



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

Dakar International Forum
on Peace and Security in Africa

International Dakar Forum on Peace and Security in Africa

Scoping notes

Table of Content

Session 1 :

«Post Covid-19 stability issues: Security challenges and new threats?»

Plenary 1:	
«The African continent and the world in the post-Covid-19 phase»	4
Workshop 1:	
«Public health challenges: towards the collective management of pandemics»	5
Workshop 2:	
«Security and development: The impact of demography and climate change in Africa»	6
Workshop 3:	
«New challenges: cyber security and the fight against fake news & disinformation»	7

Session 2 :

«Consolidating peace and security in Africa to promote emergence»

Plenary 2:	
«Security and emergence: How to improve the security of states and allow the financing of sustainable peace and reconstruction dynamics?»	9
Workshop 4:	
«The African continent and the rise of violent extremism»	10
Workshop 5:	
«The security challenge: cooperation and the strategic autonomy of African states»	11
Workshop 6:	
«Surveillance and control of maritime areas»	12



Session 1:

**«Post Covid-19 stability issues:
Security challenges and new threats?»**

Plenary 1:

«The African continent and the world in the post-Covid-19 phase»

The Covid-19 pandemic that struck the world at the beginning of 2020 took most of the world's states by surprise. The ensuing crisis has caused numerous malfunctions in trade, the movement of people, and the allocation of financial resources that were unexpectedly redirected to health emergencies. The pandemic also had the effect of increasing the population's distrust of their leaders and the media. Covid-19 is now part of the narrative of conspiracy theorists, both in terms of its origin and its *raison d'être*. Finally, the pandemic has revealed paradoxical situations. Despite generous speeches emphasising international solidarity, it is more often than not in a scattered manner that states have tried to find solutions.

This gap that appeared in the first months of the crisis is indicative of the urgency that struck all the stakeholders involved. They had to adapt to the pace of the evolving health situation and according to their level of knowledge of the virus. With the exception of a few countries, the resulting hesitations sometimes prevented decision-makers from defining a clear line that could be understood by the population. Yet a pandemic requires, by definition, a concerted approach and full transparency. As the virus knows no borders, it is now almost unrealistic to imagine the total isolation of a country. In this context, a return to multilateralism appears to be an imperative if the pandemic is to be curbed and then defeated. National strategies must therefore be made consistent with regional and global policies.

In the fight against the pandemic, African populations have shown great resilience, superior to what has been seen in other regions where people had become unaccustomed to dealing with severe restrictions. In fact, the African continent has a long tradition of managing epidemics (yellow fever, Ebola, etc.), and its countries were able to activate the local initiatives and structures that existed to manage other epidemics.

In this context, there is room for reflection around regional structures in Africa—the AU and the regional economic communities—with a view to improving collective management of pandemics. The AU has been proactive in taking the lead in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, affirming its ability to implement a coherent policy. This demonstrates the value of responding to the crisis within a framework of solidarity, while at the same time raising the question of vaccine distribution policy and good governance to avoid, for example, possible inequalities in the distribution of stocks.

The pandemic also had a direct effect on relations between African countries and their external partners, the latter being more concerned with the health and economic situation in their home country. This situation has led to a reduction in aid and assistance and, more importantly, has weakened ties with Africa, which has brought the issue of cooperation and strategic autonomy of African states back to the forefront in the post-Covid-19 world.

In addition, the pandemic has exacerbated some of the threats affecting African countries in the area of digital development, namely cybersecurity and misinformation.

The health crisis has seen an explosion of cyberattacks for predatory purposes, particularly against economic actors. The Covid-19 pandemic was also the subject of numerous discussions and questions on social media, sometimes to the point of destabilising public authorities.

OBJECTIVE

Initiate a dialogue among stakeholders on the policies and means to be implemented for a rapid exit from the health crisis, with emphasis on collective responses to ensure stability and emergence, including those relating to regional cooperation and the strategic autonomy of African states.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

This introductory plenary will focus on the following points:

- The place and contribution of Africa in strategies to combat pandemics.
- The right balance in terms of cooperation with the outside world, the risk of dependence, and the search for greater autonomy.
- The challenges related to objective information in the context of a crisis (be it environmental or health-related), especially in social media.
- The reconciliation of the urgent need to prepare for future pandemics with the imperative to address the continent's current security challenges.

Workshop 1:

«Public health challenges: towards the collective management of pandemics»

CONTEXT

The political, economic, and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic—particularly on the development and stability of African States—show that health issues are now a major security concern. Like for violent extremism, which ignores borders and is fought at both the national and regional levels, the fight against the pandemic must find appropriate responses. In this context, a concerted strategy seems to be an indispensable condition, not only for defeating the pandemic, but also for ensuring the rapid exit of the African continent from the health crisis.

The relationship between the various levels of decision-making and action—local, state, regional, and international—must be thoroughly considered in order to define the role of each level, while taking into account the various African contexts and their specificities. Strengthening the governance and means of action of certain regional and continental bodies appears to be a prerequisite for better implementation of public policies.

In addition to the strengthening of coordination between institutions, in certain situations, recourse to public-private partnerships could make it possible to find appropriate responses to the challenge presented by the pandemic. The goal here is not to oppose multinational initiatives, but to complement or support them, subject of course to good coordination. These partnerships could concern, for example, support for research in the health field or the ad hoc strengthening of structures in charge of the fight against the pandemic, particularly in the field of logistics.

In addition, a reflection should be carried out on a new multilateralism at the global level to face future pandemics—that are bound to occur—in a more balanced way. Isolationist reflexes should be avoided, especially when there is tension on or shortage of access to tools required for protection (masks), screening (tests), care (oxygen), or prevention (vaccines). A renewed governance of health policies could also serve as a model for other categories of aid, such as development aid. Developed countries seem aware of the need for solidarity in the fight against the pandemic. The last G7 summit thus resulted in a \$4.3bn dollar increase in the aid to the WHO to facilitate access to the vaccine in developing countries.

The involvement of the armed and security forces of African countries in the fight against Covid-19 is another avenue to explore. Indeed, thanks to their organisation and to the quality of their equipment and human resources, they have made a major contribution to the management of the pandemic, just as they did in the past during the Ebola epidemic in Central and West Africa. Regional security structures exist, some of which are already heavily involved in the fight against violent extremism. However, it might also be appropriate to consider the increased use of these structures to combat future pandemics.

Finally, it will be difficult not to mention the involvement of the African populations themselves. Without their understanding of the challenges posed by pandemics or their support for the fight against them, any public policy is bound to fail.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

This workshop focuses on articulating the means for a collective response to the pandemic in order to ensure stability and development in Africa. Current and past health crises show that the solutions lie in strengthening and structuring joint responses rather than strictly national policies.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- How can cooperation in health crisis management be harmonised at the national and regional levels?
- What international cooperation and what common vision for the pandemic response can be implemented?
- How can a new public-private partnership be fostered, whether in the fight against pandemics or in dealing with the consequent economic challenges? How can we link up with other initiatives (from states or regions)?
- How can defence and security forces be involved in the management of health crises? What could be the role of regional security organisations?
- How can African populations be better involved in the global fight against pandemics? How can they be included alongside other initiatives (state, regional, or international) in an inclusive manner, in all their diversity (women, young people, civil society, local authorities, associations, etc.)?

Workshop 2:

«Security and development: The impact of demography and climate change in Africa»

CONTEXT

The African continent could be strongly affected by two major challenges in the 21st century: population growth and climate change. Each of these will have a direct impact on economic, political, social, and security issues. Managing these challenges is an absolute necessity for Africa.

According to the United Nations, the continent could double its population by 2050, which would thus count 2.4 billion inhabitants. This demographic dynamism raises several questions. Indeed, analysts doubt the capacity of economic activity to absorb the unemployment of youth, whose demographic weight continues to grow. In addition, there is the foreseeable scarcity of water and food resources due to population growth.

Demographic issues will be at the heart of the economic agenda of the African continent in the years to come. Indeed, the strength of cultural traditions, the weakness of retirement systems (and therefore the need for intergenerational solidarity to compensate for this), and the limited access of women to education are all factors that contribute to this population growth, even though the economic capacities to absorb it are weak. The security impact of uncontrolled population growth is fatal if there is tension over access to resources and jobs.

This demographic challenge is concomitant with the environmental threat to the ecological balance of the African continent. Africa could be severely impacted in several ways: rising water levels in coastal regions (especially deltas), desertification, deforestation, or more frequent and intense climatic episodes. This situation will aggravate certain security challenges such as conflicts related to access to water or land, population displacements and climate refugees, and destruction due to natural and man-made disasters.

It is therefore essential to reflect on this dual demographic and environmental challenge in order to reduce its impact on peace, security, and development in Africa.

OBJECTIVE

Highlight the link between development, population, ecology, and the promotion of peace and security, and to propose solutions that could enable the continent to benefit from its demography and effectively address the negative impacts of climate change on its security and development.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What are the impacts of population growth on youth, particularly in the areas of education and employment? How can we respond to these impacts to avoid negative consequences in terms of security?
- How can cultural, social, and human dynamics and values be enhanced to encourage inter-community dialogue and counter violent extremism?
- How can we effectively combat climate change, which is more attributable to developed countries? How can we prevent the potential negative impacts of climate change and anticipate them in order to better control its consequences?

Workshop 3:

«New challenges: cyber security and the fight against fake news & disinformation»

CONTEXT

Adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2014, the Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention) remains the reference text on digital issues in Africa. Considering that cybercrime does not stop at physical borders, this Convention proposes a comprehensive approach, which consists of harmonising the cybersecurity tools of AU Member States, starting with their information and communication technology (ICT) legislation. While this step is the first step towards an African digital space, only eight states have ratified the Convention to date. However, such fragmentation reflects more a lack of cohesion on this issue within the AU than a general disinterest in the cyber threat, since several non-signatory states have adopted their own laws in this area. However, the response to the transnational nature of the threat can only be collective. The development of an African digital sovereignty strategy therefore appears to be a way of reinvigorating this quest for cohesion. While the definition of the concept of «digital sovereignty» is still the subject of political and academic reflection, what would be its meaning applied to the African context?

With the growing Internet penetration in Africa comes a mechanical increase in the surface of exposure to cyber risks. For example, in 2017, cyberattacks caused Nigeria to lose nearly \$650 million compared to \$550 million the previous year. To ensure the rise in competence of African states against these threats, bilateral and multilateral strategic and operational cooperations are crucial to strengthen infrastructure resilience. There are many areas of exchange: the implementation of legal frameworks dedicated to cybersecurity, the creation of computer emergency response teams (CERTs), the encryption of high-value data, etc. In this respect, several projects have emerged, including the OCWAR-C project between West Africa and the European Union, and the National School of Cybersecurity with a regional scope in Dakar. However, the exponential growth of digital technologies (5G, big data, Internet of Things, etc.) tends to make cyber risk more complex and calls for continued cooperation. How can we adapt cooperation activities to the new technological challenges? How can we strengthen interoperability between African partners?

«The first technical trial of the vaccine against the coronavirus will be tested in Africa.» Attributed to António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, this false quote has provoked many negative reactions on African social media, in addition to damaging the image of the UN among Internet users. Because of their virality, fake news can shape the behaviour of consumers and even citizens. They thus represent a threat to the stability of African countries whose information space is particularly permeable to information manipulation. Indeed, for many users, the technological leap forward embodied by smartphones has encouraged the use of social media (WhatsApp and Facebook in the first place) to get information. However, fake news circulates faster than «real» information. Moreover, African news websites generally publish their content alongside that of international news agencies (AFP, Reuters, Sputnik, Xinhua, etc.), thus exposing their readers to narratives sometimes developed by media in the pay of foreign powers. How can African states protect themselves from information manipulation?

OBJECTIVE

This workshop aims to open the debate on cybersecurity and the challenge of information warfare on the new digital media. The awareness of all actors, both public and private, to these highly secure issues as well as the possible partnerships and the definition of best practices will form the core of the discussions.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What is the nature and scope of cyber threats, mainly in the field of disinformation? Is it possible to establish a typology of actors, risks, and methods adopted?
- What are the factors (structural and situational) that contribute to the manipulation of information in cyberspace?
- What can be the technological, political, and societal responses to the manipulation of cyber information?
- What strategy should be adopted with regard to partners and solution providers in cyberspace? What links should be established with the private sector?
- How can political and economic leaders be made more aware of cyber risks?
- What cooperation(s) can be implemented at regional and continental levels?



Session 2:

«Consolidating peace and security in Africa to promote emergence»

Plenary 2:

«Security and emergence: How to improve the security of states and allow the financing of sustainable peace and reconstruction dynamics?»

CONTEXT

The Covid-19 pandemic must not overshadow the challenges affecting Africa, especially in the areas of security and economic emergence. The gradual exit from the health crisis must be accompanied by a reflection on the priorities for the recovery of the African economy, but it must also put the essential fight against all forms of insecurity back at the centre of public action. Security is a prerequisite for any policy of economic emergence.

It is a fact that security and development go hand in hand. Both require cooperation at all levels—regional, continental, and international. It is therefore necessary to reflect upstream on the post-Covid-19 period that is beginning in order to better coordinate efforts to ensure a stable and secure environment conducive to economic and social development.

However, the budgetary resources of African states are sometimes insufficient to revive economic activity. In a post-Covid global context, issues related to international aid and debt are therefore becoming central to supporting the security–development diptych on the continent.

Among the major security challenges, the rise of violent extremism requires a coordinated response that takes into account local approaches. The fight against armed groups calls for solutions in both the capacity and political spheres, in a logic that links prevention and coercion.

The security context is also impacted by demographics and climate change, which result in strong tensions between communities over access to water and food resources. This challenge is all the more complex as it requires a holistic approach combining security, political, social, and educational approaches.

An important aspect to consider is that of marine resources, which constitute a real development lever for states with access to the seas and oceans; provided, however, that they are able to control and master their maritime spaces. The fight against piracy and illegal fishing requires surveillance and intervention means, and above all a multinational strategy, given the limited resources of coastal states.

OBJECTIVE

Promote the strengthening of cooperation and reorient the support of the international community towards the objectives of stability, development, and emergence of Africa and propose solutions for the financing of the dynamics of peace, sustainable reconstruction, as well as the mobilisation and rationalisation of investments.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Promotion of the 3-D approach (Defence, Diplomacy, and Development) in the prevention and fight against instability in Africa.
- Improved transfer of skills and capacity in crisis countries through subregional, regional, and international cooperation.
- Synergies between public and private institutional actors in financing post-Covid-19 reconstruction.
- The place of education and youth in the post-Covid response
- Promotion of traditional and cultural mechanisms to solve the challenges of the African continent

Workshop 4:

«The African continent and the rise of violent extremism»

CONTEXT

Despite the Covid-19 health crisis, instability in Africa has not abated. The continent remains one of the main areas where violence is rife, in several forms: violent extremism, inter-community struggles, proliferation of armed gangs, criminal networks, etc. These different forms can intermingle and feed each other.

During the year 2020, 1,878 terrorist attacks were recorded on the continent, resulting in 8,211 deaths (including 1,778 terrorists). The majority (59%) of the attacks were against civilians, 35% against defence and security forces personnel, and 6% targeted government institutions and international organisations¹.

Three major trends can be identified in this extreme violence in Africa.

Firstly, attacks have increased in East, West, and Central Africa, due to a resurgence of actions by armed jihadist groups, such as the regional branches of AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), the gangs that have emerged from the dismemberment of Boko Haram, or local branches of the Islamic State such as the ISWAP (Islamic State – West Africa Province). In addition, there are communal conflicts related to pastoralism, cattle theft, illicit trafficking, and violence over access to resources.

Secondly, in response to this security environment, military and political efforts have multiplied. While effective in its own right, military response alone is not sufficient to reverse the trend and mitigate violent extremism in Africa. Political action, on the other hand, has a longer-term impact.

Finally, the reaction of populations and communities to the efforts of regional and international organisations and of states has been mixed. Military operations have been met with reservations, even though the populations have expressed a real expectation of durable solutions for development.

OBJECTIVE

The workshop aims to shed light on the current situation in the fight—both politically and militarily—against the rise of violent extremism. It also aims to propose solutions to strengthen combat capacities and prevention policies to improve the security of populations in the long term.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What political and military responses are needed to combat the development and expansion of violent extremist movements?
- How can intra-state conflicts that could degenerate into regional conflicts be contained and prevented (situation in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Mali, etc.)?
- What could be the responses of regional bodies to better coordinate the fight against cross-border crime and transnational extremist groups? What support can be expected from external partners?
- To what extent can we envisage the pooling of certain assets and capabilities (military, intelligence, security, etc.) between neighbouring states? Under what conditions?
- What public-private cooperation is needed to strengthen the capacities of African states in the fight against violent extremism?

¹Speech by Mr Idriss Mounir Lallali, Director of the ACSRT, Meeting of the ACSRT Focal Points, 8-9 February 2021

Workshop 5:

«The security challenge: cooperation and the strategic autonomy of African states»

CONTEXT

One of the consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak has been the relative inward-looking attitude of many actors, including some of Africa's key security and defence partners. Yet the outbreak has not dampened the many challenges affecting the continent. On the contrary, violent extremist groups have increased their offensive actions; political instability persists; illegal trafficking (arms, drugs, human beings, dirty money), internal migration, and other epidemics persist. At the same time, African countries are suffering the full impact of the reduction in external aid and assistance. This situation has highlighted the need for state empowerment, which requires greater cooperation among regional partners. Indeed, the above-mentioned security challenges are transnational by nature and must therefore be addressed within a multinational framework.

Cooperation in the field of security and defence will have the effect of fostering a climate of trust between partners. It is not a question of severing all ties with powers outside the continent, but of acquiring a capacity for action that ensures greater autonomy, with the corollary that African states will be more responsible for taking on security challenges.

To achieve this objective, it is essential to reflect on the capabilities of the defence and security forces (DSFs). This reflection must be guided by a balanced approach between security priorities and the reality of financial resources. It is a question of equipping ourselves with resources adapted to the challenges, with trained personnel who will thus be able to act locally as well as in the framework of ad hoc coalitions or in that of multilateral structures such as the AU. For example, strengthening the capacity to act in a coalition with staff exercises and regular training will make it all the easier to respond to challenges while guaranteeing greater autonomy.

In addition to the coercive or peacekeeping operations carried out by the DSFs, emphasis could be placed on better information sharing to improve border surveillance and thus combat illegal trafficking and armed gangs. The aim could be to develop the capacity to anticipate threats before they gain momentum. Lastly, it will be necessary to reflect on financing—by states, regional structures, and international assistance—with a view to greater effectiveness.

OBJECTIVE

Explore ways in which Africa can autonomously address the security challenges it faces, including through cooperation between the defence and security forces of African states, coherence of capability requirements, and funding mechanisms.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- How can we ensure that the capabilities of the African DSFs are increased in line with the threats and resources available?
- What regional cooperation is needed to ensure consistency between the various levels of intervention (national or multinational; ad hoc coalition of willing countries)?
- How can we ensure the sustainability of funding to support peace and security in Africa?

Workshop 6:

«Surveillance and control of maritime areas»

CONTEXT

Despite the existence of the Montego Bay Convention (1982)—which theoretically defined the contours of the territorial law of maritime spaces—the control of marine and underwater routes and resources is still a fundamental issue for countries with a maritime coastline or with strong ambitions in this field. The fact that some states, such as the United States, have not ratified the Convention makes these issues more complex. As an area of trade and commerce and a source of wealth, the sea is also a place of confrontation and clash between maritime powers.

In Africa, the major challenge for coastal states is the control and mastery of territorial waters where sovereignty is fully exercised, and sometimes of the exclusive economic zone where only maritime resources are concerned. The need to assert their sovereignty and their interest in the fishery, mineral, and energy resources present in these areas constitutes the first point of interest for states. The second is the need to preserve freedom of movement at sea and to combat illicit activities. These challenges are all the more important because the maritime areas concerned are sometimes larger than the land component of national territories. Lastly, it is necessary to add the question of protecting the maritime approaches to prevent and, if necessary, counter any hostile action from the sea.

The African Union has taken up the subject. This effort resulted in the African Charter on Maritime Security, Safety and Development in Africa (the so-called Lomé Charter), issued in 2016. It emphasises, among other things, the prevention and repression of transnational crime at sea, most notably terrorism, piracy, human trafficking, illegal fishing, and pollution prevention. In addition to this security aspect, it also aims to develop a sustainable and environmentally friendly blue economy which, according to the Charter, constitutes a «new frontier for Africa's renaissance». It invites coastal states to implement an integrated strategy for the seas by 2050 to ensure the safety and security of maritime spaces. If the long-term ambition of the AU and Togo is to bring this Charter to the United Nations, it will first have to obtain the full support of all its signatories. Indeed, to date, only two states (Togo and Benin) have ratified it out of the 35 initial signatories.

While overexploitation of fishery resources is observed in all coastal areas of the continent, piracy and terrorist activities at sea have increased considerably in recent years, making the continent's seas the leading piracy zones in the world. These illicit activities take place mainly off the coast of the poorest and most unstable countries, where the state is weak or non-existent, such as in some areas of the Gulf of Guinea, the Horn of Africa, or the Mozambique Channel. State action at sea is weak and often ineffective because of the economic and political difficulties of the countries concerned, which is aggravated by the inadequacy of the resources and equipment of the national navies. Finally, certain bilateral agreements between coastal states and developed countries practising intensive fishing can have harmful consequences by imposing unequal competition with traditional fishing fleets, thus contributing to the impoverishment of coastal communities.

Responding to these security and economic challenges could involve a policy to revisit national measures and regional initiatives such as the Yaoundé Protocol (June 2013, involving ECCAS, ECOWAS, and GGC states)¹. National and regional frameworks should be revitalised to strengthen the control of African maritime spaces, but also to define a policy for the acquisition of naval capabilities (surveillance, control, intervention, etc.) adapted to local realities.

OBJECTIVE

This workshop aims to identify the current and future issues and challenges in the control of African maritime spaces and to propose solutions for their sustainable control and development by the states concerned.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What are the current and future stakes and challenges in the control of African maritime areas?
- How can we stem the maritime fault lines through better coordination of regional architectures?
- How can we harmonise national legal frameworks, strengthen the capabilities of maritime actors, and protect resources more effectively?
- How can we support the development and modernisation of the means of African national navies?

¹ Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC)



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