



Action for Peace Forum & Initiatives 5 - 7 December, 2022 Report

African Union Headquarters, December 7, 2022

The African Artists Peace Initiative (AAPI) launched a decade long action campaign to '*Rethink, Reset and Co-create initiatives for sustainable peacebuilding*'.



Participants gather for a group photo with His Highness Prince Ras Mengesha Seyoum, Chairperson of the Elders Forum for Peace and opening keynote speaker at the first edition of the Action for Peace Forum (Photo: Dagmawi Menkir, 2022)

The African Artist Peace Initiative (AAPI) in partnership with African Union Commission's Silencing the Guns Unit, hosted the first edition of the Action4Peace Forum 5 - 7 of December, 2022 at the Mandela Hall of the African Union Headquarters. Since 2015, AAPI took upon its role as a Pan-African movement of creatives and *peaceivists* successfully hosting (5) annual Arts4Peace Forums, engaging (33) country chapters, 90 celebrated personalities and over 12,000 members over the years.

The 3-days forum was convened with the objective of '*Rethinking, Resetting and Co-creating action initiatives for sustainable peace building*' which set the overarching theme of the gathering. A total of 330 participants gathered, representing community elders, AU, IGOs, government, social enterprises and university students to identify shared challenges and opportunities within various working groups. The forum offered the opportunity to define strategic objectives and strengthen national and regional ties between the AU, government, arts, sports, media and the social enterprise sectors towards amplifying public consciousness in the role of cultural diplomacy for mobilizing collective action for peacebuilding.

Five thematic working groups were organized namely *Media for Peace, Culture for Peace, Education for Peace, Sports for Peace* and *Interfaith dialogue for Peace*, as a means of getting more specific with the proposed work tracks. The action portfolios can be found by visiting www.action4peace2030.org





Ibrahim Ceesay Shalom

Campaign Coordinator, Action4Peace Forum & Initiatives; Founding Executive Director, African Artists Peace Initiative (AAPI).

The overall goal of the forum is to rethink innovative financing of peace-building initiatives and co-create funding mechanisms for sustainable peace in Africa; within the frameworks of the Africa Agenda 2063 and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

The main objectives of the forum include the following among others:

- Provide a platform for coordinated-actions and mass-mobilization of state and non-state actors involved in peace-building and sustainable development in Africa.
- Propose key policy recommendations and joint-actions to African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and National Governments to reinforce and champion the new African Union Silencing The Guns 2021-2030 Campaign.
- Develop sustainable financing mechanisms for sustainable peace in Africa and launch into official operations the "Partnership4Peace Africa 2030 Fund (PAF).

The strategic outcomes of the forum include the following:

1. Sustained partnerships for peace with international partners, including the Regional Economic Communities, African Union Commission, UN Agencies, National Governments and the private sector.
2. Popularization and amplification of the African Union Silencing The Guns by 2030 Decade Campaign.
3. A funding facility to support innovation and acceleration peace-actions across Africa
4. An organized state and non-state actors partnership for peace platform providing leadership in mainstreaming the voices of African peoples in the realization of the Africa Agenda 2063 and UNSDG's at the national and regional levels.
5. Produce activity reports, policy briefs, newsletters, video-documentaries and info-graphics on Action for Peace Initiatives at the national level.

Highlevel Opening



ACTION4PEACE FORUM
DECEMBER
2022



(Left to right) Highness Prince Ras Seyoum Mengesha, Chairperson for the Elders Forum for Peace; Ibrahim Ceesay, Executive Director for African Artists Peace Initiative (AAPI) and Campaign Coordinator for Action for Peace Forum 2030; Dr. Desta Meghoo and Mr. Abdulkadir Aroura, Director for Silencing the Guns Unit at the African Union Commission.

At the opening ceremony, His Highness Prince Ras Mengesha Seyoum underscored the responsibility of the elder generation to guide, empower and educate young people to ensure the continuation of building on commendable legacies of building peaceful communities. Various stakeholders committed to support the initiative and pledged contributions to support the campaign at the national level. Mr. Abdulkadir African Union Commission explained why 'education should be our most important investment on the youth to avert peace and security threats and ensure prosperity in the African continent. He recalled the significance of civil societies in complementing the policies adopted under the Silencing the Guns Unit of the Commission.

During his opening remarks, Mr. Ibraheem Ceesay Shalom emphasized "the only reliable way to achieve the Agenda 2063 is by using the pool of talent and potentials of young people. We are gathered here for the next 3 days to rethink our way of doing things, resetting how we do them and co-creating new action together'. Various stakeholders committed to support the initiative and pledged contributions to support the establishment of the country office in Ethiopia.

Community elders and peace advocates were among the participants, honor their exceptional work in championing indigenous knowledge and peace through their work, especially in conflict prevention and mediation.

Dr. Desta Meghoo reiterated her commitment to support networks of the arts community and young people in the promotion of peace and culture, as done in preceding forums. Peace is not an *is*, said Dr. Desta Meghoo, 'it is a *becoming*', emphasizing the the role each individual can play by being the action of peace itself.

It is to be recalled that AAPI hosted (5) Arts for Peace Forums in Addis Ababa since 2015 mostly at the margins of the African Union Heads of State Summit. In addition to offering tangible outputs such as voluntarily offering AAPI's *Agenda 2063 Icons* to the African Union Commission as part of its artists' contribution in promoting Agenda 2063 visually using creative communications.



Dr. Mulatu Astatke and Dr. Desta Meghoo, co-recipients for the African Cultural Renaissance Award (ACRA) are joined by the Women Emerging Leaders Initiative (WEMLI) fellows, Mr. Ibrahim Ceesay; Mrs. Heran Tadesse, Co-country Coordinator (AAPI Ethiopia); Ms. Nikita Shiel-Rolle, founder of the Cat Island Conservation Institute, The Bahamas, Community Elders and Abba Geddas.



The three-days forum took upon a three phased work flow (i.e. to rethink, reset and co-create). The first phase encouraged participants to *rethink* past and current approaches to peacebuilding and interrogate what needs to be done differently. The *Reset* phase of the activities involves exploring new and concrete action pathways for applying the ideas considered at the *Rethink* phase. The co-creation phase aimed at galvanizing the consultative inputs from each thematic working groups allowing each participant to take ownership of specific action items that capitalize on already existing initiatives.

Mr. Abiy Shimelis, Campaign Manager for the Action for Peace 2030 campaign mentioned "...in our common ambition to creatively promote peaceful coexistence, AAPI is doing its part in creating the convening space for co-creating tangible action that impacts concrete gains in peace, good governance, and economic opportunities. The campaign is our collective voice, applicable to each of our own talents, expertise and lived realities. Mr. Dagnachew Wakene, disability rights advocate and consultant, gave a brief presentation on how 'especially disabled people are victims in times of conflict'. The war has increased the number of disabled people. He demonstrated how 'exclusion is easier than inclusion, so everyone should stand strong to keep inclusion, which is a mindset in the way we treat others and ourselves'. The Ubuntu phrase "I am because we are" was one of the inspirational phrases shared remind the spirit of inclusivity.

Inclusivity in peace building



(Left) Mr. Dagnachew Wakene, disability rights advocate and consultant presented his experiences in dealing with issues of inclusion. (Right) Members of the Women Emerging Leaders Initiative (WEMLI), (7) young women benefited from the program under the mentorship of Mr. Ibrahim Ceesay for (10) consecutive sessions.

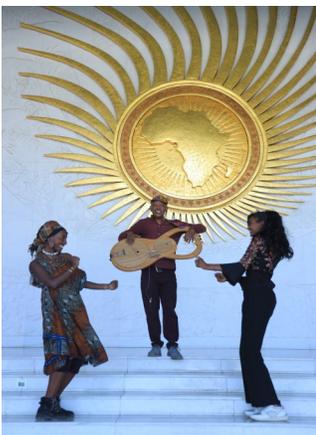
1. Education for Peace

The Education for Peace work track is set to champion and explore action items that help participants learn more about the African Cultural Renaissance and Agenda 2063 through innovative ways of disseminating actionable learning activities. Initiatives will be co-created and developed with priority areas on disability rights, gender equality and youth empowerment. The pilot initiatives will strongly consider economic empowerment of young women, health, and power disparities between men and women as well as examining the traditions and structures that have led to the disadvantaged position of women. The action factory will be co-chaired by two local CSO and are currently in the process of merging their organizational contribution as co-chairs for the education work track.



2. Culture for Peace

Culture engages people, focusing their attention and actively involving them in an experience. Active involvement means that their emotions, not just intellectual or cognitive skills, are affected. It is this ability to touch emotions that allows arts and culture to influence attitudes in ways that traditional instruction cannot (AAPI, 2022). African cultural heritage, indigenous people & knowledge and positive traditional practices have a big impact on peace building and the roles of cultural diplomats and traditional leaders came out as the main take away from this track.



3. Media for Peace

Media has a powerful role to play in the peace-building process. The Media4Peace work track deliberated on the key role of media in conflict prevention, peace-building and reconciliation in African societies. Pilot initiatives focusing on creative communication, right to information and citizens journalism for justice and peace were co-created and developed. Special initiatives were suggested such as the creation of an African Network of Community Radio's for Peace-building (ANCR4P). Various digital media houses including Awaqi, Ulta Communications, Ethio-Journal, OBN and Walta took part within this work track. Possibilities of jointly co-creating impactful infotainment content depots were noted as action items.



4. Sports for Peace

Sports4Peace will examine the nexus between sports and social cohesion in African societies. Sports initiatives will be co-created and developed with special focus on how sports can accelerate and catalyse peace-building actions on post-conflict demobilization and stabilization; reintegration of child soldiers and ex-combatants; rebuilding mental health of traumatized population; and reconciling fragile and torn societies. The Sports for Change initiative led by Ahadu Gebru will serve as one of the co-chair for the *sports for peace* work track.



5. Interfaith Dialogue for Peace



Various religious leaders and elders graced the forum with their presence and parted their wisdom and message of solidarity with the forum participants. It was noted that promoting Security of Religious or Belief Communities is key in inculcating culture of peace in societies.

Deacon Terefe Worku, Senior Researcher at Walta Media and Communication Corporation made a presentation on the importance of interfaith dialogue. The current attention being paid to inter-religious action lack proper attention. The interfaith dialogue work track explores crucial question of intra-religious collaboration, which is often as challenging as the inter-religious work, thus requires building academic and practical research from multiple related fields.

6. Tourism for Peace

Using tourism as a cultural diplomacy tool was one of the key co-creation areas that was highlighted during the forum. Dr. Desta Lorenzo (bottom left), from the Addis Ababa Tourism Bauru; presented detailed strategic points on how eco-tourism for Peace can be championed for peacebuilding and inter-cultural diplomacy. Prof. Marco Vigano, renowned scholar in heritage preservation shared some of his insights on how to co-create new tourism routes in less explored regions of Ethiopia.



7. Business for Peace



Ms. Hanni, Marketing Director for Grand Palace Hotel noted that 'peace building activities should be linked with the business community, bringing together various chambers of commerce, private business owners and business unions' towards consolidating resources for proactively enabling positive peace. For businesses to benefit from the dividends of peace, accountable civil society play a crucial role

in converting resources to action.

'Business can play a significant role in cultivating positive peace (economic empowerment) rather than negative peace (absence of war)' said Mahlet Belachew, one of the participants of the forum representing SOPHOS Ethiopia, emphasizing the role of business in proactive peacebuilding.' Funding may be able to make things better, but lasting peace is promoted through economic empowerment'.



Get Involved



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www.action4peace2030.org

ACRA AWARD



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Dr. Mulatu Astatke—Ethio Jazz Founding Father and legendary music composer and **Dr. Desta Meghoo** — a seasoned creative consultant specializing in the Creative Cultural Industries with an emphasis on diversity and inclusion; receive the African Culture Renaissance Award from Mr. Ibrahim Ceesay on behalf of the entire African Artist Peace Initiative (AAPI).

At the closing ceremony, Dr. Mulatu Astatke and Dr. Desta Meghoo, were announced as co-recipients for the African Cultural Renaissance Award (ACRA). Mr. Ibrahim Ceesay, on behalf of AAPI, finally conferred the award upon Dr. Desta Meghoo and Dr. Mulatu Astatke in recognition of their “dedication, service and achievements in propagating the culture of peace through their arts and talent”.

The ACRA annual award is conferred on deserving individuals and/or organizations that have dedicated their work in promoting and championing the “Culture of Peace” as defined by UNESCO; tolerance and understanding. Past recipients of the award includes: Roskilde Festival of Denmark (2016), H:E Madam Bineta Diop, African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security (2017), Amb. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriages in Africa/Secretary General of the World Young Women Christian Association (2018), H:E Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of Ethiopia and H:E Isaias Afwerki, President of The State Eritrea (Co-recipients 2019).

**"Peace is a becoming"
- Dr. Dest Meghoo**



[Click to watch video](#)



Video Credit: Ultra Communications (2022).

Case: Tourism for Peace in Kambata



Action4Peace Forum team visits Durame, Shinshicho Town and Mount Hambericho (777 Staircase) eco-tourism project in Kambata, Sidama Region as part of its site assessment to suggest 'heritage conscious' tourism routes and eco-lounge retrofitting.

Forum participants under the #Toursim4Peace working group embark on their first site assessment visit in Kambata Zone Mountain Hambericho. Prof. Marco Vigano—Founder of Misrak Kirs, Ms. Nikita Shiel-Rolle—Founder of Cat Island Conservation Institute (CICI) Bahamas, Mr. Abiy Shimleis—Campaign Manager for Action4Peace 2030 Campaign and Mr. Ibrahim Ceesay Shalom—Coordinators of Action4Peace Forum and Initiatives gather for a group photo before embarking on a six hour long trek to the top of Mount Hambericho (777) (approx. 3,990 m a.s.l) in Kambata Zone.

The site assessment was aimed at identifying potential eco-tourism use experiences and routes that could be implemented within the next 2 years. The site assessment was made possible by the support of Assefa Lintiso (founder of Green Thinkers Association) and the local Kambata Tourism Zone officers Mr. Desta Fitamo, Mr. Abinet and others who were the visionaries behind the 777 Staircase construction Project for Mount Hambericho, who continue to champion tourism to promote cross cultural integration and economic empowerment.

Objectives:

- Site visit documentation and Community Consultation
- Propose a tourism route and experience log for new visitors
- Cost estimation and proposed budget for enhancing eco-lounges near the mountain base

Proposed Budget: 7,000 USD.

Project year: 2023 — 2025.



Intergenerational Dialogue with the Elders



The Action4Peace (AAPI Ethiopia) team paid a courtesy visit to His Royal Highness Prince Ras Seyoum Mengesha, Chairperson of the Elders Forum for Peace and opening keynote speaker at the first edition of the Action for Peace Forum, to thank him for his life time achievement and for showing the team support and inspiration during our Action 4 Peace forum. Looking at the past to better shape the future is an essential value reaffirmed among the team. (December 15, 2022).

Indigeneous knowledge at Lebawi Academy: Work Visit



Educational visit of Lebawi Academy, a learning institutes that is implementing a hybrid curricular model – Ethiopian national curriculum and best practices from around the world. Heran Tadesse, Co-country coordinator for AAPI Ethiopia and Nikita Shiel-Rolle, Founder and CEO of Cat Island Conservation Institute and Young Marine Explorers (YME) (December 19, 2022).

Case: Countering Media Polarization

While peacebuilding is a slow and painstaking process, modern digital media technologies, like social media, capitalise on consumers' shorter attention span for profit, especially that of younger generations. Polarised narratives are becoming more widespread as more people absorb information through narrow bubbles of this medium. This is made worse by the ease to spread misinformation or disinformation, further breeding online hate speech across and among communities. Historical facts and objective figures are manipulated and misconstrued, while ill-processed opinions rush to justify polarised statements. This trend discourages both deeper individual and social cognitive processes, which should have ideally laid the fertile grounds for constructive peace conversations. Clearly, new and innovative methodologies are needed to cope with the evolving media consumption culture of the 21st century. To address these challenges, this paper is presenting novel and radical approaches to peace advocacy. More info: www.unoy.org/ypsrn/abiyshimelis/



Case: Mentorship in Practice



Seven young women benefited from the *Women Emerging Leaders Initiative (WEMLI)* under the mentorship of Mr. Ibrahim Ceesay for ten consecutive weekly sessions on issues of wholistic self-development and servant leadership.



Meet Melat Yohannes— CEO and Editor-in-Chief of The United Africa Youth Magazine and member of The Women Emerging Leaders Initiative (WEMLI). Her magazine's mission is to 'provide a curated, multimedia experience that celebrates Africa's diversity and champion Africans everywhere' say Melat. For more information about *The United Africa Youth Magazine* join the Telegram channel at: www.t.me/unitedafricayouthorganization



Skate 4 Peace: a healing sport for street children of Addis Ababa

Objective: Uniting Global Communities for tangible Sustainable Development through skateboarding, movement, collective healing and heritage

Theme: Personal Healing health and well-being SDG 3 & SDG 16

Activity: 5 part party series: Learn to Skate, Yoga and Da Grouper School Party

Duration: A 5-part series of 4 ½ hour events hosted every 2 months.

Resources: A co-created five part Sustainable Development [Curriculum and Resource](#); tied to community-based projects will accompany the program. ([Sample Party & Concept Note](#))

Movement & Art

Painting, dancing, two DJ's (Bahamian and Ethiopian), poetry and group game competitions.

Outcomes:

- The development of a wellness community that enables community members to gather weekly for a group therapy / sound healing experience.
- Increase the development and inclusion of girls and women in skateboarding.
- Create tangible pathways for the Skate 4 Peace community to engage in policy creation and participate in United Nations SDG meetings and side events.
- Informing about the necessities and benefits of peace.

Possible Partners: Ethiopia Skate, Addis Ababa University Peace Club, Addis Ababa University Art Club African Artist Peace Initiative, Gitem Sitem, Heran's Yoga, Lebawi Academy, Hidase Lideta High School, YME Bahamas,



Educational visit of Lebawi Academy, a learning institutes that is implementing a hybrid curricular model – Ethiopian national curriculum and best practices from around the world. Heran Tadesse, Co-country coordinator for AAPI Ethiopia and Nikita Shiel-Rolle, Founder and CEO of Cat Island Conservation Institute and Young Marine Explorers (YME) (December 19, 2022).

Heritage 4 Peace: Zeway Debre-Tsion Monastery



Kebron Begenia Institute With Rethink Global Initiative

Begenia is an ancient chordophone dating back to the biblical era. It has been used as a healing sacred instrument mainly due to its healing bass vibrations, which can be seen in ancient stories like that of King David. The two millennia old Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is owed a debt of gratitude by the world for preserving intact this heavenly instrument. For various reasons The Begenia was heading in the direction of extinction. By the grace of God, it is making a rebound due to the effort of ambitious people from unexpected quarters.

Kebron Begenia is an up-and-coming Institution which mainly focuses on the preservation and dissemination of the useful ancient wisdom of The Begenia. Kebron Begenia Institute as the Rethink initiative aspires to preserve ancient and indigenous knowledges. If granted the opportunity, the initiative intends to present a Begenia intensive for a fortnight for the Zeway island communities. In our stay, we are planning to teach 15-20 students, hoping that they will bear disciples of their own in the near future. Estimated expenditures are

Cause	Number of Items	Cost
Buy Begenas	15 Begenas	\$2,122
Logistics	1 Car	\$150
Accommodation	5 Days	\$250
Personal Allowance	1 Week	\$500
Total		\$2,300



(Left) The five tribes of Zeway Debre-Tsion island Monastery, over several centuries, created the indigenous language called Zaye (ሃይ) leaving a unique intangible heritage of co-existence. (Right) Ermias Haylay; Founder; Kebron Begenia

Upcoming Engagements



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6 - 10
FEB

LAUNCH OF LOCAL HUBS UNDER VARIOUS WORK TRACKS

Following the brilliant ideas and proactive steps taken by local participants, it was decided by the Secretariat to launch the Ethiopian National Chapter of the Campaign. Various courtesy calls and official visits will be conducted in various hubs to activate the (5) thematic areas of work i.e. Culture for Peace, Media for Peace, Education for Peace, Sports for Peace and Interfaith dialogue for peace. **More information:** www.action4peace2030.org



17-19
FEB

PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE FORUM

The partnership for peace forum is the followup meeting specifically focused on partnership and discussing funding mechanisms for the decade long action initiatives, local projects and the annual forum. The meeting will be a high level panel for presenting the 2-months planning progress since the forum. The meeting will be held in the margins of the 36th Heads of States Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. **More information:** www.action4peace2030.org

Thank you



Ultra Communications & Events

Young Marine Explorers — The Bahamas

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For more information on Campaign and upcoming activities



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