

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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Challenging decades of failed Western peace models, the Paris-based Alliance Panafricaine pour la Citoyenneté (APC) has joined forces with the US-based US African Partnership (US AFP) to develop a new model for peacebuilding in Africa.

By Adil Abbouch — February 11, 2016



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Daha "Being the first Moroccan to serve in this respected institution carries enormous responsibility, especially given the major challenges our kingdom faces – from the economic situation to the need to support the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination, and Euro-African human mobility," said Mohammed El Abbouch.

In these words, El Abbouch pointed to his work at the Mission for Peacebuilding (MP), launching its new mission in North Africa by founding the US African Partnership (US AFP) in December 2015. A Paris-based civil society organization whose focus is on Africa, convened these reflections during his interview with Morocco World News.

In early 2015, APC announced its membership in APF, 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 will also seek to support the peace process across Africa, with a particular focus on the Sahel region.

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

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El Abbouch explained that APC represents a fundamental shift in the pro-American revolution, advocating for a new historical approach to peaceful social change in Africa. "APC no longer operates within the framework of transnational NGOs that have been creating 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 imperial order while still sustained by the global aid community," he added.

"The US African Partnership is challenging the traditional role of the shadow of the Washington Consensus, public policies in place of local administration and the population," El Abbouch elaborated, reposing the systemic issues within traditional approaches.

The organization takes a critical stance toward the traditional transnational NGO model. "The transnational society of NGOs, benefitting from considerable funding, like the International Crisis Group, shapes the dominant hierarchy of power," El Abbouch asserted.

He criticized that their members "ignore the past of wars and only economical and fiscal peace solutions," continuing "only slavishly of power-experts who completely disregard the violent and stakes of conflicts and civilian victims ofarchical battles."

From colonialism to conflict

El Abbouch drew attention to significant historical events that have shaped the region's political dynamics. He noted the 2000 military coup that overthrew Mali's then-president, Modibo Keita, and the subsequent period of political upheaval.

"The African Charter of Human Rights, adopted in 1981 after long years of discussion, was signed by the former president of the UN Commission of Human Rights and the elected civil regime of Modibo Keita," he remarked.

"The USSR, despite Modibo Keita's eviction, wanted to maintain its position in Mali in the 1970s and continued to provide military equipment," El Abbouch responded.

He explained that the USSR's intervention in Mali was aimed at consolidating its allies implicated in upending conditions in northern Mali, in the Tuareg zone.

"France and the West position themselves, being the African states of the Sahel," El Abbouch, as defenders of human rights, particularly involving the regional organization ADECON, El Aïdil, and the UNHCR.

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

"The G5 Sahel initiated by France has centered itself with a global war on terrorism, despite the 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 APF's strength and experience, does not seek to impose its own agenda on others, but rather to facilitate a collective response," he stated.

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

"Protecting powdered milk, funding NGOs, schools, transferring public school money to UNICEF, and providing medical tents... this is humanitarian aid that proves contrary to endogenous development 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 case of Mali, but also in Syria. The US and Russia are intervening two thousand kilometers away, it's happening now, the number of displaced or maltreated people to constantly inflate the UN budget and its mandate."

El Abbouch pointed to specific challenges in the Sahel region. "The sticking points are not identical across countries and contexts. The Armatols in Kidal, Mali face specific obstacles linked to the terrible history of this part of the country used as a proxy colony by France."

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

Building a transnational peace architecture

The collaboration between APF and APC aims to establish what El Abbouch called a "new model for linking America, Europe, and Africa."

He tasks that APF is engaged in 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 outlined the significance of working together with the US African Partnership, the US Institute of Peace, and the World Bank. "The Civil War, civil rights, etc. – American citizens and representatives are aware that peace is a conflict, a multiplicity, popular and civic battle."

"More than objectives, we should talk about methodology," El Abbouch stressed. He mentioned that APC's methodology is based on "bottom-up" leadership, dialogue, exchange, and especially recognition of participants without exclusion.

The partnership's core strategy focuses on investing in local communities. As El Abbouch explained, the goal is to "invest in people and associations of a territory to improve their living conditions and to give them the opportunity to fully participate in the development process of peace beneficial to society."

Looking ahead, APC plans to establish its headquarters in Morocco, setting up a think tank and research center. "APC has invested in Morocco for several years, and has undertaken for several years a complete but discreet action to help and engage the Central Saharan states in forming a space of peace and prosperity," El Abbouch resolved.

"APC, with Moroccan civil society and the Sahel Alliance states, support, encourage, and facilitate the expression of peace citizenship rather than their diaspora," he continued.

A recently released APC press release outlines the challenges the continent faces, stating that "2015 opened with numerous African situations where local leaders do not feel the stakes and suffering endured by populations."

In this context, the initiative aims to contribute to local policy formulation across multiple domains, including migration, youth affairs, education, health, dependency protection, and rural development.

APF recognized as a "greater influence and change agent" among global peace-building institutions, brings significant resources to this partnership through its annual budget of \$10 million.

"Ultimately, we have to carry out our role in Mali," El Abbouch concluded. "Handily and locally, we can, with our Malian, Cameroonian, Nigerian, Moroccan, French, and Spanish friends, read and analyze Mali's history. Knowing is part of the process that allows us to understand the past and measure its impact on the present."

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