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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321  
Email: [situationroom@africa-union.org](mailto:situationroom@africa-union.org)

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### **Message from the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security on the commemoration of the International Day of Peace**

Fellow Africans, like the rest of the world on 21 September every year, the African Union (AU) observes the International Peace Day, dedicated to strengthening the ideals of peace. This 39th commemoration indeed, presents an occasion for us to reflect on the progress made in the unwavering commitment of African leaders to work towards the achievement of Aspiration 4 of the AU Agenda 2063, namely, a peaceful and secure Africa, a Continent where the idea of Silencing the Guns shall be engraved in the minds and the hearts of each and every African. It also calls for further reflection, notably on the challenges impeding the sustainability of peace in our Continent.

As evidenced by the ongoing implementation of the 2021 AU theme - “Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want.”, we shall take full advantage of this momentum within our 55 Member-states, to support the call for peace and solidarity among Africa’s peoples through the exchange and sharing of common values embedded in African arts, culture and heritage, in order to build a more united and harmonious Africa.

The recent uptick in violent conflict in Africa threatens to undermine development gains in member states and the AU’s overarching vision for the continent as reflected in Agenda 2063 and its flagship initiative of Silencing the Guns. This has brought to the fore the centrality of conflict prevention as firmly established in AU’s legal and normative frameworks including the Constitutive Act and the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC Protocol). We must recommit to conflict prevention strategies and increased mediation efforts on the continent.

We therefore encourage our Member States, AU Organs, RECs/RMs, civil society and all African citizens and the diaspora to scale-up their work towards peacebuilding, to promote a culture of peace in all forms through cultural and artistic expression that contribute to the respect of human rights, diversity, solidarity and the rejection of violence as well as hate speech towards building peaceful societies.

It is also imperative to call on all warring parties where ever they may be in Africa and elsewhere to, in the spirit of this international peace day, immediately stop the fighting and engage in lasting ceasefire to give a chance to peace-making efforts.

As the world gradually recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to draw lessons and

refocus our energy towards solutions that build resilience and improve the living standards of our people, including through ensuring rapid, fair and equitable access to vaccines for all citizens of the world.

Finally, cultivating the culture of democracy, the culture of the total respect for human rights, the culture of safeguarding fundamental freedoms, the culture of zero tolerance for unconstitutional change of government, as well as the culture of silencing the guns and non-violence – all rolled into one, signals the attainment of an enduring culture and rich heritage of peace dividends for generations of Africans.

A peaceful, secure and more democratic Africa is a sure possibility!  
Happy International Day of Peace!

H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye  
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS)  
African Union Commission (AUC)