# Strategic Paper for the
# Horn of Africa Youth Initiative (HAYI)

## Horn of Africa Youth in Action

### Regional Youth Peace Forum
### 22 – 24 July 2008, Asmara

# Background

Any cursory glance of the Horn of Africa reveals that most of its countries suffer from worsening living conditions and a marked deterioration in the quality of life. The Horn of Africa has witnessed a spur of new conflicts and tensions, making no country in the region free from the risk of the ignition of war. Never before has the tension been so high and unstable. In the Horn, there are countries that suffer from internal, ethnic and economic conflicts while others suffer from conflict with their neighbors. Examples of ethnic/economic conflicts include that of Sudan (Darfur), in Ethiopia (the Oromo and Ogaden regions) and within Somalia. There are also cross territorial conflicts, such as that between Eritrea and Ethiopia and Somalia and Ethiopia.

In general, this wretchedness is linked to several economic, social, political and physical variables such as:-

- Social factors which include the massive movement of refugees or internally displaced persons leading to complex humanitarian emergencies; deteriorating physical environments, increasing demographic pressures and inter/intra group conflicts.

- Economic factors of marginalization, underdevelopment, uneven economic opportunities, unemployment, severe economic crisis and decline.

- Political factors of weak and ineffective state institutions; narrow bases of popular support leading to elite rivalry; corruption; deterioration of public services; foreign intervention and domination; armed conflicts within and between states; absence of democracy, rule of law, and violations of basic human rights; and a general delegitimization of state authority suspension.

No wonder then that basic economic growth and other developmental projects are stagnate and, in most instances, collapsed; and thereby rendering future prospects for job creation, education and improved welfare almost non-existent. These circumstances make young people most vulnerable and hardest hit of all social groups, either as combatants in conflicts or victims robbed of future opportunities for education and employment. In short, the region has fast become uninhabitable for its citizens, particularly the youth who are forced to embark on life-threatening journeys to developed countries where they will be confronted with new forms of exploitation. Moreover, the role of youth in lobbying for peace has been diminished.

Faced with such challenges, the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), has taken the initiative of inviting to Asmara parallel organizations from countries of the Horn of Africa, to shoulder their responsibilities and consider their contribution to sustainable peacebuilding and development.

The "Regional Youth Peace Forum" was convened between 22 and 24 July 2008 at Inter-Continental Hotel, Asmara, Eritrea. Ten youth organization from the horn of Africa have participated in this forum. These are the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students from Eritrea, the National Federation of Sudanese Youth, SPLM Youth League, Sudanese Communist Party-Students Chapter, Youth Secretariat of the Democratic Unionist Party, Sudanese Eastern

Front Youth Secretariat, Somali Youth Congress from London and the Somali National Youth Union from the Sudan, the Ogaden Students and Youth Forum from London and the Mathare Youth Sports Association from Kenya.

The forum provided a real opportunity for Horn youth to examine unutilized opportunities to chart new horizons for collectively improving the lives of the youth and those of their communities, through collective and coordinated action in support of sustainable peace-building and development. The Forum endeavors to maximize the role of youth in the region to deal with challenges of peace building and development. Through organizing and networking, youth can make peace a reality and create viable alternatives to war, conflict and ethnic tension, and ultimately they can show that lasting just peace means more than the absence of war.

The intention of the "Regional Youth Peace Forum" was to establish a network of indigenous groups to generate ideas for regional sustainable peace-building and development. The youth organizations of the region represented in the forum after having in-depth discussions and deliberation for three days have agreed to work together to establish a network- the Horn of Africa Youth Initiative (HAYI) amongst themselves whose values, vision, missions, purposes and objectives and organizational structure are as under.


## 1.      Values & Principles:

As mentioned above, the conflicts in our region has commonalities in their origins and manifestations. However, due to our socio-demographic variability, the way we see them and solve them may vary. Therefore, in order to benefit from each, sharing our values and principles is very important. Some of the guiding values and principles that the network intends to withhold include:

- Appreciate, respect and celebrate our diversity, history and civilization
- Promote self-reliance to solve our own problems through our own efforts
- Assure equity in gender, ethnicity, and religion
- Develop the virtue of self-determination, self-confidence, self-sacrifice and active participation to shape identity
- Promote the culture of peace through tolerance, democracy and dialogue
- Promote and collaborate for the active participation of our organizations in decision making processes.
- Work towards economic and social justice through solidarity to serve the whole population, especially the voiceless.
- Respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and internal affairs of each country
- Commitment to the principles of peaceful co-existence with others and using peaceful means towards meeting objectives.
- Respect for environmental sustainability.

## 2. Vision & Mission.

Through engaged discussions, representatives of youth from the countries of the region examined the vision, mission and purpose of the proposed network.

### 2.1 Vision

The representatives of the youth organizations from the Horn region have agreed on the following vision to guide and inspire the activities of the network:

**"A strong, united, committed and conscious youth contributing significantly to a peaceful, stable and developed region."**

### 2.2 Mission

Through engaged, serious and frank discussions, representatives of youth from the countries of the region agreed on the following missions for their network:

- To establish an effective network capable of empowering the youth to promote the culture of peace and by becoming active agents of positive social change
- To create a platform fostering democracy, justice and good governance for sustainable peace and security
- To empower youth to be active participants in peace building and sustainable development and create solutions for their own problems without foreign interventions
- To increase the involvement and networking of youth in the diasporas to play a leading role in lobbying and advocating for issues that concern their nations in the Horn
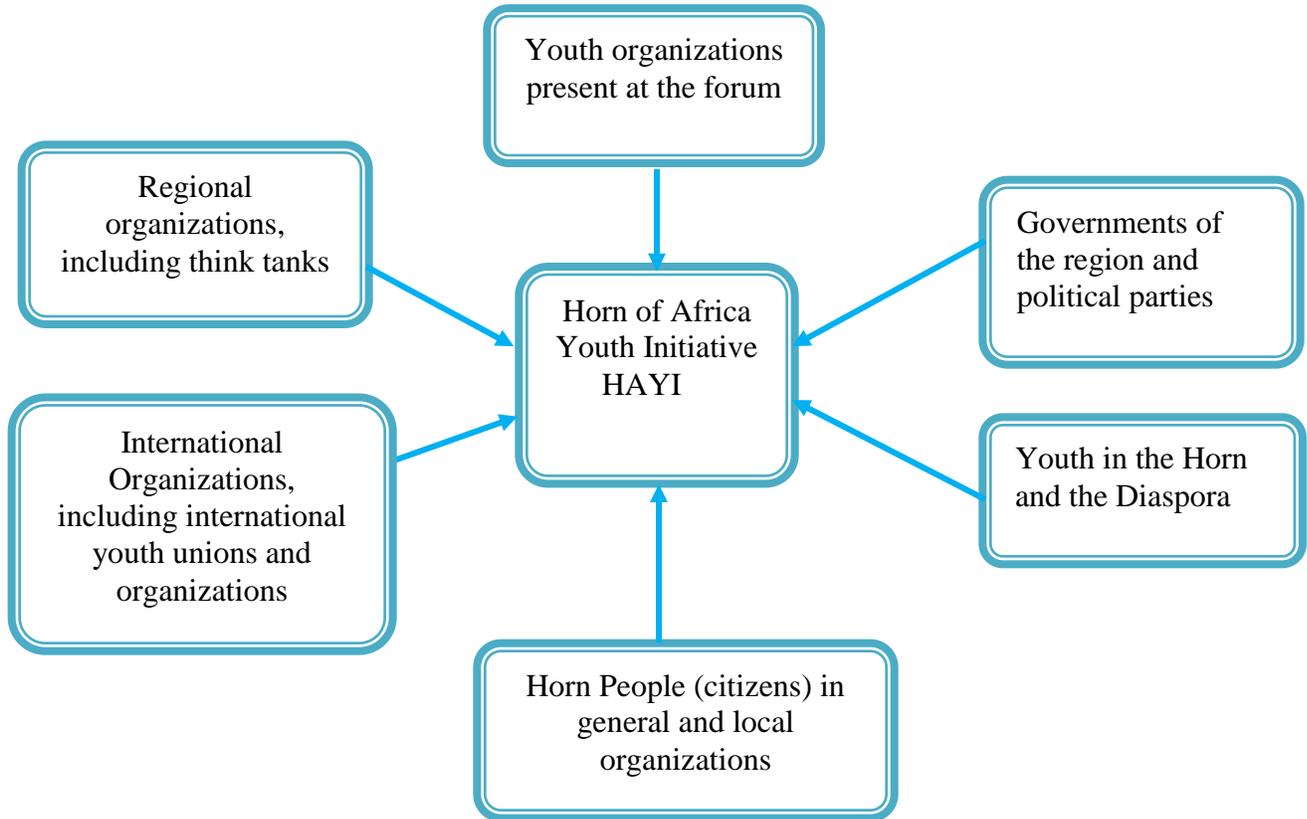
### 2.3 Purpose and Objectives

The network intends to embark on activities that will foster peace, reinforce stability and development in the region through:

- Lobbying for development programs that benefit the youth directly and immediately;
- Introducing capacity-building programs for youth in the region in various fields.
- Working to create a strong foundation for sustainable peace thereby inspiring the youth to become active agents for peace and development
- To seek programs which prevent the root causes of conflict especially if they involve youth.
- To bring about a constructive engagement of youth in peace building and development that requires more support through training, mobilization and coordination of their actions.
- To improve personal and organizational capacity of youth that facilitates positive social change.
- To motivate and empower youth in developing new partnerships and projects in the context of global campaign for a culture of peace and non-violence through training and education.

## 3.      Stakeholders Analysis

Stakeholders who have a bearing on the activities of the network at varying levels of aggregation were identified through direct discussion approach between participants. Recognizing the need to properly analyze the role that stakeholders can play and acknowledging that at this time some might be identified as partners rather than stakeholders, the following stakeholders were identified:

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Youth organizations │
                    │ present at the forum │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼
┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│    Regional      │   │                  │   │  Governments of  │
│  organizations,  │──▶│  Horn of Africa  │◀──│  the region and  │
│ including think  │   │  Youth Initiative│   │ political parties│
│     tanks        │   │      HAYI        │   └──────────────────┘
└──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘
                              ▲
┌──────────────────┐         ▲            ┌──────────────────┐
│  International    │────────▶             │ Youth in the Horn│
│  Organizations,  │◀────────             │ and the Diaspora │
│ including        │                      └──────────────────┘
│ international     │
│ youth unions and │
│  organizations   │
└──────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Horn People (citizens) in │
                    │ general and local   │
                    │   organizations     │
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Horn of Africa youth groups are generally the key beneficiaries of HAYI, especially those who are affiliated or part of the founding organizations. Being the first network of such a mandate in the region makes HAYI a unique organization with great potential to make a difference. If HAYI meets its mandate and achieves its mission for coming years, it will definitely leave a very inspiring note for the coming generations, especially if we take into consideration the gloomy outlook of the region.

In the short run, the ability of HAYI to meet its mandate and effectively implement its first-year work plan, plus its ability to achieve its mission in the long run, are the core criteria that stakeholders use to assess HAYI's performance.   The second measurement will be the ability of youth organizations to be able to influence national, regional and international decisions regarding peace, security and development.

## 4.        Strategic Issues

Participants intensively discussed the ways in which the network (HAYI) may respond to seemingly insurmountable challenges in the region. The Forum secretariat used a direct approach to lead the discussion among participants so as to identify the strategic issues and objectives that HAYI will undertake. The group discussions identified the following as strategic issues after taking into consideration the factors that make them critical to youth and which may have a consequence if the youth fail to address them:

### Political Issues
- Lack of a culture of peace
- Internal conflicts (intra and inter-state conflict)
- Lack of democracy and human rights
- Lack of good governance and ethics that respect the interest of the youth
- Lack of nationalism and Pan-Africanism through creating strong media that would help change the perception of Africa
- Africans not being left to solve their own problems due to foreign interference
- Gap between leadership and the people
- Lack of voice of the youth and their participation in decision making processes
- Lack of cooperation between organizations and governments
- Lack of awareness of the difference between positive and negative foreign interference
- Challenge of common vision and support for the initiative to empower those at the local level
- Challenge of inviting unrepresented and marginalized groups to the initiative

### Socio-economic Issues
- Illiteracy
- Create awareness and capacity building among youth organization
- Disease and extreme poverty
- Unemployment
- Brain drain
- The absence of women in public arenas
- Challenge of transferring the skills of the educated youth in the Diaspora to those in the Horn
- Lack of resources due to the degradation of the environment, foreign interference and ignorance
- Acquiring financial support for the network without deviating from its objectives
- Challenges of empowering our organizations and institutions
- Lack of healing and empowerment to regain hope
- Ignorance of each other's cultures, history and present political situations
- Influence of western cultures on our original and authentic local cultures, heritage and history
- Youth instability due to lack of education and vocational training opportunities, job opportunities, migration, etc.

## 5. Work Plan

Strategic issues are mounting challenges that HAYI sets itself to address. These issues also stand as opportunities because they stand as fields for work. Various types of programs and projects can easily be developed to address the major strategic issues related to peace-building and development. After identifying the strategic issues, the representatives of the youth from the countries of the Horn of Africa discussed possible projects and programs to address the objectives of HAYI. Implementation of these proposed work plans and their duration are left to the discretion of the network administration once it is established.

### 6.1 Project (1): Promote a culture of peace

As a response to strategic issue of how HAYI may contribute to peace-building in the region, the participants agreed to (1) **promotion of the culture of peace**. The exact details of timing and logistic will be left to the secretariat.

Project objective:
    a. To introduce youth to the other cultures of the Horn;
    b. To raise the youth awareness about the consequences of conflicts and wars through awareness programs;
    c. To raise the awareness of our communities on the issue of peace;
    d. To organize a culture and sports festival; and
    e. To show a spirit of solidarity from the people of the region to the war victims.

### 6.2 Project (2): Establish a foundation for the network and promote unity

As a response to how HAYI may respond to developmental challenges, the participants suggested to **learn from one another**. The exact details of timing and logistic will be left to the secretariat

Project Objectives
    a. To share the development experiences and learn from one another;
    b. To explore possibilities of replicating some of the successful experiments in a new place bearing in mind the differences although the sociopolitical environment in the region is very similar to great extent;
    c. To organize awareness-raising programs on developmental issues (i.e. HIV/AIDS, gender equality, etc.)
    d. To organize strong media activities that would change the negative perceptions of the Horn;
    e. To create a DVD that shows the history of our different countries; and
    f. To teach history and culture through innovative ways such as through drama, music, etc. that also send out a message against tribalism, segregation, etc.

## 6.3 Project (3): Building youth capacity

As a response to strategic issue of how HAYI may contribute to building the youth capacities, the participant agreed to work on (3) **building youth capacity**. The exact details of timing and logistic will be left to the secretariat.

Project objectives:
a. To directly take part in building youth capacities in specific areas;
b. To offer concentrated and intensified training programs in certain areas by experts in the respective fields;
c. To organize workshops and seminars for capacity building, promoting a culture of peace, and increasing youth participation in development;
d. Organize campaigns to increase the awareness of the youth in peacebuilding and sustainable development; and
e. To materialize some of the youth aspiration in concrete projects and campaigns.

## 6.4 Project (4): Youth support

As a response to strategic issue of how HAYI may take part in supporting  the youth in the Horn of Africa, the participant agreed on the project (4) **Youth Support**. The network must consider the gender biases inherent in our societies and therefore they must take into consideration the positive-discrimination approach to favor the underprivileged groups such as women. The exact details of timing and logistic will be left to the secretariat.

Project objectives:
a. To offer focused and direct support in specific areas;
b. To organize lobbying and advocacy activities for the issues that concern the youth of the Horn;
c. Unite the various youth organizations in the Diaspora; and
d. To unite the youth by letting them interact in organized events.

## 6.5 Project (5): Building the Capacity of the Network

Knowing that none of the above project could take place without building a strong network, the participants of the forum agreed to (5) **build the capacity of the network.** The activities would concentrate on not only building the capacity of the network as a whole but also its member organizations. The exact details of timing and logistics will be left to the secretariat.
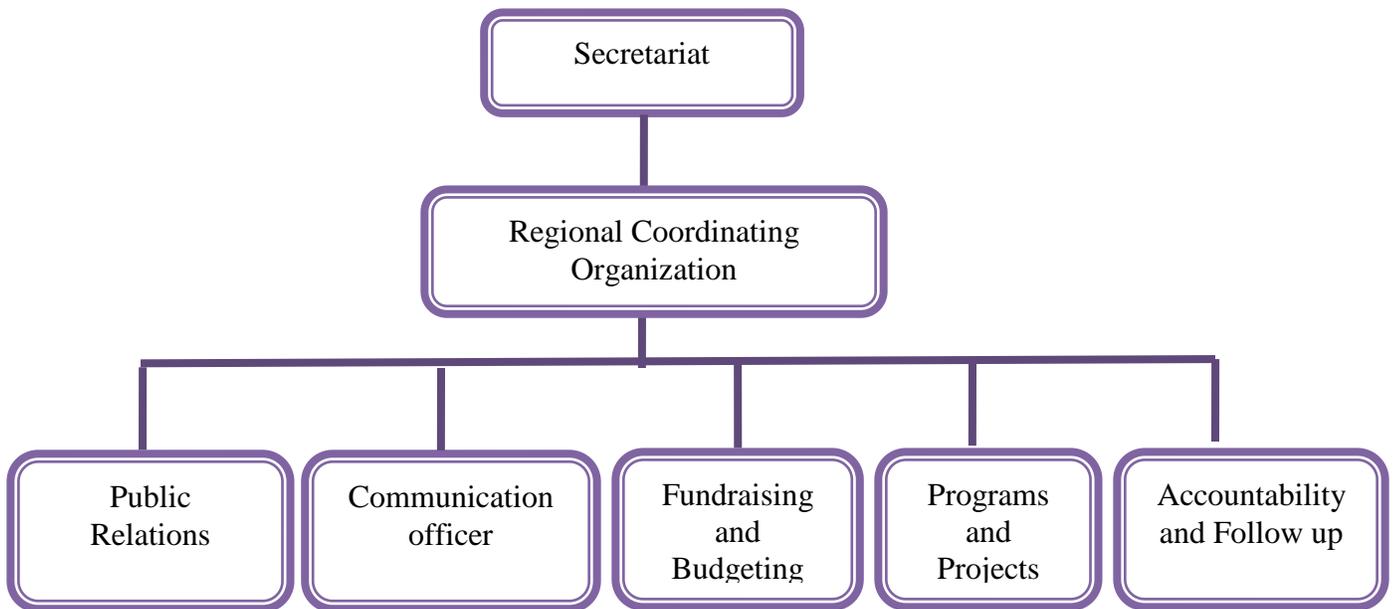
Project objectives:
a. Hold regular meetings, exchange of training, workshops, etc. on various issues of capacity building
b. Engage youth of the Horn in the Diaspora to lobby for the Horn and our initiative to MPs, senators, etc.

c.  Create a website and use other media channels to introduce HAYI and promote the network's activities;
d.  Dedicate a page of our organizations' website for the forum and the network, as well as include a link of the network's website on our organizations' website;
e.  Consistently report on all of the activities conducted
f.  Promote cooperation between member organizations and key stakeholders
g.  Make press releases, resolutions and statements on critical issues in particular countries as a network
h.  Share important ideas through writing media articles on specific issues such as "foreign intervention its origin, manifestations and implication on the region"; and
i.  Gain financial support for the network without deviating from our objectives, through fundraising, unconditional donations, and annual membership fees.

## 7. HAYI organizational structure.

A committee of delegation heads was set up to discuss how the HAYI organizational structure should look like. After a thorough discussion, the committee came up with the following structure which the participants agreed upon:

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                    │   Secretariat   │
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                             │
                ┌────────────┴────────────┐
                │  Regional Coordinating  │
                │      Organization       │
                └────────────┬────────────┘
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│ Public  │ │Communi- │ │Fund-    │ │Programs │ │Accountability │
│Relations│ │cation   │ │raising  │ │and      │ │and Follow up  │
│         │ │officer  │ │and      │ │Projects │ │               │
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## The Secretariat

The secretariat is the highest decision making body of the network. It is composed of representatives of each founding organization of the Horn of Africa Youth Initiative network. The Secretariat has to elect country from which the Regional Coordinating Organization is going to carry its responsibilities for at least the first year. Organizations in the elected country will nominate one organization to work as a Regional Coordinator.

## The Regional Coordinator

The coordinator will be the highest administrative figure in the Network and the position shall be transferred to a country in the region on a rotating basis.

## The Executive officers

Each represented organization will have the following executive officers that will directly follow and implement the network activities. The lead executive officer for each activity shall be selected by the secretariat on country basis and shall correspond with counterparts from each organization. The officers that each organization should nominate are the following.

- ❖ Communication officer
- ❖ Programs and projects officer
- ❖ Follow up and accountability officer
- ❖ Fundraising and budgeting officer
- ❖ Public relations officer.