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*CONFLICTS IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AFRICA:  
PROMOTING PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE REGION*

Mr Chairperson  
Members of the diplomatic corps  
Distinguished Guests

As we gather tonight we are conscious of the fact that the technological revolution and information super-highway has ensured that you, in your living rooms and bedrooms are constantly subjected to instant and sensational images of African conflicts, horrifying brutality, and harrowing pictures of dying children with begging bowls.

We cannot indulge in the luxury of scepticism and despondency, but we must constructively and critically examine the challenges facing Africa. Globalisation has brought the world closer yet we are still are still incapable of living at peace with ourselves or with each other and are unwilling to eradicate the scandal of global poverty and hunger. Hundreds of detailed proposals have been made and hundreds more have been made by others but none has the slightest guarantee of success.

Global poverty and hunger is on the increase resulting in an evergrowing disparity between rich and poor, between and within nations. We are unwilling to eradicate the scandal of global poverty and hunger, even though the resources are there – the technology, the ideas, the wealth – and that what was missing was the will and the imagination to harness these things to higher purpose. I think the African continent exemplifies these particular challenges: the challenge of peace, the struggle against poverty and the struggle for development. It was not enough merely to recognise the fact that there were problems and challenges. The bigger issue was what then do we do to respond to all of these challenges.

Today, there is a renewed spirit of confidence and self-assertiveness on our continent. Once again our leaders have taken up the mantle of revolutionaries for the African rebirth. They are outstanding examples of what President, Thabo Mbeki, was referring to when he said that "there exists within our continent a generation which has been victim to all things which created the negative past; this generation remains African and carries with it a historic pride which compels

it to seek a place for Africans equal to all other peoples of our common universe ... I believe that the new African generations have learned and are learning from the experiences of the past. I further believe that they are unwilling to continue to repeat the wrongs that have occurred"

At the end of the day, we need to ask ourselves: are we on the right track to conflict resolution in Africa?

The SG's High level Panel report " A more secure world our shared responsibility" (2005) concluded that there are 6 clusters which we should we concerned with:

- Economic and social threats, like poverty, infectious diseases and environmental degradation
- Inter-state conflict
- Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide and other large scale atrocities
- Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons
- Terrorism
- International organised crime

Development is the indispensable foundation for a collective security system that takes prevention seriously. It is vital in helping to prevent or reverse the erosion of state capacity, which is crucial for meeting every class of threat. It is also part of the strategy for preventing civil war and addressing the environments where terrorism and organised crime flourishes.

Chairperson

Sadly, the continent most affected by underdevelopment is Africa.

A recent Oxfam report has found that Africa is the only continent to have grown poorer in the past 25 years and sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world to have lost market share in agricultural trade. Poverty in Africa increased by 3% between 1990 and 1999, while on average, world poverty fell by 7% over the same period. Sub Saharan Africa's share of international trade declined from 6% in 1990 to around 5% in 2003.

Tony Blair wanted this to be a year for Africa but rich countries have put self-interest ahead of everything else and what's on the table now, would actually make the continent worse off. Oxfam's report accuses rich countries of making unreasonable demands on developing countries. Until significant offers are made, rich countries have no right to ask for concessions in other areas.

We cannot ignore the reality that violent conflicts have become the scourge of the African continent. Over the past three decades more than 8 million Africans have perished in the fires of ethnic and racial hatred, religious intolerance, political

ambition and material greed. Over 15 million refugees and displaced persons live in terrible conditions, landmines are indiscriminately planted, the infrastructure is systematically destroyed and our agricultural land laid to waste.

Any call for the re-awakening of the continent will flounder in the presence of such persistent conflict. We must all honestly and constructively accept the reality that we will fail the African people by not addressing the root causes of conflict and by not taking sufficient action to prevent conflicts. The African rebirth demands that we identify the root causes of African problems and take measures to tackle them.

Our problems are also compounded by the fact that "war is profitable". People, who are making money out of war, have a financial interest to ensure that conflict continues. Such phenomena are not unique to Africa. Conflict prevention and resolution and people centred development therefore demands a striving for good governance, inter alia, respect for human rights and rule of law, promotion of transparency and accountability in government and enhancing of administrative and institutional capacity.

An examination of Sub-Saharan African countries engaged in conflict or recently emerged from armed conflict reveals a startling pattern of low per capita income, low life expectancy, low levels of FDSI, low levels of ODA and high levels of indebtedness.

Today there is a vibrant debate regarding peace-keeping. There is a growing group of analysts who are arguing with the Brahimi report on UN peace-keeping and correctly concluded that failed peace-keeping efforts of the UN are a consequence of a lack of " sound peace building" or " post reconstruction strategy".

Basically the argument is that much of the present policies are based on " security first programmes". "Security first " policies have been described as a combination of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and security sector reform.

In some countries of conflict in SSA, the capacity to execute any form of policy has virtually disappeared. In its place is a shadow state dependent on militias and other paramilitary organisations.

For many these new conflicts, war makes rational economic sense not only because it enhances their local status and wealth, but also because it is rooted in the power relations in the global *status quo ante*. War provides ample opportunities for elites to develop links with the global economy via the diamond trade, money laundering, drug and gun smuggling

Post-modern conflicts are highly rational responses in a context of economic scarcity and exclusion. Emphasis on enhancing civil-military relations and

military transparency important, particularly where the state and the military continue to monopolise a country's security agenda.

A case can be made for a developmental peace-keeping strategy, which is founded on human security.

Camdessus, the former managing director of the IMF, observed that 'poverty is the ultimate systematic threat facing humanity. The widening gaps between rich and poor nations are potentially socially explosive. If the poor are left hopeless, poverty will undermine societies through confrontation, violence and civil disorder.'

Wolfenson argued that in order 'to prevent violent conflict, we need a comprehensive, equitable and inclusive approach to development.' Kofi Annan observed that the best way to prevent conflict and promote security is to encourage healthy and balanced economic development, combined with human rights, minority rights and political arrangements in which all groups are fairly represented. Current approaches to development need to fundamentally change if they are to avoid contributing to growing levels of human insecurity.

Africa has embarked on an ambitious transformation, reform and renewable strategy. The overarching objective is to break the vicious cycle of political instability, poverty, underdevelopment and a weak capacity to defend and advance Africa's interests in the global arena. Clearly conditions of peace, security and stability are pre-requisites for the achievement of the goals of the revitalisation and regeneration of Africa.

Many factors have an impact on development in Africa. Investors for example look for a conducive environment, defined by predictability, suitable returns, legal certainty and so on. Clearly, however, conditions of peace, security and stability are the essential prerequisites for the achievement of the goals of the revitalisation and regeneration of Africa. The contributory relationship between conflict, instability, poverty and poor socio-economic development and growth must be broken, and yet, it is an acknowledged principle that the one cannot exist without the other.

In pursuit of these conditions for development, the continent has made progress in operationalising the structures necessary for resolving, preventing and managing conflicts and in developing the requisite capacity for peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) deliberately highlights peace and security, democracy, good political, economic and corporate governance, and regional integration as the necessary conditions for development (and investment, both domestic and international). These necessary conditions, aside from making the continent an attractive investment opportunity also

provides an environment which yields both short term and long term incentives to peace processes. This is coupled with other NEPAD priorities such as infrastructure development; agriculture, health, education, market access etc are designed to addressing the critical development challenges facing the continent.

NEPAD is a plan by Africa's leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic.

NEPAD has created the dynamic for dialogue among African leaders and stakeholders on issues critical to governance, peace, security and social economic development. There seems to be a serious commitment (as reflected by troop contributions) by African leaders to involve their countries in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts as well as peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace enforcement. The Heads of State and Government meet regularly to discuss and manage the implementation of NEPAD in an atmosphere characterised by frank dialogue.

This dialogue is carried over into the structures of the Peace and Security Council, where developments in peace processes are closely monitored. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union has as its main function conflict resolution, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. The AU is also working towards establishing an African Standby Force and early warning system.

One of the principal elements about it must therefore be that as Africans we take responsibility for the success of this programme. Great difficulties in getting the developed world to respond in an adequate manner to the challenges that the countries of the South face, problem of realising this old, old objective of 0.7% of GDP as development assistance.

Today we have the African Union, which says that we cannot use the doctrine and practice of national sovereignty to carry out crimes against the people behind the walls of that sovereignty. The Constitutive Act therefore says [that] in instances of crimes against humanity, in instances of crimes of genocide, in instances of war crimes and so on, the African Union will intervene in any of its member states in order to protect the lives of people.

African leaders have shown political commitment and made substantial progress in resolving conflict and instability situations on the continent i.e. DRC, Angola, Ethiopia/ Eritrea, Burundi, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Central African Republic, Liberia, Sao Tome & Principe and Cote d'Ivoire. African countries are committing their own human and financial resources to provide African solutions to African problems. As a consequence, conflicts are being tackled with increased

determination and new crises are being resolved with new speed and determination than in the past. Unconstitutional changes of government are no longer tolerated in Africa and issues related to illicit proliferation of small arms, light weapons and landmines, amongst other issues that contribute to conflict, are being addressed.

Africa recognises the critical importance of a multilateral system of co-operation and governance, that even among all of the African countries with varying degrees of development, economic strength and other strengths, that we must, all of us, respect the fact that we have, each one here, a people, a country. We have a duty to take care of our own destiny and therefore indeed as Africans to make sure that we make sure that we do all of these things whether they are about democracy, about ending corruption, about ending poverty, that we intervene ourselves to address those matters.

The African continent is intensely engaged in a deep and fundamental reform and renewal process. The over-arching objective is to break the cycle of political instability, poverty, and underdevelopment, as well as to strengthen Africa's capacity to defend and advance her interests in the global arena. The key building blocks of this strategy are increased political unity and concerted action through the African Union, and accelerated socio-economic transformation through the NEPAD. The new breed of leaders emerging in Africa realise that Africa needs to take charge of her own development and destiny and are willing to pursue good governance as the fertile earth for sustained peace and development. The African Peer Review Mechanism has been developed under the NEPAD process in order to promote democracy, good governance and the attainment of peace and stability.

The primary purpose of the APRM is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through the sharing of experiences and the reinforcement of successful and best practice, including the identification of deficiencies and an assessment of needs for capacity building.

Connected to the issue of the APRM is that of the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance adopted by the AU in 2002. The purpose of NEPAD's Democracy and Governance Initiative is to contribute to the strengthening of the political and administrative framework of participating countries in line with the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, integrity, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

We are serious about the matter of setting up the institutions and respecting them that bind everybody to work together to address these global common challenges. To respond to the issues of peace, of poverty, of underdevelopment, of racism, of sexism, of the environment, of world peace, to respond in a manner that ensures

that indeed we do not have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century a global system which is undemocratic, a global system which would be defined by some who are more powerful than others. It cannot solve the problems of the world.

Africa's commitment to democracy and human rights is also evidenced by the increase in the number of democratically elected governments and peaceful changes in power since the early 1990s. Africa now has more democratically elected governments than at any other stage of her post-independence history. These countries are increasingly adopting prudent fiscal and monetary policies and investment frameworks and are working to root out mismanagement of public funds, corruption and money laundering. This has led to an improvement in macro-economic stability. Only 11 countries now have double-digit inflation, down from 28 in 1995.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), in its Preamble, explicitly acknowledges the promotion and protection of human and people's rights, the consolidation of democratic institutions and culture, and ensuring good governance and the rule of law. The Preamble also acknowledges the need to build a partnership between governments and all segments of civil society, in particular women, youth and the private sector, in order to strengthen solidarity and cohesion among Africa's peoples.

In order to give effect to these undertakings, an African Court of Human and People's Rights and the Pan-African Parliament have been established, while an African Court of Justice and an Economic, Social and Cultural Council are being created as organs of the AU.

Chairperson

The strong leadership that African Heads of State and Government are providing in the resolution of conflicts across the continent evidences our will and determination to advance the renaissance of Africa. Unlike in the past, we are acting in a coordinated and coherent manner through either the Regional Economic Community structures or the organs of the African Union. In addition, our approach is often different to past practice as we now have a better understanding of the underlying dynamics underpinning conflict and instability.

The 5 members of the Security Council must show greater commitment, seriousness and urgency when dealing with the issues of conflict prevention and peace-keeping in Africa.

Increasingly our experience forces us to ask the question: Are double standards applied to conflict situations in Africa as opposed to elsewhere.

South Africa's involvement in Peace Missions is relatively recent, taking into consideration the fact that the country had no experience of this type endeavour

before 1994. After elections in 1994 South African government institutions underwent an integration process that allowed for the incorporation of nine different armies and six departments of foreign affairs. At that stage the country did not have a structured policy pertaining to international action within multilateral ventures, let alone involvement in peacekeeping operations.

There was a strong realization that South Africa would have to become an active participant in peace operations. Due to its location and the fact that the country was a new African democracy, South Africa was regarded as an ideal candidate by numerous countries to play a vital role in peace operations, with specific regard to Africa.

In absence of direct experience and (at that stage) involvement, South Africa had to rapidly build both capacity and develop a philosophy to enable it to become involved in peace keeping operations. It was acknowledged that the well-established tenets of traditional peacekeeping – the consent of the parties to the conflict, the impartiality of the peacekeeping force and the prohibition of the use of force except in self-defence as advocated by the United Nations would remain the cornerstone to any future South African participation. Furthermore, the South African approach would be to delve into the causes of a given conflict in order to prevent an escalation or recurrence of the violence.

Since then though, South Africa has been involved in numerous situations relating to peace missions, from peacemaking activities including facilitating discussions, through brokering of peace agreements to peacekeeping under the auspices of both the African Union and the United Nations Security Council.

South Africa's general approach is to a large extent both pragmatic and practical. First, where possible, we follow the multilateral route. Secondly we agree with the African Union principle that regions should be consulted in the approach to any particular conflict situation unfolding, and thirdly we tailor our bilateral interaction in support of the multilateral approach.

South Africa recognises the African Union as the principal continental organisation responsible for the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent. Furthermore peace, security and development are seen as a prerequisite for the implementation of the development and integration agenda of the AU. We see the establishment and the launch of the AU Peace and Security Council, as well as South Africa's election to this body, as a test of commitment for South Africa with regard to implementation of Africa's agenda for peace, that is, conflict prevention, management and resolution.

We recognise post-conflict reconstruction as of the utmost importance in peace missions. Our experience in this regard is limited, but we will place a lot more emphasis on post-conflict reconstruction since it is evident that the continent is moving into a phase where post-conflict reconstruction will take centre-stage. In



this regard, South Africa will also be promoting the role of NEPAD as a useful tool for reconstruction.

**Conclusion:**

The long-term benefits of good governance to peace processes are what we are currently experiencing in South Africa. The principles of good governance, such as open and transparent government, rule of law, and recognition of human rights tend to be more visible and experienced by the average citizen only after a number of years. Yet, the dividends in terms of international confidence, increased investment and alleviation of poverty through infrastructure development and service delivery, far exceeds what we could have foreseen 11 years ago.

Bearing the above-mentioned in mind, it is no wonder that South Africa endeavours to contribute through all the mechanisms available on the continent to provide a secure, peaceful and stable environment within which Africans can be champions of their own development and which will open the door to increased domestic and international investment. For this to happen the conflicts on the continent have to be stopped and further outbreaks of conflict prevented. It means a forceful commitment to democracy and good political governance and it means the provision of macro-economic stability and a better management and utilisation of public revenues. Sound policies of economic governance coupled to peace and security provide for an increased ability to address the pressing issues of poverty, job creation and human resource development. These issues are part of the African Union and NEPAD as they are clearly in Africa's best interests and not because they may satisfy the wishes of outside parties.

Many challenges still lie ahead and it is important to realise that the processes we are currently busy with have been embarked upon with a long-term vision of twenty years and more. It is clear that we have embarked on an ambitious path. It is equally clear that it is an irreversible path, one to which we must all dedicate our every effort. For the sake of future generations of Africans we must succeed – we will succeed.

Africa's time has come, let us through action make our rebirth and renewal a reality. This is in the interest of all humanity and not just Africans.

Thank you.

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