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SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF MEGATRENDS IN AFRICA

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

Africa Center for Strategic Studies

MODERATOR

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THEMATIC FOCUS

This panel analysed the security implications of megatrends that characterize Africa's peace and security landscape, including migration, demographic transition, urbanization and climate variability. Data and research on megatrends provide some indication of what Africa's security landscape will look like in the coming years. As global fertility levels contract, Africa's population is forecast to double before 2050. The continent's demographic profile will maintain a persistently youthful age structure, and job creation is not expected to keep pace. Urban centres will bear the brunt of this growth. Africa is also particularly vulnerable to climate variability: drought conditions, floods and extreme weather events threaten to disrupt agricultural production, deplete water tables and expand the reach of vector-borne disease. Demographic and environmental pressures will drive both in- and out-migration. These megatrends will challenge the future and adaptability of security institutions in 2030.

SUMMARY

The African continent underwent a dramatic transformation between 1994 and 2008: economic growth averaged 4.6 per cent per year, the number of electoral democracies increased from 25 to 36, and the size of the African economy has almost doubled. While the trendline is generally positive, there are challenges. Dr Jakkie Cilliers elaborated on some of these megatrends, including demographic growth, urbanization, migration and climate variability, as well as economic trends. First, the demographic dividend—the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure—will only begin to pay off by 2054, when the dependent-to-worker ratio reaches 1.7. Second, poverty is urbanizing, as the poor are moving to cities more rapidly than the population as a whole. Third, the population of urban poor is set to triple by 2050. This trajectory suggests that, in absolute terms, the number of people living in poverty in Africa will increase by approximately 100 million by 2030. In order to close the poverty gap, Africa must triple its growth rate.

Dr Luka Kuol highlighted the connection between these megatrends and the security challenges stemming from corruption, peacekeeping and organized crime. This led a discussion of the need for national security strategies, which many African states do not have. To solve these challenges, Africa must see a paradigm shift in governance norms, which have yet to take root in much of the continent. States must transition from procedural to substantively competitive elections.

Africa must also leverage mechanisms for regional security cooperation, since many conflicts on the African continent are of a regional character. Ms Michelle Ndiaye emphasized that regional organizations must be at the forefront of framing institutional responses. They must also reconcile short- and long-term objectives, which are often at odds. Countries and regional organizations must take a strategic, long-term, evidence-based approach to insecurity. These responses must be formulated in parallel.

Dr Raymond Gilpin spoke on the interconnectedness of these megatrends. What are appropriate entry points when variables are interdependent? Indeed, there are multiple nexuses within the

security–development–governance sphere, and each is deeply entwined with the other. Thus, there arises the need to revisit the framework in order to address these complex issues: the problem must drive the solution. The main point was that these megatrends establish a challenge to revisit and reconceptualize how problems are thought of and solves.

According to the speakers, is it also important to look at the European and African relation in a new light. African states must move towards a more regionally, continent-wide and globally integrated future. The speakers highlighted the Agenda 2063 and continental free-trade agreements as mechanisms to address these issues. The speakers concluded by restating the need to pivot from a state-centric to citizen-centric security framework.



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