African-Centered Solutions in Peace and Security (AfSol)


Introduction

African Union Heads of States and Governments adopted the Tripoli Declaration on the “Elimination of Conflicts in Africa and the Promotion of Sustainable Peace” in 2009. In the declaration, the Heads of States recognized that peace and security in Africa lacks intellectual foundation and therefore poses an “intellectual challenge”. The Institute for Peace and Security Studies, IPSS, was mandated by the African Union Executive Council Decision (AU) (EX.CL/567 (XVI)), and the follow-up Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two institutions, to take up the intellectual challenge of defining African-centred Solutions (AfSol) through training, research and advocacy around African peace and security issues. With the mandate from the AU, IPSS has positioned itself to provide a veritable and honest platform for the incubation and exchange of innovative ideas, and translating such ideas into concrete action.

IPSS launched the AfSol workshop series to provide the leading African institutions, especially the AU and RECs, with state-of-the-art knowledge and expertise on how to grapple with the intellectual challenges provoked by the quest for African solutions in peace and security.

Outcomes of the First AfSol Workshop

This second African-centered Solution in peace and security (AfSol) workshop follows from the inaugural session, which was held at IPSS from 26th to 27th September 2014.

From the first workshop series, a number of pertinent and foundational issues and questions were raised inter alia: Why do we need to consider and discuss AfSol in the first place? What is the genealogy of the idea of AfSol, and what are its underlying assumptions? When we talk about being African, who is an African, and would that description be based on our history, geography and identity, or what else? “who is an African” “who defines AfSol, and for whom” and “Is AfSol an ideology, a concept, philosophy, policy, or pure practice”.

AfSol is understood and deployed by IPSS, emphasis is on peace and security priorities as there is a need to frame, situate and elevate the discourse on AfSol to meet pressing peace and security challenges; and by so doing mobilize appropriate and timely solutions. As such debates about AfSol during the inaugural workshop were converging around key principles of ownership, shared values and commitment and as to how these core principles help us to understand existing and emerging peace and security trends in Africa.
Objectives of the Second AfSol Workshop Series

This second workshop series represents a deliberate desire to expand and deepen debate around the above issues and concerns. Generally, the interpretation of defining and operationalizing AfSol has relevance to the ontological position of creating awareness and consciousness along the essence of Pan-Africanism. The operationalization and interpretation has to follow from this ontological position, spread through to the key principles of ownership, shared-values and commitment. Therefore, the interpretation of these three key principles is desirable- indeed, sorely needed- at this time. IPSS shall provide a veritable platform for establishing a clear linkage between theory, policy and practice. AfSol workshop series provides not only a platform to take a retrospective glance at the past but also because it seeks to mobilize a corpus of knowledge and innovative ideas capable of shaping the future.

The broad objective of the second workshop is to build upon the modest successes recorded during the inaugural workshop by moving from theory to practice.

The specific objectives, among others, are as follows:

- To demonstrate the practicality of the principles of AfSol established by the inaugural workshop;
- To engage all levels of African societies in the shaping of AfSol debate and operationalization so as to provide an opportune platform for a more nuanced and open discussion on AfSol;
- To introduce and mainstream the philosophy and practices behind AfSol into different research, advocacy and policy sectors;
- To produce a state-of-the-art book that documents the best and most innovative perspectives on AfSol.

Participation:

The Second AfSol Workshop brings together a mix of experts drawn from prominent members of organized civil society groups, academia, practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders.

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1 The report from the first AfSol workshop series is available in a separate document.