DIALOGUE AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR PREVENTION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

AUTHORS
Pr THIERNO MOUCTAR BAH
Mrs NDEYE AMY NDIAYE
Mrs ODILE TENDENG

LED BY:
DR ADJARATOU WAKHA AIDARA NDIAYE

WITH THE CONTRIBUTION OF ALL PARTICIPANTS IN TWO WORKSHOPS
This document was developed as part of the Project «Regional Dissemination of national dialogue mechanisms in Africa» funded by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) with ECOWAS technical support.
Executive Summary
PREFACE BY GENERAL LAMINE CISSE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I: PREVENTION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESSES IN AFRICA AND THE PARTICULARITY OF DIALOGUE AS A CONFLICT RESOLUTION TOOL

A. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Africa: dialogue, an important practice in African cultures...
1. The important place of dialogue in the Negro African culture
2. The palaver tree, a privileged place of dialogue among actors
3. The different procedures of negotiations and dialogue in traditional Africa

B. Institutional conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms: the cases of ECOWAS and AU
1. The African Union mechanisms
2. ECOWAS mechanisms

CHAPTER II: EXISTING MODELS OF NATIONAL DIALOGUE IN AFRICA: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

A. Dialogue as a tool to build a successful democratic transition:
1. Dialogue to heal Apartheid's trauma
2. Dialogue as a tool to make post-genocide Rwanda emerge
3. Dialogue as a tool for establishing a sustainable social pact in Benin
4. Dialogue as a mean to resolve social political conflict: in light of the National conference in Senegal

B. Dialogue in states in democratic construction
1. The difficult ways of dialogue in Guinea Bissau
2. The civil-military dialogue to consolidate democracy in Guinea
3. Dialogue in Côte d’Ivoire: noble objectives with controversial foundation
4. National dialogue, a privileged stabilizing tool in Mali
5. The virtue of dialogue: the experience of Burkinabe

C. The special feature of dialogue in the Great Lakes region
1. Congo and the failures of attempting national dialogue
2. Burundi renewal with violence
3. National dialogue, a necessity in Chad

D. Women’s contribution to dialogue: The Experiences of Women in Casamance and the MARWOPNET
1. Women in conflict resolution in Casamance
2. Women’s movements: the case of the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET)

CHAPTER III: IN SEARCH OF A FRUITFUL DIALOGUE MODEL FOR AFRICA

A. The prerequisites to dialogue
1. A common understanding of the meaning and purpose of dialogue
2. Communication based on active listening
B. The different principles and ideals governing dialogue

1. The necessary values for a successful and effective dialogue
2. The necessity of taking into account the nation’s and of all the stakeholders’ interests

C. The need of an institutional recondition: the role of civil society and African peace and security mechanisms (AU and ECOWAS)

1. Institutional recondition, a fundamental step to dialogue
2. Strengthening institutional peace and mediation mechanisms in Africa
4. Women’s involvement in the framework of dialogue

GENERAL CONCLUSION

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANNEXS:

Annex I : Table of analysis of the mechanisms of dialogue
Annex II : General recommendations for a successful dialog
The African continent still remains up until today plagued by many conflicts which constitute a serious obstacle to its development. For this reason, it seemed necessary to engage in a brainstorming process in order to facilitate the effectiveness of conflicts prevention, management and resolution measures. This task would not have been well conducted if we did not return to African cultural values in order to understand how the ancestors tried to prevent and resolve conflicts that inevitably arose between kingdoms, families and/or tribes.

Understanding conflict management and resolution mechanisms necessarily requires through the knowledge of the population’s environment, terroirs and customs. It’s all of these elements as well as their interactions that will help to identify the broad effective mechanism that can provide a weapon of deterrence, conflict prevention and resolution.

An observation of habits and customs seems to demonstrate that for a long time in Africa, any actors who wanted to intervene in conflict resolution or prevention must favor dialogue. Therefore studying, traditional culture in the context of conflict prevention and resolution in Africa, is to situate dialogue and the culture of peace in its historical background and also point out that in the sake of conflicts prevention and resolution, African people have always given a huge importance to procedures of negotiation and dialogue, which are the traditional modes of conflict resolution.

What about West African sub-region?
The Economic Community of the States of West Africa (ECOWAS), initially created for the promotion of economic integration of its fifteen Member States is gradually transforming, under the pressure of political events, in an organization also responsible to find solutions to armed conflicts and other political crises which jeopardize peace and security in the communities.

Additionally, since the 1990’s, ECOWAS, under the impulse of its member states is intervening well beyond its traditional diplomatic field by sending thousands of soldiers to try to restore peace in Liberia and then in Sierra Leone and more modestly in Guinea-Bissau. At the same time, the institution has developed jurisdictional and diplomatic conflict resolution mechanism.

At the regional level, Partners West Africa - Senegal (PWA-Senegal) is committed to be a leader to encourage Civil Society Organizations (CSO) as credible partners in the promotion of peace, democracy, development, the rule of law and gender sensitive leadership in West Africa.

To do this, in the project framework «Regional dissemination of national dialogue mechanisms in Africa» funded by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), we are trying a combination of open dialogue and search for solutions to crises or conflicts which prevent dialogue. Conflict resolution could be considered as a prerequisite or dialogue; such as conflicts prevention is a condition for dialogue to persevere; these two factors constitute two challenges whose resolution allows you to strengthen the links that unite different parties of a same community, or of a whole nation, and leads to a culture of respect and recognition which will result to peace; our end goal.

In fact, dialogue is done every day, in a stirring system, contact, and communication between populations and when there is harmony, it is said that there is «the will to live together».

_PREFACE BY GENERAL LAMINE CISSE_
The search for the best Dialogue revolves around democracy which is the institutionalized form of dialogue and requires good governance. It’s this dialog that allows inclusion, knowledge and acceptance of one and other that leads to national cohesion.

To practice this dialogue, both at the political parties smallest cells or others, to national level. This democratic and open dialogue, in its durability and rigor, lead the actors to sharing and democratic transition. To use dialogue as a conflicts prevention and resolution tool, to accompany and facilitate democratic transitions, Partners West Africa - Senegal talked about it again during one of its previous workshops, relative to dialogue in the West African sub-region, which served as sub frame in our approach.

We then grouped together, by centers of interest the types of conflicts with their characteristics and the environment in which they are occurring, or are likely to take place. This typological approach has allowed us to define the scope of these conflicts and their consequences on the political development of our States.

At the end of these prerequisites, after long debates, centered on logic and the serenity, rigor and the discernment, while we were pressing on the lessons learnt, that we have, I said to myself, made the normative mechanisms choice, legal, diplomatic and other traditional, conflicts prevention and management. This allows me, to retain, among many other things, all important, elements, as conclusion and recommendations.

The current relevance, of border conflicts prevention and management, through dialogue and other political, economic and cultural means. This would eliminate the gray areas, these areas of choice for any accepting irregularities. The effective pooling of efforts of our sub region, of our continent, and our partners in the north, in our common struggle against this new nebula, that is the religious terrorism. This battle must be done through weapons, justice, certainly, but also through the search of knowing one and other, and via the religious education of our children.

In regards to taking gender into account in dialogue, it should:
- Increase the rate of completion of school and university education of women.
- Strengthen their capacity so that they can occupy positions of responsibility, and integrate spaces of dialogue, in reference to the Security Council 13-25 Resolution.

We therefore recall that, regarding the gender component, woman is not the «other» to integrate but, rather, «the equal to associate».

I would like, on behalf of the partners West Africa-Sénégal thank USIP for allowing this work but also to all the participants who responded to our invitation. These 2 workshops were very rich in lessons and have, strengthened the links that have been woven between one and the other and beyond people, between our commons States and organizations. This allows me to thank the representatives of ECOWAS, MINUSMA and all the countries that have actively participated in these workshops.
The African continent is in the midst of several conflicts that pose a serious obstacle to its development. Since the end colonization, the continent has been plagued by cycles of violence that often lead to major political and social conflicts.

These conflicts destabilize or weaken both states and societies. Identifying mechanisms to resolve these crises has become a political issue for Member States, sub-regional and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector as well as the international community. This report will propose several conflict resolution approaches to address Africa’s crises.

Brainstorming possible African conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms requires an examination of African cultural values, in order to understand how previous generations successfully prevented and resolved conflicts between kingdoms, families and/or ethnic groups. Understanding conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms of a specific population necessitates an examination of their environment, their territory and their customs. These exogenous factors, combined with local interactions, help to identify the actual mechanism capable of constituting a weapon of deterrence, prevention and resolution of conflicts.

To identify the best conflict resolution tools, it is necessary to review the existing consultation frameworks in Africa and measure their strengths and weaknesses.

In fact, it should be noted that despite the persistence of conflict on the continent, successful examples of peaceful conflict resolution have and still exist in Africa. These models, specifically based on dialogue, have helped to lay the foundations of a political transition in some countries or pacify the relationships between actors, thus creating the conditions for new social pacts to emerge and mitigate violence. This implies that there are many effective models of peaceful conflicts prevention and resolution in Africa (III).

At the end of a seven month research project, which included the organization of two workshops (regional and sub-regional), Partners for West Africa (PWA), with the support of U.S.I.P (United States Institute of Peace) has produced this research document which demonstrates that inclusive and sincere dialogue is an effective tool capable of sustainably preventing and solving conflict. Any democracy which aims to be in the service of social progress and the well-being of its citizens must prioritize dialogue as an important tool of governance by promulgating rules or mechanisms of prevention and resolution of social conflict. Several analyzed experiments described below, will confirm this assertion. It will be examined as followed :

− First, it is useful to give a general overview on conflict resolution processes in Africa.
− Then, we will try to review the existing dialogue experiences in Africa in order to measure their strengths and weaknesses.
− Finally, we will respond to the following question: which model of dialogue is most effective for conflict prevention and resolution in Africa?

1PWA has organized in 2016, two workshops at the sub-regional and regional levels respectively entitled: «The Dialog as an effective tool for the resolution of political and social conflicts in Africa» and « which national dialogue for an effective conflicts prevention, their resolution and the political democratic Transitions in Africa?»
2Nouratou ZATO KOTO YERIMA, « Practice of social dialog in Benin », Frederich Ebert, on 2014
GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CONFLICTS RESOLUTION PROCESSES IN AFRICA AND DIALOGUE AS A CONFLICT RESOLUTION TOOL

The persistence of conflicts in Africa has raised various concerns on conflicts prevention and resolution. A general overview on dispute settlement processes in Africa can be divided into two parts: the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and the institutional conflicts resolution mechanisms.

A. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Africa: dialogue, a decisive practice in African cultures

The African continent has been stunted by recurrent political instability. Beyond the conventional conflicts of civil wars, ethnic conflicts and the rebellions, the continent is facing new security challenges related to terrorism, health and environmental threats.

Therefore studying traditional culture in the context of conflict prevention and resolution in Africa is required to situate dialogue and the culture of peace in a historical context, and to point out that, in regards of conflicts prevention and resolution, Africans have always granted a major importance to the process of negotiation and dialogue.

1. The important place of dialogue in the Negro African culture

The Negro-African culture has always managed to survive conflict by developing and adapting endogenous tools of conflict resolution and prevention. The final goal is the search for peace and compromise. At the heart of this search for compromise, dialogue has always occupied an important place.

The term dialogue comes from the Greek, it is composed of two entities: Dia- and logos which mean, respectively, «between» and «words, speeches, reason.» It is a word shared among several people or group of people. From an etymological standpoint, dialogue appeals to reason and active listening which allows one to follow a train of thought, to hear the essential, to translate emotions and fears. The ultimate goal in this type of communication exercise is not to have a result on the receiver’s end, but complementarity points of views, in order to search together in a disinterested manner a consensus if it is not the truth.

Dialogue is known in many traditional societies in Africa. It was the instrument that societies used to diffuse crises or conflicts which threatened the family or the communities’ foundations.

The African philosophical thought inspired by African wisdom has always favored the peaceful option in conflicts prevention and resolution. The African elder preferred conflict prevention rather than its resolution. The expression, »prevention is better than cure» has thus all its meaning. For the African elder, «Why get to the conflict if it can be avoided»?

In Senegal, the famous Kocc Barma Fall (late 16th early 17th century) promoted this belief and his proverbs encouraged the pursuit of peace through the promotion of moral tenents and strong social cohesion. But, when conflict arose, dialogue was fundamentally the preferred conflict resolution tool.

2. The palaver tree, a privileged place of dialogue among actors
It is in the context of dialogue that we can recall the Palaver tree’s spirit in African traditions. Etymologically, the word palaver comes from the Spanish «palabra» which means speech, discussion. As an organized discussion framework it uses the expression of opinions, contradictory debates, advice, negotiation and positive criticism as a means of conflict deterrence and arbitration. In this sense, the palaver tree institution is the most obvious expression of the vitality of a culture of peace, discussion and dialogue3, in Africa.

The palaver tree is characterized by its sacredness. The exchanges, discussions and negotiations are expressed through proverbs, parables, tales, joking kinship, genealogies and myths. The palaver tree is thus a source of lessons learnt.

The palaver tree’s objective is not to judge or condemn a party. «The palaver tree appears as a speech therapy, which aims to break the vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence in order to restore harmony and peace»4. As a matter of fact, what is being sought out through the palaver tree process is a peaceful consensus, common understanding and the spirit of tolerance.

It is common knowledge in West Africa, particularly among the Dongo of Mali, that, «both parties share responsibilities, the supreme consideration being the preservation of internal tranquility, and mutual forgiveness in the end»5. Similarly, in countries such as the Dahomey, current Benin, most of the conflicts were settled under the palaver tree with a strong involvement of the village’s wise men, who were inclusive actors of a social, constructive and sincere dialogue6. This requires, in practice diplomacy, and an art for a permanent and fruitful dialogue with all stakeholders.

Among the Beti of southern Cameroon for example, not less than six terms and conditions are a prerequisite to any palaver: Where, When, Who, What, Why, how? The nkul (drum made of a hollowed tree trunk) announced to all surrounding villages, the holding of the palavers tree (ekwane ayôn)8.

Thanks to its richness, its pragmatism and its techniques, the purpose of the palaver was very often reached. The actors often came to a compromise between the belligerents. To do so, decisions ranging from permanently or progressively settling the conflict were taken and implemented, it often resorted to mediation.

3. The different negotiations and dialogue procedures in traditional Africa

Negotiation procedures and pacification also existed among the Bamileke people. What stes them apart is their profound respect for human rights and high value placed on agreement even in time of war. In Bamileke practices, it is prohibited to execute a war chief regardless of the fights intensity. Because in the absence of a chief, dialogue cannot be engaged. All means were implemented to remove the obstacles of dialogue even after the war.

It is in this spirit that a great importance was given to emissaries who had the function of negotiators or Ombudsman. In traditional Africa, negotiators or mediators must defend the interests of his party while showing flexibility to compromise. Patience, wisdom, humility, impartiality and decency are considered as the required qualifications to become a good mediator and inspire trust in one’s

---

4 Ibid.
6 In the south Gabon, there were the secret societies initiatory who remained the last receptacles, the guardians of traditions passed on from generation to generation. The populations in specified geographical areas, perpetuate these traditions within the secret societies which were and still are the expression of a common traditional background even if it’s expressed in diversity. They taught wisdom whose precepts used by traditional chiefs who fed the necessary dialogue to resolve any conflict. These precepts are tolerance, acceptance of other, concern of the compromise were the basis of any successful negotiation. V. Monique Mavoungou-Bouyou, «the cultural mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts in precolonial societies in the south of Gabon»: traditional practices in intercultural dialogue and the culture of peace in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, Volume 2, UNESCO, 2005.
7 The palaver obeyed prerequisites. The discussions went peacefully in mutual respect with a search for consensus as a backdrop. To do this, active listening is valued because it facilitates dialogue which ensures consensus. In case of difficulty, the wise, presumed neutral and educated are consulted to resolve disputes.
8 Jean Louis Mbengue, «conflicts resolution and the promotion of peace among the Beti from southern Cameroon», history monograph, seminar of Phd, University of Yaoundé I, 1995.
client as well as with the opposing side.

In traditional Africa, a great experience is required to lead a mediation. It is only the people who have historical knowledge and values who are chosen as mediators. The age being a symbol of wisdom, the elderly often occupy the function of ombudsman. They shall ensure the respect of commitment made, which is translated elsewhere as the principle of «pacta sunt servanda». Without this respect, there can be no mutual trust or dialogue.

Good neighborliness relationships are developed in traditional Africa and participate to promote peace and harmony between peoples. The Dioula merchants, in particular, sellers of cola have played an important role as diplomatic agents. Confidants and messages bearers for the Sovereign, they enjoyed privileges and immunity.

In the area of conflict prevention and resolution in Africa, women are not outdone. They play a vital role because they ensure the harmony of the family, clan and the community by extension. Among the Bamileke, women put an end to a conflict by brandishing “the Tree of Peace leaves”. In Senegal, mainly in Casamance, women and children are sacred and should never be targets of warring parties, even in the time of war. Women, especially queens support their husbands in taking decisions related to war and in the choosing the different points of negotiations.

B. Institutional conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms : the case of ECOWAS and African Union

The creation of the United Nations, in the aftermath of the Second World War, foreshadowed a new era where the search for peace and harmony would become a priority for each continent, region and state.

1. African Union mechanisms

Following the creation of the United Nations, the African States created the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which became the African Union (AU) in 2002. Since its inception, the OAU gave a privileged place to peaceful settlement of inter-African conflict. A mediation, conciliation and arbitration commission was set up to this effect, but its resources were limited. As a result, the OAU frequently resorted to its Council of the Wise or Ad-hoc committees to settle disputes.

The goals of peaceful conflict resolution is at the heart of the AU’s mission. The organization has several institutions working in this direction :

- The Peace and Security Council (CPS) : this is the primary body of the African Union peace and security architecture. It draws its foundation from several legal texts, among which are the African Union’s Constitutive Act, the Protocol of its creation, the African Charter of Human Rights and the rights of people, and the provisions of the “Universal Charter”, that is to say the Charter of the United Nations. Its creation is a result of the decision made at OAU’s Conference of Heads of State and Government which decided to incorporate the OAU’s central agency of management of conflict prevention and resolution mechanism, as the Union agency.

- The peace and security council’s mission is to promote peace, security and stability in Africa.

---

*This principle which underlies the idea of respect for the given word is very often allocated to Hans Kelsen which is part of the theoretical foundations of international law which also aims to peace and harmony of nations. It is pleased to note that it is also known and used by the actors of peace in traditional Africa.*
Its objective is to develop a culture of peace among the Pan-African citizens. The council also assumes the functions of early warning and preventive diplomacy, as well as functions related to the restoration of peace, including the good offices, mediation, conciliation and investigation. The council has important prerogatives in the field of promotion and research for peace. It has the power, among many others, to authorize peace support missions, to impose sanctions in the event of unconstitutional changes of government, and «take initiatives and actions deemed appropriate» in response to ongoing or potential conflicts. It is useful to note that the AU’s Peace and Security Council is a full right decision-making body, and its decisions are binding to member States.

- In the perspective of an efficient deployment of the Peace and Security Council, the African Union peace and security architecture (APSA), has been designed. The African Union peace and security architecture is a set of functional tools likely to provide comprehensive responses to issues stemming from more complex crises that occur on the continent. The APSA is organized around structures, objectives, principles and values, as well as decision-making processes on the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction and development on the continent. The objective is to arrive to «promote and protect human rights and the rights of peoples, to consolidate democratic institutions and culture and to ensure good governance and the rule of law».

The African Union peace and security architecture maintains relations with other bodies such as the Pan-African Parliament and the Commission of Human Rights and the rights of people, civil society organizations etc. In addition, the relationship between the African Union (AU), which has the main responsibility to promote peace, security and stability in Africa, and the Regional Economic Communities/regional conflicts prevention, management and resolution mechanisms (REC/MR) is an essential component of the African Union peace and security architecture.

2. The ECOWAS mechanisms
A longside the AU, ECOWAS was created in 1975 to work effectively in conflict prevention and resolution processes in West Africa.

It is useful to recall that at its creation, ECOWAS's main objective was economic integration of Member States. But this objective was quickly been derailed by political crises in the region and rivalries between Heads of State who were competing for regional leadership. The civil wars in Liberia (1990-1997 and 2003-2007) and Sierra Leone (1991-2002), which threatened the peace in Guinea, have constituted a threat to the whole of West Africa. In the light of this situation, it had become necessary to readjust the ECOWAS vision.

ECOWAS has several useful conflict prevention and resolution instruments : Protocol Related to conflicts prevention, management and resolution mechanism, the preservation of peace and the security; the additional protocol on democracy and good governance; the conflict prevention framework and the revised ECOWAS Treaty of 1993.

At the Conference of Heads of State and Government in 1999 in Lomé, the Protocol related to conflicts prevention, management and resolution mechanism, the preservation of peace and the security was adopted. The system established by the1999 Protocol plays a key role. It was followed in 2001 by the Additional Protocol on democracy and good governance in the December 21st 2001, which complements the mandate allowing the ECOWAS to tackle in a political, diplomatic and military manner the root causes of conflicts. The ECOWAS mechanism is governed by
a three levels institutional system:
- The Conference of the Heads of State and Government who is the highest instance of decision in the framework of actions related to the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts and the preservation of peace.
- The Mediation and Security Council which has the power to take, on behalf of the Conference of Heads of State and Government, decisions for the proper implementation of the provisions of the said mechanism.

The President of the Commission which has the ability to take measures «such as missions of inquiry, mediation, facilitation, negotiation and reconciliation of parties in conflict»; finally the Council of the Wise composed of eminent personalities who may, on the behalf of ECOWAS, use their good offices and their skills to play the role of mediator, conciliator and arbitrator.

With respect to ECOWAS conflict prevention of framework (pic). It was designed to be “a comprehensive strategy and an operational conflict prevention and peace-building system for ECOWAS and to the Member States to mobilize human and financial resources at the regional (including the civil society and private sector) and international scale, in their efforts to ensure the prevention of conflicts and the concrete interventions for peace building.” In regard to the revised ECOWAS Treaty of 1993, article 58 is devoted to regional security. In this article, the Member States must be committed to work toward the preservation and strengthening of a constructive relationship in order to maintain peace, stability and security in the region. For these purposes, they shall cooperate with the Community in order to create and strengthen the appropriate mechanisms to ensure the prevention and resolution in time of conflict, inter-State and intra-State actors.

The efforts and the willingness of AU and ECOWAS to operationalize integration despite the difficulties are real. Knowing that peace precedes development, these organizations are actively involved in the research of conflicts prevention and resolution in Africa. These institutional mechanisms operate in collaboration with other mechanisms essentially based on dialogue.

The collaboration between the institutional mechanisms and the traditional mechanisms in terms of conflicts prevention and resolution has become today, a request from the African public opinion. Strongly rooted in their culture, Africans cannot sustainably resolve their problems by ignoring the traditional mechanisms. In addition, the change in paradigm, new issues related to globalization, the geopolitical and security challenges require a much more integrated view of conflicts management. That is the relevance of all the institutional mechanisms of conflict management integration bodies.

THE DIFFERENT EXISTING TYPES OF NATIONAL DIALOGUES IN AFRICA:
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Dialogue is without a doubt an African tradition and is strongly rooted in black culture. Throughout the centuries, even if the methods have evolved and changed over time, dialogue has remained a central tool of resolution and prevention of unavoidable conflict.

At the beginning of 1990’s, several African countries sought to settle their chaotic political situation by organizing «Sovereign National Conferences.» It’s goal was a fundamental redefinition of the political rules at the state level, rules which must be adopted into new constitutions to end the single-party and dictatorship regimes which had characterized the continent. Under the banner of national dialogue or through sovereign national conferences, dialogue between the different actors within the state allowed a transition from one system to another. The process of democratization engaged by these «sovereign national conferences» has led to the establishment of political pluralism, trade union and the organization of multi-parties elections, drafting new constitutions, and even a reorientation of economies. This was the case in Benin, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Central Africa, Togo, Niger, Mali, and others.

While the process did produce successful outcomes, there were also limitations. Democratization and the drive toward peaceful societies remain a constant and progressive effort, frequently confronting large roadblocks.

As stated by an African elder, maturity of people is determined not by the number of tragedies that they have known but by the way in which people peacefully coexist without clashing or fighting. It is symptomatic of the fact that African dialogue has known its letters of nobility; but its weaknesses are also to be noted.

A. The dialogue as a tool to build a successful democratic transition

The post-colonial state had a lot of difficulties integrating different people in a same community. It has often resorted to violence in its relations with the population, its political opposition, the intermediate bodies, etc. The colonial policies of resource management, adopted by newly independent states, lead to exclusion and marginalization, while state institutions failed to deliver quality services to populations.

The attempt to construct states is often a real tragedy in Africa. It should be added that the reproduction of the authoritarian model and artificial borders passed on from colonial authorities generated multiple conflicts and disputes: inter-community conflict, conflicts between States, crises, post-electoral violence, coups, popular insurrections, etc. In such a context, finding a peaceful solution at the national level to such conflicts remains problematic. The saw-tooth evolution of the curve of peace in Mali, missed democratic transitions in Congo-Brazzaville, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the current crisis in Burundi are part of this wake. The actors involved in these political crises did not build a consensual and permanent dialogue framework in order to discuss to exchange ideas on subjects of disagreement or dispute. The logic of violent confrontation is rather privileged than constructive dialogue and the search of compromise. The authoritarian behavior have often been the cause of whim during democratic changes.

1. Dialogue to heal Apartheid’s trauma

10 Mr. Ngoma Binda, «Democracy and political dialogue, becomes mold of success of the transition Congolese as the base for the governance of tomorrow», on 2004, p. 297
12ibid
In post-apartheid South Africa, the protagonists have favored transitional justice instead of a repressive justice. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to elucidate the massive human rights violations, giving the floor to victims and executioners. The latter has put forward national reconciliation through a manifestation of historical truth and the recognition of victims’ rights. This was the option for peace actors and the leaders of the new South Africa, anxious to build a nation gathered around the principles of ethics, justice, dignity and non-violence. Reconciliation, the ultimate stage of mediation, must be allowed to rebuild the broken social links.

Nearly 22 000 South Africans have been heard by investigators during the course of the Truth and Reconciliation Process. Particular attention was given to victims’ relatives, by welcoming and listening to them. Psychologists intervened to support some of the victims.

This approach which combined transitional justice and national reconciliation has inspired several countries in Africa: Côte d’Ivoire, Burundi, etc. In the field of transitional justice the results obtained in these countries are well below those achieved in South Africa. In these countries, the composition of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions often sinned by a lack of consensus on the modalities of its creation or operation. That is the reason why part of the population did see themselves in the conclusions or recommendations.

2. Dialogue as a tool to make post-genocide Rwanda emerge

Rwanda like South Africa has experienced a major social trauma due to the genocide in 1994, which killed nearly 800 000 people, Tutsis for the most. Despite all, Rwanda has molten through a process of national reconciliation, based on a transitional justice. Therefore the justice achieved within the traditional courts, commonly called Gacaca, was organized in parallel of conventional courts.

At the image of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, the Gacaca had a dual objective which is to make the truth emerge and to promote reconciliation at the national and local levels. It needed to, in spite of the seriousness of the facts, to establish dialogue between executioners and victims. The objective was to enable the Community to renew the links destroyed between families and ethnic groups during the genocide. Dialogue between communities is again the slogan for the Rwandan population. «Indispensable, it (dialogue) is the only conducive framework for building a climate of trust between the ethnic groups»

Commonly designated as Umushyikirano, national dialogue is institutionalized in Rwanda and stated in article 168 of the Basic Law which is consecrated in its terms: *there is an established «National Council of Dialogue». It brings together the President of the Republic and 5 persons representing the Council of each district and each city designated by their peers. It is chaired by the President of the Republic in the presence of the members of the Government, the Parliament and the Prefects of the province, the Mayor of the city of Kigali as well as other persons that could be designated by the President of the Republic. The Council meets at least once a year. It debate among any other issues related to the state of the Nation, the state of local authorities and national unity. The recommendations of the said Council shall be forwarded to the concerned institutions and services in order to improve the services rendered to the population.»

In concrete terms, it is an annual meeting between the President of the Republic, the Government
and civil society to discuss ways and means to solve the nation’s issues. The ‘Umushyikirano therefore constitutes a flexible form of participatory democracy. It is without doubt one of the propellants mechanisms in the economic development of Rwanda.

The Gacaca experience has been a real success, because it rendered justice to genocide victims, but especially laid the foundations of a genuine national reconciliation. The various resolutions of the national dialogues are based on the improvement of public service, the increase of direct investment in Rwanda, access to health care for most of the disadvantaged, agricultural sector reformation in order to achieve self-sufficiency in food and exportation, generalization of teaching English, the access of rural populations to public services.

In the light of the foregoing, it is possible to argue that Rwanda has tried, we may say, to initiate a process of emergence and stabilization based on an inclusive approach of a continuous dialogue between the different segments of society. This has allowed some researchers as Edward Senno-ga rasp bar and Amata Sangho Diabate to support that “Twenty years after the genocide, Rwanda can be regarded as an example of successful development. The unity and reconciliation have been strengthened, which promotes good governance in the medium term”.

However on the civil society side, several issues remain to be solved, including the establishment of a solid democracy with greater openness and an effectiveness of democratic freedoms. In addition, it should be noted that several voices are high to denounce the absence of defenders for the accused tried by the Gacaca. For them, this form of transitional justice delivers a discounted justice.

3. Dialogue as a tool for establishing a sustainable social pact in Benin

In Benin, dialogue was established through the National Sovereign Conference. The success of the National Sovereign Conference in Benin is explained by the quality of the person, who led these consultations, Mgr. de Souza with his inclusive character, and also the development of a new social pact, as an dynamic to emerge from the crisis: new constitution, new electoral code, new code for the press, multiparty system. In brief, a social contract that is binding to all. Each actor wishes to respect his word and his commitments. This goes back to the popular wisdom of the «palaver tree», which has allowed Beninese to reconnect with their history. In the case of Benin, dialogue has allowed the political class to engage in a catharsis and write a new social pact, which is still in force, and this in spite of the fluctuations of the political life in this country.

4. The dialogue as a means to resolve social political conflict: in light of the National conference in Senegal

The Senegal can boast to a certain extent about being an exception, since it has not experienced a coup, making it an «island of stability in an ocean of instability». Senegal has an old democratic tradition based on peace, consultation and dialogue. Therefore, the example of Senegal deserves to be duly noted. Dialogue is deeply rooted in Senegalese culture. Any time that a situation appeared too perilous, political, religious and traditional authorities have called for dialogue. Where weapons have failed elsewhere in Africa, a sincere and frank dialogue has been able to solve tensions in the «country of Téranga». The most typical example is without a doubt the most recent National consultation.

1See economic prospects in Africa, UNDP, 2015
4Source: Tenors were high in the middle of the work. But the government wants to make social dialogue the base of its action. Source: said Mr. Sy, during a press conference available on http://www.seneweb.com/news/Societe/le-gouvernement-senegalaie+-veut-faire-du_n_118390.html visited on 15 September 2015.
Through citizen engagement, the national conference drafted one charter, one general report, 9 thematic reports, 35 departmental reports and 3 reports from the diaspora. In its methodology, the national conference has opted for the use of national languages in these consultations, in order to involve the maximum of citizens who do not understand or speak French. The respect of dialogue’s principles, the rejection of dogmatism, and the search for consensus were the major axis of the methodology adopted.

The national conference was however faced with challenges related to the lack of monitoring. Although it was supposed to be a catalyst for change, the major conclusions of the national conference and principles formulated in the CNRI report have not been uniformly applied. The visions of the actors and citizens were different from the policy makers concerns who held the executive and legislative power. The paradox is that, the major part of political actors and even civil society who were part of the National conference became members of the government in power while the National conference conclusions are still not implemented.

This approach, based on dialogue in Benin and in Senegal, has also been used in Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and to a lesser extent in Congo. However, the results were not similar because, even if the objectives are the same the leader’s democratic culture, decision makers, the political will and the historical background of those countries are different. In general, it is important to emphasize that in a countries deeply affected by war or social crisis and major politics, dialogue can be an effective tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The cases of South Africa and Rwanda are clear examples. These States have been able to take advantage of dialogue by using its virtues. What about states in democratic construction?

B. Dialogue in States in democratic construction

1. The difficult ways of dialogue in Guinea Bissau

Guinea-Bissau experienced a liberation war from 1963 to 1974. This war is the source of issues facing this country at the present time. Since its accession to independence, Guinea-Bissau’s political history remains marked by permanent tension, a climate of distrust and conflict.

The military, who fought for independence, have failed to be part of a Republican dynamic. A glimmer of hope emerged during the PAIGC First Congress in 1983, whose major objective was to discipline the military force. However, the climate of mistrust and the lack of transparency still threaten the institutions. In Guinea Bissau, dialogue began after each political crisis, stumbling upon serious obstacles, and this in spite of the ECOWAS’s strong involvement. The weakness of the institutions, the series of armed confrontations and coup d’état have bankrupt the State, with an ever-present army who monopolizes the political life since the accession to independence. The lack of political will to implement a security sector reform, with the creation of a republican army, is a major obstacle for a definitive and peaceful resolution of conflicts and crises besetting this country.

It is regrettable to note that since 2000, no head of State has managed to peacefully finish their mandate. The dialogue Commission put in place by the President Malang Becaye has conducted many activities, throughout the country and the diaspora, conferences to listen to the Bissau Guinean-on the causes of conflict. This Commission has taken into account NGOS experiences, initiatives of individuals and groups and also capitalizes on all information in order to share them. Unfortunately in January 2012, the President Malang Bécaye was ousted and the Transitional Government put in place has been unable to continue the dialogue.
The 2014 elections were a hope for the country to get out of this chaotic situation, but given the interests at stake, the Government was dismissed at the end of a year. To cope with this crisis and find solutions, a Commission of dialog led by the Father da Fonseca has been put in place to define mechanisms based on reconciliation. Sadly, the minimum geostrategic interests, the lack of sincere desire of the actors, and the difficulties of financing the activities of the Commission constitute a serious obstacle to the establishment of a sustainable peace.

2. The civil-military dialogue to consolidate democracy in Guinea
In the Republic of Guinea, the security sector reform (SSR) has helped reduce the endemic violence in this country marked by chronic instability since the death of its first president in 1984. The army, who led the country for several years, has reproduced an authoritarian model, characterized by massive human right violations. The action of the defense and security forces (DSF) has largely contributed to increase insecurity and impunity in the country.

To renew the links between the DSF and the population, the Government has initiated a national consultation, involving all of the country’s active forces, including civil society to discuss the issues of this reform. This dialogue has helped to lay the foundation for an organized army more respectful of the rule of law and reduced the level of violence in the capital Conakry. Its objective was to proceed to a better definition of tasks assigned to the army and the police. This national consultation has helped to achieve the following results:
- The demilitarization of the capital Conakry;
- The withdrawal of the army from the preservation of public order operations;
- The retirement of approximately 4000 military members;
- The creation of the High Command of the National Gendarmerie and the Directorate of Military Justice;
- The return of the Guinean army in peacekeeping operations.

Even if all the security problems are not solved by this national dialogue, the creation of the civil-military Committee (CMC), which is part of the spirit of dialogue, has been highly beneficial. Indeed, in regards to the repeated abuses of the army against civilians, consultations were made between civil society and the DSF in order to put an end to the cycle of violence. The creation of CMC may be regarded as a significant step toward a change of paradigm on the place and role of the DSF in the construction of democracy in Guinea. It has especially helped to break the wall of misunderstanding and mistrust between the army and the citizens. The Guinean society, which is plagued by multiple conflicts particularly at the community level, needs frameworks for dialogue and consultation at all levels for more stability.

3. The dialogue in Côte d’Ivoire: noble objectives with controversial foundation
In the case of Côte d’Ivoire, the 2010 post-electoral crisis and its aftermath is a useful case to study. Alassane Ouattara, the elected President of the Republic decided to create a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to serve as a framework for dialogue between Ivorians.

Article 5 of the Regulation indicates the main mission of the Commission namely: «to independently work towards reconciliation and consolidation of social cohesion among all communities living in Côte d’Ivoire». Ivory Coast’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission had the merit of associating through its three Vice-presidents, important pieces of the society with the objective of putting in place an executive committee composed of representatives of the main religions that are found in the Ivory Coast, but also the traditional chiefs.

19Cf. article 5 of the ordinance No. 2011-167 of 13 July 2011 on the creation, powers, organization and functioning of the Commission dialog of truth and reconciliation
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has seven principal commissioners representing the five major regions in Ivory Coast such as the North, the South, the West, the east and the Center, but also the African and non-African residents and the Ivorian Diaspora as well. The Commission was criticized however because while some thought that all political actors must be involved in the process, Laurent Gbagbo had already been transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other members of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) were concerned. In such a situation, is it necessary to negotiate directly with the regime in place or to rely on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? This throbbing question is related to the justice and peace rationale. Should it focus on reconciliation, dialogue or should it begin by justice?

Another handicap of the Commission is linked to the fact that its President was challenged from the beginning. Charles Konan Banny, responsible for leading the institution, has strong political connections. He is a member of the IBD Program, a political party belonging to the Coalition that led to Alassane Ouattara victory in 2010.

4. National dialogue, a privileged tool for stability in Mali

With an area of 1,241,231 SqKm and an estimated population of nearly 14 million in 2009, Mali is a multi-ethnic country. The Bambara, Malinke, Soninke represent 50% of the total population, followed by the Peuhl (13%), Burkinabe (12%), Tuareg and Moorish (10%), Songhai (6%), and, finally, persons of other ethnic groups (5%).

The Tuareg nomads are found mainly in the north of the country, under served and less developed than the southern regions. Despite the efforts made by the State of Mali, some groups in the North, including the Tuareg and the Arab feel they are marginalized and victims of discrimination by the central government. It should be noted that the premises of the Tuareg rebellion dated from the time of the common organization of the Saharan regions (COSR) project. The objective of the project was to detach a part of Algeria’s territorial spaces French Sudan, Niger and Chad to the benefit of the colonial power. These areas deemed rich in mineral resources correspond precisely to the space occupied by the Tuareg. The project of subtraction of the territory for the benefit of the COSR was withdrawn because of Sudan’s opposition. But this project had already spread the seeds of the division. In doing so, the independent Mali has experienced various rebellions.

The popular movement of the Azawad (PMA) was created in 1988 in Libya. Followed by different attacks carried out by this group: one against the prison and police garrison of Ménaka, another in Tchintabaradene which took place respectively in June and in May 1990. The army’s repost didn’t wait, with a military operations launched in the North, particularly around GAO in July and August 1990. Despite the peace agreement negotiated in Tamanrasset (Algeria) in 1991, the violence continued.

After taking over power in 1991, Amadou Toumani Touré held a national conference in Bamako in the hopes to put Mali on the path of the democracy. Thus in January 12th 1992, a new constitution was adopted. Alpha Omar Konaré won, the first multi-party elections of Mali.

The management of these rebellions movements became one of the priorities of the new state who worked for the preservation of the stability and territorial integrity. In the meantime, a national covenant, which enshrined a particular status of the northern regions of Mali, was established in 1992. The objective of the pact was to be able to negotiate a peaceful, just and durable solution, in order to put an end to the conflict which was raging in the 6th, 7th and 8th regions of the Republic of Mali called Azawad. This solution was trying to take into account cultural, geographic and socio-eco-
nomic diversities that exist in Mali. The title III of the Covenant deals with the question on special status accorded to northern regions in Mali. A wider autonomy is planned through the establishment of local regional and interregional communities, which constitutes the interregional Assembly. The title IV is related to the issues of solidarity and national unity in the North. It states «the integration with special title in the frames of movements and nationals from the region of Northern Mali in the central authorities of senior officers of the National defense and the other security bodies». As well as their integration in the various public bodies and Para public administration.

The title V focuses on sub-regional and international cooperation and Title VI defines the implementation timetable on the covenant's provisions on national reconciliation and the establishment of a police headquarter in the North linked to the office of the President of the Republic.

The most interesting part of the adoption of the pact is the method used to finalize it. The willingness to move toward peace, by negotiation should be saluted. It can be noted on the Covenant preamble whereby parties seem to overlook the classical approach to conflict resolution through military force by involving civil society and political parties to the discussions.

The national pact is the result of a long process of mediation and negotiations which has led to compromises on several components: the integration of ex-rebels in the public services (trained uniform force and general administration) and in the socio-economics activities; the relief of military arsenal in the Northern regions; the return of the administration and technical services in the north; the resumption of economic activities and the implementation of socio-economic programs of development in the medium and long term scope; the return of refugees; the implementation of decentralization program.

Therefore 2,390 ex-combatants have been integrated in State uniform force and 150 to the Public Service. Additionally 9,511 non-combatants have benefited from socio-economic rehabilitation programs, in form of grants for the creation of micro-projects. Currently also benefiting from a consolidated program in form of microcredit and support in the creation of medium-sized businesses through a mechanism of bank guarantee. Nowadays, the resettled repatriated refugees and displaced populations benefit from ongoing development programs in their areas and are of more and more integrated in the socio-economic programs of the new communities.

The last component, dedicated to the economic development of the Northern regions has focused on the social and economic macro and micro programs of inclusion of vulnerable populations in the North with a particular emphasis on rural youth.

For Zeidan Ag Sidalamine, former coordinator of the Movements and Unified Fronts of Azawad (Mfua), the National Pact is one of the best agreements of the sub-region, which has inspired many torn up nations on the continent. He continues to show its disagreement with the last rebellion in 2012 by hammering: «I condemned any recourse to armed violence wherever it comes and whatever its signature may be, by respect to my political and moral commitments written in the Covenant of April 11th 1992, and in the Bourem agreements of 11th January 1995 with the Gandha Koy. The commitments included the solemn declaration of self-dissolution of the Movements and Unified Fronts of the Azawad and of the Patriotic Movement of Mali Gandha Koy in March 27th 1996 in Timbuktu» now former spokesman of the National Pact and of the Flame of Peace. Therefore, from the point of view of several observers, the National Pact had already identified all the problems.

Experiences in three program areas took place: the security dimension translated by the integration of the MFUA’s combatants within the governmental forces and the Public Service of Mali, the institutional dimension corresponding to the implementation of decentralization and the socio-economic dimension related to the repatriation of refugees and their reintegration as well as those of demobilized combatants.

As well on the method as on the results, the National Pact can serve as an example to illustrate that a consultation can generate stability. Moreover, the singularity of this Pact pushed the author Odile Hardy to consider it in its work as an original solution. Moreover, peace process initiated by this Covenant, consolidated and lead to the Flame of Peace ceremony, on March 27th 1996 in Timbuktu, during which 3 000 weapons of the rebellion were symbolically destroyed. An amnesty law was passed in 1997 by the Parliament of Mali.

However, it has to be acknowledged that despite its comprehensive content, its participatory nature and its consistency, the agreements of the National Pact have not solved the situation described in the North. The creation of new groups of rebellion from the outbreak of the MPA, has not facilitated things. A resurgence of tension is noted in 2006 and 2007 who led respectively to the Algiers Agreements in 2006 and to the peace agreement concluded in Libya in 2009.

Despite everything, the rebellion resumed on January 17th 2012. It was favored by the return of hundreds of Tuareg members of Khadafy’s Islamic legion and by the dissemination of the Libyan military arsenal. The situation is worsened on March 21st and 22nd 2012, when in addition to the armed rebellion in the North, a military mutiny overthrew Amadou Toumani Touré’s regime.

To help Mali to get out of the crisis, a Framework Agreement was signed on April 6th by the military junta and ECOWAS to put in place a political transition. In this framework, Dioncounda Traore, President of the National Assembly, is designated on April 12 as interim President and Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the transition. A second agreement is concluded on May 20th between the putschists, the transition authorities and ECOWAS extended this transition for a year starting May 22nd.

On April 6th 2012, the MNLA unilaterally proclaimed «the independence of Azawad». The Northern Mali is then occupied by Islamists terrorist movements who imposed their terrible act: AQMI and the MUJAO are joined by Ansar Dine, Islamist Tuareg movement opposed to MNLA.

Thus, the construction of peace in Northern Mali continues to be a long and painful process characterized by ups and downs. The consensual peace which existed was the result of the combination of several factors and strengths: social, cultural (culture, societal values, the virtues of dialogue, consensus, peace, persuasion), policy (the democratic opening). But, the historical turning point was the change of approach in the question of the North began under the auspices of the National Pact. Several mechanisms were experienced in research and peacebuilding. These mechanisms carried their results to such extend that a research conducted by the French Senate, clearly mentioned that in order for Mali to get out of this situation, it must reshape its national pact.

However, it should be noted that it is difficult to get to a definitive peace as long as the interests of one and other (neighboring countries, Western countries, Arab countries, rebel groups, the State of Mali, etc.) are divergent and often conflicting.
In addition there is a change in balance with the narco-traffickers, the merchants or hostage sellers, armed bandits, the smugglers of migrants, terrorist movements encouraged by the Libyan crisis (Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb).

In the light of the research conducted by an NGO and based on focus groups26, it appears that the solutions for improving the social relations in Mali must be done at the community level and be anchored in dialogue. Sitting around the same table to talk and looking at each other straight in the eyes, share a cup of tea, start a simple and direct dialogue appears to be the actions which, in the eyes of the communities surveyed, can ensure a true reconciliation.

5. The virtue of dialogue: the experience of burkinabe
The popular uprising that forced Blaise Compaoré leave in October 2014 is strangely similar to Maurice Dr Yaméogo departure on January 3rd 1966. As in 1966, the people of Burkina Faso has taken their destiny into their own hands and said «no» to an autocratic power.

What can be however noted in the popular uprising of October 30th and 31st 2014 which overthrew Blaise Compaoré, is the large number of young people and women throughout the country, who took part in the uprising and the strong involvement of the traditional chieftainship, including the essential role played by the Moogho Naaba, The King of the Mossi.

Indeed, following the decision of the Council of Ministers in October 21st 2015 to validate the bill to amend the Article 37 of the Constitution in order to allow Blaise Compaoré to seek another mandate, the opposition parties and civil society organizations call for a national mobilization to ask the government to withdraw the bill. This event was followed by several others until the fall of Blaise Compaoré. All layers of the society have taken part : on October 27th, women of Ouaga circumvented the City Hall ban and organized a demonstration against the regime of Blaise Compaoré. October 28th will be declared the day of civil disobedience. One could read on young people’ T-shirt : our number is our strength. On October 30th the President of Burkina Faso called for dialogue during which the Opposition called for its immediate resignation. Which will be eventually done on October 31st.

Behind the scenes, to prevent the country to fall into civil war, religious and traditional leaders simply in the first line the emblematic figure of the Moogho Naaba. The Palace of the Moogho Naaba, a moral enclave is the place where the State of Burkina Faso has always found the resources to start afresh. It was the case in 1932 when Naaba Sagha IV incarnated the fight up to the reconstitution of the Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) whose territory had been integrated into the colonial entities. It is still the case today because the current tenant of the palace, the Naaba Baongo whose name «Baonga» means «plain, lowlands» has continued the work of his ancestors.

Since the beginning of the crisis, those who felt threatened including the Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida fled before his comrades of the RSP - found refuge in Moogho Naaba Palace, same with those who were seeking to prevent the country to fall into chaos. The Palace of the Mogho Naaba is a sanctuary for dialogue, peace comfort and morale.

The last act in the crisis of Burkina Faso which opposed the Loyalist soldiers to the regiment of the Presidential Security (PSR) was played in the Moogho Naaba Court. The agreement that has been signed between the loyalist forces and the putschist regiment of the Presidential Security has been under its tutelage.

26Six Groups Discussion on 168.V. Research Reports OXFAM, rebuild the mosaic, prospects for better social relations after an armed conflict in northern Mali
It is an agreement of appeasement which provided that the RSP of General Diendéré will remain stationed in his barracks while the loyalist forces will fifty kilometers back from the capital. PSR men then abandoned all controlling positions they held in the city.

The lesson that should be learnt from the intervention of the Moogho Naaba and all the other traditional chieftdoms in Burkina Faso specially the case of the supreme chief of Bobo Mandarè, who distinguished himself by its mediation during the dark hours of the crisis, is that the traditional leaders must join the negotiations. Their social status, their sense of national interest the effectiveness of their mediation and the confidence that they enjoyed on the part of all parties make them the best mediators who underpin the dialogue where politics have failed. The Moogho Naaba and his colleagues have contributed to save Burkina Faso’s institutions. That is to say that there is a place to explore in traditional chieftainship as a way to the settle conflict in our country. These traditional structures often labelled as «old fashioned» are only used when the so-called «modern» solutions offer no perspective. It is time that they are given an official status anchored in the Constitution. Which will allow them to fully play the role which is their: that is to build and renew the threads of dialogue each time it is necessary.

C. The special feature of dialogue in the Great Lakes region

1. The Congo and failures of an attempted national dialog

The Great Lakes region has been affected by repeated crises but its leaders have consistently tried to settle their disputes through dialogue. The Congolese had this idea that intra-Congolese dialogue remains the only peaceful and honorable way to emerge from the DRC crisis. Therefore, several dialogues or several consultation fora were required in Congo in order to reach a durable peace. In fact, since the establishment of democracy in 1990, the DRC has experienced several crises, particularly political. These crises have often been the object of considerable human loss, massive human rights violations and displacement of populations. These various crises have led the actors to negotiate.

The frameworks of dialogue allowed direct contact: it was the case of the negotiations between Mobutu and the former rebel leader, Laurent Désiré Kabila. It is also the case of several other negotiations, such as those held in Victoria Falls I and II, Lusaka passing by Pretoria, Durban, Port Louis, Nairobi, Windhoek, Dodoma, Sirte and Gaborone. These forms of dialogue have been criticized by the Congolese public opinion who saw them as a simulacrum of negotiation or simply a sharing of power. This means that despite the involvement of the United Nations Organization (UNO), the Organization of African Unity (OUA) and/or the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the terms of the dialogue have not led to the expected results.

By contrast, the National Sovereign Conference (NSC)\textsuperscript{27} would have been a real framework for fruitful dialogue between the Congolese. Held in 1990, it is distinguished from other negotiations by its inclusive character, in addition to be a framework for discussion on questions of common interest. It is a true dialogue for «Congo highest interest «. In general, the objective of the Sovereign Conference was to reduce the conflicts that would emerge as a result of the country opening to a multiparty system\textsuperscript{28} and its transition to new democratic political institutions. A degradation of the economic situation\textsuperscript{29} coupled with genuine political crisis has been characteristic of Congo during the 1990’s. The assertion to organize a national conference was launched in Brussels by the representatives of nine political parties of the Opposition in MPR to Mobutu. Thus, on 24 April 1990, he announced the country opening to a multiparty system.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27}Several African countries subscribed in the schema of the National Conference in the years 1990 to 1993. It is the case of Benin and Gabon in 1990, Congo, Niger, Mali, Togo and Zaire in 1991 and Chad in 1993.

\textsuperscript{28}Among the difficulties, it may be noted an increased climate of violence and insecurity such as abductions, killings and destruction of properties; systematic looting of commercial establishments and the sacking of public buildings as well as the economic infrastructure; the intensification of the repression against the written press and against the population (e.g., the Walk of Hope for peace in February 1992); the resurgence of inter-ethnic conflicts (e.g., the Kasaiens in Shaba in 1992, Masisi and Walikale in North Kivu in 1993); the deterioration of the economic situation; the collapse of the central State and an acceleration of country’s state of decay; the stalemate in the process of the transition.

\textsuperscript{29}The rate of inflation was 7000% in 1992. V. Table de concertation on the human rights in Zaire, 1996, p. 30

The process was spread over a year and a half, from the second half of 1990 to 1992, and has brought together delegates representing all strata of the population, all regions and the diaspora of the Zaire. In the course of its work, the National Sovereign Conference had an internal regulation, which was structured around different commissions, each being in charge of examining a specific aspect of the socio-political life of the country, in addition to a plenary session to discuss the commission’s reports. It has three major forces or groups of major actors: the Presidential sphere of influence, the Opposition (grouped but not necessarily united in a Sacred Union) and the Catholic Church.

In spite of Mobutu’s several stifling attempts and the inconsistency of some political actors, the Conference allowed the Congolese to converse among themselves and to formulate an inclusive and participatory way and solutions to various problems which constrained the development of their country. The originality of the Sovereign Conference is that no explicit and external interference has operated. Moreover, this conference has given birth to the Constitutional Act of the Transition, a draft constitution to be submitted to a popular referendum. The conference, ended by taking the legal status of the High Council of the Republic serving as Transitional Parliament, as HCR-PT. Unfortunately, its acquis and resolutions will remain ignored and solely relying on the crisis of primacy of power between Mobutu and the CNS. In fact, following Mobutu’s decision to suspend the SNC and its refusal to recognize and to allow the application of the resolutions and the acquis, the country was plunged into a serious conflictual transition.

The second Congo war was an armed conflict that began in 1998 and ended officially in 2002. It involved nine African countries, and 30 armed groups, which represents the greatest war between states in the history of contemporary Africa.

The desire for dialogue has survived Mobutu because even after its fall, the dialogues were not broken. Laurent Désiré Kabila who took power in 1997 will face the second Congo war, until his assassination in 2001. The Pretoria Agreements and Lusaka’s have put an end to this conflict later, in 2002, the calls by civil society actors and religious leaders for an inclusive dialogue will receive a favorable echo from Joseph Kabila, to organize a national consultation. This dialogue was held at Sun City (South Africa) from February 25th to April 17th 2002. It resulted after multiple transactions, a comprehensive and inclusive agreement signed on April 21st 2003 by all delegates. This agreement had the advantage to provide DRC an agenda which allowed the end of the hostilities, the return to the normal constitutional order, the creation of a republican army by the integration of the belligerent forces, national reconciliation, the reunification of the administration, the organization of elections and the establishment of the institutions of transition with a government and a parliament.

The Sun City agreement laid down important acts because it has allowed the establishment of a political transition and ended the war, establishing a government headed by a President and four vice-presidents. The consensus as indicated in the Agreement was a central element, in the sense that article 17 advocates a consensual management of the transitional period. The Sun City agreement appears to force the country to walk towards a consensual model of democracy based on negotiation and dialogue, compromise and shared responsibility. They thus advocate a consensual democracy which is a model of government among which the organization and the functioning recognize the integration and the participation of main competing political strengths.
It “is characterized by its «inclusiveness», negotiation, and compromise”. In every term, consensual democracy involve the largest possible number of groups in the management of the nation. Therefore, it gives every individual of every group and at any time responsibility for the fate of the country.\textsuperscript{34}

Despite these agreements, conflicts still continued while others emerged. After reporting the ineffectiveness of the military option, the President Joseph Kabila convened a peace conference on security and development in the North Kivu and South Kivu from January 6th to the 23rd 2008. The result is a commitment act signed by the government representatives, armed groups, of the international community. Various commitments were taken by the protagonists, including an immediate ceasefire, the military integration or the disarmament and reintegration into civilian life, facilitation of refugees and the return displaced persons, the establishment of a demilitarized zone and the abstention to support national or foreign armed groups, the presentation and promulgation of an amnesty law for acts of war and insurrection.

It’s was followed by a national program of securing, pacification, stabilization and reconstruction of North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. However, in the test of implementation, the failures are still well known. Peace and security have always turned without evidence for the populations of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The difficulties in the coordination of efforts between the initiators of the agreement, and the divergence of economic and political interests have taken over. Peace has unfortunately been ineffective in 2012, the war started again. Several other negotiations and agreements were unsuccessful.

As a result of the multiple crises and the multiple dialogues, it should be noted that the political situation in Congo is evolving in saw-tooth, particularly in regards to the election results. The presidential elections in November 2011 for example were organized under an unspeakable climate, marred by violence which were deadly at times, of irregularities and proven fraud. This has led ipso facto to a legitimacy crisis of the institutions.

At the present time, the national dialogue continues to be relevant in Congo, because the military option has demonstrated its shortcomings. Even if the dialogue is not yet fruitful, it continues to constitute the only viable outcome even if the method must change, to adapt to the context.

2. Burundi renewal with violence

The political history of Burundi is marked by violence. From 1962, date of its independence, onwards Burundi has not rested: the massacres in May-June 1972 and those of October 1993 followed by the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, the first democratically elected President, killed three months after swearing into office, by a small group of extremists within the army, have plunged the country into mourning for a long time. To get out of the spiral of violence several attempts were conducted. Among the most important: the inter-Burundian dialogue organized between the 15th and 18th of May 1994 which fitted perfectly the symposium held in Geneva from the 10th to 12th of December 1993 on the restoration of peace and democratic process in Burundi.

The Geneva symposium in fact opened the way for a genuine dialogue between Burundians, as it was able, in less than a year after the putsch and the assassination of President Ndadaye, to gather Hutu and Tutsi around the table to commence reconciliation. The symposium’s conclusions have advocated a meeting of the same type to be organized in Bujumbura and involve more Burundian actors. In fact, the meeting which was held in July 1994 in Bujumbura reunited, in a frank

and open dialogue, for the first time representatives of the government, political parties, members of the armed forces and civil society actors. For the first time the people of Burundi have been able to live a public exchange, which was sometimes very contentious between the civil and the military who were forced to face the strong critics coming from civil society.

The inter-Burundian meeting chose four important points:

- National dialogue is the only effective way to solve the country political crises;
- National army must become an institution that enjoys the confidence of the entire population;
- There is a need to strengthen the judicial system for it to be independent. The Conference strongly recommends that all those who have committed crimes against humanity are brought to justice;
- There is a need to strengthen democratic institutions and to promote political pluralism. And any candidate for the presidency must give the assurance of its loyalty to the Constitution.

The national dialogue thus initiated will continue four months later and will conclude by the signing on September 10th 1994 of a governmental convention between eight parties in opposition and the parties coalition in power.

In spite of all these efforts, Burundi remained fragile. The dialogue between the opposition and the government has not been smooth. The circulation of weapons, exploitation young people, suspicion and fear tended to be the «modus vivendi». On September 30th 1994, in his inaugural speech the President Ntibantunganya describes the situation in the country in these terms: “In fact, peace and security have been seriously tested in the country. The weapons illegally held by the population have multiplied. The militias in the payroll of some political leaders or bands of criminals are sowing the spirit of desolation in Burundi. Murder has become the motto for some young people to the extent of making it a sign of bravery. There are even politicians who, without shame or fear, shout loud and clear on stages or in conferences with national or foreign journalists that the salvation of Burundi can only be found through and by the path of war.

What is unfortunate in all this is that these people without faith use our youth. There are young people who have abandoned their studies to engage into war. Currently they are the ones who are in these groups that you hear about. Those are the ones called: Intagoheka. «Relentlessly obsessed who do not sleep», the Sojedem «The Youth solidarity for the defense of minorities rights», «Without-Failure» and «without defeat».

The situation described by the President Ntibantunganya had caused national dialogue. Burundi renewed with violence. To break out of this violence, it took a man: Nelson Mandela, whose mediation has led to the Arusha Accords, the name of the city in Tanzania where it was sealed in 2000, the founding principles of peace in Burundi. The agreements signed in Arusha come into force on November 1st 2001, providing, among many other things, a 3 years transition period with at its head, for the first 18 months, the Major Pierre Buyoya as President and for the Vice-President position, Domitien Ndayizeye. Pierre Buyoya will respect the rotation and will be leaving his post in due date. South Africa will send 700 soldiers to ensure the monitoring of the Arusha agreements.

The news coming from Burundi are not more optimistic: assassinations, intimidation, imprisonment, etc. thus contributes to further entrench the instability in the Great Lakes area which has already been for decades widely embedded in serious crises. Even today there are voices that ask the international community to get involved once more in Burundi in order to reconnect the wires of dialogue, to enforce the Arusha Agreements and to put the country back on the path of reconciliation.

25The national dialogue can it break the power of Terror in Burundi? Report on the impact of the international conference entitled National Dialogue held in Bujumbura from 15th to 18th May 1994 on the efforts of Burundi to restore the democratic process in the country by Zdenek Cervenka and Colin Legum

Scandinavian Institute of African Studies of Uppsala, November 1994
Pending the arrival of a mediator of Nelson Mandela’s mold, murders are proliferating, intimidation continues. Each day, dialogue is more and more moving away. Will the international community arrive in time?

3. The national dialogue, a necessity in Chad

Shaken by years of instability, Chad is a country that has a very hectic political history. Coups d’état, rebellions, crises with the neighboring countries including Libya and Sudan where it is possible to see the same ethnic groups in each side of the borders and the fraternal wars mark Chad’s contemporary history as it is currently illustrated through the crimes against humanity which are coming out of the of victims testimonies during Hissein Habré’s trial.

Bad governance, corruption\textsuperscript{35}, human right violation, the unilateral change of the Constitution and the mismanagement of oil revenues would have made Chad one of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the world. Yet, several agreements have been initiated to remove Chad out of this situation. It is thus the Dakar Agreement, the Sirte agreement\textsuperscript{37} between four rebel groups and the Government of Chad, and the August 13th 2007 agreement on electoral reforms.

Similarly, following the political crisis caused by the 2005’s constitutional revision, which has enabled the President Deby to present himself for a third mandate in 2006, the international community (France, EU and OIF) supported the inter-Chad political dialogue in order to create a «political agreement in view of the strengthening of democratic process in Chad» concluded on August 13th 2007. This process has allowed the holding of legislative followed by the presidential elections in 2011, under the supervision of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The local elections, the first in the history of the country were held on January 22nd 2012, in 42 Communes.

These various examples above show that many initiatives have been undertaken to get to stability. In this perspective a global example of national dialog retains our attention : namely Chad’s National Sovereign Conference which held its meetings in Ndjamea in 1993.

This conference lasted three months and has been qualified by a Dutch expert as the «celebration of democracy»\textsuperscript{38} and generated significant hope. The Chadians thought it would be the opportunity for them to break definitively out of the long period of civil wars and enter the era of democracy and peace.

Important decisions have been taken at the end of the Conference:
- Legitimization of the President of the Republic powers, as the first organ of transition;
- Election of a Prime Minister of transition, in the person of Dr Fidel Moungar;
- Election of a parliament of transition, appointed the Higher Council of Transition (HCT) composed of 60 members;
- Adoption of a «transitional national charter» pending;
- Adoption of a specific political plan of action that the transitional Government had to apply during the transition period, limited to one year, however, with the possibility of an extension.

Unfortunately, the implementation of these recommendations was not effective. The opposition between the Transitional President and his Prime Minister did not facilitate an efficient transition, moreover the President of the transition changed Prime Minister two times and even the minister of finance, for reasons that were assumed to be personal. The elections that followed later have been the subject of criticism and up to today the democratic environment in the country is challenged by several international NGOS.

\textsuperscript{35}V. Fund for Peace, 2008
\textsuperscript{36}This agreement insists on the Reinstatement of four armed movements in the government
\textsuperscript{37}The expression is from Dutch Robert Buijthenhuijt, a specialist of the Chadian policy, which has followed the course of the Conference.
To get out of the impasse in 2006, the civil society has prepared an urgent appeal for dialogue. A monitoring Committee for the call of peace and reconciliation has been put in place, but it has encountered a lack of will, a categorical refusal of the power which rejected the terms of dialogue such as desired by the civil society. According to an opponent of Chad in exile, «there is no inclusive dialogue in Chad, but an exclusive dialog with Khartoum. Chad and the Sudan’s Heads of State have agreed according to their interests and have neglected the reconciliation with their own opponents, thus thinking to resolve the crises in our countries.»

Consequently, beyond this National Conference whose implementation may be considered as a failure, there is not yet another real global and inclusive dialogue in Chad. So far the history of Chad has demonstrated that the fragmented agreements have not been the solution. Despite a relative stability, there is always rebellion in perspective. Several other reasons also justified the need for a consultation. At the time of the implementation of the trial of Hissein Habré, who will make the Chadians relive their past, the national dialogue became more than necessary, especially since justice goes hand in hand with reconciliation. And reconciliation can only be effective if it is preceded by an inclusive dialogue.

For some observers of the international community, there is no doubt in the weakness of Chadian political parties. Chad’s political scene is indeed often described as being composed of a presidential party all powerful - the Patriotic Movement of Salvation (PMS) - around which revolves, on one side, a nebula of opportunistic parties of the majority, and, on the other, an impotent democratic opposition, reduced to play game with the power. Other observers express a more nuanced point of view, for which, contrary to the preconceived ideas and clichés, Chadians political parties have society projects and political programs. Then, the recent elections constituted a capital challenge under a context of tensions. As a reminder, the President Deby has spent 24 years in power and has amended the Constitution so as to represent himself and win the last presidential elections in 2016.

Finally, with the new security challenges and terrorism that threaten this area, particularly with Boko Haram attacks, construction of a national covenant between the different components of the Opposition and the powers in place, on the internal plan becomes a categorical imperative.

D. Women contributions to dialogue: the experience of Women in Casamance and the MARWOPNET

A side of dialogue’s traditional structures which are composed in majority of men, we can note a movements of women who are often very pragmatic and who do not exclude at first glance any structure. True artisans of peace, they mobilize the positive forces expected to renew the threads of dialogue which led to conflict resolution, question the main protagonists and participate at the community level in particular, to mediation between the parties in conflict. The members of all these structures usually act at local and regional level and even national, even if their influence is more difficult to measure at the national level.

It is interesting to see in the framework of such a study, the role played by women in the resolution of conflicts through dialogue, involving other mechanisms of conflict resolution.

1. Women in conflict resolution in Casamance

Another experience of dialogue that deserves to be mentioned in this report is that of women of Casamance, which since the beginning of what is called coyly the crisis in Casamance, have not ceased to intervene with the protagonists of the conflict arguing for a dialogue which would save
human lives. Indeed, the conflict that has pitted the Government of Senegal against the separatists Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) has made hundreds of dead, thousands of wounded, tens of thousands of displaced persons or refugees and whole villages wiped off the map, and lasted for over thirty years. In the face of this conflict, women of Casamance are involved in the search for solutions by having recourse to cultural and traditional resources, through stories, the forum theater, the symbolic of the woven loincloth, etc. All these tools are drawn from the cultural, religious and sociological heritage of Casamance. The main organizations that use these tools are Kabonketoor42, women «Priestesses of The Sacred Wood» and Usoforal.43

The women of Casamance approach, regardless of the organization to which they belong is similar to that of many women. It is to mobilize the positive cultural values, to plead in favor of dialogue between the various protagonists of the conflict while claiming a place as part of the process. Thus, to explain the situation of women in the conflict and the initiatives they take in favor of dialogue for peace, USOFORAL has organized under the title «the talking loincloth» an itinerant exhibition in which women have travelled in several countries with the same message. The «the talking loincloth» exhibition is a space brought by women and for women, through them it is the disturbed story of an entire community that shines through the loincloth. In this approach, USOFORAL seeks to create the space in which the protagonists of the conflict will be able to more easily find the path of dialogue, make the situation evolve, and give back to conflict its positive function in human relations.

In Casamance, women and children are traditionally considered as sacred people, but the crisis trampled on this sacredness and for a long time, women as well as children, were also victims of the conflict through the anti-personal land mines or fights which have often taken place in this part of Senegal. In order to open to dialogue with armed groups, women make them realize the loss of positive values, among which the one that protects the woman and the child. To strengthen their advocacy, women have built partnerships in Casamance and at the sub-regional scale, in particular with the women of Mali, Guinea-Bissau, the Gambia and Guinea.

For the purpose of gathering dynamisms, skills and expertise of each of its members with the purpose of being able to propose concrete and relevant solutions to put an end to the crisis in Casamance, organizations of women then decide to create a platform called Women Platform for Peace in Casamance (PFPC) which brought together 170 associations of women in Casamance, and represents more than 30 000 members. Their investment in peace has thus contributed to the decline of the level of violence and raise awareness to all Senegalese, on the conflict in Casamance. Despite the successes achieved, the women of Casamance are still struggling to impose their participation in the negotiations that are open here and there, despite the support expressed by the Head of State, Macky Sall who spoke in 2012 in these terms: «I have tried and I think I have found […] the secret door which opens the splendors of the cities of peace. This door is you […]. The Torch of Peace is there, then take it to enlighten our stubborn quest of peace».

In the last presidential election of 2012, the Women Platform for Peace in Casamance seized this opportunity to produce and submit to the candidates a memorandum for peace in Casamance. Only nine candidates signed it, agreeing to implement the return of peace if they were elected as President of the Republic. Every opportunity was good to initiate dialogue with the decision makers or with the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), or both. Hence, the candidates in the second round of the 2012 elections were received by the women who wanted to present their peace programs; a new approach in the political history of Senegal. Women were demanding the candidates address their responsibility for the future of the region.

42Kabonketoor means «forgive each other».
43USOFORAL means «Let us unite». The term therefore refers to the solidarity.
After the elections, the women resumed their dialogue with representatives of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), Casamance political representative, traditional and religious leaders as well as the military authorities, to lay the foundation for future negotiations. The strategy has proven to be lucrative, with a new stage in the negotiations for peace in Casamance opening in January 2013, and the Platform coordinator was invited by the Government to be part of the delegation that will engage dialogue with the various protagonists. The battle for peace is not yet won in Casamance, but women have been able to mark each step of this battle by a strong presence, by always renewing strategies for dialogue between the protagonists.

2. Women’s network: the case of the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET)
The Mano River Women’s Peace Network is actively involved in the processes of management and resolution of conflicts in the Mano River Basin. To achieve their objectives, they rely on joint structures belonging to the three countries. This network brings together women from three countries: Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The National Network of traditional communicators (NANETC) for example to supports conflict prevention and peacebuilding actions put in place.

The organization is headed by a Board of directors at the sub regional level and has its headquarters in Freetown. In its operation, each of the countries members of the network conducted its activities in accordance with the realities that dictates the field. It is thus that the MARWOPNET, section Guinea has opened, along the Liberian borders, Sierra Leonean, in Côte d’Ivoire and Mali, 12 antennas in the Prefectures of Forécariah, Kindia, Faranah, Kissidougou, Gueckédou, Macenta, N’Zérékoré, Lola, Beyla, Yomou, Kankan and Mandiana. With its different antennas, The MARWOPNET has developed an expertise in mediation using the traditional techniques of conflict resolution.

Created in 2000 under the auspices of ECOWAS and under the initiative of Women Africa solidarity, the Committee of African Women for Peace and Development (CAWPD), with the support of the African Union, UNDP, the Nigerian Government and other development partners. One of the most spectacular mediations of MARWOPNET was the one which allowed to unlock the political dialogue between the Presidents of the three Governments of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. In fact, the war which had engulfed Liberia and Sierra Leone for more than ten years threatened Guinea, especially between 2000 and 2001 and Ivory Coast, where in 2002 a ended the country’s political stability.

The whole Mano River region was threatening to burst. Charles Taylor was in bad terms with the presidents in power in Guinea and Sierra Leone. At the highest level, the political dialogue was locked. Understanding the urgency of a mediation, the Mano River Women’s Peace Network began to work in developing several strategies including to personally meet the Presidents Conté, Taylor and Kabbah to plead in favor of peace through dialogue. This approach resulted in February 2002 with a high-level meeting in Rabat, Morocco, under the auspices of the King Mohamed VI. The United Nations applauded this action by awarding King Mohamed the United Nations Human Rights price.

This brief review of the conflicts in Africa, the consultations that they have generated as well as their mechanisms, demonstrate that dialogue constitutes a privileged mode of conflicts prevention and resolution. The actors were sometimes successful, and sometimes not. However, they are still building, because it is not the dialogue itself which constitutes an obstacle but the manner in which it is conducted or the ineffectiveness of the resolutions from these frameworks of dialogue. Hence the need to develop an effective method, in terms of conflicts prevention and resolution.

45Chad, the Central African Republic, etc. all these countries have experienced moments of dialogue with its benefits and its limitations.
CHAPTER III

IN SEARCH FOR A FRUITFUL MODEL OF DIALOGUE FOR AFRICA

African societies, rooted in the tradition of oral dialogue have always made discourse a means to establish and to restore the peace. The elders, the guardians of tradition and wisdom, did not hesitate to make use of tales, proverbs, genealogies and myths to transmit the lessons which served as a basis for finding a cordial agreement between the different segments of the community. This is easily justified, if one recalls the famous quotation of Amadou Hampathé Bah, «In Africa, an old man who dies is a library which burns». The elders were able to resolve and prevent conflicts, thanks to their knowledge, their wisdom and their experience. Their mastery of the tools of dialogue allowed them to establish peace and harmony in their communities.

In the aftermath of independence, carried by civil society organizations, inspired by African Dialogue traditions, has resulted in several countries of Africa to achieve their political, economic and social transitions through national conferences. This was the case in Benin, the first African country to have experienced this tool in 1990, and then in Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Central Africa, in Togo, Niger, Mali, etc.

At a time when these lines were being written, national dialogue is still a hot topic in Burundi, and in Senegal, and constitutes a preferred method. As an effective conflict prevention and resolution tool in Africa, dialogue has, in several countries, helped to establish a lasting peace, a participatory democracy and reconciliation. Capitalization of best practices, in the matter, could contribute to a durable solution to political and social conflicts which are rampant in the continent.

The reminder of spaces of dialogue and consultation which exist in Africa allow you to examine the lessons learnt in terms of good practices. It is then necessary to see how to make them operational while avoiding the constraints and limits of dialogue. It is necessary to stress that, like any tool of resolution and prevention of conflict, dialogue conceals limits and weaknesses. It belongs to stakeholders to avoid them by applying appropriate rules and principle for a successful dialogue.

A. The prerequisites to dialog

In order to use dialogue, it is necessary that the protagonists have the same understanding of the meaning and purpose of dialogue.

1. A common understanding of the meaning and purpose of dialogue

When the actors of a given country decide to settle their dispute through dialogue, they must understand at first the meaning and purpose of dialogue. Dialogue is an exercise of tolerance and openness to one and other, which aims to find together, through the confrontation of different and/or even antagonistic positions, the truth or the solution to the problem at hand.

Dialogue implies that there is a communication, a discussion between two or more persons who do not necessarily in agree on one point of view, but who agree to discuss in order to understand each other. It assumes that the stakeholders have a minimum of discernment, of wisdom and good faith to avoid «a dialogue of deaf».

In the framework of dialogue, actors must be ready to compromises and make concessions. The main instigators and organizers of the National Conference of Benin summarized it in these terms: «The idea of the Active Forces national Conference in Benin is the product of a national consensus. The political power has taken the initiative. The people has consented while remaining on their guards. But, to every difficulty, the power as well as the people, threw ballast and made concessions. These concessions and the constant intermediation of the President of the High Council of the Republic made the national conference in Benin a success ».

For a dialogue to succeed, the actors must have a mutual understanding on the meaning of the dialogue and its purpose. This implies that all sides are preparing to make concessions and to seek to compromise on dividing issues, sources of tensions. The actors may only get there that by understanding the purpose of dialogue. This finality passes through a successful communication between the actors.

2. Communication Based on active listening

As any communication, dialog includes a minimum of an emitter and a receptor. In the framework of dialogue, the transmitter and the receiver must all be willing to compromise. To do this, either the receiver, or the issuer must not seek to impose a cognitive point of view, a perspective or reference. The purpose is not to know who is right or wrong. Who won or who lost ? It is true that friction may exist, which the consequence to the logic of war and reciprocal are spying between the different components of a nation. However the dialogue’s objective is to arrive to transmit by a code represented by language which can be verbal or non-verbal, a message, in order to be decoded and received by a recipient.

Therefore, dialogue aims to transform all communication actors in their own being and their freedom. In this sense, active listening is one of the first criteria of a successful dialogue. Nelson Mandela, alluding to the palaver tree, said in his autobiography : «All those who wanted to speak did it. It was democracy in its purest form. There could be a hierarchy between those who spoke, but everyone was listened to». Without an active listening, it is difficult to communicate and understand. In other words, active listening is the basis of a successful communication. Active listening between the dialogue stakeholders, constitutes a mark of good faith and good will between the actors. It assumes that there is respect, consideration and mutual trust between the actors. This demonstrates that it is going in pair with other values.

B. The different principles and ideals governing dialogue

In addition to active listening, there are other values which must govern the frameworks of dialogue.

1. The necessary values to a successful and the effective dialogue

The wisdom of the stakeholders, the humility of the protagonists, their sincerity, their honesty and good will are also assets for a successful dialogue. In Benin, the process has given rise to a political pluralism and has fostered the emergence of a new class of men and women in the political scene and of civil society organizations whose leaders have become key actors of different political alternations. The democratic achievements have resulted in 2006 to the election of a head of the State coming from the civil society, who then broke the political parties’ monopoly. It is Thomas Yayi Boni, outgoing President of the Republic of Benin. The limit on the number of mandates as a constitutional provision in Benin is also one of the «the nation’s strong forces» national dialogue achievements.
The experience of Benin demonstrates that for an effective dialogue, the negotiators or mediators must be highly respected personalities, experienced, wise, high sense of patriotism and impartial. They must inspire confidence to different stakeholders.

In addition, these criteria were even recognized in traditional Africa where the facilitator of the palaver tree was characterized by its authority, namely, his wisdom and his experience.

The resolutions coming from the frameworks of dialogue must be binding and enforceable. The respect of the conclusions coming out of the consultation framework is one of the factors of a successful dialogue. In Benin, the success of dialogue is established through the National Sovereign Conference explained by the quality of its leaders and the effective nature of its decisions. The President Kérékou accepting to delegate to the Prime Minister a part of its powers, a compromise thus was found and the conclusions of the conference implemented.

For a dialogue to be effective, a charter of good conduct and commitment to implement the decisions from the framework of dialogue must be defined by the actors, from the beginning of the consultation.

2. The need to take account the interests of the nation and of all stakeholders

The issues related to democratization, consolidation of the nation-state, and apartheid have confirmed that most of the conflicts in Africa are more complex than that of traditional societies. The African populations being multi-ethnic, ethnicity frequently proceeds one’s identity as a citizen of a state. In the aftermath of the independence, the creation of borders, as well as the new economic, political and social issues have strengthened the division between the populations according to their social (ethnic, rich/poor) or political status. This situation has produced civil wars, tribal wars, the accentuation of the poverty, dictatorship etc. This was the case in Liberia, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Chad, in South Africa, in Rwanda, DRC just to mention the least.

To cope with this situation and to restore peace and agreement between the different parties, the dialogue must correct the sub frames of conflicts. In a framework of consultation, if the differences in the economic and political interests of one and other is put forward, the negotiations will be in vain.

Artisans and actors of dialogue must favor the interests of the nation and non-personal interests. They must work together to build a sustainable democracy. Actors of dialogue must know that the dialogue between political leaders is not synonymous to power sharing but to the democratization of power. The accession to power must be done only through free, transparent and credible elections.

In a framework of consultation, the priority of dialogue must be the backed up by the higher interest of the nation and of all social strata that comprise it. Dialogue must above all reflect the popular will. It must take into account the views and interests of young people, minorities, the poor, grass root communities, traditional and religious leaders, opinion leaders, etc. The inclusion of all social strata and all traditional structures are essential in the spaces of dialogue and consultation.

In a framework of consultation, it is also necessary to take into account the interests of the victims. Reconciliation, the final stage of mediation, must be allowed to mend broken social links. To do so, the interests of the victims should be taken into account in the reconciliation between them and their perpetrators. By doing so, dialogue should not be a source of impunity.
That is the relevance of all transitional justice mechanisms such as developed in South Africa and Rwanda. Even if for the purpose is peace and agreement, equity and justice should govern the negotiations which must always be carried out beyond any partisan interest.

To take into account the interests of all social strata, dialogue must be sincere, continual and based on a multidisciplinary approach. As an effective tool of conflict resolution, dialogue needs indeed to be invigorated and supported. It must not only be resting exclusively on political mechanisms. Because political dialogue must produce convincing results that can be challenged in the long term by the population which may at any time raise the issue. It is as well as «Twenty years after the genocide, Rwanda can be regarded as an example of successful development. The unity and reconciliation have been strengthened, which promotes the good governance for the medium term»48. On the contrary, Congo, despite the commitment of political leaders to initiate dialogue through negotiations with the rebels, the results have not been as expected.

C. The need of the institutional recondition, the role of civil society and African mechanisms of peace and security

The ultimate goals of a national dialogue should be the legitimization and the strengthening of the republican institutions. This must be the work of state and civil society actors, and the institutions of integration.

1. The institutional recondition, a fundamental step of dialogue

To succeed in a sustainable political dialogue, a social pact must be built, which supports the institutional architecture, political and legal status of the country. Without a consensus on these three structures, it is difficult to establish a lasting peace. If Guinea-Bissau has not really managed a dialogue which allowed it to get out of the spiral of instability in which it is found since independence, it is in large part due to the instability and the non-respect of its institutional structures. Democracy and the exercise of power always being interrupted by an army that fail to demonstrate its true Republican character.

Civil society must also play a fundamental role in the frameworks of consultations. A contract of trust between civil society, the political parties and the populations must be built through a framework of an ongoing coordination which allows civil society to position itself as the natural facilitator each time that there is a framework for consultation. This implies that it is a credible civil society, aware of its role, respectful of the institutions of the Republic, apolitical and guided by the principles of human rights and transparency. It is only in this framework, that it can play its role of counter-power and interface between the State and the population.

2. The strengthening of mediation and peace institutional mechanisms in Africa

In theory, there are a number of institutional mechanisms for conflicts prevention and resolution in Africa. Ecowas and the AU have each a mechanism allowing them to build institutional capacity in order to better manage crises and conflicts in the region.

However, at the time of the implementation, the peacekeeping operations carried out by these two organizations have shown their limits. They sinned by their slowness. AU and ECOWAS do not have the human, logistical and financial resources needed to manage and intervene quickly in the multiple crises and conflicts prevailing in Africa.

To allow different organizations of integration to implement their ambitions in the area of conflict prevention, it is necessary to strengthen their financial resources. What happens undeniably by the
regular assessment of the different member states. The strengthening of the financial logistical and human resources would allow an intervention much faster, and more effective and efficient. The communication as well as the good practices of the mechanisms of the AU and ECOWAS in the matter of peace must be publicized because they are generally unknown to the public.

For more effectiveness, African mechanisms of peace, security and mediation must further develop a close cooperation with the United Nations system, as well as with other very experienced international organizations in peacekeeping operations. This cooperation exists, but it is still too timid and fragmented. A better harmonization between the texts that govern the different operations for the preservation of peace and security in Africa is also necessary for a better cohesion in the interventions.

In addition to these problems, the ECOWAS and the AU must develop a preventive diplomacy by strongly encouraging States to promote the democratic principles enshrined in the ECOWAS Protocols and the AU Charter. In order to make conflict prevention an ideology states should to anticipate and limit the risk of widespread violence in the short term, but also implement a strategy which would launch a genuine democratic transition. Preventive diplomacy, which is conducted by ECOWAS, the AU or by the two in good intelligence, can resolve the dangerous situations and contain the level of violence.

Ecowas and AU must continue to fight against the breakdown of dialogue. They must consolidate their efforts in the fight against impunity, the dictatorship, the coups d’états and whenever it’s needed, they must be involved in the security sector reform. In the immediate aftermath of the coup in Guinea in December 2008, the two organizations systematically sought an alignment of their positions and presented a common front within the international Contact Group that they have co-chaired. The threat and then the effective implementation of targeted sanctions by the AU Peace and Security Council against the leaders of the JUNTA of CNDD have thus been able to consolidate and give credibility to the diplomatic efforts by ECOWAS.

In the area of conflict prevention as in other fields, strengthening regional mechanisms must go hand in hand with the consolidation of the mechanisms and institutions at the level of each of the Member States. Ecowas and AU can never be a substitute to a States but they must accompany them in their efforts conflicts resolution consequently their national dialogue process.

3. The security sector reform, a key element of a successful dialogue in African countries
In most African countries marked by the disintegration of the security sector, any national dialogue assumes as a prerequisite a security sector reform. National dialogue on this sector in Guinea has the merit of having shown that in order to succeed a major reform such as the one of the security sector, there must be the participation of all actors and appropriation of the consultation’s results by the populations.

Only a consensus on security sector can give the legitimacy that befits the action of political powers and military authorities. Such a consensus allows you to reconnect the wires of dialogue and links between the different communities of the nation. The quality of dialogue on central issues such as the SSR can improve the relationships between the State and the citizens and give public policies more social relevance.

---

49Hassatou Balde, «the mechanisms for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts of african organizations». - news and international law, august 2001.
The creation of the civil-military Committee (CMC) is also in the spirit of dialogue. In fact in the face of the repeated abuses by army against civilians, consultations were initiated between civil society and the SDF in order to put an end to the cycle of violence. The creation of the Committee civil-military can be considered as an important step toward a shift of paradigm on the place and the role of the MSDS in the construction of democracy in Guinea. It has especially helped reduce the misunderstanding and mistrust between the army and the citizens. The Guinean society, which is plagued by multiple conflicts at the community level in particular, has a need of frameworks for dialogue and consultation at all levels for a better stability.

In Guinea Bissau, the Army has always been very suspicious and considers the security services reform as an affront which explains the persistence of crises. The recurring crises in this country are first a manifestations of a laborious process, painful and non-linear for the construction of a State that is at the same time legitimate and capable of ensuring the security of its populations. For ECOWAS, the objective must be to first bring Guinea-Bissau to reach the average standards in the region in the field of structuring and modernizing the security sector, while encouraging the initiatives of bilateral and multilateral partners interested in supporting a more ambitious reform programs over several years.

4. The involvement of women in the frameworks of dialogue
Traditionally, women were involved in conflicts that raged in the domestic space. As a mother and wife, they were naturally for the family harmony and worked for peace and agreement between the different members of the family or clan. They used in large part «strikes», rites, prayers, libations, processions to reconcile the belligerents.51

Today, women should not be simply seen as victims of war. They also assume a key role in ensuring the survival of their family during these periods of unrest and destruction and are particularly involved in the Movements for the defense of peace at the lower levels, educating their community to a culture of peace. They must therefore be involved in the peace negotiations.

Resolution 1325 of the United Nations adopted in October 2000, recognizes the disproportionate impact of war and conflict have on women and children. It advocates a full and equal participation of women at all levels, from the beginning of conflict prevention to the reconstruction, peace and post conflict security.

The participation of women allows you to better understand the causes of conflict and the possible alternatives. It also strengthens the responses to the various needs of the populations and contributes to the preservation of lasting peace. The participation of women allows a greater number of stakeholders in society to contribute to the resolution of the conflict and thereby promoting the acceptance of the peace agreements. It provokes the conclusion of peace agreements supported by the entire nation rather than by an elite.52

Women must therefore be involved in all the negotiations because they play a fundamental role in dialogue. True instruments of peace, they mobilize the strong forces likely to renew the threads of the dialogue to lead to the definitive settlement of conflicts. Women enrich the decision-making process, made of quality and individuals talents. It is on this basis that Ban Ki-moon has called on the Member States and civil society to increase the presence and the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. «The Security Council has stressed on several occasions that the involvement of women in the prevention and mediation of conflicts is essential for the consolidation
of peace and the strengthening democratic foundations\textsuperscript{53}. They must therefore be associated during the negotiations and in the spaces of national dialogue.

In the light of the foregoing, it is established that the dialogue is an effective tool of conflict resolution. However, its success depends on several parameters. The instigators of dialogue, the artisans of dialogue, the actors of dialogue and the facilitators of dialogue must respect the necessary principles to enable a framework for consultation to achieve its objectives. In Africa, an effective dialogue is based on:
- Active listening and a fluid communication;
- A multidisciplinary approach and a respect for traditions;
- An inclusive and an Institutional recondition;
- A security sector reform and the involvement of women;
- Effectiveness of its decisions;
- The consolidated mechanisms of organizations and integrations, etc.
Throughout this present analysis, it is clear that the dynamics of conflicts and crises which plagued Africa for more than half a century have not hindered the internal capacity to promote peace and reconciliation among the parties to a conflict. In this report, dialogue emerges as the most relevant tool to create a conducive climate for prevention, mediation, negotiation and build the compromise to decrease the tension or permanently resolve conflicts.

Earlier, the artisans of dialogue were successful, the failures were also noted. However, it is not the dialogue itself which constitutes an obstacle but the manner in which it is conducted or the ineffectiveness of conflict prevention and resolution from these frameworks of dialogue where the need to ensure the effective method capable of constituting a tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

The anchoring of the dialogue in the African culture, as well as its capacity to transcend the contingencies in order to create an appeased future deserves to be operated each time that a conflict broke out on the continent. Obviously dialogue is not a panacea. In order to be sustainable, it must complemented by modern conflicts prevention and resolution tools in force at the level of the continent and on the international plan. This dialogue must be inclusive and sincere while taking into account its implementation. It is this dialectic articulation which will allow Africa ravaged by so many conflicts and crises, to reconnect with its past and its culture and to consider the future in a perspective of justice, reconciliation and democracy.


42. Mbembe, Joseph-Achille, «Traditions de l’autoritarisme et problèmes de gouvernement en
51. Nzouankeu, Jacques Mariel, «Démocratie majoritaire et démocratie consensuelle» Actualité de la démocratie dans le Tiers Monde, juil.-déc. 91, pp. 5-17.
56. Rapports de recherche OXFAM, reconstruire la mosaïque Perspectives pour de
meilleures relations sociales après le conflit armé au Nord du Mali.


Main source


Webography
5. http://www.memoireonline.com/01/06/64/transition-democratique-congo.html
10. www.cdvr.ci/
11. www.ivorian.net/actualite/p/55.html
12. www.jeuneafrique.com/pays/tchad
## Annexes

### Annex I: Table of analysis of the mechanisms of dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework for Dialog</th>
<th>Forces/Benefits</th>
<th>Weaknesses/Obstacles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecowas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Division of mediation</td>
<td>• The process of existing mechanisms,</td>
<td>• Lack of knowledge of the mechanisms (lack of communication),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Council of the WISE</td>
<td>• recognition and collective response to</td>
<td>• lack of trust between the actors (divergent interests),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Conference of the Heads of States</td>
<td>the problems,</td>
<td>• the mechanisms of referral (the sovereignty of the States),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the institutionalization of the frameworks,</td>
<td>• the slowness and the delay in the decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• political convergence for the resolution of problems,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• recovery and recognition of cultures of the space.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The traditional mechanisms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The palaver tree</td>
<td>• The expression of the vision of the world (African cosmogony),</td>
<td>• The non-adequacy between current realities and the traditional mechanisms,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The sacred wood/forest</td>
<td>• social life regulation,</td>
<td>• the exploitation of internal and external actors by the politics,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The religious and traditional leaders</td>
<td>• the enhancement of the cultures,</td>
<td>• the regionalization and the «ethnicisation»,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The joking kinship</td>
<td>• the social cohesion,</td>
<td>• the loss of traditional values,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• conflicts prevention and resolution</td>
<td>• the mechanisms non evolving, character,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the Safeguarding of Traditional Values.</td>
<td>• the conservatism of certain, traditional values,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• the unavailability of resources (financial, human, logistical etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The National Consultation</strong></td>
<td><strong>The National Conferences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collective, inclusive,</td>
<td>• all aspects of the political life of the country were discussed,</td>
<td>• Politicization,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of national languages.</td>
<td>• strategic Planning,</td>
<td>• the game of political actors in power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• political convergence for the resolution of problems,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• recovery and recognition of cultures of the space.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inclusion of all layers of society,</td>
<td>• Political influence,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• field Knowledge,</td>
<td>• low level of funding from partners,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• support land of the Issues.</td>
<td>• problem of professionalism and empowerment of actors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of synergy,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• leadership issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### General recommendations for a successful dialog

1. Use new information and communication technologies;
2. Ensure greater involvement and representativeness of women, youth, religious and traditional leaders in the dialogue;
3. Promote and strengthen the civil-military dialogue;
4. Actively involve the defense and security forces in the dialogue;
5. Use national languages in the dissemination of the Dialogue’s conclusions;
6. Involve all the components of the nation in the frameworks of dialogue.

### Specific recommendations of the integration mechanisms for implementation of models of successful dialog

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frameworks for dialogue</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecowas</strong></td>
<td>• Promote a better communication of the texts and the modes of operation of ECOWAS,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Division of mediation</td>
<td>• publicize the good practices of the institution,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Council of the wise</td>
<td>• promote a better communication,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Conference of the Heads of States</td>
<td>• texts and modes of operation of ECOWAS,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• publicize the good practices of the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The traditional mechanisms</strong></td>
<td>• Documents inventory: constitute an inventory of the whole research and document available on the different modes of dialogue,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The palaver tree</td>
<td>• constitute a data base on the history of women and their organizations in the sub-region,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The sacred wood/forest</td>
<td>• develop an updated tool to ensure a better transmission of traditional values embodied in today’s the reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The religious and traditional leaders,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The joking kinship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The National Consultation</strong></td>
<td>• Work with the concerned institutions to ensure the implementation of the results of the consultations and also of their disseminations in the sub-region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The National Conferences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The NGOs and CSOs</strong></td>
<td>• Ensure the networking and the effective coordination of the organizations at the national and sub-regional levels with the same objectives (Casamance, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Guinea Conakry).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thanks Mr. Jordan Welty from Georgetown University for the last edits.