

African Union signs agreement with Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation to establish the African Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention

February 21 2013 *The Auschwitz Institute and African Union make ground-breaking steps in creating a continent-wide network to prevent atrocity crimes.* The African Union yesterday in Addis Ababa signed an agreement with the nonprofit Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation to create the African Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention, marking a historic step forward in the continent's commitment to prevent atrocities and build a peaceful and prosperous future.(...)

The creation of a continent-wide intergovernmental network is intended to address the twin bugbears of accountability and political will that have plagued efforts to ensure states' responsiveness to genocide and other atrocity crimes.

In the short term, the initiative provides for: financial and technical support for the undertaking of national initiatives to prevent genocide and mass atrocities throughout the African continent

an education and training program for state and AU Commission officials, conceived and delivered by the Auschwitz Institute with the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission to address the region's specific needs for prevention development of a genocide and mass atrocity prevention curriculum for AU member states to incorporate into their training of national civil servants

In the long term, the initiative envisions the creation of regional and sub-regional mechanisms of inter-governmental coordination on early prevention, and support for those mechanisms that already exist the fostering of sustainable leadership on genocide and mass atrocity prevention in member-state governments.

Given the damaging legacy of failure to prevent mass atrocities in Africa, and the incredibly high stakes — in terms of impact on economies, the environment, and human lives — the Auschwitz Institute insists on the following principle as paramount in creating the network and ensuring its success: Effective prevention of genocide and mass atrocities is developed and sustained from within a society, so initiatives must originate locally and be locally directed.(...)

In 2008, the Auschwitz Institute launched its educational programs for government officials, with the aim of building a worldwide network of policymakers personally and professionally committed to preventing genocide. Since then, with states' increased acceptance of the responsibility to protect their populations from atrocity crimes and a growing realization that the international community is often too divided to be counted on to respond to outbreaks of atrocities, let alone to prevent them, there has been a rise in regional efforts to tackle the challenge.

Even before the norm known as the Responsibility to Protect, Article 4 of the African Union's Constitutive Act of 2000 set forth what is sometimes referred to as the principle of non-indifference: "the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity."

See the full press release

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