

The African Union (AU) has called on African countries to strengthen economic sovereignty, regional cooperation and accountability, saying lasting peace will depend on the continent's ability to shape its own future amid a changing global order.

Selma Malika Haddadi, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), made the call at the 12th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa, which opened in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, on Saturday under the theme "Pathways to Peace in Africa: Economic Sovereignty and Geopolitical Transformation."

Haddadi said African countries should approach international partnerships strategically, ensuring they strengthen the continent's ability to make independent decisions and pursue its development priorities.

"In a changing international order, Africa must engage with clarity of purpose and mutual utility," she said.

She called for a shift from high-level political commitments to practical results that improve people's lives, arguing that sustainable peace requires sustained political will and resilient economies capable of addressing the underlying causes of conflict.

"Africa's pursuit of peace demands that we confront a fundamental question: How can our continent secure lasting peace while remaining constrained in its ability to transform its wealth, finance its priorities, and influence the decisions that shape its future?" Haddadi asked.

Regional integration and economic independence

The AUC deputy chairperson identified economic sovereignty, effective resource governance, stronger continental institutions and regional integration as key priorities for advancing the African Union's Agenda 2063.

She highlighted the need to implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and advance the AU Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, saying these initiatives could help turn African borders into gateways for trade, mobility and shared prosperity.

Haddadi also stressed that Africa's natural resources should generate tangible benefits for local communities rather than deepen grievances or contribute to

insecurity.

She urged governments to strengthen public accountability, ensure transparent resource contracts and expand domestic value addition so that more of the wealth generated from extraction benefits African economies and their populations.

Youth participation in peace and development

Haddadi also called for stronger protection of informal cross-border traders, whose livelihoods should not be treated solely as a security concern.

She reaffirmed the African Union's commitment to expanding youth participation in peace processes, digital innovation, climate action and economic governance.

"Unity, we affirm must become the capacity to act together. Sovereignty must improve the lives of our youth, and the peace we pursue must be sustained by their trust, participation, and shared prosperity," she said.

The three-day Tana Forum, running from October 23 to 25, brings together African leaders, policymakers, researchers, diplomats and security experts to discuss African-led approaches to peace and security.

Its focus on economic sovereignty and geopolitical transformation reflects the organisers' emphasis on the links between economic capacity, regional cooperation and sustainable peace across the continent.