

The Secretary-General has renewed COMESA's commitment to efforts meant to address the root causes of violent conflicts in the region.

"Violent conflicts undermine peace and security which is a fundamental prerequisite for our quest for sustainable economic development and as a region we shall continue to engage in efforts to address them," Mr Ngwenya said.

Speaking at the workshop to discuss the draft Code of Conduct for Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility in the COMESA region, held in Nairobi, Kenya, Mr Ngwenya said that a study conducted at the beginning of the Peace and Security Programme in the region in the year 2000, it was revealed that one of the root cause of conflicts is the issue of governance, specifically the poor management of the exploitation of natural resources.

"As you may be aware, the COMESA region is endowed with abundant natural resources which if managed well would contribute to poverty reduction and wealth creation for citizens in the region. It is in this context that the Member States decided to address root causes of conflicts arising out of illegal exploitation of natural resources," he said in a speech read for him by Ambassador Salvator Matata, the COMESA-AU Liaison Officer.

He added that efforts have been made in this regard by partner RECs such as SADC and the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

"COMESA seeks to compliment these efforts through a holistic approach in addressing economic dimensions of conflicts that include the development of national and regional policies on small scale and artisanal miners as well as law reform in the management of natural resources."

Mr Ngwenya added that although COMESA has paid attention to small scale and artisanal mining, the Member States have realized that they also need to engage big businesses and investors in the region so that they can help in maintaining peace and security as opposed to contributing to violent conflicts.

"COMESA has thus decided to focus on helping Member States govern our trade regime so that it contributes to the promotion of peace and security for economic development through a Regional Code of conduct for Corporate Governance and Social Responsibility. I, therefore, call on you to take time and improve on the draft that is placed before you in order to enrich this process," he concluded.

He paid tribute to Kenya for the great sacrifices that the Government and people continue to make towards stabilising Somalia as well as addressing issues of piracy off the coast of Somalia.

“The developments in Somalia as well as the birth of the Republic of South Sudan through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that was negotiated and concluded in Kenya are evidence of Kenya’s contribution to the attainment of sustainable peace and security in the COMESA region. I, therefore, appeal to participants to critically examine the draft code of conduct which is to be discussed with a view of identifying pitfalls, omissions or unnecessary additions in order to provide the necessary guidance.”

The workshop, held in December was attended by participants from Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.