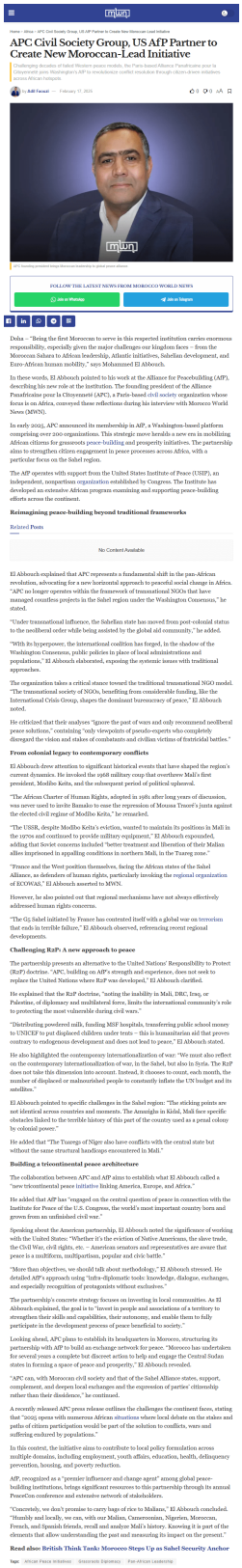
APC Civil Society Group, US AfP Partner to Create New Moroccan-Lead Initiative

Challenging decades of failed Western peace models, the Paris-based Alliance Panafricaine pour la Citoyenneté joins Washington’s AfP to revolutionize conflict resolution through citizen-driven initiatives across African hotspots.

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by Adil Faouzi — February 17, 2025

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Doha – "Being the first Moroccan to serve in this respected institution carries enormous responsibility, especially given the major challenges our kingdom faces – from the Moroccan Sahara to African leadership, Atlantic initiatives, Sahelian development, and Euro-African human mobility," says Mohammed El Abbouch.

In these words, El Abbouch pointed to his work at the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP), describing his new role at the institution. The founding president of the Alliance Panafricaine pour la Citoyenneté (APC), a Paris-based civil society organization whose focus is on Africa, conveyed these reflections during his interview with Morocco World News (MWN).

In early 2025, APC announced its membership in AfP, a Washington-based platform comprising over 200 organizations. This strategic move heralds a new era in mobilizing African citizens for grassroots peace-building and prosperity initiatives. The partnership aims to strengthen citizen engagement in peace processes across Africa, with a particular focus on the Sahel region.

The AfP operates with support from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), an independent, nonpartisan organization established by Congress. The Institute has developed an extensive African program examining and supporting peace-building efforts across the continent.

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El Abbouch explained that APC represents a fundamental shift in the pan-African revolution, advocating for a new horizontal approach to peaceful social change in Africa. "APC no longer operates within the framework of transnational NGOs that have managed countless projects in the Sahel region under the Washington Consensus," he stated.

"Under transnational influence, the Sahelian state has moved from post-colonial status to the neoliberal order while being assisted by the global aid community," he added.

"With its hyperpower, the international coalition has forged, in the shadow of the Washington Consensus, public policies in place of local administrations and populations," El Abbouch elaborated, exposing the systemic issues with traditional approaches.

The organization takes a critical stance toward the traditional transnational NGO model. "The transnational society of NGOs, benefiting from considerable funding, like the International Crisis Group, shapes the dominant bureaucracy of peace," El Abbouch noted.

He criticized that their analyses "ignore the past of wars and only recommend neoliberal peace solutions," containing "only viewpoints of pseudo-experts who completely disregard the vision and stakes of combatants and civilian victims of fratricidal battles."

From colonial legacy to contemporary conflicts

El Abbouch drew attention to significant historical events that have shaped the region's current dynamics. He invoked the 1968 military coup that overthrew Mali's first president, Modibo Keïta, and the subsequent period of political upheaval.

"The African Charter of Human Rights, adopted in 1981 after long years of discussion, was never used to invite Bamako to cease the repression of Moussa Traoré's junta against the elected civil regime of Modibo Kéïta," he remarked.

"The USSR, despite Modibo Keïta's eviction, wanted to maintain its positions in Mali in the 1970s and continued to provide military equipment," El Abbouch expounded, adding that Soviet concerns included "better treatment and liberation of their Malian allies imprisoned in appalling conditions in northern Mali, in the Taoreg zone."

"France and the West position themselves, facing the African states of the Sahel Alliance, as defenders of human rights, particularly invoking the regional organization of ECOWAS," El Abbouch asserted to MWN.

However, he also pointed out that regional mechanisms have not always effectively addressed human rights concerns.

"The G5 Sahel initiated by France has contented itself with a global war on terrorism that ends in terrible failure," El Abbouch observed, referencing recent regional developments.

Challenging R2P: A new approach to peace

The partnership presents an alternative to the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. "APC, building on AfP's strength and experience, does not seek to replace the United Nations where R2P was developed," El Abbouch clarified.

He explained that the R2P doctrine, "noting the inability in Mali, DRC, Iraq, or Palestine, of diplomacy and multilateral force, limits the international community's role to protecting the most vulnerable during civil wars."

"Distributing powdered milk, funding MSF hospitals, transferring public school money to UNICEF to put displaced children under tents – this is humanitarian aid that proves contrary to endogenous development and does not lead to peace," El Abbouch stated.

He also highlighted the contemporary internationalization of war. "We must also reflect on the contemporary internationalization of war, in the Sahel, but also in Syria. The R2P does not take this dimension into account. Instead, it chooses to count, each month, the number of displaced or malnourished people to constantly inflate the UN budget and its satellites."

El Abbouch pointed to specific challenges in the Sahel region: "The sticking points are not identical across countries and moments. The Azoughis in Kidal, Mali face specific obstacles linked to the terrible history of this part of the country used as a penal colony by colonial power."

He added that "The Touregs of Niger also have conflicts with the central state but without the same structural handicaps encountered in Mali."

Building a tricontinental peace architecture

The collaboration between APC and AfP aims to establish what El Abbouch called a "new tricontinental peace initiative linking America, Europe, and Africa."

He added that AfP has "engaged on the central question of peace in connection with the Institute for Peace of the U.S. Congress, the world's most important country born and grown from an unfinished civil war."

Speaking about the American partnership, El Abbouch noted the significance of working with the United States: "Whether it's the eviction of Native Americans, the slave trade, the Civil War, civil rights, etc. – American senators and representatives are aware that peace is a multiform, multipartisan, popular and civic battle."

"More than objectives, we should talk about methodology," El Abbouch stressed. He detailed AfP's approach using "infra-diplomatic tools: knowledge, dialogue, exchanges, and especially recognition of protagonists without exclusives."

The partnership's concrete strategy focuses on investing in local communities. As El Abbouch explained, the goal is to "invest in people and associations of a territory to strengthen their skills and capabilities, their autonomy, and enable them to fully participate in the development process of peace beneficial to society."

Looking ahead, APC plans to establish its headquarters in Morocco, structuring its partnership with AfP to build an exchange network for peace. "Morocco has undertaken for several years a complete but discreet action to help and engage the Central Sudan states in forming a space of peace and prosperity," El Abbouch revealed.

"APC can, with Moroccan civil society and that of the Sahel Alliance states, support, complement, and deepen local exchanges and the expression of parties' citizenship rather than their dissidence," he continued.

A recently released APC press release outlines the challenges the continent faces, stating that "2025 opens with numerous African situations where local debate on the stakes and paths of citizen participation would be part of the solution to conflicts, wars and suffering endured by populations."

In this context, the initiative aims to contribute to local policy formulation across multiple domains, including employment, youth affairs, education, health, delinquency prevention, housing, and poverty reduction.

AfP, recognized as a "premier influencer and change agent" among global peace-building institutions, brings significant resources to this partnership through its annual PeaceCon conference and extensive network of stakeholders.

"Concretely, we don't promise to carry bags of rice to Malians," El Abbouch concluded. "Humbly and locally, we can, with our Malian, Cameroonian, Nigerien, Moroccan, French, and Spanish friends, recall and analyze Mali's history. Knowing it is part of the elements that allow understanding the past and measuring its impact on the present."

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