

ROAD TO THE 2021 NANJING PEACE FORUM - “Living in Harmony with Nature for Peace”

Positive Peace in Africa – The Environment We Need

AFRICAN REGIONAL DIALOGUE (online)
22 October 2021, 09h00-13h00 CAT

CONCEPT NOTE (Version: 18 October 2021)

I. Background

The UNESCO Harare and Nairobi Offices are organizing a African Regional Dialogue on “**Positive Peace in Africa – The Environment We Need**”, in contribution to the 2021 Nanjing Peace Forum that is jointly hosted by the UNESCO Beijing Office, the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, the Information Office of Jiangsu Provincial Government, and the Nanjing Municipal Government. This annual event was first launched last year as part of a three-year MoU between UNESCO and the Nanjing Municipal Government to reiterate the significance of peace, and to formalize a partnership to promote peace and understanding among people. The Forum is designed to seek ideas on how to reshape the world towards one marked by intercultural understanding, tolerance, solidarity, social justice, and inclusion. It is a periodic coming together, underpinning a permanent process of strengthening dialogue and capacities for all relevant stakeholders towards building and sustaining peace.

II. 2021 Nanjing Peace Forum

In order to enhance the notion and importance of “Ecocivilisation” for peace, this year’s overarching theme for the 2021 Nanjing Peace Forum is “**Living in Harmony with Nature for Peace**”. The notion of Ecological Civilisation purports to dissociate economic development from environmental degradation, with five overlapping pillars – Environment, Economy, Society, Culture and Governance. This theoretical framework – that is very close to the concept of Sustainable Development – seeks to promote harmony between humanity and nature.

This overarching theme takes into consideration that climate change, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and environmental pollution have adversely impacted the well-being of human society, often aggravating social injustice. Similarly, unsustainable and unequal social development inevitably results in systems and practices that are harmful to the environment. This mutually reinforcing and destructive cycle has often resulted in violence and conflict, posing a serious threat to peace, and which will only intensify with accelerating and irreversible climate change.

III. Positive Peace in Africa – The Environment We Need

The African continent at large is facing acute threats that are related to a compendium of ecological threats, climate change, economic overexploitation of the natural resources, and lack of transparency and governance in the management of public affairs. These threats include:

- High variability in climate conditions with high risks of rising temperatures and droughts, which is very problematic for countries on the continent that are over-dependent on rain-fed agriculture;¹

¹ Institute for Economics & Peace. *Ecological Threat Register 2020: Understanding Ecological Threats, Resilience and Peace*, Sydney, September 2020. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports> (accessed 29.09.2021).

this also results in the uprooting of communities that threatens entire ways of life, including the practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage;

- Loss of biodiversity, which we know is detrimental to life and sustainable development. Keeping ecosystems resilient and safeguarding our planet's biodiversity (SDG 15) is fundamental to poverty eradication, human health and wellbeing.² Yet, in Africa, by 2100, 50% of Africa's bird and mammal species could disappear, and 70% of the protected areas themselves have been affected by war from 1946 to 2010;³ and by the replacement of natural ecosystem with concrete buildings in Africa's fast-growing cities.⁴
- Widespread poverty and prevalence of food insecurity. Over 100 million Africans were facing crisis, emergency, or catastrophic levels of food insecurity in 2020 (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 3 and above), which represents a 60% increase from the previous year.⁵ This reality is compounded with the rapid demographic growth – the continent is home to 14 countries who are projected to double their population by 2050.
- Natural resources extraction which has been a driving factor of power relations in Africa, during the colonial era but also after the independence of the African countries. Extractive industries are generating a colossal wealth from the soil, essentially for exportation in a globalized economy. But the lack of transparency in the management of that national wealth, as well as its redistribution to the society and population have been a major cause of tensions and conflicts over the years. Another major problem is the displacement of population for the purposes of extracting natural resources, which also generates many conflicts. These also concern the impact of resource extraction, and its escalation or mitigation as per the dynamics of the relationship between states, host communities, foreign actors, and CSOs.

The African Regional Dialogue will strive to bring insights on two central questions:

- **What are the environmental preconditions for Africa to build and consolidate a Positive Peace?**
- **What new approaches or paradigms can be tested to translate the Ecocivilisation into practice?**

To reflect on these questions, systems thinking is necessary to open new ways of understanding relationships and flows between economic, ecologic, social, and political factors, beyond focusing only on events. Events or problems represent the outcomes of the relationships and flows. This is why it is important to look at the multidimensional concept of Positive Peace as a holistic, systemic framework. According to the Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), "Positive Peace" is associated with "many other social characteristics that are considered desirable, including stronger economic outcomes, higher resilience, better measures of wellbeing, higher levels of inclusiveness and more sustainable environmental performance".⁶

IV. Some Possible Key Ingredients towards Ecocivilisation in Africa

With the speakers featured in the African Regional Dialogue, discussions will delve into the complexity of dynamics between the economic, ecologic, social, and political ingredients that could lay solid foundations for an Ecocivilisation. By doing so, the speakers will discuss some key ingredients that could be taken into consideration:

² UNESCO's commitment to biodiversity, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/biodiversity>

³ See Joshua Daskin and Robert Pringle, <https://eeb.princeton.edu/news/warfare-and-wildlife-declines-africa%E2%80%99s-protected-areas>

⁴ INTERACT-Bio, <https://cbc.iclei.org/project/interact-bio/>

⁵ Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/food-insecurity-crisis-mounting-africa/>

⁶ Institute for Economics & Peace. *Positive peace report 2020: analysing the factors that sustain peace*, Sydney, December 2020. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources> (accessed 29.09.2021).

- Ethical principles should guide actions and accountability of stakeholders in addressing effects and causes of climate change. In 2017, UNESCO has adopted a Universal Declaration on the Ethical Principles in relation with Climate Change⁷ that sets forth the universal principles that should inspire policies beyond the vested interests or skepticism. Such an Ethical Framework can support and facilitate formulation of policies that establish the concrete and objective criteria of extreme vulnerability of the population groups that are the most exposed to risks. These in turn should engage the moral obligation of the duty-bearers to protect the most vulnerable, by monitoring and evaluating their policies from an ethical point of view.
- From an ecological point of view, a threats register can also be used to foster a system thinking among all stakeholders, and allow holistic public deliberations. The Institute of Economics and Peace elaborated an Ecological Threats Register (ETR) for the first time in 2020 that looks at water stress, food insecurity, droughts, floods, cyclones, temperature rise, sea level rise, and population growth. Combined with the Positive Peace Index (8 elements), such a Register can provide a comprehensive analytical framework for social engagement and policy making.
- The Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) should be considered and taken on board in developing climate adaptation strategies and approaches in Africa.⁸ According to IUCN, “climate shocks require decisions that promote good sociological and ecological solutions. Failure to use local and customary institutions is likely to result in violent conflict over resources that are becoming increasingly scarce. Such conflict can be between similar resource users (e.g. between pastoralists), or between users with different needs (farmers versus pastoralists)... Evidence suggests that drawing TK/IKS holders into decision-making and policy dialogue may valorize TK/IK knowledge, facilitate participation of traditional customary resource management institutions while informing and adjusting national or subnational policy to find equitable, socially just, and environmentally well-informed solutions during times of extreme weather shocks or threshold crises of natural resource systems”.⁹
- Protecting biodiversity and cultural and natural heritage as our touchstones, or points of reference as humanity. Emphasizing the universal value of World Heritage sites should contribute to build and cultivate our aesthetic abilities to ensure the conservation and promotion of shared heritage as a pathways to resilience, reconciliation and peace. Today, there are over 1,000 UNESCO World Heritage sites, with 897 cultural, 218 natural, and 39 mixed properties. These are important spaces to foster international cooperation and intercultural dialogue, and should be more actively leveraged for peace. In addition, Intangible cultural heritage practices have proven to be highly effective tools for helping communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate change-related disasters and emergencies. Cultural and creative industries could also play a pivotal role in communicating messages of cultural understanding and peace building¹⁰ as well sustainability.

⁷ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/ethics-science-and-technology/ethical-principles#:~:text=The%20UNESCO%20Declaration%20of%20Ethical,morally%20unacceptable%20damage%20and%20injustice.&text=They%20called%20for%20global%20partners%20to%20mobilize%20around%20these%20principles>.

⁸ See also: Okoye, C. A. (2014). An evaluation of the evolved African conception of the environment. *African Identities*, 12(2), 139-151.

⁹ Indigenous Knowledge in Adaptation: Conflict Prevention and Resilience-Building, IUCN, TECS conflict sensitive adaptation series, https://www.iucn.org/downloads/tecs_csa_10_indigenous_knowledge_in_adaptation_crawhall.pdf

¹⁰ Mashariki Journal: Cultural Understanding and peace building journal, https://issuu.com/cdea.tanzania/docs/mashariki_journal_vol_1_issue_1

V. Programme

Friday, 22 October 2021 (Central Africa Time)

Simultaneous Interpretation: English and French

Registration Link: https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_j2bnvt9ISnKuDXNq1kvb5A

- 9.00-9.20** Opening Remarks
- 9.20-9.40** Presentation of the Nanjing Peace Forum Programme and its Regional Dialogues, Mr Tee Wee Ang, Programme Specialist for Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO Beijing Cluster Office
- 9.40-10.25** **First Panel – Ethics, Politics, Economics, and Peace**
Moderator: Mr Phinith Chanthalangsy, UNESCO
- [Towards and ethical framework for a just transition “beyond” climate change in Africa – Connecting principles and action] Prof. Johan Hattingh (South Africa), Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Stellenbosch University; Chairperson of UNESCO’s Drafting Group of the 2017 Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change
 - [Measuring Ecological Risks for Peace - Positive Peace and Ecological Threats Register] Mr Trust Mamombe (Zimbabwe), Director for Southern Africa, Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)
 - [Reimagining governance, peacebuilding, and ecology in Africa – How can States anticipate?] Mr Jesutimilehin O. Akamo (Ethiopia), Researcher, Africa Peace and Security Programme (APSP), Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia
- 10.25-10.45** Discussion
- 10.45-11.00** *Break*
- 11.00-12.00** **Second Panel – Biodiversity, Knowledge, Culture, and Peace**
Moderator: Mr Hugue Charnie Ngandeu Ngatta, UNESCO
- [Harnessing the power of Arts and Culture – What models exist in Africa to promote Eco-Existence?] Ms Ayeta Anne Wangusa (Uganda), Member, UNESCO Reflection Group on Culture and Climate Change
 - [The role of indigenous languages in peace and the protection of nature in Africa] Dr Handaine Mohamed (Morocco), Chairperson, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)
 - [Mitigating the loss of biodiversity – What does IUCN do in Africa?] Mr Charles Lukania Oluchina (Kenya), Regional Programme Coordinator, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
 - [The role of communications and advocacy in Africa’s fight against climate change] Mr Li Bolun (China), Co-founder, Diinsider
- 12.00-12.45** Discussion
- 12.45-13.00** **Closing**

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