

Proposed African Union Commission Input to the United Nations' New Agenda for Peace

A. Key Agenda Priorities

In contextualizing the collective security interests of the Member States of the African Union on the global platform provided by the United Nations for the preservation of international peace and security, the under-listed priorities may be canvassed as inputs for the New Agenda for Peace:

- i. Reconfiguration of the global peace and security architecture as an imperative for renewed multilateralism for world stability
- ii. A comprehensive and robust counter-terrorism approach premised on peace enforcement and a whole-of-society approach, complementary to Peacekeeping
- iii. Adequate, flexible, predictable and sustainable financing of continental and regional peace operations, through access to the UN assessed contributions
- iv. The Primacy of Politics, promoting effective conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy mediation and dialogue
- v. Durable Cybersecurity / ICT / AI solutions and global regulatory system to address new pervasive threats to international security
- vi. The mainstreaming of Women, Youth Inclusion & Child Protection as well the protection of civilians
- vii. The preeminence of Post conflict reconstruction and development in building and sustaining peace
- viii. A New Vision for Disarmament anchored principally on an inclusive and multi-stakeholder defence and security governance of SSR/DDR
- ix. Implementing the Peace, Security and Sustainable Development Nexus for assured Human Security and Resilience

B. Key messages

The New Agenda for Peace (NAP) is an opportunity to reconfigure the global peace and security architecture to be in line with relevant aspirations of AU Agenda 2063 and UN SDGs by:

- **Restructuring the multilateral ecosystem with adequate inclusion of the global South, is a compelling necessity, where Africa plays a strong, united and influential role as a global player and partner.**
- **Promoting an Africa where good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice for all and the rule of law thrive, is key for the advancement of a peaceful and secure Africa.**

- Strengthening coordination, leveraging comparative advantages, and ensuring complementarity between the United Nations and continental as well as regional organizations in order to effectively address the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges is crucial to achieving sustainable peace and development in Africa.
- Financing mechanisms that are predictable, sustainable and adequate rather than voluntary and ad-hoc for African-led Peace Support Operations is also critical.
- Prioritizing the delicate balance between the classic first generation political and civil rights and the economic, social and cultural rights, premised on the fundamentals of the right to peace and the right to development as well as the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- Tackling terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organized crimes in a more robust and comprehensive approach, one that is needs-based, more cost-effective, efficacious, and result-driven, in the current fast-evolving circumstances.
- Advancing durable solutions to climate-induced displacement in an inclusive manner while integrating and mainstreaming conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding, and gender is also relevant.
- Promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is part of our twin development and disarmament focus.
- Anchoring the peace, security and development nexus approach should be at the core of all relevant activities and engagements across the peace continuum.
- Strengthening the means of implementation by revitalizing the global partnership for peace to make it smarter and more effective is necessary.
- Emphasizing the critical role of Africa in the success of the NAP; and in this regard, the NAP should be fully aligned with, and support, the implementation of key AU programs and initiatives, most notably the AU Silencing the Guns initiative, and Implementation of Agenda 2063; and
- Mitigating impacts of global crises and geopolitical tensions on Africa, by ensuring that the NAP highlights the compelling principles of regional and national ownership and priorities.

C. The Context – Imperative for renewed multilateralism for Peace

The African continent continues to be more differently and adversely affected by globalization, terrorism, lingering neo-colonialism, governance issues, the impact of climate change etc. Yet, despite being the continent with the largest voting bloc in the UN, the dynamics of the workings of the UN, especially the UNSC, effectively blunt Africa's capacity to play her rightful role as a force for global peace and shared progress along with other global stakeholders.

As Africa confronts multitudes of challenges, the continent joins other voices in calling for a rethinking of the global peace and security agendas, an imperative of the moment. A renewed international cooperation and partnership that is anchored on mutual respect to advancing a balanced global governance system is therefore compelling.

The UN and the AU, together with the sub-regional organizations, must explore more effectiveness in addressing continental & global issues, including in the area of security. Such approach must respect and be anchored on the AU Vision captured in its Constitutive Act; Agenda 2063 (Aspirations 3,4,7) reinforced at the global level by UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs Goal 16); and most importantly focused on a partnership that works and driven by leadership and ownership of the African people.

D. Priority Pillars Explained

- i. **Reconfiguration of the global peace and security architecture as an imperative for renewed multilateralism for world stability** – Global peace and security threats are constantly evolving, with the international peace and security architecture now confronted with new and more complex security challenges and multidimensional conflicts that are regional and transnational in scope and compounded by increasing geostrategic competition. This has sent shocks within the multilateral system creating systemic imbalances. This security landscape and reality make genuine and systemic partnerships that support effective regional responses to global security threats a strategic interest and a necessity. In this regard, the NAP should therefore:
 - a. Provide for the new global peace architecture to have a greater role for the global south such that Africa plays a strong, united and influential role as a global player and is given its due respect by partners.
 - b. Recognize the positive role and contribution of African voice in the Council, when considering Africa-related issues on the UN Security Council agenda.
 - c. Address the polarization of the UN Security Council through necessary reform.
 - d. Advance the long overdue reform of the UN Security Council in line with the African Common Position as stipulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration as the only viable option for Africa’s full representation at the UN Security Council. This will address the current polarized state of the council. The AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2023 reiterated the need to reform the United Nations to conform to the present geopolitical realities, in particular the need to rectify the historical injustice done to Africa by addressing Africa’s non-representation in the Permanent category and its gross under-representation in the Permanent category and its gross underrepresentation in the non-permanent category of the UN Security Council. Such reform should also factor in possible review of the working procedures of the UNSC, specifically regarding the penholder system. African Members of the UNSC have the capacity to be assigned penholder

responsibility. Furthermore, the current sanctions regime needs to be re-examined to allow for a calibrated application of sanctions to achieve desired results.

ii. Comprehensive and robust counter-terrorism approach premised on peace enforcement and a whole-of-society approach, complementary to Peacekeeping

Over the last years, the AU, and its RECs and RMs have mandated, authorized, and deployed several Peace Supports Operations (PSOs) across the length and breadth of Africa. The continent is also home to the highest number of UN Peacekeeping Missions. Africa-led interventions have the benefit of not being constrained by some UN peacekeeping principles. Furthermore, the AU is able to deploy even in the absence of consent of the home country and is also able to authorize pro-active use of lethal force against belligerents, whilst remaining impartial. All these have ensured that AU and Africa-led PSOs are more rapidly deployed, are able to protect civilians and provide an enabling environment for humanitarian assistance.

Thus, AU missions simultaneously engage spoilers in kinetic operations; provide lifesaving, stabilization support, counter violent extremism, engender women peace and security issues and provide the enabling environment for development actors to engage in post-conflict reconstruction and development even whilst conflict is ongoing.

The current needs analysis following the persistent security threats in Africa points to the need for Peace enforcement. The new agenda should therefore:

- a. be tailored towards a more robust response/approach that is needs-based, and more cost-effective, efficacious, and result-driven.
- b. highlight the need for full support and long-term durable commitment from the international community in preventing and combating transnational threats,
- c. ensure coherence and complementarity between UN and efforts of continental and regional organizations, while highlighting the imperative of coordinated responses at the international, regional, and national levels;
- d. increase resources allocated to building national and community resilience against terrorism, and emphasize the need to contextualize counter-terrorism initiatives and support - that are tailored to the particular needs of local and national contexts;
- e. increase support to building institutional capacities to design and implement strategies and action plans to combat transnational threats, including terrorism, and organized crime

- f. strengthen coherence within and between national, regional, and international frameworks with regard to terrorism financing, illicit financial and arms flows, and organized crime; and
 - g. advocate for the importance of investing in prevention efforts to address the root causes of radicalization and extremism conducive to terrorism, while promoting synergies between security approaches and development measures in facing the underlying structural drivers.
 - h. increase UN support to established AU peacebuilding frameworks with the aim of overcoming technical, financial, institutional, and operational obstacles—all within the context of advancing key regional frameworks such as the AU’s Agenda 2063, and its flagship initiative on Silencing the Guns by 2030.
- iii. **Adequate, flexible, predictable and sustainable financing of continental and regional peace operations, through access to the UN assessed contributions** – As highlighted in (i) above, the international peace and security architecture is in urgent need of adaptation and regeneration if it is to remain relevant, fit for purpose and better to anticipate and respond to global trends and evolutions. In view of the foregoing, three key points need to be reiterated: (a) No single organization can provide appropriate response; (b) The AU and its sub-regional organizations have demonstrated a clear comparative advantage as first responders with political will to undertake offensive operations in high-risk environments, especially in contexts where UN peacekeeping operations are unable to undertake peace enforcement activities; and (c) There is need for financing mechanisms that are predictable, and sustainable rather than voluntary and ad-hoc. Hence, a well-funded African peace and security architecture is not simply an African Priority, it is indeed for the global public good.
- In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that the NAP should:
- a. emphasize the necessity of ensuring adequate and sustainable financing for peace support operations, including through access to UN-assessed contributions, as well as endorse the recommendations of the “Consensus Paper on Predictable, Adequate, and Sustainable Financing for African Union Peace and Security Activities” and recommend it to the UN General Assembly and UN Security Council for consideration;
 - b. draw lessons from previous joint models for cooperation in peace operations and put forward recommendations for future joint engagements on that basis— including on aspects related to operational capacity building and equipment provision, as well as those related to safety and security—in line with the “Consensus Paper on Predictable, Adequate, and Sustainable Financing for African Union Peace and Security Activities”;
 - c. Underscore current needs analysis for peace enforcement;

- d. implement/adopt the concept of trilateral cooperation in the area of pre-deployment training for UN peacekeeping operations and AU peace support operations, including by promoting experience sharing by Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs), and by utilizing the experiences and capacities of AU Centers of Excellence in this regard; and
- e. directly involve TCCs in the early stages of mandate formulation, mission planning, and delivery, with regard to missions being deployed in Africa—particularly given the critical role of African TCCs in mandate delivery.

iv. The Primacy of Politics, promoting effective conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy mediation and dialogue

The primacy of politics through the concentric circles of conflict prevention, management and resolution, complemented by preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and democracy/political governance (political inclusion/inclusiveness), human rights, national reconciliation, and transitional/restorative justice is paramount for addressing today's security challenges. In this regard, the rights-based approach should be the centerpiece of the New Agenda for peace - the right to peace, right to vote, women's rights and equality etc.

In this regard, the NAP must:

- a. prioritize the delicate balance and sync between the classic first generation political and civil rights and the economic, social and cultural rights, both premised on the fundamentals of right to peace and the right to development as well as the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment;
- b. ensure support for regional and national peace infrastructures,
- c. underscore the importance of the fundamental principle of national ownership in political processes—which is a prerequisite for successful conflict resolution, peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development—while emphasizing the importance of political leadership and commitment at the national level;

v. Durable Cybersecurity/Information and Communication Technology/Artificial Intelligence solutions and global regulatory system to address new pervasive threats to international security

– Over the last decades, Africa has benefited from unprecedented level of ICT penetration with the attendant consequences of enhanced intra-Africa trades, increased economic efficiency and overall improvement in quality of life. Yet, greater access to ICT access also comes with attendant vulnerabilities and multilateral attention must be paid to the collateral damages of widespread ICT access and put in place cybersecurity governance and regulatory mechanisms that can adequately mitigate these vulnerabilities in Africa particularly as it relates to emerging technological issues such as Artificial intelligence (AI).

Hence, the NAP is an opportunity to promote the protection against illicit use of technology through the establishment of a global regulatory institution.

x. Mainstreaming Women, Youth Inclusion & Child Protection as well the protection of civilians and addressing the effects of climate change

a. **Climate Change Impact on Peace and Security** - The scale and magnitude of environmental degradation and climate change impacts—including droughts, floods, cyclones, rainfall variability, and sea level rise—aggravate fragilities and exacerbate vulnerabilities, and thus have implications on efforts to achieve sustainable peace and development in Africa. Concurrently, significant gaps persist between the global, regional, and national endeavors to tackle the impacts of climate change and those to advance sustainable peace and development, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The risks associated with climate change range from water and food insecurity, competition over scarce or diminishing natural resources leading to poverty and inter-communal conflict, to climate-induced displacement and loss of livelihood.

There is a need to embed responses to climate risks within advancing peace, resilience, and sustainable development in Africa, in line with the AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action (2022-2032)¹ and African-led initiatives in this area.² It is therefore important to bring together the relevant stakeholders from the climate change, development, and peacebuilding communities, to ensure that contextualized responses can enable actors across the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus to effectively respond to a range of intertwined challenges at the confluence of climate, conflict, and fragility—bearing in mind the importance of strengthening nationally owned efforts and context specificity.

Finally, national capacity-building is crucial for building resilience and mitigating the negative impact of climate change, and bridging the gap between policy and implementation, grounded on the principles of national ownership and inclusivity including by ensuring that needs of local communities are addressed, as well as adopting responses that focus on mitigation, adaptation, peacebuilding, and climate finance.

Therefore, the NAP is an opportunity to:

¹ African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action (2022-2032), <https://au.int/en/documents/20220628/african-union-climate-change-and-resilient-development-strategy-and-action-plan>

² An example of such initiatives is the COP27 Presidency Initiative on Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace, <https://www.cccpa-eg.org/publications-details/1107>

- i. underscore the importance of integrated and holistic responses to climate-related risks to advance sustaining peace and development;
- ii. ensure the coherence, coordination, and complementarity between different stakeholders across the HDP nexus on the local, national, and regional levels, with the aim of mitigating the impacts of climate change related risks;
- iii. scale up efforts for building African capacities, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings, and ensuring such efforts are grounded in principles of context specificity and national ownership;
- iv. support efforts to scale up climate finance for conflict-affected and fragile countries; and
- v. advance durable solutions to climate-induced displacement in an inclusive manner while integrating and mainstreaming conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding, and gender.

b. **Women & Youth Empowerment**- Africa is endowed with a young, diverse demography with women and men under 35 years of age comprising approximately three-quarters of the population of the continent. Indeed, about 75% of Africa’s population is under the age of 35, and 50% of these are young women. This demographic spread can be a great springboard which the continent can harness for unprecedented development. The AU together with its Member States using the RECs, RMs and other mechanisms continue to explore various ways of empowering its youth in facilitating the Africa we want. Investment in African youth calls for scaled up global solidarity with African governments and communities as an empowered youth is not only an African asset but also a global force for good. Conversely, uneducated, and marginalized youth would constitute a major global shared risk especially for peace and controlled migration. Herein begins effective and sustainable conflict prevention.

The NAP should therefore:

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- i. reflect transformational initiatives and greater role for women and youth especially in peace processes;
 - ii. advance the principles of context-specificity and inclusivity—including the role and meaningful participation of women and youth, with a focus on building national capacities and resilient institutions reiterating the necessity of supporting robust institutions in conflict-affected countries as a means of facilitating transitions and consolidating peace as a step towards reconstruction and development.

c. **Protection of Children in Situations of Conflict** – the mainstreaming of child protection in conflict prevention, peace-making and peace-building and

post-conflict reconstruction processes is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable peace and security in Africa. This acknowledgement provides an underlining peace and security rationale for ensuring child protection. It implies that failure to protect children has wide-ranging implications for the peace, security and development agendas of the African Union, including for the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063. Enhanced protection of African children in situations of conflict is a consistent and strategic priority of the African Union within the unity of effort to build a peaceful and secure Continent. The AU's resolve in protecting children reinforces the moral imperative and legal responsibility for children. The international humanitarian law and international human rights law, therefore, are all underscored by the AU's efforts towards protecting children's rights during conflict situations with special regard to children who often have no means to defend themselves against abuses.

The NAP should therefore:

- i. underscore the relevance of the protection of children for the peace, security and development agendas;
 - ii. promote the participation of children in decision-making processes based on their evolved capacities, capacity enhancement of all relevant stakeholders, coordination of international, regional and subregional actors to promote the welfare of children and accountability for perpetrators of violations against children, particularly in conflict situations.
- vi. **A New Vision for Disarmament anchored principally on an inclusive and multi-stakeholder defence and security governance of SSR/DDR** – Unprecedented risks threatening international peace and security, hinder disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, leading to new arms races, including nuclear weapons threat. It is therefore imperative to bring disarmament back to the forefront of the United Nations (UN) agenda for Peace. The New Agenda for Peace (NAP) presents an opportune context to re-emphasize the importance of the disarmament agenda by:
- a. Repositioning Security Sector Reforms (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes;
 - b. Strengthening National ownership for Amnesty for holders of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), as a practical step to silence the guns;
 - c. Promote the peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy as new opportunities emerge in health/food & energy transformation;
 - d. Promote the accelerated implementation of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW);
 - e. Ensure inclusiveness in international discourse on Nuclear Disarmament

- f. emphasizing the critical importance of total elimination of nuclear weapons in a verifiable and irreversible manner, and according to clear benchmarks and specific time frames;
 - g. promoting the role of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, such as that established by the Treaty of Pelindaba, as well as redoubling efforts and undertaking necessary measures that aim at establishing such zones, as agreed in the respective NPT review conferences, including the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference decision to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East;
 - h. reaffirming the urgency to attain NPT universality, and ensuring implementation of all its aspects;
 - i. strengthening partnerships for disarmament by reinvigorating disarmament institutions and processes and engaging regional organizations, including by enhancing coordination and implementation of joint action plans between African nuclear disarmament entities, such as the African Committee on Nuclear Energy, and the respective UN entities, such as the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, in view of their significance as preventive mechanisms;
 - j. preventing an arms race in outer space from all its aspects by concluding a comprehensive legally-binding treaty prohibiting the placement of all types of weapons in outer space, as well as the use of force to deliberately harm satellites and other outer space assets, while continuing the efforts exerted under the auspices of the UN to develop guiding rules and principles for responsible State behavior in this strategic domain pending the conclusion of a legally-binding treaty;
 - k. supporting efforts to reach common understandings under the auspices of the UN to reach joint understandings on the risks related to lethal autonomous weapons and the military applications of artificial intelligence--and the available means to address them-- provided that these understandings do not in any way lead to any possible negative impact on the right of States, especially developing countries, in using these technologies in legitimate civil and military fields, or impose restrictions on technology transfer;
support African regional and national efforts aimed at preventing and addressing the flow of illicit weapons, enhancing demining programs, and eliminating the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).
- vii. The preeminence of Post conflict reconstruction and development in building and sustaining peace** – As part of the whole-of-society approach, the AU and African-led interventions in conflict situations are comprehensive incorporating Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) into peace enforcement, peacemaking/building and state building as concomitant imperatives. The NAP is therefore an opportunity to:

- a. raise awareness about the extreme importance of investing in stabilization and institutional reconstruction;
 - b. scale up support to the AU in its peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development efforts, in alignment with Communiqué of the 1122nd meeting of the PSC, held on 28 November 2022 on the topic: Briefing on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in Africa (PCRD), with an overall aim to advance a timely, coordinated, and sustained peacebuilding approach across the continent³;
 - c. enhance cooperation and synergies between the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, including the Peacebuilding Commission, and its AU counterparts, including the AU Center for PCRD, and reaffirm the importance of and support thereafter to regional peacebuilding tools, mechanisms and innovative structures within the APSA, including the African Panel of the Wise, APRM, FemWise-Africa, and AU Centers of Excellence, to support the implementation of relevant policy frameworks and architecture, such as the African Governance Architecture (AGA), African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and AU Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Policy and their respective activities and work plans;
 - d. underscore the importance of Psycho-Social support to survivors of conflict.
- viii. **Implementing the Peace, Security and Sustainable Development Nexus for assured Human Security and Resilience** – The interlinkages between peace, security and development and their implications for the realization of the African Union’s vision of “creating an integrated prosperous and peaceful continent driven by its citizens”, are well established in the foundational instruments of the African Union. Moreover, the preamble of the Constitutive Act and the objectives of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, affirms the promotion of peace, security and stability as prerequisites for sustainable development.
- While the UN-AU partnership has grown steadily over the past decade, the partnership remains disproportionately focused on traditional security and crisis management response. The means of implementation of the NAP need to be strengthened by revitalizing the global partnership for peace to make it smarter and more effective. The NAP should therefore:
- a. declare support for regional peace, security, and sustainable development efforts, including those related to the Peace Security & Development Nexus, a key priority for the African continent, and to advance implementation of key programs and initiatives, in this regard;

³ <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-1122nd-meeting-of-the-psc-held-on-28-november-2022-on-the-topic-briefing-on-post-conflict-reconstruction-and-development-in-africa-pcrd>

- b. align with the AU's efforts to Silence the Guns (2030) and implement Agenda 2063 as well as the UN Sustainable Development goals in order to efficiently address, through collective response, the multidimensional security challenges that Africa and the international community at large face today;
- c. examine innovative pathways to address the interconnected challenges and risks of achieving sustainable peace and development in Africa, by strengthening coordination, leveraging comparative advantages, between the UN and regional and continental organizations;
- d. put the nexus approach at the core of all relevant activities and engagements across the peace continuum.
- e. Highlight a strong collective response mechanism between the UN and regional and continental organizations, in line with chapter 8 of the UN Security Council Charter, to address peace and security challenges towards the maintenance of international peace and security for the global good;
- f. underscore the importance of strengthening the institutional relationship between the peace and security organs of the UN (UNSC) and those of continental and regional organizations including the AU Peace and Security Council. This would ensure coherence in addressing conflicts on the continent, ensure coherence in response, and utilize the political leverage of both councils. In this regard, the NAP is an opportunity to enhance the institutional relationship between the two organs, including through the following recommendations:
 - (i) calling on both councils to politically commit to advancing the discussions on institutional relationships;
 - (ii) convening joint briefings by high-level UN and AU officials and senior officials on conflict-related situations, and peace and security-related topics in Africa;
 - (iii) undertaking joint planning and joint assessment missions to conflict areas with a view to developing a common understanding of the situation at hand;
 - (iv) leveraging the comparative advantage of each council, including in relation to the conflict resolution tools stipulated in the UN Charter, as well as in the protocol establishing the AU PSC; and
 - (v) promoting best practices, and drawing on lessons learned from previous engagements, especially those that promote and emphasize national and regional ownership.
- g. address institutional capacity gaps between the UN and AU, and exploring ways of achieving an increased common understanding, and thereafter a joint approach to address the challenges to peace and security in Africa, including by adopting an approach that encompasses joint strategic assessment planning and operational coherence between the two organizations;

- h. promote coordination between the UN Secretariat – AU Commission, by holding conflict-specific meetings and consultations to discuss how to identify key aspects of the necessary response; and
- i. ensure more effective UN-AU integrated planning and operational complementarity at the country level so that both organizations can enhance their effectiveness when intervening in specific contexts.
- j. propose innovative pathways to address the interconnected challenges and risks of achieving sustainable peace and development in Africa, by strengthening coordination, leveraging proximity, and ensuring complementarity.
- k. promote African ownership of its peace architecture.

E. Conclusions – Peace in Africa is certainly a global good as the rest of the world cannot be said to be safe if the continent is unsafe. Africa has many times been left out in the global space as if to say it didn't matter. The New Agenda for Peace as proposed by the UNSG therefore presents a veritable moment for the African voice to not just be heard but to also be reflected. It is therefore expected that the identified priorities and key messages by the AU Commission will be taken on board in the development of the NAP.

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