

# Policy Dialogue on

## Regional Economic Communities and Peace Building in Africa: Lessons Learned from the Experiences of IGAD and ECOWAS

1-2 September 2016  
Abuja, Nigeria

The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) in collaboration with Social Science Research Council-Africa Peacebuilding Network (SSRC-APN) and in partnership with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Abuja propose to hold a two-day policy dialogue on RECs and peace building in Africa with special focus on lessons from the experiences of IGAD and ECOWAS.

The increased role of regional organizations in conflict management, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are important features of the emerging post-Cold War system. Given the growing complexity of conflict dynamics and security challenges in the post-Cold war world require greater cooperation and coordination among states within regions. The current waves of globalization are already provoking consensus formation and international coordination on a regional basis. Many national governments are coming together to address problems/threats with cross-border or transnational dimensions such as pandemics, desertification, drought, climate change, HIV/AIDS, drug, arms and human trafficking have further influenced many states to embrace regionalist approaches and mechanisms. This is the context in which the emergence of the African Union (AU) as an import peace and security actor represents a renewed commitment of African states to the regionalist approach. The AU main mechanism for promoting peace and security is the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Its key elements include the Peace and Security Council (PSC), a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Stand-by Force (ASF), the Panel of the Wise (PoW) and the Peace Fund. The APSA is designed to function in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms.

The AU recognizes the RECs as officially representative regional associations of African states. Although the RECs were set up primarily to promote economic integration economic integration, they have increasingly taken up a prominent role in conflict resolution and peace support operations as evident in the recent peace processes in Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Congo DRC, Sudan , South Sudan and elsewhere. The intervention of the ECOWAS in the Liberian crisis was the first experiment with intervention by a sub-regional organization in post-Cold war Africa. It is interesting to know that the lessoned learned from peacekeeping and mediation efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the early years of ECOWAS/ECOMOG contributed to the consolidation of mechanisms for conflict prevention and peace building in West Africa. More recently, the example of the ECOWAS "success story" in peace mediation, peace building and peacekeeping has been replicated by other regional economic communities (RECs) on the continent. For example, the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has played important roles in the resolution of conflicts in the Horn of Africa. IGAD had initially been set up to address natural resource management

and development in the Horn of Africa, before taking on board conflict management, peace and security roles on a regional basis. In 2006, IGAD proposed a peace-support mission to Somalia (IGASOM), charged with the task of protecting the Somali Transnational Federal Institutions (TFIs) and create a conducive atmosphere for the political transition. IGAD was also involved in peace mediation and peace building processes in Sudan, Somalia and South Sudan. It played a key role in facilitating the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the National Congress Party and Sudan People's Liberation Movement that ended one of Africa's longest running civil wars. IGAD contributed to the negotiations that culminated on the independence of South Sudan in July 2011. Apart from being involved in UN-led peace support operations in Sudan and South Sudan, IGAD has also played a supportive role to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping since 2007. Since December 2013, IGAD is also mediating between the warring factions in South Sudan.

The lessons from ECOWAS intervention in West Africa as well as IGAD's experiences so far in conflict mediation and peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa aptly show that the involvement of RECs in regional peace and security processes face some challenges. Some of such challenges include the lack of adequate resources and capacity, including weaponry, technical and professional know-how, lack of political will among decisions makers, competing national interests, etc. Resource and capacity deficits partly explain the tendency of African RECs to rely on external funding and technical support. Some analysts note that the dependence on external funding may compromise the integrity, legitimacy and ownership of peace mediation, peacekeeping and peace building processes and operations. The divergence of interests among member states, coupled with the strategic and economic interests of powerful donor states is also capable of undermining the consensus necessary for the effectiveness of the RECs. The records of IGAD and ECOWAS with regard to promoting peace, stability and development in their respective regions are mixed. In spite of the challenges they face, RECs are capable of playing important roles with regard to peace mediation, peacekeeping and peace building. This calls for a comparative perspective to the roles of ECOWAS and IGAD in relation to regional peace and security in West as well the Horn of Africa, and exploring new ideas and actions that are likely to strengthen their capacity to effectively address the peacebuilding challenges facing both regions.

Issues and sub-themes to be addressed at the Policy Dialogue include:

- Comparative Perspectives to ECOWAS and IGADs role in Regional Peacebuilding
- ECOWAS, IGAD and the International Community
- ECOWAS, IGADs Peace and Security Architectures: what place for human security?
- Transnational Actors and Regional Peace and Security in West and the Horn of Africa
- Challenges to provisioning of Public Goods and Regional Security: What prospects for the future?

About 50 participants drawn from among researchers, policy makers, practitioners and representatives of civil society organizations are expected to engage in the two-day policy dialogue. It will include the opening session, 5-6 plenary sessions, and a concluding session that will focus essentially on key recommendations and way forward for the RECs in their mandates. The proceedings of the policy dialogue will be consolidated into a communique, policy briefs and a book length manuscript that will be submitted to NAI.