

# Talking points – Leveraging the Arts for Peace Virtual Training for Silencing the Guns"

18-22 September 2023

## ZOOM DETAILS:

Join Zoom

Meeting: <https://unitar.zoom.us/j/89538958883?pwd=Z2ZSeU51K2h1ZFpJWXVmWnZ6QU4yZz09>

Meeting ID: 895 3895 8883

Passcode: 478641

## OPENING

H.E. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa, *African Union* Officials here present, distinguished colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen.

Good morning!

I extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to all the remarkable artists from the diverse corners of our beloved African continent who have gathered here today. I am deeply honored to deliver these opening remarks for the "**Leveraging the Arts for Peace Virtual Training for Silencing the Guns**" a collaborative effort between the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Silencing the Guns (STGs) Unit of the African Union.

## ABOUT UNITAR

- The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is one of the training arms of the United Nations system and our mandate is to build to capacity of UN member states, organizations and individuals for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda on the Sustainable Development Goals. UNITAR places priority value on ensuring that our knowledge and related products and services are human-centered, modern and innovative, and that they meet the highest recognized quality standards.
- By embracing these values, UNITAR has become particularly well-positioned to work in support of local actors and networks in contexts affected by violent conflict and sustained insecurities. Additionally, UNITAR is particularly apt to help implement region-wide impactful and collaborative capacity building initiatives that are replicable and scalable, owing in part to its experience of working with methodologies for long-term local ownership, as well as to its present reach and networks.

## **PARTNERSHIP AND PROJECT BACKGROUND**

- It is in this context that UNITAR has established a long-standing partnership with the African Union Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, (PAPS) through the Silencing the Guns (STGs) Unit in order to jointly take forward the project “ **Leveraging Arts for Peace: Creating ownership towards the realization of the Silencing the Guns Roadmap**” with the aim of increasing the power of arts and culture as vehicles for the promotion of sustainable peace on the African continent.
- As a first step towards the implementation of this project, a training Series on “Culture, Arts and Heritage dedicated to the Collaborative efforts to Sustainable Peace in Africa”, was organized in Accra, Ghana from 13 to 15 December 2021.
- As a follow-up to this, we are launching today the first ever series of virtual trainings for African artists on 'Leveraging Arts for Peace', guided by the outcomes of the Accra meeting; and grounded in the belief that art helps prevent conflict in communities. It is undoubtedly a strong, and impactful mechanism for raising awareness and inspiring tolerance around societal differences.
- This training program stands as a testament to the potent partnership between UNITAR and the Silencing the Guns (STGs) Unit, a partnership founded on solidarity, cooperation, and a shared vision of a peaceful and prosperous world. Together, we are taking a profound step toward peace through the expressive and transformative capacities of the arts.

## **THE POWER OF ARTS FOR PEACE**

- The theme of today's training, "Leveraging the Arts for Peace," carries profound significance for us all. It underscores the pivotal role that creative expression plays in fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and ultimately, peace. For those of you who have dedicated your lives to the arts, you understand the indescribable power inherent in artistic endeavors. It is a power that transcends borders, connects hearts, and instills empathy—a power that has the potential to heal, educate, and inspire.
- Our choice of this training theme is not arbitrary but deeply rooted in the context of our times. The African Union has made commendable progress in advancing its peace and security agenda. Yet, we cannot ignore the persistent challenges that threaten to undermine these strides. Armed conflicts, violence, and instability continue to cast shadows over various regions, impacting countless lives and communities. These challenges necessitate innovative approaches that extend beyond conventional security measures, and it is in this context that we recognize the transformative potential of the arts in promoting peace.
- Artists, you are the torchbearers of this transformation. You have the unique ability to translate complex emotions, experiences, and societal issues into tangible and relatable forms. Through music, dance, visual arts, literature, theater, and more, your guilds have historically challenged injustice, promoted dialogue, and kindled the flames of social change. Today, we call upon this creative energy to bolster our shared mission of silencing the guns.

## **TRAINING CONTENT AND APPROACH**

- Over the course of this training program, you will have the opportunity to explore how your artistic talents can contribute to conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding. Our esteemed trainers and facilitators have curated a comprehensive curriculum that not only imparts knowledge and skills but also fosters dialogue and collaboration among fellow artists.
- However, this training goes beyond the acquisition of skills; it is about building a community of practice. We encourage you to actively engage, share your unique experiences, and forge

partnerships. The connections you establish here will extend beyond these virtual sessions, forming the basis for future collaborations and artistic endeavors that will drive peace and unity across our continent.

- As we embark on this journey, let us keep the African Union's vision of "Silencing the Guns in Africa" at the forefront of our minds. While the timeline has evolved, our unwavering commitment to this goal remains resolute. Silencing the guns is a call to action—an urgent plea to address the root causes of conflict, promote sustainable development, and create an Africa where every individual can live in peace and dignity.

## **CLOSING**

- In closing, I extend my deepest appreciation to each of you for your dedication to the cause of peace. Your presence here today signifies your commitment, and it is through our collective efforts that we will make a profound difference. I wish you all a rewarding and inspirational training experience, and I eagerly anticipate witnessing the transformative impact your artistic work will have in silencing the guns and building a more peaceful African continent.
- Thank you, and let us embark on this transformative journey together, armed with the incredible power of art and creativity.