BUILDING PEACE IN THE MIDST OF A PERFECT STORM: WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA?

Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding (SVNP) Southern Africa Regional Policy Conference – Pretoria – South Africa

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CONFERENCE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

How do we achieve sustainable peacebuilding in Southern Africa? This is a key question for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and its 16 member states. The international community, intergovernmental organisations, regional organisations, national governments and civil society have focused their efforts to achieve sustainable peace building and the development of resilient societies. Southern Africa, however, still experiences many peace and security challenges and is now also faced with the threat of violent extremism. There is, for example, continued armed conflict in the eastern DRC, maritime insecurity in southern Tanzania, northern Mozambique and Mauritius, civil unrest in Zimbabwe, electoral related unrest in Malawi, military interventions in Lesotho, protests in South Africa and transnational crime throughout the region, especially along porous borders, as well as high levels of gender-based violence and femicide throughout the region. Violent extremism in Northern Mozambique has become a priority peace and security issue for the region. Regional insecurity is deepened by ailing economies, poverty, unemployment, corruption, a weak security sector, lack of respect for human rights, and the lack of infrastructure, including that of health as recently magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is in this context that the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding organised a Southern Africa Regional Policy Conference to assess security challenges and proffer strategic policy interventions that regional leaders could utilise to address the situation. The Africa Institute for South Africa, in the Human Sciences Research Council, in partnership with the Institute for Security Studies, University of Johannesburg, Institute for Global Dialogue, Centre for the Study of Social Action (CEPAS) at the University of Kinshasa, and the Wilson Centre Africa Programme were the co-hosts of the conference.

The objectives of the conference were:

- To gain a deeper understanding, analysis and thought leadership on the current state of peace and security and requirements for peacebuilding in Southern Africa;
- To deepen our insights on the growing threat of violent extremism;
- To identify actionable recommendations to be shared with targeted policy makers and practitioners in the region, and

- To connect SVNP members and create a space for collaboration amongst the SVNP network in Southern Africa.

SADC has established structures, frameworks and processes for advancing development, conflict management and peacebuilding. SADC has also developed several strategies to enhance regional complementarity as a means to achieve a more inclusive and equal regional integration model. However, sustainable peacebuilding approaches are uneven and ad hoc in their implementation and the mechanisms that SADC has put in place are dated for the new conflict context it increasingly has to confront, especially the threat of violent extremism.

Sustainable peacebuilding has to be holistic and promote human centred approaches. It has to be able to confront hard security threats, build a peace infrastructure and simultaneously address the social, economic, political, environmental, energy, and health challenges that are the underlying drivers of conflict. The promotion of inclusive governance and the development of effective, efficient and legitimate security sector institutions and conflict management structures and processes are key. In SADC able to meet this peacebuilding challenge? How is SADC responding to the growing threat of violent extremism? How can it deal with increasingly complex regional challenges and identify opportunities for new ways of building and sustaining peace? This regional conference reflected on these key questions in Southern Africa, focusing particularly on assessing trends, challenges and opportunities regional actors should pay attention to. The conference also reflected on how the region can fulfil its goals of building resilient societies and communities capable of sustaining peace and development on their own, within an ever changing and dynamic environment. By assessing specific case studies from DRC, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Lesotho, the regional conference provided the space to reflect on some of the main lessons learnt.

The opening plenary of the conference was chaired by Prof Cheryl Hendricks, the Executive Head of the Africa Institute of South Africa. She recognised and thanked all organising partners and highlighted the objectives of the conference. She noted that the conference was taking place in the midst of a third wave of the COVID pandemic, one that quickly proved to be far more contagious than the previous two. She also recognised the passing of former President Kenneth Kaunda and Francis Kornegay. Francis was for many "a friend, colleague, a fellow compatriot, a true pan Africanist, an alumnus of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre and a Senior Research Fellow at the IGD." It was he, too, who had come up with the title of this conference: Building Peace in the Midst of a Perfect Storm. Prof Hendricks noted that she trusted that this conference would

therefore be a befitting tribute to a person of the calibre of Francis Kornegay who always sought to "think deep, critically engage, and remain true to the cause of building peace and the pursuit of socio-economic and gender justice in Africa."

Prof Hendricks further noted that the threat of violent extremisms would dominate the conference but urged that participants pay attention to the other forms of conflict, too, as violent extremisms emerged precisely because of challenges with respect to the nature of our states, governance and the security sector. She contends that we need to "revisit our peacebuilding strategies for if in the midst of building up our continental and regional peacebuilding architectures we are seeing increased conflict and recurring conflicts, as well as 'repeat mediations,' then the peace script itself needs to be revised."

Key points which emerged during the conference were the decline in the quality of democracy in the region, the impact of the pandemic exacerbating inequality and providing an opportunity for the reassertion of authoritarian tendencies; the need to address past injustice and to create inclusive peacebuilding processes and a regional infrastructure for peace as well as to revisit security sector reform. A human centred approach needs to guide the peacebuilding interventions in the region.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Prof Leickness Simbayi, the Acting CEO of the HSRC, welcomed all participants on behalf of the HSRC. He stressed that the Southern African region is facing major security challenges and highlighted the challenges in the DRC and in Mozambique. The displacement of people and noticeable food scarcity in the region was seen as a point of concern that could lead to further unrest. He emphasised that the southern Africa region should develop a holistic approach to maintaining peace and security if it is to make any headway in achieving some of the aspirations of Agenda 2063. He further hoped that the conference would be able to put forward workable solutions for peace and security in Southern Africa.

Dr Monde Muyangwa, the Director of the Woodrow Wilson Centre's Africa Programme welcomed all on behalf of the SVPN and also paid tribute to Francis Kornegay. She also recognised the work of the Southern Voices in West and East Africa. Dr Munyangwa noted that democracy was under stress in the region and underscored the need for building consensus across the continent. She welcomed

the forward-looking agenda of the conference and the calibre of scholars present to deliberate on the issue.

Dr Philani Mthembu, the Executive Director of the Institute for Global Dialogue, in his opening remarks thanked AISA/HSRC and the organising team for putting together the conference. He commented on the difficulties in holding conferences during the pandemic. Dr Mthembu also emphasised the importance of peace and stability in Southern Africa, and indicated that it is becoming very challenging to achieve the various aspirations of SDGs, especially number 16 on peace and security. He contends that countries should be able to hold each other accountable to make sure that the various aspirations of the SDGs are achieved and that civil society is an important actor for achieving peaceful societies. He, too, paid tribute to Prof Francis Kornegay who passed away on 11 June 2021.

OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

This panel was chaired by Annie Chikwanha, Professor in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Johannesburg. The first presenter on the panel, Ambassador Welile Nhlapo, Senior Political Advisor at ACCORD, reflected on the overall theme of the conference. He indicated that over the past two decades the region has been relatively stable though there were challenges of governance and armed conflict in some member states of SADC. He revisited the long route to peace and security in Southern Africa and the struggle the region waged in order to be free and independent. The transition to post-colonial states in the region has, however, been impacted by acute poverty, unemployment, and democratic deficits.

Amb Nhlapo remarked on the situation in Swaziland and the DRC and on the deployment of troops to Mozambique. He insisted that this is a mission the region should take seriously and that SAMIM will be negatively impacted by the governance and exclusionary policies of some governments in the region. In this also emphasised the need for a wholistic mission in Mozambique for a military solutions will not yield sustainable peacebuilding.

In her presentation titled ‘Covid-19 and Governance – Regional Integration put to the test’ Liesl Louw-Vaudran, Senior Researcher and Project Leader at ISS, noted that the pandemic brought out the best and worst of the continent in terms of governance and democratic dividends. The pandemic infection rate at the time was falling in north Africa, but the Southern African region was in a deadly third wave. What has been achieved since independence was being eroded as some ruling parties on the continent used the pandemic to cling to power and in most

countries individual liberties had been curtailed. The pandemic has also led to regional integration initiatives taking a back seat. Liesl contends that there should be political will to address the democratic challenges despite the rapid spread of the pandemic and conflict prevention rather than military solutions should be emphasised. Civil society remains key for holding governments to account on key societal challenges.

In his presentation titled 'The Political Economy of the State in Zimbabwe: The Rise and Fall of the Securocrat State' Dr Ibbo Mandaza, the Executive Director of Southern Africa Political Economic Series (SAPES) remarked on the (in)capability of SADC and AU to resolve new conflicts and crises on the continent. He noted that the liberation movements have served their purpose and that they cannot transform the current situation in the region. He underscored the need to understand the birth of the Zimbabwe state, i.e., born out of conflict. Though there have been regular elections, almost all have been contested. The state has relied on the military and other security organs to maintain peace and security. He outlined the various challenges of the country's electoral process and the role of external factors in ensuring the Mugabe regime survived the 2008 electoral defeat. He noted the role of the Zimbabwean diaspora in conflict resolution and the need for SADC to ensure that the rule of law is maintained in the country.

The last presentation of the panel was by Dr Khabela Matlosa, former Director of the Political Affairs Department at the AU, presented on 'Is Durable peace possible in Southern Africa.' He contends that we focus more on the symptoms and not the triggers of conflict in Southern Africa. He opined that we focus more on the politics and less on the foundation of a peaceful society. Governance should be built around a social contract between the state and society. This social contract is strained in Southern Africa, as seen for example, in Swaziland. There is therefore a need to revisit the social contract. Some of the structural drivers of violence in Southern Africa are elite competition over state power and oppressive state apparatus. Dr Matlosa highlighted that the region should focus on the plight of the youth, women and on underdevelopment and hunger. If this is not done, SADC will not succeed in, for example, Mozambique. Peace building is the key to addressing the security challenges in the region. We need to build societies that are resilient to the societal challenges and therefore move away from state centred to people centred approaches in dealing with the conflict challenges. The region must invest in an Infrastructure for Peace.

Participants questions to the panellists included: how is sovereignty viewed in the region? Should we have deeper criteria for regional integration? Do we see peace

if former liberation movements are kicked out of power? What are new peace element for a peaceful society? How do we create a morally oriented politics?

In their response panellists indicated that the Constitutive Act of the AU addresses the question of intervention in Member States. However, for institutions such as the AU to function effectively states must cease part of their sovereignty to supranational institutions or else the integration process on the continent will not work. The AU however is not a supranational organisation but an intergovernmental one and thus sovereignty remains the elephant in the room. The over reliance on national sovereignty will impede the implementation of the AFCTA and other community integration projects on the continent. If the state is an arena of accumulation and a place of contestation and corrupt practices we cannot meaningfully talk about its role in addressing conflict challenges if it is not transformed. The transformation of the state would have to revisit how states were formed, its foreign foundation and foreign institutions.

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

This panel was chaired by Dr Egna Sidumo, Head of Department of Politics at the Joaquim Chissano University, Mozambique. The first speaker of this panel was Martin Ewi, a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria. In his presentation titled 'An Overview of Violent Extremism in Southern Africa' he indicated that the southern African region has been acclaimed as the most peaceful region on the continent. However, it has not really been that peaceful. Activities of non-state-actors such as PAGAD in South Africa shows that violent extremism has long been a feature in the southern African region. The activities of violent actors in the region are largely home-grown with an external flavour. He dismissed the role of religion in triggering conflicts in the region and noted that the Mozambican conflict could locate its genesis from the long history of conflict along the East Coast of Africa.

The prevalence of conflict in the Great Lakes region, Angola and in South Africa have also greatly contributed to the current armed conflicts we are experiencing in the region today. Dr Ewi noted the attitudes of liberation movements who see the state as the property of the 'Freedom Party' and are therefore unwilling to let go even if they are defeated in national polls. Those who have the necessary know-how to address security challenges are put aside and cadres are deployed. Many of those employed in state organs are not qualified to address the challenges confronting the state. Global terrorists,' he noted, equally have tentacles in the region. Key triggers of conflict include corruption, poverty, porous borders,

abundance of natural resources and external interference. He also noted the intervention of SADC in the province and questioned whether SADC has the necessary funds to successfully intervene in Cabo Delgado. He too recommended that the region adopt a wholistic and multidimensional approach to peacekeeping in Mozambique.

Dr Enio Viegas Filipe Chingotuane, Head of Department, CEEI, at the Joaquin Chisanno University, speaking on 'Violent Extremism in Mozambique', pointed to some of the root causes of extremism. There was a strong regional imbalance between the northern part of Mozambique and the Southern part. Low levels of education, little access to health centres, widespread poverty, marginalisation of the region because of its inclination to support the opposition were some of the key triggers of the conflict in the Province. The other issue, he stressed, is the proximity of the province to neighbouring countries such as Tanzania that have a challenge with Al-Qaeda. The arrival of terrorist groups in the province from Tanzania, Sudan, Kenya and Somalia created a violent socio-political environment. Organised crime and the violent crackdown by the security forces further escalated the security challenges in the province. He noted the displacement of the population from their land with the incursion of multi-national companies, which contributed to the current state of conflict in the region. He further highlighted the frustration over the impact of mega-multinational projects with very little benefits for the local people.

To effectively address these issues there should be strong political will, strengthening of police and military presence, effective presence of the state and the implementation of a community policing forum. Religious bodies should also be bought in to assist with addressing the societal challenges the province is facing.

In her presentation titled 'Women and Violent Extremism: Perspective from West Africa (Mali and Niger)' Dr Ella Abatan, a Researcher at the ISS Regional Office for West Africa, highlighted the triggers of violent conflicts in West Africa. In Mali she noted the activities of the Katiba Macina group and Boko Haram activities in Niger. The norm has always been to perceive women as victims, but in Mali and Niger, some women were agents of the violent activities in the countries. Her presentation concentrated on the motivations why women joined these groups. One of the main reasons was that women wanted to protect their families. Women believed that if they do not join the group, their families would be targeted. Other reasons include family influence, fear of rejection, money, and social standing in society. Why do these groups recruit women? She highlighted that the reasons are many and may include the wish to grow their number,

facilitate their embeddedness in societies, secure active or passive support of the population, sustain their daily life and the fact that women serve as runners for the group. She argued that women should play a more important role in ensuring that women's needs are met so that they do not have the desire to join violent groups on the continent.

In 'Understanding Violent Extremism in Southern Africa: A Review and Recommendations' Prof Anthoni Van Nieuwkerk, Professor at Wits School of Governance, presented some findings from a study that was conducted in Mozambique on violent extremism in the country. Some of the lessons gathered in the field include, violent extremist locate themselves in areas where the state has less presence. Weak governance and state capture, corruption, porous borders, unemployment, structural violence, transnational crime all contributed to violent extremism in the country. He contended that counter-terrorism activities on the continent have failed to bring peace and stability and that Africa needs new approaches to resolve the myriad security challenges the continent is facing.

As a recommendation, he noted that SADC should deploy a multidimensional peace keeping force to Cabo Delgado as a matter of urgency. Member states need to strengthen their financial intelligence to gather the necessary intelligence to track and understand the financing of crimes in the region. National Action Plans on PVE should be developed for the region. SADC should also consider security sector reform in order to ensure that the security sector id adequately resourced and structured to deal with the new forms of conflict in the region.

Questions for the panel included: What impact would the designation of terrorist groups as foreign have? This in effect implied that there would be no need to enter into negotiations with these groups. Panellists indicated that dialogue should be key in addressing some of the fundamental security challenges on the continent. In Mali, dialogue is already being undertaken and dialogues should be located within the African context. The state is not the enemy but rather a conduit through which the security of the state is anchored. The major challenges we have on the continent are that actors and agencies weaken the state so that it cannot fight corruption and address insecurity on the continent. Some panellists argued that the state should be strengthened and given the necessary space to carry out its important function, which is development.

Dr Lena Mukendi, an Independent Consultant, presented a wrap of the day's discussions and key take away points.

EXAMPLES OF PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The session was chaired by Father Alain Nzadi-a-Nzadi, Director of CEPAS. The first presenter of the session, Dr Joao Machatine Ndlovu an Independent Conflict Consultant in Mozambique, spoke on 'Trends and Emerging Threats in the Southern Africa Region.' He stated that the SADC region is a melting pot of entities with varied and conflicting interest ranging from state to non-state actors. Some of the threats highlighted include dysfunctional economies and political management, dependency on development aid, the exploitation of natural resources by multi-national companies, corruption and rent seeking, porous borders, proliferation of private security companies, cybercrime, unemployment and the continued vestiges of colonialism. The abuse of hard drugs by youth, was also seen as contributing to high crime rates. Mr Ndlovu also spoke to the spectre violent extremism. He indicated that governments and civil society organisations should work together to address issues of insecurity in the region.

Dr Frank Lekaba, Lecturer in the Department of Politics, Northwest University, presented on 'The role of Civil Society in Peacebuilding.' The effectivity of civil society in conflict management depended on trust and legitimacy from the broader society their ability to be able to analyse and develop conflict resolution strategies, their coherence and their ability to obtain the support of the mediators of the conflict.

In her presentation titled 'Peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, Shuvai Nyoni, the Executive Director of the Africa Leadership Centre in Kenya, observed that post-independent Zimbabwe has not really focused on building peace. Rather, the first and the second republics were interested in consolidating their grip on power at the expense of state and nation building processes. Peace building initiatives were relegated to the back burner of state craft in the country. She spoke to the lived reality of structural violence, the continued non-acknowledgement of the Gukurahundi massacre which has been a scar on the political landscape, electoral violence which has never been properly addressed nor the perpetrators brought to book and the violent nature in which the state of Zimbabwe has responded to citizen demands for change and reforms. Shuvai highlighted the need for a new social contract between state and citizens in Zimbabwe and that government should create the space through which conversations for change could take place.

Dr David Zounmenou, a Senior Consultant at the ISS in his presentation titled 'Peace building in the Democratic Republic of Congo' noted that the country continues to face a crises on multiple levels. He emphasised that peace in the DRC needs to be re-negotiated with different and continuously changing stakeholders and that disarmament must be a priority. There are about 122 armed

groups operative in the eastern DRC. The state apparatus, including the army, remains weak and this impacts on the peacebuilding process.

Prof Anna Chitando, of the Zimbabwe Open University, presented on 'Women and Peacebuilding.' She pointed to the roles that women have been playing in peacebuilding processes across the globe and the roles they currently paly, especially in relation to fighting violent extremism. She lamented the impact of patriarchal and structural impediments that prevent women from fully embarking on peace building initiatives in the region.

Dr Rigobert Minani of CEPAS presented on 'Reflections on MONUSCO's Peacebuilding in the DRC.' He charted the tumultuous journey of UN peacekeeping in the DRC over the last 22 years. The UN was said to continue to have an inadequate understanding of the conflict in the Congo. Some of the major issues revolved around the plight of the Banyamulenge and the silence of the International Community on the encroachment of Rwanda in the Eastern part of the Congo. The various peace processes the country has engaged in is seen as having no major impact on peacebuilding in the country and as largely outside imposition. He noted that most armed groups in the country still take their orders from foreign powers and that the country has been invaded by its neighbouring countries. There has been a lack of accountability for all these atrocities.

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN PEACEBUILDING

This session was chaired by Dr Philani Mthembu, the Executive Director of IGD. The first presenter of the session was Amb. Iqbal Jhazbhay, former South Africa's Ambassador to Eritrea and Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Africa. In his presentation titled 'The Ethiopia-Eritrea 2018 peace and friendship agreement: Appraisal and some reflections for Southern Africa' emphasised the massive goodwill of the presidents of both countries to ensure that peace and stability return to the Horn of Africa. He contended that many countries on the continent continue to experience negative peace. As the second most populous country on the continent, Ethiopia has a major role to play to ensure that peace returns to the Horn and along the Indian Ocean coastline. Personal diplomacy matters a lot in peacebuilding. The personality of the Ethiopian Prime Minister played a major role in advancing peace and development between Eritrea and Ethiopia. He noted the interplay of national interests and geo-political players in the region and that there needs to be a balance between these to arrive at sustainable peacebuilding.

Lena Sundh, Special Envoy for Sweden, speaking on 'International actors and peacebuilding' highlighted the artificial division between Africa and International actors as Africa is part of the international. The AU and RECs have become prominent in peacebuilding processes on the continent and international actors need to take their lead from these organisations for resolving security challenges on the continent.

The ambassador of Norway to South Africa, Astrid Emelie Helle, highlighted the role of Norway in peace and conflict resolution in Southern Africa. Norway has a policy of assisting but not siding with any of the parties to the conflict. Norway provides expertise and works with civil society organisations in the resolution of conflicts in Southern Africa. They support women, youth, and civil society organisations in the resolution of conflicts across the region. Amb Helle also noted the role of South Africa in the resolution of conflicts across the region. Norway works closely with governments, civil society organisations and RECs in the resolution of conflicts in the region.

The Ambassador of Netherlands to South Africa, Johannes Peters, indicated that the Netherlands' approach to peace and security is based on a multi-dimensional approach and that it works towards inclusive and durable peace and thus to addressing the root causes. Inclusive justice and reconciliation are key in building peace across the continent.

FUTURE OF PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

This session was chaired by Prof Cheryl Hendricks, the Executive Head of the AISA. The panel included Dr Monde Muyangwa, Director of the Wilson Centre Africa Programme, Dr Martha Mutisi, a lecturer at the Africa University, Prof Sandy Africa, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria and Dr Jakkie Cilliers, Chairman of the Board and Head of African Futures and Innovation at ISS, Pretoria, Sandra Oder of the Department of Politics, Peace and Security at the African Union.

Sandra Order noted the need for Infrastructure for Peace in the region and the centrality of REC's in peacebuilding. Dr Mutisi indicated the need to invest in our own early warning systems. This would ensure that conflict triggers are quickly detected and solutions proffered. The region should focus more on human security and address state fragility. An inter-generational dialogue for peace building in Southern Africa should be promoted.

Prof Sandy Africa noted the need to reflect on what is absent the current invisible tenets that inhibit peace in the region. The key she noted is what is absent to

achieve peacebuilding in the region – this related to the ability of the state to respond to conflict. Needed a repositioning of the social contract and adherence to the rule of law and avoidance of the politicisation of the military and the security apparatus of the country. We need to invest more in scenario playing in ensuring that key challenges to the state are predicted and solutions offered.

Dr Jakkie Cilliers noted that the SADC region is struggling and falling behind on democratic and governance indexes. There has been a slow pace in the growth trajectory of South Africa and therefore a mounting inability to address current development needs. The inequality gap is widening. Inclusive democracies deliver better outcomes and the region needs to therefore do more in this regard if it is to ensure sustainable peacebuilding.

Dr Monde Muyangwa posed the question what is peace and who is defining it? The region has an obligation to figure out what they need to do to safeguard their democracies. Youth in particular need to be brought more centrally into peacebuilding as they are the future peacebuilders. The state on their own cannot bring about peace in the region, hence the need for civil society participation.

In Prof Cheryl Hendricks and Dr Monde Muyangwa thanked all for the engaging debates that characterised the conference.