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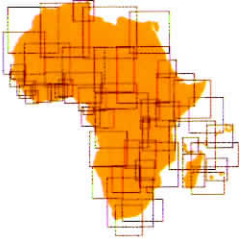JOHNS HOPKINS
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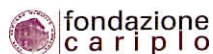
3rd Conference

Africa
54 Countries
One Union

Addis Ababa, May 3-4, 2012

Africa: 54 Countries, One Union
Addis Ababa, May 3-4, 2012

Peace, Security & Development
Concept Note

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Most recent wars in the African continent have been intrastate conflicts, which often have far-reaching regional as well as international dimensions and ramifications. Such conflicts not only rupture a country's development; they are often the consequence of the failure of a country's political process and development efforts.

Often overlooked, the variety and prevalence of non-military threats to peace and security also disrupt governance and compromises development. These threats include: local resource-related violence including the effects of climate change, insecurity linked to organized crime (particularly drug trafficking) and border disputes, insecurity associated with global ideological connections including terrorism, maritime piracy along the continental coasts, and governance related conflicts and violence. Contemporary peace and security challenges now include a combination of political violence and criminal violence, with many countries now experiencing repeated cycles of intrastate conflicts and criminal violence.

Despite encouraging progress in Africa on the issue of peace and security, stability in West Africa and the Sahel regions has been an issue of significant concern. While the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire have ended, the recovery process and the creation of stable institutions have taken time. In the meantime, the weakness of governance in post-conflict environments has attracted transnational criminal networks. Similarly, the porosity of borders, the absence of strong state authority in border areas, and the limited reach of law enforcement capacities into neighbouring countries, have made some countries more vulnerable to cross-border illegal trafficking, the proliferation of small arms and light

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weapons, the unrestricted movement of mercenaries, and a general climate of impunity.

International drug traffickers use West Africa as a transit hub for the transportation of drugs, such as cocaine, from South America to Europe. These traders have formed alliances with terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and other criminal syndicates. The penetration of funds from various illegal trades into the broader regional economy, the corruption it causes, the violence among criminal groups striving to capture markets and the armed attacks against state or private assets have all undermined governance and threatened socio-economic development. In addition, violence perpetrated by armed rebel groups or bandits against local communities continue to affect the daily lives of citizens and to hamper their efforts to improve their living conditions.

Against this backdrop, the crisis in Libya introduced a new set of cross-border challenges for West Africa and the Sahel region, especially in countries such as Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Tunisia. The crisis further exacerbated a precarious socio-political situation in West Africa and the Sahel region with the influx of thousands of impoverished returnees, as well as the inflow of unspecified and unquantifiable numbers of arms and ammunition from the Libyan arsenal.

This interlocking landscape raises questions about:

- the adequacy of analytical capacity and monitoring mechanisms in the concerned region;

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- the adequacy of research and policy frameworks, which have traditionally treated armed conflicts and non-military threats to peace and security as separate phenomena without fully considering the relationships between them;

- the coherence of the approaches to deal with these various threats to peace and security;

- the capacity of the international architecture to move from providing assistance to individual nation states to addressing cross-border threats to peace and security;

- the coordination of efforts amongst Member States, regional organizations, civil society, the private sector, the international financial institutions and other multilateral partners and;

- the availability of donor resources in the current global economic downturn.

Focusing on the roles of the African Union and its sub-regional organizations, the European Union and the United Nations, as well as those of China and the United States, this session will offer senior policy-makers and experts the opportunity to discuss the relevance of regional integration and mechanisms in addressing peace, security and development challenges in Africa, especially in West Africa and the Sahel regions.