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African Diaspora in the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development of Africa

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of the African diasporic communities in post-conflict peace building of war-torn homelands. The aftermath of armed conflicts in African states is always a critical period necessitating financial, physical and human assistance from local and international bodies, both non-governmental and governmental. These bodies are known to have the capability to intervene in the rehabilitation and reintegration of war victims as well as reconstruction of states in war-torn countries. It is in this regard that the role of the African diaspora has become very pertinent, even then, most writings focus on the African diaspora's role to immediate families during and after wars, either in form of remittances or relocation abroad. Therefore, this paper intends to explore the diasporic post-conflict peacebuilding role in the public space, the kinds of agencies institutionalized by them and the consequences of their participation in building peace in war-torn homelands.

Key words : African Diaspora, Homelands, Armed conflicts, Peacebuilding, Reconstruction.

Introduction

Political instability, famine, economic crises, violence and most importantly, armed conflicts have characterized much of the African political landscape since the era of Independence. The situation has worsened with the end of the Cold war, resulting in civil wars, which do not only impact on the fragility of states, but also cause the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, including women and children, destruction of properties, refugee crisis, internal displacement and weakening of family bonds. According to Wallensteen and Sollenberg (2000), there were 16 armed conflicts in Africa in 1999 alone.

Today, while armed conflicts in some African states have remained intractable, in some others, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, and Sierra Leone, they have subsided, necessitating post-conflict reconstruction. However, the reconstruction process has been a very problematic one in Africa due to the inadequate and sometimes, unavailable instruments like the economic, institutional and social apparatuses needed to embark on successful reconstruction (Fagen, 1995; Bush, 1998). Though the international community has been very effective in devolving immediate humanitarian relief activities, initiating quick impact projects and implementing long-term development strategies, the fatigue that follows at the mid-stages of the process and sometimes, failure of the process itself, bring to fore, the role of African diaspora in post-conflict reconstruction process of their home countries.

Even though past studies on African diaspora had either focused on the historical emergence of diaspora or the cultural practices in diasporic new world, there is increasing recognition of the potential role of the diaspora in the general political, social and economic development of Africa, especially, in post-conflict era. This is exemplified by their recognition as the continent's sixth region by the African Union (AU). Drawing from the experiences of diasporas in other parts of the world, the AU has included in its Constitutive Act, issues pertaining to their engagement in Africa's development. This study is not country specific, rather, its underlying assumption rests on the notion that

there is a potential to make better use of the capacities of diaspora communities for supporting conflict transformation in their home countries.

Conceptualising the Diasporas in Homeland Development

For some time now, many countries in Africa have embarked on the difficult transition from armed conflict to post-conflict reconstruction that includes humanitarian relief activities and more importantly, comprehensive efforts to foster sustainable peace and development. To this end, the international community has been either intricately or superfluously involved in building social infrastructure and political institutions. But very little data are available on the role, attitudes and activities of the diasporas and home countries (Tebeje, 2004). Concomitantly, they have received inadequate academic attention in development paradigms. At the heart of this neglect is the perceived stereotyping of migrants as a 'phenomenon' rather than a 'potential' to their home countries (Zunzer, 2004). Interestingly, the diaspora phenomenon has taken on a focus of attention in international parlance. According to the International Organization for Migration (2004), it is estimated that there are 3.6 million Africans in the diaspora out of which over 2 million reside in North America and in the European Union.

Due to the different migrant nature of people, research findings have shown that defining the diasporas may be as problematic as their origin. According to Hear, Pieke and Vertovec (2004), diasporas are defined as populations of migrant origin who are scattered among two or more destinations, between which there develop multifarious links involving flows and exchanges of people and resources: between the homeland and destination countries and among destination countries. They include mixes of people who have arrived at different times, through different routes, means and with different legal statuses. Similarly, the AU has defined the African diaspora as "consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African

Union" (AU, 2002). In contradiction, Zeleza (2005: 39), in his bid to reconstruct the Black Atlantic, finds that the term 'diaspora' is being used in a

'fuzzy, ahistorical, and uncritical way in which all manners of movements and migrations between, and even within, countries are embraced in its generous conceptual bosom without paying attention to the historical conditions and experiences that produce diasporic communities and consciousness, or the lack thereof'.

To Kent (2005: 2), the argument spans from whether a new migrant should be seen as a member of an existing diaspora or part of a new one or not part of any at all. But to Safran (1991), people of the same origin may or may not have diasporic identities. Therefore, for a migrant to become a diaspora, Kent (2005) argues that such diaspora must be dispersed to at least two locations with an ongoing relationship with the homeland and a degree of ethno-national consciousness. Butler (2000) posits five dimensions : (1) reasons and conditions, of the dispersal; (2) relationship with homeland; (3) relationship with hostland; (4) interrelationships with diasporan groups, and (5) comparative study of different diasporas.

To Zeleza (2005: 41-42) a diaspora can be perceived

"as a process, a condition, a space and a discourse: the continuous processes by which a diaspora is made, unmade and remade, the changing conditions in which it lives and expresses itself, the places where it is moulded and imagined, and the contentious ways in which it is studied and discussed. It entails a culture and a consciousness, sometimes diffuse and sometimes concentrated, of a 'here' separate from a 'there', a 'here' that is often characterized by a regime of marginalization and a 'there' that is invoked as a rhetoric of self-affirmation, of belonging to 'here' differently. The emotional and experiential investment in 'here' and 'there' and the points in between obviously changes in response to the shifting material, mental, and moral orders of social existence...Diasporas are complex social and cultural communities created out of real and imagined genealogies and geographies (cultural, racial, ethnic, national, continental,

transnational) of belonging, displacement, and recreation, constructed and conceived at multiple temporal and spatial scales, at different moments and distances from the putative homeland.”

For the purpose of this paper, we will adopt a fluid understanding of the concept.

The origin of Diaspora can be traced to the Latin word, *diaspeirein* meaning disperse. In Greek, *dia* means scatter or sow while *spora* means sowing or reproduction and spreading (NIICA, 2007). Though African diaspora had existed, the term became popular in the United States in the latter 20th century when within the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the Black community forged new national and political identities (Shepperson, 1993: 44). One hallmark of these new identities was the reinterpretation of the slave experience in light of the concept of diaspora (Osher and Smith, 2003). Historically, the diaspora has emerged at different times. The original presence of Africans in Europe is generally related to the rise of slave trade from the 15th into the 19th century. Due to Trans-Atlantic slave trade, port cities like Antwerp, Amsterdam and Rotterdam became home to numbers of people from Africa. In the immediate post-trans Atlantic slave trade, another dimension of diasporas emerged on the scene. They are referred to as the diasporas of colonization, and they include students who went to study abroad and stayed and seamen to mention a few of the categories and followed by diasporas of decolonization including migrants of the colonial wars in Africa (Zezeza, 2005: 56). The trend has continued till now but in a different perspective (Haar, 2005).

Post-colonial era witnessed migration emanated partly, from the worsening economic conditions in the 1980s and partly from the apparent state of disorder in some African states degenerating into civil wars of deleterious consequences, arriving as refugees or asylum seekers in Europe and America. Examples of such abound in the Nigerian communities in Britain, the Congolese in Belgium, Liberians and Ethiopians in the US, Sierra Leoneans in Britain and Somalis in Italy.

To what extent do these groups contribute politically and

economically to their countries of origin? One popular view is that the activities of diasporas largely reinforce the dynamics that make homeland conflicts more protracted (Mohamoud, 2006, Collier, 2000; Collier et al, 2003; Lacina, 2004). To this group of writings, civil wars can erupt in situations where there are political instability, a low level of economic development and most importantly, the presence of a large diaspora that remit money to combatants to purchase small arms, light weapons and other weapons of destruction. They, in that sense, contribute to the internationalization of armed conflicts in Africa. Collier (2000: 6) goes further to argue that there is a close correlation between the propensity for peace in a war-torn country and the number of its diasporas. This is because diasporas are more financially stable and therefore, can afford to finance anger or vengeance in homelands. Hence, the higher the number of diasporas produced by a war-torn country, the higher the number and level of conflict and vice versa. To Collier, if the country has unusually large American diasporas, its chances of conflict are 36% but if it has an unusually small diaspora, its chances of conflict are only 6%. It is pertinent to remark that one cannot totally dismiss such arguments because naturally, people tend to show loyalty to their groups in any society and may nurse grievances as a form of asserting continued belonging. They, thus, tend to make life for those left behind much more dangerous in post-conflict situations.

It is also instructive to note that the negative attitude by diasporas may be explained by the knowledge that they do not suffer the consequences of their actions directly because of the distance to the conflict ground. In Africa, some Somali diasporas have become fund collectors, who get donations from diaspora members in order to support clan militia and warlords in Somalia (Bradbury, 2002). This phenomenon is not limited to Africa as the case of Sri-Lanka Tamil Tigers has revealed (HRW, 2006). Unfortunately, Africa lacks data to further substantiate African diaspora as negative agents.

Adam and Page (2003), Mohan (2002), and Mohan and Zack-Williams (2002: 211), on the other hand paint the diaspora in a positive light. Mohan (2002: 104-123) divides the role of

diasporas in homeland development into three. First, the diasporic communities use their localized connections to secure economic and social well-being and, as a by-product, contribute to the development of their locality. Second, they utilize their diffuse global connections beyond the locality to facilitate economic and social well being. And third, they channel ideas, money and political support to the home country. All three are, however, intertwined.

Using data from 74 low and middle income developing countries, Adam and Page contend that on average, a 10% increase in the share of international migrants in a country's population will lead to a 1.9% decline in the share of people living in poverty and that a 10% increase in the share of international remittances in a country's GDP will lead to a 1.6% decline in the share of people living in poverty. Evidences from South Africa, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso, Somalia (especially, with the Hawilad 'money transfer' system), Burkina Faso and Kenya have proved that individual households that receive remittances from the diaspora were well off than households without remittances in peace era (Collier and Lal, 1986; Lachaud, 1999; Gustafsson and Makonnen, 1993; Gundel, 2002: 269-277; Sheffer, 2002: 190; Adepoju, 2005: 44-45). In the 1990s, remittances from Ghanaian diaspora, which totaled between \$250 and \$350 million per year, outstripped foreign direct investment (Akyeampong, 2000). Therefore, analysing the diaspora and development has become important given that migration has emerged as a key part of many household strategies. Through empirical research conducted in Denmark, Sweden and the DRC, Eriksson (2004) found that remittances to the DRC mainly function as a social security net, and that majority of remittances are used for subsistence, that is, to cover essential needs like food, rent and clothing. She perceives the development impact of remittances as huge if development is to be defined basically as poverty reduction.

Closely tied to this argument is the use of remittances for absorbing transitory shocks like drought-induced food crises or illness as done by the Soninke diasporas from the Kayes region

of Western Mali (Azam and Gubert, 2005). These remittances sustain livelihoods through increased purchasing power for food, education, health, consumer goods/durables, housing and other essential services. For example, Eritrean diasporas remitted US\$300 million in 1997 to mitigate the impact of famine and drought (Sumata, 2002: 18-20). In the DRC, remittances facilitated, to some extent, local entrepreneurial activity as Kinshasa's transport system received important investment, the acquisition of minibuses, trucks and taxis from Congolese Diasporas.

The Economic Commission for Africa (2006) and Anderson (2000) have argued that remittances and investment by the diasporas would not have been possible but for the development in telecommunications and transportation. The revolutions in communication technology and new attitudes to transnational activism have increased the linkages between the diaspora communities and the homeland. It is now theoretically and practically possible for organized diaspora network to not only be established, but to also interlink in numerous countries; to debate political issues among themselves; to form agendas of concern about the homeland and to draw up and implement plans of action across a range of issues affecting homeland peace building and reconstruction.

In addition to Mohamoud's (2006) exploration of African diaspora's role in sending remittances to families in homeland, he highlights other policy areas in which the Diasporas have contributed to state's development. They include participation in country's politics by making their expertise available to conflicting parties; assisting new governments in drafting new treaties, agreements and constitutions; and identifying policy priorities for social, economic and political reconstruction, and formulating strategies for implementation. A very good example is the role played by the Somali diaspora in the Nairobi peace negotiations among the political factions in 2003/2004. One can also recall that the Eritrean diaspora helped to draft the first constitution of the country after its separation from Ethiopia in 1993.

African Diaspora and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa

The dimensions and consequences of conflicts in much of Africa are extremely dismal. Many of Africa's internal conflicts are intractable, throwing up the displacement of citizens from their homeland and destroying the social fabric of societies (Michailof, Kostner and Devictor, 2002: 5). Hence, there is always a need to bring about post-conflict reconstruction that targets development, peace and security. Severely traumatized societies need to pass through a post-reconstruction process, which is both short and long term, in order to arrive at sustainable peace and security in the country and avoid a relapse into another war.

As the AU (2002) has identified, post-conflict reconstruction involves a complex system that provides for simultaneous short, medium and long-term programmes to prevent disputes from escalating; avoid a relapse into violent conflict; address the root causes of conflict; and build and consolidate sustainable peace. This is built around four distinct issue areas or "pillars" namely: security; political transition, governance and participation; justice/reconciliation; and social/economic well-being. However, these phases should not be understood as absolute, fixed, time-bound or having clear boundaries. In terms of security and socio-economic being, reconstruction entails three basic ideals namely, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). The non-implementation of DDR constitutes a security threat to a country that is just emerging out of war and to the citizens who are still traumatized by their experiences of the war. The refusal to implement the phases of DDR or the non-availability of adequate funding to implement a successful one is always disastrous for such societies as exemplified by the experiences in Angola, Burundi, Liberia and Somalia.

Disarmament is the first phase of DDR, and logically precedes demobilization and reintegration. It is one component of a larger process that includes separation of forces, cessation of outside military assistance, withdrawal of foreign forces, regrouping of rival forces, cantonment of rival forces, retrieval of weapons, disablement of those weapons and formation of a national army (World Bank, 1999: 5.3). Disarmament is important not only for the material improvement of security conditions, but also for its

psychological impact. There are added psychological benefits when ex-combatants physically disable their own weapons, and are led in doing so by their commanders, immediately upon entering the disarmament site. The process symbolically underscores the transition from military to civilian life.

Demobilization, on its part, includes assembling of ex-combatants, developing orientation programmes, and transportation of demilitarized combatants to the communities of destination. These movements of large groups of people should be timed to coincide with phases of civilian life that facilitate reintegration, such as crop and school cycles.

In another dimension, reintegration is a concept that extends far beyond the physical process of relocating affected populations. It is further divided into the social/economic pillar; and governance/participation pillar. It is a situation in which formerly displaced populations and their receiving communities are able to co-exist, sharing both economic and social resources (World Bank, 1999). Therefore, reintegration does not only aim to reinsert ex-combatants (including the formal and informal education of ex-child soldiers as well as female participants) in order to provide an alternative to weapons, or aim to focus on war-affected victims such as repatriated refugees, internally displaced people and generally traumatised people through provision of micro-credit facilities, employment opportunities, and scholarships for the children and youth to cope with education and vocations, investment possibilities, repair of roads, health and other social amenities destroyed. Integration also involves the art of groping with state building after years of war. While war might be easy to conduct, the real challenge lies in building sustainable peace through good governance. To achieve this end, the three essential principles proposed by Michael Steiner, namely 1) the awareness of the responsibility that interventions entail, 2) the consistency in terms of resource allocation, political will and long term commitment, and 3) the necessity for international legitimacy in the absence of domestic legitimacy, remain very much valid (Ottaway and Lacina, 2003). To this end, African diasporas have been very relevant in shaping the future of their home countries in the aftermath of civil

wars as cases in some countries have shown, albeit, on a very small scale.

Some diasporic networks have formed civil society groups to advocate, donate and implement certain projects in their homeland in order to facilitate the post-conflict reconstruction process. For example, the Concerned Liberian Women (CLW) in the Netherlands focuses on women's socio-economic and psychological rehabilitation and reintegration as its target goal. There is also Hope-Sierra Leone (H-SL), established by the Sierra Leone diaspora in Denmark with the assistance of the Danish, Norwegian and European organisations. It has been responsible for reconciliation, farming and training of the post war Sierra Leone police corps, and helped to unify two major opposition groups, the RUF and CDF in 2002.

Some diasporas have also sponsored media projects that educate and create awareness in people about the need for peaceful coexistence and social harmony, and to promote a culture of peace and tolerance. Mohamoud (2003) cites the example of the Nuba Mountains radio station in Sudan, sponsored by the Sudanese diaspora. The radio station plays an important role in informing the community about the prospects for peace and challenges that need to be addressed in post-conflict Sudan. Moreover, within the civil society milieu, there are increasing advocacy activities intended to galvanise support, persuade and pressurize the international community to take punitive measures against gross human rights violation by rebel groups, factional leaders, and governments in their respective homelands. The Congolese diaspora in France, Belgium and the Netherlands acted as pressure groups and undertook transnational advocacy activities through expert meetings, seminars and workshops aimed at influencing policy matters at the European Union level.

However, in spite of the laudable projects implemented by African diasporas, their role is still hardly felt in Africa's post-conflict reconstruction process. Apart from few cases mentioned, the development phase of war-torn countries does not always see the full presence of the diasporas in rebuilding broken structures. Rather, they are more prominent in the escalation of conflicts

through funding of war-projects and networking the transfer of small arms and light weapons, and the transfer of remittances to families. Nevertheless, the negative attitudes and potentials of the African diasporas can be transformed to reflect long-term peace and development in war-torn African states. But the transformation will need a lot of commitment and will power.

The Future of African Diaspora in African Conflicts

African diaspora has important contributions to make at consolidating peace and security in their homelands. This is because, as a group, they constitute a large pool of African experts across the globe that possesses social, financial and intellectual capital to impact positively on the reconstruction process. They should therefore focus attention on addressing both short-term or emergency and long-term reconstruction and transformation issues and, most importantly, working on the root causes of the conflict. There are several ways of contributing to conflict management and conflict transformation in war-torn homelands.

Early engagement is necessary for any form of intervention by the diaspora. This can be in two forms: early warning and stoppage of conflict. Early warning entails the identification and monitoring of structural and proximate predictors of conflict in a particular setting (World Bank, 1999: 4.4). Though this has been the traditional responsibility of international bodies such as the UN agencies, regional bodies and news agencies, the diaspora can take advantage of their linkages, even with the grassroots in their home countries, to track day-to-day developments and advise their home governments about the likelihood of conflict. However, for early warning signals to be successful, the diaspora needs the political will to provide timely information as well as follow up with timely action.

The stoppage of conflict may occur immediately when conflict fatigue is setting in, or when the military balance has decisively shifted. The diaspora should strive to ensure reconciliation of the warring groups by engaging them in meetings in their diasporic countries, trying to get to the roots of the conflict, and initiating

policy framework that will finally end the conflict. It is instructive to note that the Somali diaspora participated in the Nairobi peace talks between the political factions in 2003-2004. Their visible and sustained intervention is particularly required where the timely methods fail and the country engages in low-intensity protracted war and finally signs fragile peace accords that culminate in post-conflict reconstruction. They should be involved in the different phases of post-conflict peace building and reconstruction. And there should be proper coordination with the international community. This becomes imperative on issues of disarmament where diaspora's resources and expertise may be inadequate to meet the challenges of DDR. Empirical studies carried out in some countries show that a major factor for the relapse into another war is the failure to embark on successful disarmament arising from inadequate funding as well as poor technical planning. Liberia's DDR in 1997 is a good case in point. It was not surprising that former combatants, including child soldiers, quickly extracted their weapons from where they were buried and began another war in 2001, and later on move to Cote d'Ivoire's rebel camps (Oluwaniyi, 2005). The failure to properly disarm and demobilize soldiers after the Nigerian civil war triggered crimes and criminal activities such as armed robbery in the early 1970s. The successful demobilization, reinsertion and rehabilitation of former combatants into civilian life are keys to political stability and to rebuilding war-torn societies, and therefore, should be of priority to the diaspora.

The reintegration component is particularly important. The exposure, education and financial backgrounds of the diaspora can be brought to bear in ensuring concrete reintegration of first, ex-combatants; and second, war-affected victims such as refugees and internally displaced citizens, most importantly, women and children. Re-integration resolves the socio-economic problems in war-torn societies when tailored to fit the war-torn country's peculiarities. Creation and/or funding of vocational skills directly or indirectly by the diaspora for these war-affected people are extremely important. Assistance must be targeted towards promoting demand-driven training, which is then linked to job

placement. They can also participate in setting up industries in their homelands for the main purpose of absorbing the unemployed in the societies and in rebuilding of social infrastructures that were destroyed during war. To achieve this, the local people must be involved in the planning and execution of the activities.

More recent cases of post-conflict reconstruction have underscored the need to give attention to the particular needs of women, including immediate and long-term programmes to combat violence against them and secure their physical safety; ensure their full political participation; and emphasize the importance of investing in women's health. This is because women's lives are changed fundamentally by conflict, and this change affects how they engage in post-conflict activities and institutions (CEDPA, 1998:2).

Another area the Diaspora can be involved in the reintegration efforts is in the area of research and documentation of people's experiences during conflict, including refugees and internally displaced people. This involves establishing research or database centres, carrying out research studies using in-depth life history interviews and focus group discussions with all strata in the society. This is necessary in order to have an idea of their pre-war lives, including traditional roles, and changes that have occurred to ensure successful reintegration into a pre-war life. These studies should be designed to generate policy that will impact positively on citizens in the aftermath of war. Closely related to this is the need for the participation of the diaspora in organizing capacity building workshops and international conferences with indigenous intellectuals, academics, governmental parastatals and social workers in collaboration with international organisations such as AU (Peace and Security Council), NEPAD, United Nations and other sub-regional organisations. These meetings will provide ways of harmonizing international diplomacy that cuts across political, economic and social exchanges. For example, in 2005, training for conflict transformation was organized with the diaspora whose countries of origin included Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan in South Africa. The main thrust of the training was to involve

members of the diaspora organisations in peace building, serve as a platform for dialogue and compromise, and to understand conflict dynamics. This training led to the formation of the Multi-Cultural Women Peacemakers Network by Amne Nagi in the Netherlands and the Himilo Relief and Development Association by Mohamed Basweyne (HIRDA).

Conclusion

This study reveals the linkages between the African diaspora and post-conflict reconstruction in war-torn countries. It proves clearly that though African diasporas have been effective in home countries, their role is not given the needed recognition. From the foregoing, it has been realized that as part of their role in homelands, they help in initiating and sustaining conflicts through funding and purchase as well as transfer of weaponry to warring parties. Nevertheless, they also assist in mitigating conflicts, especially, in post-conflict reconstruction stage. However, in spite of their gigantic efforts during post-conflict reconstruction, their present positive role is not enough to totally transform conflict into sustainable peace and development. Hence, going by the pillars of post-conflict reconstruction mechanisms, which include security, socio-economic reconstruction, justice/reconciliation, and governance/participation, this study proposes potential role for the African diasporas in their war-torn countries.

Diasporas, because of their strategic position, have access to financial resources and transnational networks at different levels that, if properly tapped, can make a difference to excruciating conditions in their homeland. Policy makers need to co-opt diasporas into peace and conflict and development strategies of their homelands. A lack of understanding of the nature of these contributions, how to mobilize them, and the circumstances that are most likely to yield positive results hamper policy makers' ability to tap this expanding resource.

A genuine engagement by the African Union with the diaspora could enhance Africa's negotiating and resource mobilization capacity with the international community (Murithi, and Ndigna-Muvumba, 2005). With the renewed African Union's interest in

collaborating with the diasporas, the AU can give moral and political support to diaspora initiatives in their respective regions. Lastly, the diasporas should be reminded of the fact that if they do not bear the costs of the conflicts directly or indirectly, others including their relations in the homelands bear the brunt of the wars. Based on this fact, they should be involved in socio-economic recovery and democratic stability of their homelands. Against this backdrop, their engagement also raises issues of representativeness and accountability, particularly in the political sphere. As the notions, 'long distance nationalism' or 'Arm chair nationalism' suggest, diaspora groups are often able, through their considerable resources, to exert substantial influence on the homeland without having to bear the consequences of their interventions, particularly in terms of social tensions, conflict and violence. This raises questions about the extent to which the most vocal and active among them are representative of the diaspora as a whole and even more contentiously, the extent to which and validity with which the diaspora can speak for those back in the homeland, especially countries embroiled in violent conflict.

Nevertheless, like diasporas in other regions of the world, the impact of the African diaspora will depend on the level of their organization, co-ordination and consciousness both at local and global platforms. Although the context may be different, African diasporas have a lot to learn from the Jews who have developed sophisticated organizational efficiency that decisively impact the policies of both key Western nations and the State of Israel.

The AU should develop institutional frameworks and strategies that promote the positive potentials of the diaspora, and which are also capable of reducing their propensity and capacity to generate or exacerbate conflicts in the homelands. It should put in place mechanisms to coordinate the various national diaspora groups both at the country and global levels. The embassies of AU states in European countries should include this task as part of their official briefs. This should be complemented by the formation of a world-wide umbrella body to coordinate the various national diaspora organizations. A two- or three-day seminar or workshop

can be organized by the AU for diaspora organizations prior to the annual gathering of the AU Summit.

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