regional economic communities (RECs) and international partners. Thus, just as good governance has become an increasingly important factor in directing the flows of aid, trade and investment so vital to Africa's development, so too has the need to measure governance. In this regard, identifying and developing mechanisms for addressing governance challenges was a key objective of the retreat.

Some of the existing initiatives that have emerged to meet the demand for comparable, measurable and accountable governance in Africa include the following:

2.3.1 The NEPAD and the APRM

The NEPAD is an AU strategic framework for African socio-economic development. Intended as both a vision and policy framework, it has been hailed as the first development initiative created by Africans to foster socio-economic development and promote democracy and good governance (NEPAD website, 2012). The NEPAD manages a number of programmes and projects, covering six thematic areas – one of which is economic and corporate governance. Within this thematic focus, the NEPAD initiatives include:

- "strengthening the capacity of member states to ensure good corporate governance and management of development programmes

- assisting in improving technical aspects of procurement processes

- strengthening capacity to supervise and control programmes and projects

- supporting efforts to strengthen the capacity of enterprises to implement flagship programmes and projects

- promoting an enabling environment for business and effective regulatory framework for economic activities

- improving corporate accountability

- empowering the Diaspora and creating conditions to enable them to play an active role in development, democracy, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction processes

- promoting macroeconomic policies that support sustainable development

- supporting implementation of sound, transparent and predictable government policies

- promoting sound public finance management" (NEPAD website, 2012).

The NEPAD offered a new approach to addressing traditional development issues by linking concepts such as poverty reduction to issues previously seen as 'political', such as democracy or government corruption. Through the APRM, African leaders committed themselves to meeting specific standards and indicators of democracy and good governance. Founded in 2003, the APRM is a voluntary self-monitoring assessment tool acceded to by member states of the AU. Through the APRM, African leaders can have their states undergo a peer review process on their operationalisation of democracy and good governance. The reviews are held every two to four years.

The vision of the APRM is to work within the framework of the NEPAD. The APRM's mandate is to encourage conformity with regard to political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards. Essentially, the APRM is a tool to assess the performance of African countries' compliance with a number of agreed indicators, standards of good governance and sustainable development frameworks. As such, it is seen by many as an innovative and ambitious African-led exercise, which breaks new ground in terms of the concept of 'peer review' and moves beyond the existing norms around the inviolability of sovereignty that had previously hampered debate around more effective governance measures in Africa. Based on voluntary commitment by heads of state, the peer review process is ideally funded – and thus 'owned' – by the country undertaking the review. In this way, the mechanism does not operate as a governance watchdog, but is rather intended to function more as a support structure for those governments that are committed to improving governance in their respective countries. Each country designs its own review process – ideally based around transparency and accountability – where structures are put in place to ensure the participation of citizens and civil society in assessing the governance practices in the country (NEPAD website, 2012).

2.3.2 The African Governance Report

The biannual African Governance Report (AGR) is published by UNECA and monitors progress towards good governance in African countries. The first AGR, titled *Striving for Good Governance in Africa*, was published in 2005 and covered a survey of 27 countries that assessed the perception on governance by households and experts at a country level (NEPAD, 2007b). The second AGR, titled *Measuring and Monitoring Progress Towards Good Governance*, was published in 2007. Overall, the Africa Governance Report recognises that good governance is a prerequisite for the realisation of development challenges and the achievement of the MDGs (NEPAD, 2007b).

2.3.3 The Ibrahim Index of African Governance

The Ibrahim Index of African Governance is a statistical measure of governance levels across all African countries. The index is funded by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, which was launched in 2006 to support good governance and improved leadership on the continent. The index uses a variety of indicators to compile a ranking table indicating the overall quality of governance in the respective countries. The results are compressed into a single statistical measure, where an improvement or decline in governance performance can be tracked and compared annually. This allows citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs) to assess the performance of their country's government. The index measures and assesses national governance against 57 separate criteria in order to capture comprehensively the quality of services provided to citizens by their governments. The essential objective of the index is to look beyond policy statement and intention, and rather focus on measurable output and the impact felt by citizens (Mo Ibrahim Foundation website, 2012).

2.3.4 The Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP)

Established in 2004, the AfriMAP was developed with the intention of complementing existing initiatives, such as the APRM, by providing in-depth research on selected themes to provide an independent source of information on governance issues. In this regard, the AfriMAP monitors the compliance of member states of the AU with selected standards of good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law (Open Society Foundation, 2011).

Working with CSOs and other relevant national actors, the AfriMAP develops country reports on governance issues focused around the link between development and the respect for human rights. The reports serve as an audit of government performance across the justice sector, political participation and democracy, as well as the effective delivery of public services. Developed with a standardised template that allows for comparison between countries, the reports highlight successes, areas of improvement and best practices. The AfriMAP has also commissioned reviews of the APRM process in several countries, and plays a significant part in the broader response to the call from the AU to emphasise the need for accountable governance in Africa (Open Society Foundation, 2011).

2.3.5 Global indexes: the Human Development Index

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistical index used to rank countries by level of 'human development'. The comparative index is a measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living. The HDI is significant in that it developed a single statistical measure for both social and economic development (UNDP, 2012).

While the HDI is used to distinguish whether the country is a developed, developing or an underdeveloped country, it can also measure the impact of economic policies on quality of life – and, as such, can be used to question national policies. The HDI's relevance as a measure of governance would be, for example, in highlighting two countries with similar levels of income per person, but vastly different levels of life expectancy or primary school enrolment. Such statistical contrasts can serve to stimulate debate around government policy priorities.

The diversity of mechanisms and approaches to measuring governance in Africa is indicative of the increasing recognition that governance matters – in terms of socio-economic development, entrenching democracy and achieving and securing peace. Thus, linking improvements in governance with improvements in socio-economic outcomes creates impetus for change, improves aid effectiveness and creates benchmarks and targets against which countries can measure their respective governance goals. Consequently, understanding existing mechanisms for assessing and addressing governance was an important context that framed discussions at the retreat.

3. Governance in Africa: trends, prospects and challenges

3.1 Prospects and positive trends

In recent years, there have been a number of initiatives and interventions intended to enhance governance in Africa (Shinkaiye, 2006). Central to the development of the AU was the expectation that the organisation of states would act as a moral check, ensuring that member states remained true to the obligations enshrined in the concept of a social contract between the state and its citizenry. As such, good governance and the promotion of democratic ideals that see to the effective participation of the citizens in defining who rules them, are central to the mandate of the AU.

In furthering these goals, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance was adopted at the 8th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, held in Addis Ababa on 30 January 2007. This charter highlights the commitment by member states to the universal values and principles of democracy, good governance, human rights and the right to development. The charter provides a comprehensive framework against which governance on the continent can be measured, by highlighting adherence to the rule of law; the holding of regular, free and fair elections; the rejection of unconstitutional changes of government; the promotion of an independent judiciary; fostering citizen participation; and access to free speech and information. Underpinning the charter are the principles of transparency, accountability and fairness. The charter is intended to provide member states with a reference point to measure reform and to improve governance processes.

While the challenges associated with ensuring sufficient political will to embrace and enforce this charter might remain, this section aims to outline some of the prospects and opportunities for Africa's governance that were discussed by stakeholders at the retreat.

3.1.1 Jumpstarting governance: the role of social media and technologies

Central to good governance is a government's ability to reach its citizens and bridge the gap between government and the people. Governments in both the developed and developing world continue to make huge strides in using new technologies to straddle this divide, and to ensure efficient and effective service delivery. The relationship between civil society, mass media and the government has undergone significant changes as the influence of information communication technology (ICT) has spread. Three key facets of this technology have emerged as part of the so-called 'social web': "(a) mobile communications – extending internet access through a new generation of mobile phones and handheld computers; (b) social media – enabling individuals to easily upload their own content (text, photos, video) and to find (and discuss) the content generated by others and; (c) online Social Networking – enabling people to maintain and to extend their personal and professional networks, as well as to facilitate the flow of information through these networks" (Willard, 2009). ICTs have increased citizens' ability to voice their opinions and access information regarding the government and its work. Through these technologies, information is provided to and shared

by the citizenry, thereby increasing civic input into the governance process. Furthermore, they encourage active citizen participation as the population becomes informed, consulted and involved in how government runs its affairs. Citizens have, therefore, shifted from being passive to becoming deliberators, advisors and innovators (AU, 2011).

The power of social media: lessons from North Africa

The year 2011 saw a series of remarkable youth-led popular demonstrations and uprisings spread from North Africa across the Arab world into Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. Popularly known as the 'Arab Spring', the street demonstrations against long-serving and dictatorial regimes were significant in highlighting the power of social media alongside the mainstream media in organising and sustaining the uprisings. Social media platforms such as Twitter, blogs and Facebook were pivotal in spreading the flame of revolution in these countries – driven predominantly by the availability of mobile phones and young activists comfortable with Internet-based technologies. These platforms were used to publicly state their demands, coordinate demonstrations and gain support from the broader population.

Discussions at the retreat recognised the importance of reaching significant constituents such as the youth, who have a great reliance on new communication technologies – and noted that governments should seek to strengthen their use of ICTs to bolster channels of communication with them. Furthermore, these platforms are beneficial in transforming and amplifying the concerns of the wider population. Citizens find solidarity through social media, providing a space for them to engage with others and share their concerns. It has emerged as a tool for citizens to monitor and call for transparency and accountability in governance. Civil society groups have also been strengthened, as access to social networks has given them the opportunity to network, expand and share information. With these new developments, they have become exposed to a range of global issues in a short period of time and are in a position to challenge the government on a wide range of issues.

The presence of social media and new technologies enhances decentralisation, as it provides a wide array of channels through which the population can obtain information, therefore reducing reliance on more traditional media forms. However, the reality for many African societies is that new developments in technology have not replaced more traditional forms of mass media but, rather, have complemented them. For instance, radio shows still provide the space for individuals to call in and voice their opinions and, through that, still engage with the political process. Furthermore, crowd sourcing has garnered considerable attention, especially within the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Within this context, information is gathered voluntarily and anonymously through various systems such as social media communication ecosystems, e-mails and mobile phone technology. This information is aimed to provide early warning and early response mechanisms to prevent conflict. Platforms such as Ushahidi provide a solid example of early warning information calling for timely response (see below). Social media and mobile technology have become instrumental to share information, especially during elections – the elections in Senegal and

Kenya highlighted the role of these tools. In Senegal, information on the outcome of the election was shared as results became available. This contributed to the transparency of the election process, with little space to influence the results.

Ushahidi and SodNet in Kenya

Kenya provides a great example of technology innovation in Africa. The Ushahidi Platform – established from the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya – and the Social Network for Development (SodNet), focus on understanding and exploring how technology can be used to prevent future occurrences of violence (Ushahidi website, 2011; SodNet website, 2012). These platforms rely on information from citizens that is processed into responses. Ushahidi has been described as a new forum for world governance, as it promotes and utilises bottom-up processes to obtain information that is fed into preventative responses. It also provides timely information, in real-time and through a wide range of channels, through the use of mobile technology. SodNet, as an African technology company, has focused on the visualisation and contextualisation of information that is sourced from the public. Obtaining information from multiple sources helps to address gaps of credibility and the reliability of information. As more individuals provide similar information, it guarantees that the information is true and relevant.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to advance in the telecommunications sector and its mobile phone market is one of the fastest-growing in the world. Kenya's recent referendum was successful because the government realised the benefit of new technology (mobile phones). Mobile phones are effective because they are able to disseminate messages in a timely and speedy manner. They can also be used for immediate action – unlike mass media, where there is no space for response or immediate feedback. Thus, if information is controlled, it limits the opportunity for good governance.

It should be noted, however, that there are a number of significant challenges preventing greater usage and interaction with these new technologies in Africa. Examples of these challenges include illiteracy; insufficient logistical and financial resources; lack of skills and understanding of ICT systems in various government sectors; misinformation and the spread of false information – and these all point to the link between development and good governance.

Much remains to be seen and done on how governments include social media and new technologies into their strategies and methods of engagement. While the media and civil society have largely evolved to accept these new technologies, responses from governments remain slow. Participants at the retreat highlighted the importance of embracing social media and new technologies towards the achievement of good governance, and noted that governments should find ways through which they can constructively use ICT to meet the needs and priorities of the population.

3.1.2 The strengthening of governance architecture and norms in Africa

Strengthening governance architectures and norms in Africa speaks to how states are made accountable in promoting and implementing the principles of good governance. The African Charter of Democracy, Elections and Governance provides a comprehensive reference point to shape and understand governance in Africa. Corruption, poor political will and poor relations with civil society will inhibit any efforts to incorporate and promulgate the principles of good governance across the continent. In strengthening governance, it is important that the focus is on building credible, fair and strong institutions that are permanent and transformative. However, institutions are not solely sufficient in guaranteeing good governance – the role of leadership is important. Leaders must, therefore, uphold good values, be visionary and demonstrate political will to support reforms aimed at promoting good governance. The current focus on strong institutions raises the challenge of shifting the focus to good leadership as a key contribution to good governance.

In this regard, many African countries continue to make strides in adhering to principles of good governance. In increasing citizen participation and ensuring service delivery, governments have employed a wide range of tools and embarked on various initiatives to implement economic reform agendas with accompanying good governance frameworks. Embracing a multiparty state; conducting free, fair, credible and non-violent elections; creating an enabling environment for a vibrant civil society and media; improving service delivery; and increasing the space for active citizen engagement in public affairs are some of the ways through which governments are embracing the ideals of governance. However, stakeholders at the retreat pointed out that much more effort is needed to deal with corruption; encouraging and managing diversity; and promoting a sense of nationhood that overrides ethnic, religious and racial lines. Views expressed indicated that in increasing their commitment to improved governance, governments must ratify and adhere to various frameworks and instruments focused on enhancing governance on the continent. In this context, initiatives such as the APRM should be embraced, as it provides an opportunity to assess gaps in the governance process and identify approaches to addressing them.

Efforts towards genuine democratisation are reflected by the expansion of public space, which allows citizens to participate in the political process and express their demands and concerns to those who govern. Many governments in Africa have made considerable efforts to open up spaces for non-state actors to participate in public decision-making and policy influence. The creation of watchdog agencies, such as the Office of the Ombudsman, in some countries are significant examples of the move towards enhancing inclusive governance. In Ghana, for example, through the concept of e-governance, citizens can contribute online to policy processes such as budget formulation.

E-governance

Through e-governance platforms, citizens can access government services and information at all times through various online tools. In Ghana, efforts to engage with new media platforms have increased considerably, creating enhanced channels of communication between the people and government. To achieve this, the Ministry of Communication and Technology was responsible for "developing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects that help to promote access to ICT infrastructure, products and services for effective governance, stability and the development of the country" (Clark, 2001). This has been done to ensure that the country shifts towards an information society.

In 1998, a communication policy conference was held to chart a path for how Ghana would proceed in the communications era. This later evolved into a consultative process that focused on how the government could engage with new media. A culmination of these processes led to a series of legislation to develop this framework.

Another example of how new technologies were applied to government processes and systems was through customs clearance and the use of the GCNET system. This system provides information on the customs clearing process, further eliminating human processes and the related opportunities for corruption. This and other similar processes are often cited as examples of successful initiatives in reducing corruption and personalising the governance process.

3.1.3 Strengthening the role of regional organisations

Regional organisations play a significant role in advocating for good governance in member states. Regional organisations – including RECs and intergovernmental organisations such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), as well as regional CSOs – are involved in calling and advocating for fair, credible and non-violent elections, and in providing opportunities for engagement among member states to increase their efforts in enhancing good governance. Within the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the respect for democracy and good governance is considered a major tool in contributing to regional integration and development (NEPAD, 2007). In addition, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), through its Commission, is tasked with implementing its Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of 2001. It has the duty to facilitate electoral assistance to member states through capacity building for electoral management bodies, and the observation and monitoring of elections. More importantly, it promotes and consolidates good governance through capacity building for political parties, legislative bodies, the judiciary, the media, and human rights and anti-corruption institutions.

Through promoting integration and cooperation at a regional level, these organisations can help in harmonising governance policies and increase information sharing among member states. They can also be relied upon to advocate that member states adhere to and ratify the African Charter of Democracy, Elections and Governance – and to engage in the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the charter, as outlined in Chapter 10 of the charter. Discussions during the retreat reiterated that strengthening regional organisations through increasing resources and capacity will promote the governance agenda. Increased partnership between the AU and regional institutions will strengthen their involvement in governance and create avenues for joint collaboration and cooperation in measuring progress in member states. Moreover, political will and continued support from member states to endorse the regional and continental agendas are important to promoting governance.

3.1.4 The role of the private sector and civil society in enhancing governance

The emergence of global finance, trade and banking networks, as well as greater economic connectivity and interdependence, has lessened the gap between government and the private sector through the development of regulatory frameworks that allow for global business entities. This deepening interdependency is seen through the building of markets, environmental issues, global health, infrastructure, social inclusion, industrial development, security and good governance (Hamdok, 2011). The private sector is not only responsible for increasing profit margins or achieving optimum growth, but can offer support for good governance through a number of initiatives. The role of the private sector in adhering to corporate social responsibility (CSR) is important to promoting good governance. This sector can help build governance through a wide range of initiatives such as empowerment programmes, poverty eradication initiatives, social development projects and contribute to the development of the health, environmental and education sectors in the countries and societies that they work in. It can also offer support for good governance through promoting transparency and sound business ethics, and embracing anti-corruption practices. Furthermore, it can promote accountability in corporate governance, fairness in commercial dispute resolution and the protection of intellectual property rights – and can engage in institution building, the creation or maintenance of social capital, and call for and support vibrant and active civil societies and freedom of the press. It can also contribute to "policy change, engaging communities, adapting its products, investing in market conditions, collaborating with other organisations and making social investments" (Hamdok, 2011).

Much remains to be learnt on the role of the private sector in enhancing governance. These gaps can be filled by implementing awareness campaigns for the business community on good governance and particularly understanding their role in that process.

Civil society is an important element in the tripartite relationship including government and the private sector. The tripartite relationship ensures that a holistic, inclusive and needs-based approach is taken in enhancing good governance. Civil society has a decentralised presence, has access to information and understands the dynamics, needs and interests on

the ground. Its involvement in developing programmes and initiatives that enhance good governance is important to the success of such efforts. Civil society can also play a role in highlighting the gaps or failures of government and the private sector, especially in terms of whether or they are promoting good governance.

In this regard, discussions at the retreat sought to unpack the role of civil society partnering with government to promote and ensure good governance. Participants expressed that the understanding of the role of civil society in Africa has evolved; yet questions still remain around how best to define the relationship between the state, its institutions and civil society. CSOs play a significant role in promoting good governance by formalising the engagement between citizens and government around particular issues. The concept of civil society and building stronger, wider participation in the governance arena has emerged as a significant component of global forums such as the retreat, and can arguably be linked to democratic processes on the continent.

As participants noted, CSOs remain actors within the political space. As such, they must be considered within the broader power dynamics at play. There remains a legacy of weak civil society in a number of African countries, as a result of severely limited political space for actors other than those controlled by the state. Yet the emergence of more pluralistic political systems, the spread of new technologies and greater international recognition of the importance of strong civil society has seen remarkable growth of these organisations in recent years. Nevertheless, participants at the retreat highlighted that overall, despite significant improvement and growth in CSOs on the continent, Africa must still strive for good governance through wider civil society participation. This is most important in those countries where the broader policy environment and political space do not support the development of civil society groups. As participants noted, in some instances governments see CSOs as rivals in the political space and, as a result, relations are strained. This must be overcome if civil society is to play a role in strengthening democracy and ensuring improved governance.

International civil society and governance in Africa

Transparency International is an example of an international CSO that works extensively through advocacy around anti-corruption issues. In Kenya, for example, Transparency International launched the Kenya Bribery Index, an advocacy tool that has been used to identify state officials involved in corrupt business deals. In other African countries such as Ghana, Madagascar, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone, Transparency International launched the Africa Education Watch project, which seeks to improve transparency and accountability in the management of primary education resources.

A further example is Sierra Leone's Campaign for Good Governance, which undertakes assessments on governance in Sierra Leone using the UNECA instruments for monitoring good governance. In 2007, the Campaign for Good Governance launched a project titled 'Measuring and Monitoring Progress towards Good Governance', demonstrating how CSOs can play an integral role in ensuring accountability and transparency.

3.1.5 The gender dimension of governance

Governance from a gender perspective means creating the spaces for women to engage and actively participate, as well as for them to be seen as legitimate actors in the process. One of the pillars of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Beijing Platform for Action, which speak to the participation of women, identifies the importance of gender inclusion, equality and equity in the making of decisions that affect society. As longstanding gender discussions and research have shown, the gap between gender and governance is very wide, and much more remains to be done.

In promoting gender equity, it is important that a favourable work environment is created where women are treated with equal respect as their male counterparts, that they are held equally as responsible as men for the promotion of gender equity, and ensuring that they are justly represented in all government institutions, committees and offices (Gender Advocacy Programme, 2000). Related to elections, political parties should support women candidates on their party lists, ensure that every alternate candidate is a woman and develop and adhere to a quota system that reduces the under-representation of women (Gender Advocacy Programme, 2000).

Participants at the retreat emphasised the important place of gender in governance discourse, as it upholds the principles of human rights and the involvement of all people in political, economic and social processes. Gender integration and mainstreaming are central to achieving governance of the highest order. This however requires gender analysis to better understand the obstacles and challenges in integrating gender into policy design and implementation. Furthermore, a transformational approach is needed – not only integrating gender into structures, institutions and programmes but transforming the agenda. More importantly, it goes beyond the making of laws that benefit and include women. Tracking and following the process of implementation to ensure that these laws are applied and measured in terms of how they are positively impacting on women' lives, and finding solutions to problems emerging from the application of the law, are necessary.

Engendering national governance institutions also requires that these are accountable to women as citizens; that they actively adapt the rules, procedures and priorities to incorporate the interests of poor women in the development agenda and mobilise active women's agencies in civil society (Mukhopadhyay, 2003: 46). In achieving full inclusivity of gender considerations, governments must engage in broad and numerous consultations with women and men (who, in most cases, are under-represented in gender deliberations). Women's needs, priorities and interests must be captured to achieve sustainable governance reform. Providing education, informing women of their rights and interests, and building the capacity of women are important as these elements enable their active participation in the political process. It is also important to engage in discussions about the role and place of tradition, and how this impedes the participation of women in the political sphere. Furthermore, there should be guarantees for women of their involvement as political leaders rather than mere citizens. Examples where this has been successful include Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda (where more than 25% of

Parliament are represented by women). Rwanda has 49% of Parliament represented by women (Amaoko, 2010).

3.2. Challenges of governance in Africa

One of the biggest challenges to the development of African states is weak governance structures. The inability of African states to consolidate themselves fully has been a contingency inherited from their colonial past. Most African states find themselves with centralised power structures. This form of government in a state that is unable to respond, protect and provide an enabling environment for its citizens is a key characteristic that undermines governance in Africa. Most post-independence African countries find themselves heir to governance systems that are both defective and unresponsive to their development challenges (Shinkaiye, 2006). These same governance institutions remain unable to ensure and safeguard democratisation. The AU has been firm in its protection of the entity of the state, and through its Algiers Declaration banned unconstitutional changes of government. Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act, however, balances the position of the AU by giving the organisation mandate to intervene in instances of the state acting in excess of its people, or its inability to protect its citizenry.

Beyond challenges that emanate from weak institutions and leadership, growing environmental concerns and climate change implications have increasingly added to the victimisation of African populations, making them even more vulnerable. Against this backdrop, this section outlines some of the most critical challenges to Africa's governance.

3.2.1. Poverty, underdevelopment and food insecurity

The World Bank's chief economist for Africa noted that: "Poor people are poor because markets fail them and governments fail them" (Devarajan, 2008). Inefficient and ineffective governance is experienced daily by scores of Africans who become affected by poverty, underdevelopment and food insecurity.

Despite its large reserves of natural resources, Africa remains the poorest continent (Hope, 2002). According to the 2010 Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) report, chronic poverty, insecurity, recurrent natural disasters and underdevelopment are critical threats that threaten the livelihoods of many people in Africa. The continent continues to be marked by constant food crises and populations dependent on food aid – especially in the Horn of Africa region. The FAO report also stipulates that there is a growing concern that food and agricultural production in Africa will continue to decline in the future, thus increasing the vulnerability of many African lives and households. Africa continues to witness an ever-increasing number of poor and vulnerable people (Nakabo-Ssewanyana, 2003), placing tremendous strain on existing governance structures while, at the same time, necessitating ever-greater governance capacities to respond.

Linked to discussions on food insecurity, participants at the retreat emphasised that the history of conflict and marginalisation of certain groups within state structures, coupled with limited physical and social infrastructure and harsh environmental concerns, are factors that continue to increase governance challenges in Africa, and can result in instability and conflict. Climate change and its subsequent environmental consequences have further intensified the problem, resulting in the increasing scarcity of resources. This increasing scarcity in environments where there is weak governance can feed into or exacerbate existing social, political or economic drivers of conflict. Indeed, existing socio-political drivers – such as poor wealth distribution and a lack of sufficient employment, and access to opportunities and freedoms, particularly for a large youth population – also increase the risk of instability. As inequality and poverty combined with weak institutions increase the risk of conflict (UN, 2011), it is critical that governance solutions are developed and implemented to respond to these complex and interconnected issues.

In addition, most African states are underdeveloped and characterised by poor physical infrastructure, which is a key requirement for economic growth and development. Indeed, Africa's growing urban populations are placing greater strain than ever on existing infrastructure, and are exacerbating urban poverty. In responding to infrastructural challenges on the continent, governments require large capital investments to support infrastructure development – capital that is often attached to conditions of governance performance.

3.2.2. The democracy deficit and election-related violence

Post-independence states in Africa have been characterised largely by one-party governments, until the wave of democratisation that swept through the continent in the 1990s. As a result, many African states went through constitutional review processes to allow for multiparty politics; however, the inability of many African states to exercise effective and truly inclusive democracies remains a leading governance concern (Andrews, 2003). When elections meet the global standards of fairness, administrative professionalism and respect for human rights, they provide popular support and legitimacy for the respective elected governments. Electoral processes do and must emphasise the peaceful management of social conflict through public dialogue and vigorous debate, and the selection of leaders through agreed rules and processes. Thus, while elections are not on their own the definition of democracy – rather, they are one element of it – they create the necessary foundation for democratic governance by ensuring that leaders have credible and accepted mandates to govern (UNDP, 2009). The presumption here is that when people can choose freely those that govern them, they are less likely to feel a need to resort to violence to resolve their differences or to make their voices heard.

Electoral processes have been a daunting task for many African states; for different reasons, they have been marked by manipulation, the politics of brinkmanship and subversion. Thus, the intent of elections in building a democracy, guaranteeing the right of the citizens to elect leaders and promoting good governance, has often failed to be realised in many African electoral processes. Elections, which should give hope and feelings of inclusivity

to populations, are now regarded with anxiety, as they have resulted in rigged results or violence in a number of cases (Adejumobi, 2000) – with severe implications for governance processes and structures. The winner-takes-all model of democracy is perhaps the greatest challenge for multi-ethnic African states, and this forms the foundation of identity-based polarisation. In a bid to secure their political space, politicians have used ethnicity and religion as driving forces in consolidating support for elections – as was evidenced in Kenya in the 2007/8 elections.

The challenge remains as to how African states can practise democracy, be more inclusive of the whole and guarantee that all citizens feel represented. Participants at the retreat noted a growing need for the evolution of African-specific models of electoral systems that reflect the specificity of the region – and, in turn, the specific nature of the politics, systems and cultures of each country. Until this is realised, elections will continue to be a challenge. Whilst the intent of elections is to unify nations through participation in electing strong leaders, in many African states there is a growing concern that elections are but triggers of violent conflict that result in the loss of human life and property, and undermine good governance.

3.2.3 Weak institutions and leadership

In discussing governance challenges in Africa, scholars have often cited weak institutions as a fundamental reason for poor governance. It has been argued that colonial structures did very little to develop strong, indigenously rooted institutions that could tackle the development demands of modern states (Bräutigam and Knack, 2004). It is this absence of strong institutions that can lend itself to a lack of accountability and poor leadership. However, as discussions at the retreat highlighted, to argue that poor institutions are merely a contingency of colonialism would be erroneous, given that poor leadership and weak institutions have also been a product of poor choices by current leadership. The ongoing concerns over corruption and mismanagement are key indicators of poor choices in many African states. All these factors have continued to undermine the development of effective institutions and responsive leadership. Bräutigam and Knack (2004: 1) summarise this by stating that "when patterns of poor governance deepen over time and become institutionalized, the political difficulties of reform become even more challenging". Good governance requires fair, legal frameworks to be enforced by an impartial, independent judiciary. The judiciary's decisions should be transparent and implemented in a way that follows established rules and regulations. Transparency and the rule of law are required to hold leadership accountable, making accountability a key requirement for good governance (Sharma, 2007).

Another critical challenge, especially in post-conflict states, is low human resource and material capacity in state structures. Strong institutions can only emanate from capable human capacity and skill, and this is a challenge for many states. Linked to this is the problem of a weak civil society. Strong civil society can ensure and advocate proper governance across all aspects of society. Ideally, CSOs should be a buffer between governments and citizens – but this has not been the case in Africa, where CSOs either have an extremely acrimonious relationship with governments or, in other instances, are too closely linked to governments. This characterisation has meant that CSOs in many African countries are unable to offer a

great contribution to good governance. Therefore, it is necessary not only for the leadership of governmental institutions, but also the leadership of CSOs, to be accountable to the public and to their stakeholders to promote accountability and, as a result, good governance.

3.2.4 Entrenched structures of poor governance

Weak or poor governance finds its expression through the absence of the rule of law, limits to democracy, lack of accountability and transparency, and multifaceted corruption. Across different states these issues are engrained in state structures, undermining the very concept of governance. Some scholars have argued that such characteristics in a state emanate from incompetence, ignorance and inadequate infrastructure. What is unique in the case of Africa, however, is that the scramble for wealth by ruling predator elites has dominated the life of African politics since independence (Obadina, 2000). Weak institutions and lack of a regulatory framework continue to nurture corruption.

In most African states, access to state power is considered to be the easiest way to access wealth and, in many of these states, the government is the primary employer. There is, therefore, a high value attached to controlling state power – not just for the individual, but also for their interest groups. This could explain the violence that is often associated with elections as, for most candidates, losing means more than political loss, and many incumbents will fight to retain their positions (Obadina, 2000). Political expression in many of these states finds voice in ethnic, religious and tribal rhetoric, with politicians consolidating support on divisive characteristics so as to ensure that they maintain or acquire power.

Entrenched structures of poor governance may be explained by different internal factors and the greed for power that characterises political life in Africa. This explanation on its own is, however, too simplistic, as it ignores the different external factors – especially the geo-political and economic interests of the larger global community that constantly play a significant role in undermining the very idea of good governance (Ong'ayo, 2008). When coupled with poverty, disease, violence, political and economic instability, and the manipulative tendencies of the local elite, good governance in African state is constantly under threat.

Good governance presumes that governments are inclined to govern efficiently and effectively for the benefit of their citizens. The question as to when governance can be classified as good or bad remains a critical dilemma in the governance debate. There is now increased advocacy for institutions to create monitoring and evaluation systems so as to enable governments to monitor their own progress. It is believed that continuous introspection by different institutions and governments will enhance their performance. Tools such as the APRM and the Ibrahim Index of African Governance are intrinsically meant to encourage better performance on the part of states and their respective leaders. Governance assessments stem from the fact that every government is ultimately accountable to its citizenry and, as such, must be able to provide an explanation on how public funds and assets are used. The increasing dependence on donor aid by many African countries also demands that there is accountability not just to the citizenry, but to the international

community. While this proposition is ideal, the reality is such that many countries lack political good will or are structurally impeded and, as a result, have failed to conduct these assessments effectively (Governance assessment portal, 2011). Where assessments have been completed, at times they have fallen short and have often been regarded as ritualistic and devoid of intrinsic value.

The inability of some African states to undertake checks and balances of themselves or each other has created opportunistic gaps for predatory elites, as there is little possibility of accountability. Most African states that are devoid of the necessary checks and self-assessments have often become a machinery that benefits only the ruling elite, at the expense of the greater citizenry (USAID, 2006). The failure to institutionalise a culture of transparency that calls for constant self-assessment and which interrogates the benefit of particular decisions for the greater good is a significant challenge that continues to undermine good governance of African states and the eventual benefits of such governance for the people. Ritualistic assessments that have a tick-box approach should be eradicated to ensure the focus remains on proper and meaningful governance.

3.2.5 Security sector reform

The failure of African security organisations in the past has often stemmed from poor governance of the state and, in particular, the security sector – making this a key factor in developing strategies and mechanisms for improved governance on the continent. Democratic security sector governance, by comparison, not only implies that a state can manage security organisations effectively and efficiently, but also that it is legitimate, transparent, trusted and accountable to its citizens (Ball & Fayemi, 2004). Yet, the challenge still remains to overcome a history of violent transfers of power and the use of force to ensure and maintain political power. Some have argued that many African countries have been theatres to state-sponsored violence aimed at coercing legitimacy, and violence from informal groups, armed opposition groups, militias and gangs that are either looking to capture power or to make profit illegally (Ong'ayo, 2008). Such violence has seen the citizenry excessively victimised and losing life and property. Predatory elites have often used violence as a means of ensuring their access to and sustainability of power. In states where security forces effectively create greater insecurity for their populations, the use of violence, and subsequent instability, continues to be a challenge (Ong'ayo, 2008). As such, an unreformed security sector represents a significant obstacle to sustainable development, democracy and peace – as well as undermining progressive governance structures and policies in Africa. It is, therefore, evident that efficient, well-managed security forces provide positive momentum for sustainable peace and development. In this context, participants at the retreat pointed to the importance of embedding security sector reform (SSR) processes within a framework of democratic oversight and control, while focusing on human security as the overriding goal. This focus on human security, including economic development, guaranteeing basic human rights and protecting people from the fear of violence, is in stark contrast to traditional definitions of security that focus on protecting the state and its citizens from external aggression (Ball & Fayemi, 2004).

The underlying rationale behind focusing on human security within the broader context of SSR is that it is only through shifting how security is perceived fundamentally and putting citizens at the core of security planning and security governance reforms that states can create sustainable platforms for peace and development. To achieve this, participants at the retreat discussed the need to integrate traditional reforms, such as defence and police forces, with efforts to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of democratic governance. Indeed, without meaningful reform and, ultimately, transformation within the security sector, upholding and implementing the outcomes of governance reform becomes increasingly difficult. Participants thus noted the need to develop comprehensive conceptions of security that encompass all levels of the state and society, so as to permit the emergence of SSR frameworks that fit within established guidelines for good governance and democratic practices.

Despite the legislative effort to codify SSR processes and frameworks, there remain significant challenges when it comes to implementing reforms. As such, successful and sustainable SSR processes will be those that fit best with progressive steps to improve governance structures across the state. Understanding that security actors are part of a broader context that includes the other arms of government, civil society and citizens, allows for the human security-centred approach to reform and transform the security structures of the state.

The African Union and SSR

The AU has developed broad principles relating to the security sector. These are elaborated in a number of key instruments, including but not limited to the Constitutive Act of the AU, the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy and the Policy on Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), among others. In addition to this, a set of global SSR norms and principles have been developed by the UN and are elaborated in the UN Secretary General's report on SSR and subsequent UN documents. These principles form the overarching framework for the AU's approach to SSR (Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform, 2011).

3.2.6 The impact of natural resources and climate change on governance

The ability of a state to benefit from the presence of natural resources within its borders is often a function of its governance strengths or weaknesses – those states unable to tax, regulate and control the flow of natural resources across its borders adequately can suffer from a 'paradox of plenty'. This term refers to countries that are richly endowed with non-renewable mineral or oil reserves, yet suffer from continued underdevelopment. In addition, abundant natural resources have both caused conflicts and, equally, led to its funding on the continent and beyond. Over the past 20 years, one in three UN peacekeeping missions have arguably been deployed in response to conflict over natural resources (UN, 2006). Conflict

in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, has a strong mineral resources dimension, which contributes to ongoing insurgencies and regional fighting – as well as continued underdevelopment. Thus, as discussions at the retreat highlighted, natural resources can either spark conflict or merely delay resolution, as the profits from activities such as illegal mining create incentives to maintain the status quo.

In this context, the impact of natural resources on governance is significant, as economies largely dependent on mineral resources or oil experience a decline in the competitiveness of other sectors within the economy – which, when combined with poor governance, mismanagement and corruption, create the negative spirals of economic decline that characterise the 'resource curse'. The challenge facing many African governments is that in an economy characterised by limited employment opportunities, single-source revenue streams (associated with natural resources or oil sales) are easily diverted to elites associated with the government. Without strong governance mechanisms to prevent this, social discontent rises, weakening the credibility and the ability of the state to govern effectively.

However, in assessing the relationship between natural resources and governance, natural resources can become a valuable asset in a country's development through improved governance (the regulation and capacity for enforcement). As such, stakeholders at the retreat emphasised the importance of governance capacity in adhering to international treaties and legal statutes around the trade of natural resources, as well as the ability to enforce such resolutions. Key to the support for improved resource governance in Africa is an international response that matches efforts in Africa, through identifying money flows associated with the illegal or corrupt sales of natural resources and enforcing international regulations.

Closely linked to the economic exploitation of natural resources is the environmental management of resources such as forests and water. In Africa, where large, rural populations rely on non-piped water for their livelihoods, resource management (as a function of governance) is critical – and can be a contributing factor for conflict at a community level.

The dramatic expansion of productive forces that has accompanied globalisation has not been matched by environmentally sustainable practices. Globalisation and the emergence of aggressive, profit-seeking industries have the potential to impact negatively on development and peace in Africa. This is due both to the immediate impacts of exploration and production and the long-term consequences of global warming through the emission of greenhouse gases. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report (2007) notes that global temperatures have increased and will continue to increase over the coming century. This affects rainfall and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather conditions, as well as a rise in sea level. Extractive mining industries also have an impact on land use and water resources. The vast displacement of earth, rock and local ecology in mining affects water resources, while tailings and the untreated discharges from mining processes impact negatively on coastal and marine ecosystems. The majority of people in Africa depend on agriculture for food production. Since this sector relies heavily on a predictable climate, concerns are growing as global warming alters climatic conditions leading to threats to

food security and the large-scale displacement of people – and the possibility of conflict is heightened as communities struggle over access to dwindling resources. This is a real threat and an emerging challenge for governance globally and, more specifically, in Africa.

3.2.7 The 'youth bulge'

In sub-Saharan Africa, youth unemployment levels are among the highest in the world – at approximately 60% of young people. Youth unemployment will likely pose a threat to durable peace and will serve as a conflict driver, since they can be more susceptible to armed violence and militarisation (Sawyers, 2002). However, some youths who are unemployed and uninvolved in socio-political processes will find a way to vent their frustration and express their marginalisation, and will not necessarily become criminals or members of rebel groups. The rise of protest politics among disenchanted youths is to be expected, although reactions by governments will differ. Given the problems of unemployment, poverty, limited education and lack of opportunities for political participation, young people are more likely to be engaged in risky behaviours such as violent crime, prostitution, drug use and trafficking, and gang violence, among others. Already, this has been evidenced in the political violence sparked by youth in Kenya during the post-election violence in 2007/8, and the exploitation of young people in countries like Liberia and Rwanda by political and military elites (Bryan, 2010). The capacity of African governments to engage the youth meaningfully will continue to be a challenge, but positively addressing the issue will lend greater support to African governance structures in the long term.

4. Conclusion: taking the leap forward – strengthening political governance in Africa

During deliberations, participants stressed the need to update and strengthen existing frameworks and instruments of good governance, and have also called for the operationalisation and popularisation of existing instruments by AU member states through acceleration of the signature, ratification and domestication of relevant instruments. These should include the required political and socio-economic reforms. It was recognised that the continued prevalence and proliferation of armed conflict and violence on the continent is linked to the lack of decisive improvements in political and economic governance – underscoring the importance of effective leadership in sharing and maintaining institutions for good governance. The significant contribution that social media can make in sharpening the organisational tools for service delivery, the promotion of good governance and conflict prevention was recognised, and the AU, RECs/regional mechanisms (RMs) and governments were encouraged to take full advantage of these.

The conclusion of the retreat witnessed a call to the AU to support ongoing transition processes in North Africa fully, to ensure that the quest for democracy and good governance is met. One of the outcomes of the retreat was the Cairo Declaration (AU, 2011), which reiterates the need for renewed efforts by different actors and stakeholders in governance

to address implementation gaps. The Cairo Declaration captures the following key recommendations.

4.1 Tripartite partnership between government, civil society and the private sector

Good governance has the danger of remaining rhetoric if there are no attempts to maximise political will to implement the existing governance frameworks and instruments. It is important for civil society actors, the AU and member states to undergo a paradigm shift to realise the fundamental need for the moral imperative of good governance. One such strategy for implementation is to enhance the tripartite partnership of government, civil society and the private sector to augment the development–governance nexus. The private sector should partner with government and civil society in enhancing good governance through the support of institution-building initiatives and economic growth endeavours, as well as through the creation or maintenance of socio-economic capital among citizens. There is also a need to enhance efforts towards inclusive development and decision-making to facilitate democratic governance in public-sector agencies.

4.2 The role of CSOs in promoting governance

The role of civil society in influencing attitude and behavioural change has been demonstrated in a number of cases in Africa. Civil society can play a role in highlighting the gaps or failures of government and the private sector, especially in promoting good governance – which includes transparency and accountability in policy-making and the expenditure of state resources. As participants at the retreat pointed out, in recent years there has been an emergence of more pluralistic political systems on the continent, and the accompanying growth of civil society must be recognised and supported as a key pillar in the development and sustainability of improved cultures of governance. Thus, despite the challenges that many of these organisations face, they remain critical players in ensuring good governance by widening the space for societal participation in oversight and holding governments to account.

4.3 Gendered empowerment and youth advancement

Youth and women remain important players in the quest for good governance in Africa. There is consensus that women's political participation in governance is positively correlated to sustainable peace and development. As such, there is a need for the AU, member states and civil society to increase specific efforts towards gender empowerment and youth advancement in development initiatives, politics and public spheres. To engage with citizenry effectively – and youth in particular – governments are encouraged to take advantage of social media to sharpen organisational tools for service delivery, conflict prevention and the promotion of good governance.

4.4 Consolidating the non-indifference policy by the AU and RECs

The AU and RECs must remain key partners in dealing with developments affecting the continent, including unrest in member states, abuse of power by African states and the

disrespect of constitutionalism, which is exhibited in various locales on the continent. Although the AU underscores its non-indifference policy, this needs to be institutionalised and operationalised such that there is consistency and uniformity in applying this policy. Innovative monitoring and evaluation tools – such as the APRM, AGR and the Ibrahim Index of African Governance – should be fully utilised by the AU, RECs and member states to promote accountability, facilitate transparent economic management and, ultimately, consolidate good governance and democracy.

In addition to the above recommendations, participants called for the PSC to exercise its powers fully under Article 7(m) of the PSC Protocol, which stipulates that the PSC, in collaboration with the Chairperson of the Commission, shall "follow up, within the framework of its conflict prevention responsibilities, the progress towards the promotion of democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the sanctity of human life by member states". Greater involvement of the AU PoW, the PAP and the AUC on Human and People's Rights were also encouraged towards overall efforts to promote good governance.

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ANNEX I: Agenda

**African Union 2011 High-level Retreat
Making Peace Happen:
Strengthening Political Governance for Peace, Security and Stability in
Africa 4 – 5 September 2011, Cairo, Egypt**

Sunday, 4 September 2011

08:30 – 10:30   *Opening Session*
Keynote Address: H.E. Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission

10:30 – 11:00   *Coffee Break*

11:00 – 13:00   *Political Governance in Africa: Trends, Challenges and Prospects*
This session will provide an overview of the consequences of poor governance for peace, security and stability on the continent by looking at recent achievements and setbacks in promoting good governance. It will also consider different governance monitoring approaches with a view to assessing their contribution to improving governance.

Chair: Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, African Union Commissioner, Peace and Security

13:00 – 14:30   *Lunch*

14:30 – 16:00   *The Role of Governance in Preventing Conflicts (Part 1)*

Plenary Session: Jumpstarting governance: How new technologies and social media can revolutionise the relationship between citizens and state

This session will consider how new technologies and social media have connected societies and mobilised them to identify and overcome governance challenges. It will also look at how governments, despite limited resources, can use and adapt new technologies to significantly improving governance and service delivery to their citizens.

16:00 – 16:30   *Coffee break*

16:30 – 18:00   *The Role of Governance in Preventing Conflicts (Part 2)*
Three sessions running in parallel will continue the discussion on the role of good governance in preventing conflicts. Participants can choose which session to attend.

> **Parallel Session I:** Leadership and Accountability
>
> This session will look at the role of leadership and institutions in ensuring good governance. It will consider how leaders can be held accountable for their actions and inaction, and how to support leaders in reforming the public sector to ensure better governance.

> **Parallel Session II:** Sharing Responsibility for Governance: Public Opinion and the Role of Civil Society
>
> This session will critically assess the contribution of the African media and civil society to supporting responsible governance. Participants will examine the role of civil society in ensuring credible elections in Ghana in 2008.

> **Parallel Session III:** How can the Private Sector Support Good Governance?
>
> This session will examine how a vibrant private sector can contribute to good governance. Participants will elaborate on the strategies and policies currently available to governments to empower, and partner with, the private sector.

18:00 – 18:30   *Plenary Session: Report Back from Day one*

Monday, 5 September 2011

08:30 – 10:30   *High Level Panel: The Uprisings in North Africa: A New Dawn for Governance?*
     This session is an opportunity to reflect on lessons to be learned from the recent developments in North Africa. Speakers will discuss how the increasing demand for more accountable and transparent governments will affect the relationship between regional structures, governments and citizens across Africa, and in particular leaders' understanding and practice of governance.

10:30 – 11:00   *Coffee break*

11:00—12:30   *Restoring Peace When Governance Breaks Down*
     Four sessions running in parallel will consider options for restoring peace when governance breaks down. Participants can choose which session to attend.

Parallel Session I: Responding to Election-related Conflicts

This session will examine the phenomenon of election-related and political violence. It will aim to identify options to deal with, and resolve, these conflicts as well as to help re-establish the credibility of the democratic process after it has been abused.

Parallel Session II: Addressing Constitutional Crises

This session will examine cases of constitutional impasse and coup d'etats, in order to identify structural similarities between them and options to address them. Participants will look at the factors that usually lead to political breakdown and may lead to violence. The session will consider how working institutions and processes can be strengthened to protect African states from future unconstitutional changes of government.

Parallel Session III: Responding to a Dysfunctional Security Sector

Dysfunctional security structures often lie at the heart of (re-emerging) violence. This session will look at how the security sector can be transformed so that it is subject to the democratic control and actively promotes human security and the rule of law.

Parallel session IV: Responding to Mismanagement of Natural Resources

This session will seek to identify possible responses to situations where the management of natural resources triggers, escalates or sustains violent conflict. It will examine the many ways in which resources affect conflict dynamics and how the management of resources can be included in peace talks.

12:30—13:00	*Plenary Session: Report Back From Day Two*
13:00—14:30	*Lunch*
14:30—16:00	*Inspire Change: Strengthening Political Governance* Four distinguished personalities will reflect on past experiences and governance challenges as well as outlining the prospects for good governance on the continent.
14:00—17:00	*Concluding Remarks* Chair: Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, African Union Commissioner, Peace and Security

ANNEX II: Cairo Declaration

SECOND HIGH-LEVEL RETREAT ON THE PROMOTION OFF PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFFRICA

CAIRO, EGYPT

4 – 5 SEPTEMBER 2001

CAIRO DECLARATION   HL/Retreat/YoPS.Decl.(II)

""STRENGTHENING POLITICAL GOVERNANCE FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFRICA"

Cairo Declaration

The second African Union (AU) High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa took place in Cairo, Egypt, from 4 to 5 September 2011, on the theme "Strengthening Political Governance for Peace, Security and Stability in Africa". The Retreat provided an opportunity to exchange views in-depth, in both plenary and breakout sessions, on the following topics: (i) trends, challenges and prospects for political governance in Africa; (ii) the role of governance in preventing conflicts, including leadership and accountability, the role of public opinion and civil society and modalities through which the private sector can support good governance; and (iii) the restoration of peace when governance breaks down, with focus on election-related conflicts, constitutional crises, security sector reform and management of natural resources. The Retreat also devoted a plenary session to the following topic: "Uprisings in North Africa – a new dawn for governance?"

The Retreat, which was organized in cooperation with the Government of Egypt, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peace-keeping in Africa (CCCPA) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), was attended by the leadership of the AU Commission and its Special Envoys and Representatives, members of the AU Panel of the Wise and of the Advisory Council for the Year of Peace and Security in Africa, representatives of the Chair of the Union and the Chair of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) for the month of September, as well as several former African Heads of State. Also in attendance were the United Nations Secretariat and Missions on the ground in Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), partner organizations, namely the League of Arab States, the European Union, the International Organisation of La Francophonie and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, as well as representatives of civil society organizations, think tanks and resource persons.

The Retreat took place against the background of the unprecedented developments in North Africa, which erupted as a result of several factors, ranging from widespread dissatisfaction with authoritarian and unaccountable governments; increasing income inequalities, high levels of poverty, and declining living standards; and disproportionately high levels of youth unemployment, leading to social alienation. These developments call for the updating and strengthening of existing frameworks and instruments, so as to efficiently and effectively anticipate, prevent and manage them. In the meantime, Participants stressed the need for full support to be extended to the ongoing transition processes to ensure their successful conclusion and facilitate the establishment of new dispensations that meet the legitimate aspirations of the people concerned.

Participants noted that the North African uprisings have unveiled a profound process that has the potential to contribute to democratic consolidation on the continent. They stressed the need for AU Member States to take advantage of the opportunity thus created to renew

their commitment to the AU democratic and governance agenda, give added momentum to the efforts deployed in this respect and implement the required political and socio-economic reforms.

Participants recognized that the continued prevalence of armed conflicts and violence on the continent, in spite of the significant progress made over the past years, was, as stressed by the PSC, linked to the lack of decisive improvements in political and economic governance on the continent, conditions that inevitably generate frustration and discontent in the population, culminating in revolts and revolutions in some cases. Accordingly, they stressed the imperative of good governance through the strengthening of democratic culture and institutions, respect for human rights, upholding of the rule of law as a means for preventing conflicts and enhancing the participation of citizens in addressing the problems that concern them.

Participants acknowledged that, over the years, the AU has adopted several instruments on human and people's rights, governance, elections and democracy, respect for diversity and minority rights, as well as management of natural resources, which represent a consolidated framework of norms and principles, underlining the significance of the decision on the shared values adopted by the Assembly of the Union at its 16th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, from 30 to 31st January 2011.

Participants also noted the establishment of mechanisms aimed at monitoring progress in governance, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, the UNECA-led Africa Governance Report (AGR) and the Mo Ibrahim Index, which provide early warning tools to anticipate the occurrence of governance-related conflicts, as well as of the AU and RECs/RMs early warning systems. They stressed that observance and effective use of the existing instruments/mechanisms would considerably reduce the risk of conflicts and violence on the continent, while improving the living conditions of the African people.

Participants agreed that focus for the AU should no longer be the adoption of additional instruments, unless exceptional circumstances so require, but rather the implementation of the existing ones. In this respect, they called for renewed efforts from all concerned to address implementation gaps, enhance compliance and live up to the expectations for a better governance arising from the commitments made by the African leaders. They underscored the importance of effective leadership in shaping and maintaining institutions of good governance.

Participants underlined the need for continued African unity of purpose and unified action, including in the governance institutions of the world. They equally stressed the critical importance of mobilizing further financial resources for the AU from within the continent to ensure full ownership and true leadership.

While recognizing the progress made in improving governance, Participants made the following recommendations, which build on earlier AU pronouncements, including the decision to proclaim 2012 as the year of shared values:

(i)   acceleration of the signature, ratification and domestication of relevant AU instruments – in this respect, they appealed to Member States that have not yet done so to urgently take the necessary steps to become parties to these instruments;

(ii)   launching of an effective sensitization and outreach campaign to better popularize relevant existing AU instruments and the provisions contained therein, for them to be owned by all stakeholders, which require coordinated efforts by the AU, the UN, the RECs/RMs, the African civil society and private sector;

(iii)   enhancement of compliance with the existing instruments, with better monitoring. Participants underscored the critical role that civil society could play in monitoring implementation, including through the development of a compliance index that can leverage on Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and would provide regular updates on the steps taken by Member States in fulfillment of their commitments;

(iv)   effective use of existing mechanisms and instruments for improving and monitoring quality of governance in Africa, such as the APRM, the AGR and the Mo Ibrahim Index. These tools should be widely disseminated and the recommendations contained therein better followed up;

(v)   full exercise by the PSC of the powers entrusted to it under Article 7(m) of the PSC Protocol, which stipulates that the PSC, in collaboration with the Chairperson of the Commission, shall "follow-up, within the framework of its conflict prevention responsibilities, the progress towards the promotion of democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the sanctity of human life by Member States";

(vi)   greater involvement of the AU Panel of the Wise, the Pan-African Parliament and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in the overall efforts to promote good governance and prevent conflicts, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the PSC Protocol;

(vii)   implementation, wherever required, of security sector reform programs, on the basis of relevant AU instruments and partnership among all stakeholders.

Participants recognized the significant contribution that social media can make in sharpening the organizational tools for service delivery, the promotion of good governance and conflict prevention. They called on Governments and relevant international organizations, in

particular the AU and the RECs/RMs, to take full advantage of these new tools, in order to more effectively engage with the citizenry, particularly the youth.

Participants welcomed the steps being taken by the AU Panel of the Wise to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing mechanisms relating to democratization and governance in Africa, and make recommendations to the PSC, in pursuance of the request made by this organ at its ministerial level meeting of 26 April 2011.

Participants called on the AU Commission and the UNECA, working closely with other relevant partners, to draw a comprehensive action plan, taking into consideration the detailed recommendations provided by the various plenary sessions and thematic groups.

Participants expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the CCCPA for their generous hospitality and all the facilities provided for the successful convening of the Retreat, as well as to ACCORD, HD, the Government of Finland and UNDP for their support.

Make Peace Happen:
Strengthening Political Governance for Peace, Security and Stability in Africa

A research report based on the AU High-level Retreat held in Cairo, Egypt, from 4–5 September 2011, organised by the African Union Peace and Security Department in cooperation with the Government of Egypt, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa.