Kenya's Peace Policy is on track but may not attain its target

This deserves attention

Summary

For more than five years, Kenya's peace policy has been in the making. In its current state, the policy is Parliamentary Sessional Paper No. 5, however, it has not been given deserving attention by Parliament for over a year. The Kenya Peace Conference (KPC), a network of organizations committed to a shared vision for peace in Kenya, was launched in June 2014 to strengthen coordination among peace actors. Building on the efforts of Uwiano platform and of Peace Net Kenya, this peace network of over 140 peace practitioners has since January 2015 sought to analyze and promote the approval of the Kenya Peace Policy.

This policy brief is a result of shared analysis of the session paper and provides recommendations to key stakeholders including parliamentarians, private sector, media, EAC, AU, UN, CSOs including Inter-Faith actors to take action in expediting approval and implementation of the Kenya Peace Policy in order to promote sustainable peace. The Kenya Peace Policy is of interest to all stakeholders within Kenya and those accompanying Kenya's sustainable development should feel responsibility and urgency for accompanying its approval and implementation.

About the Kenya Peace Policy

The Kenya Peace Policy is an effort of the Kenya Government and other stakeholders to bring the country back to stability and create durable solutions to violent conflict. It has commendable value in seeking to enhance the prevention, mitigation, and management of conflicts. It provides a mechanism for coordination, resource mobilization, and synergy among stakeholders involved in peace building and conflict management. The policy paper has clear intentions to enhance the consistency and efficiency with which the government and stakeholders design and implement appropriate interventions aimed at promoting peace building and conflict management. KPC believes that if approved and implemented, this policy will guide all stakeholders in realizing synergies and achieving the desired policy directions. We believe there should be no further delay in approving this policy and enacting a law to guide its implementation. Failure to implement the policy would defeat its valuable intent. Once approved and implemented, the Kenya Peace Policy serves as a good example for many countries in the region, as it embraces the valuable principles of proactivity, cultural sensitivity, human rights, conflict sensitivity, participation and inclusivity, gender sensitivity, equity, collaboration and cooperation, transparency, and accountability.

A case for approving the Kenya Peace Policy

Kenya has been witnessing violent conflict. Yet despite the well thought-out proposed policy interventions, the use of force has taken first priority. This may not be for Kenya alone but regionally and globally. According to the 2015 global peace index (GPI), Kenya is rated as 133 out of 162 countries. Its 2015 GPI score of 2342 is lower than that of 2014 and ranks it amongst the bottom 21 percent of countries. The Kenya Peace Policy, if implemented, will likely improve the GPI rating.

Kenya has achieved some elementary levels of peace, without addressing the underlying structural challenges that propelled the country into conflict in the first place. There are still unaddressed trauma and inequality concerns across the different counties. Thus, it is our conviction that addressing peace and security challenges by using hard measures and military solutions is not only a comparatively very expensive affair but also may fail to create deep and durable peace.

The draft policy identifies problems of poverty, competition for scarce resources, and identity-based rivalries complicated by easy access to illicit small arms and light weapons along the porous borders. Countering terrorism has become trickier now than ever before. Terrorism is growing with increased armed groups across the region. This doesn't affect Kenya alone but also the rest of Africa. The Garrisa massacre, increased killing of chiefs in Northern Kenya, and the Westgate mall incident are some of the challenges to peace that Kenya has faced. These tragedies—along with political manipulation and negative ethnicity, cultural, and

cross-border cattle rustling, and corruption—are extremely complex challenges that cannot simply be addressed by hardware. The Kenya Peace Policy comes in timely as part of a foremost solution.

Potential risks if the Kenya Peace Policy is not approved

The absence of a peace policy can have security and economic consequences. There is a security risk since the presence of Al-Shabab forces in neighboring Somalia as well as in Kenya demand urgent action to address the cyclical nature of violence and insecurity threats. There is an economic risk since instability could affect Kenya's position as the trade and economic hub for COMESA. There is also a risk for the region since instability in Kenya would impact negatively on the peace of its already fragile neighboring states. More so there is a huge risk of illegal immigrants.

Implementation of a peace policy demonstrates commitment and prioritization of peace by government. The proposed increased investment by Kenya into the military and police towards strengthening security should be matched by increased investment in peace-building structures and systems for sustainability.

Recommendations

We urge Parliament to expedite the approval and legislation process to bring this peace policy into action. The government and all stakeholders need to allocate resources toward effective implementation of the peace policy since peace underpins development. Ensure that the policy is approved in tandem with the security policy and makes reference to the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission report on healing and reconciliation process.

We urge all stakeholders to collaborate on this issue. Peace and security requires a multi-stakeholder approach and therefore cannot be realized without joint effort and cooperation. We suggest positive language in this policy, for effective collaboration between government and CSOs. Civil Society needs to work hand in hand with government while investing in the peace sector. The role of CSOs, CBOs, and faith-based organizations in reconciliation and building of new relationships amongst the warring communities through dialogue and negotiations has been well acknowledged by the draft policy with a call to strengthen coordination. The media role in peace building and conflict management has also been recognized.

CALL TO ACTION

The Kenya Peace Policy deserves immediate attention for its potential impact and ability to mitigate not only the risks of Al-Shabab, declining economy and regional instability, but also for its potential to address the cyclical nature of violence and harness the multi-stakeholder approach to unity, tolerance, and diversity in order to realize a peaceful, secure, and prosperous Kenya. This is therefore a call to all decision makers—and especially to parliamentarians—to expedite the process of approving and enacting into law the Kenya Peace Policy to realize its mission "to promote sustainable peace through a collaborative institutional framework between state, non-state actors and Kenyan Communities."

REFERENCES

Kenya Peace Conference Action Plan (2014) ;The AFSC Kenya conflict analysis (2013) ; The Kenya Peace Conference Report (2014) ;The Kenya Parliamentary Session Paper No. 5 (2014); National Policy for Peace building and Conflict management; The Kenya Peace Conference Working group Minute (2015) Discussion on the Kenya Peace Policy.