

“Realising Sustained Peace and Security for Development in Africa”

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Protocols

I am honoured to be in your midst at the invitation of my brother, President Benjamin William Mkapa, and the leadership of African Leadership Forum 2017. I am pleased that the trail that began with President Thabo Mbeki has continued and now I am charged with giving an address on a pertinent theme he had outlined in his first Keynote Address.

This gathering couldn't have come at a better time than now, when the world at large, and Africa in particular, are grappling with threat to peace and security in so many forms, degrees and dimensions. Let me attempt our theme for discussion as put in question form: “What are the issues and circumstances that hinder peace and security and what needs to be done to curb them for sustained peace and security?”

With some understanding by all of us, let me do a bit of the unusual and go into the genesis of conflicts as contained in the Bible. The first conflict was that between husband and wife - Adam and Eve - in eating or not eating the forbidden fruit. With only two people on earth - a man and a woman -, there was conflict. Call it domestic, family or what you will, it was conflict. It required the Creator Himself, God, to intervene and to apportion blame and resolve it.

The second recorded conflict in the Bible was more costly and deadly and it was between two brothers - Abel and Cain. It led to Cain killing Abel, his brother, out of envy, greed, intolerance, lack of consideration for the other man and lack of fear of God. Again, God intervened to be the arbiter and pronounced judgement on Cain, who thought that nobody saw him when he killed his brother, thereby instituting the first deadly conflict. Bible is replete with conflicts among families, communities, peoples and between and among nations. Even Jesus declared his mission as: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour” (Luke 4: 18-19).

I have observed that from the Biblical times till today, the nature of man has not changed and God has always intervened in the affairs of humankind and human organisations and institutions to relieve, manage and alleviate conflicts and oppressions.

To record the history of the world, scholars and chroniclers of world history have been bound by acts conflict, treachery, conquest, domination, suppression, oppression, exploitation, injustice and enslavement. Most of Africa in different stages came under this cruel regime of callousness, insensitivity and worst of human inhumanity against humanity. This was essentially the legacy of slave trade, slavery, colonisation and domination inherited at independence. Balkanisation and arbitrary divisions were embarked upon to strengthen the evil regimes over Africa.

I am not approaching this discourse as a novice. I have experienced conflict in its various trajectories. Ladies and gentlemen, for over 50 years, I have been involved in peace-making, peace-building, conflict prevention and management across Africa. I have been an interloper in various sectors. I have been a force of good in many others and, in some rare instances, a victim of the evil machinations of conflicts.

Let me share with you a few insight of those conflicts that I was involved a peace-keeper, peace-maker or peace-bargainer but nonetheless a very active participant and from which we can distil my informed knowledge of the causes and courses of conflicts on the continent of Africa. It will also help in charting a roadmap to sustained peace and security for the development of our continent.

I started my public life and career as a soldier and the first theatre of operation for me was Belgian Congo or Congo Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) where I was shipped to because of the ensuing conflict in that country even as my nation was preparing for Independence. I recalled that while on that UN peace-keeping mission, many peace-keepers, including Nigeria's Lt. Ezugbana paid the supreme price over a needless war of attrition. DRC has not enjoyed durable peace and security since then.

By the last decade of the last millennium, my sub-region, West Africa, was the very epitome of conflict with Liberia and Sierra Leone as hot spots. In Liberia, an estimated 250,000 people died and Charles Taylor felt no scruples about the several hundreds of thousands wounded and displaced. Taylor didn't leave the casualties to his country alone, he veered into neighbouring Sierra Leone and started stoking insurrection by actively aiding the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh. By August 2003 when I was starting my second term as President of Nigeria and AU Chair, we offered a deal to Taylor to resign and be granted asylum in Nigeria. That move brought back peace to Liberia and Sierra Leone. I became a butt of criticism after the long arms of international law caught up with Taylor in my country but I am proud of that kind of diplomacy that successfully terminated wars. Presidents Thabo Mbeki, Chissano, John Kuffour were fellow travellers with me in the venture.

You will, no doubt, agree that the return of President (Fradique de) Menezes to power, and the restoration of democracy in the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe (DRSTP), was a remarkable achievement for our foreign policy in 2003. The reaction to the military adventurers, the process of negotiation as well as my presence in Gabon and the DRSTP to ensure an end to the military action, had certainly sent a strong signal to military officers contemplating extra-constitutional means to subvert democratically-elected governments.

A couple of years ago, I led the African Union and the United Nations' Human Rights Council on Peace Mission on the South Sudan Conflict. Like most conflicts, violence was triggered by a rift between President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, and quickly degenerated into an ethnic conflict, particularly among two major ethnic groups, the Dinka and the Nuer, culminating into a very, very bad situation. The new country with great promise is still entangled in the conflict that could go the way of Rwanda.

When crisis that left Guinea Bissau without a government for 37 days broke out, President Muhammadu Buhari along with ECOWAS leaders enlisted me to stabilise the situation. While interfacing with the dramatis personae of the conflict, President of Guinea Bissau, Jose Mario Bavs, and Prime Minister Correia, we discovered that elements of human hubris were at work. For harmony to reign in that country, we discovered the inevitability of power

sharing as envisaged by authors of the Guinea-Bissau Constitution which splits the executive arm of government into the Presidency, the National Assembly and the Premiership.

We can go on and on. I have seen that the dynamics of power and human beings insatiable urge to superintend others and disregard their feelings are at the heart of instability and conflicts in countries around Africa.

Back home in Nigeria, beside the 30-month Civil War between 1967 and 1970, which I had the good fortune of ending and collecting the instrument of surrender from the rebels as we called them on behalf of the Nigerian Government, we have had several cases of internecine conflicts like in most African countries. They are caused by poor leadership, inequity, real and perceived injustice and conscienceless pursuit of power.

At the most microscopic or micro-level, anywhere in Africa, conflicts are a product of power struggle or squabbles with some mindless power elite taking more than a fair share of what is due to all, and thus, undermining the weaker elements in their midst and domains. Whether it is on the settler/indigenes crises in Jos Plateau or the Modakeke/Ife or even the Umuleri/Aguleri in my native Nigeria or elsewhere in Africa, the stories are the same with strands of difference only on who tells the story. I participated and resolved two of those conflicts mentioned above which have been raging for over a century.

We, as leaders, can cast back our minds and replicate in our different socio-cultural and political or economic settings and see if power sharing and unfair-minded leadership with selfishness and lack of adequate consideration do not rank high in why Africans have turned to bearing arms against fellow compatriots in needless conflicts and wars when socio-economic development and inclusion should have been our priority.

The question that should agitate the mind of anybody with a modicum of humanity is if we all desire peace and security, why is it difficult for people to embrace peace and why is security elusive in almost all parts of the globe and in less quantity and quality in Africa? Another question is, do people just mouth security without understanding the concepts, precepts, practice and desiderata for it?

For me, peace signifies a situation of harmony and concord. Or put in another word, it is a state of tranquillity. In effect, peace is opposed to organised disequilibrium. It presupposes absence of low or high level conflicts, violence of any kind, including conventional/unconventional or prosecution of hot or cold war. It may refer to an internal state (of mind or of nations) or to external relations. In effect, peace then, is the absence of war and more.

In an organised society, it represents not just the presence of rule of law but law and order reigning supreme. Security, in the non-commercial sense, can be likened to a guarantee offered in exchange for loans; the state of feeling safe, stable, and free from fear or anxiety whether for individuals or groups, classes or nations.

No nation can yet claim absolute security because a peaceful and secure country should not have ingrained in the people's psyche the fear of violations of their persons and properties by either criminals and/or organised state apparatuses in pursuit of extortions or other humiliating experiences that many of our people are subjected to in the hands of rogue or failing states.

Intellectually-minded people have traditionally considered peace to mean the absence of war but as we can see, it is narrow prescription for a world that is in a permanent state of tension in the hands of powerful nations, people, elements and circumstances. No hungry man is at peace. That is why we now have terms like food insecurity. No man at the mercy of weather or whose home or farm is being devastated by flood, tsunami, sand dunes, desertification or pestilence can claim to be at peace. This is why we have environmental crisis. I saw the true situation and devastation in Sierra Leone yesterday where at least 1000 were swept into death by flood and muslide.

Peace and war may have been binary oppositions before, but, we now have intermediaries to these nebulous characterisations of how they appear. In terms of international relations, peace may have been construed to mean absence of states engaging in open confrontations with one another. The concept, I think is more vast, tenuous and crafty in its manifestations. I say this because national security and national defence are thus contradictory since we need the instruments of war (military) to pursue peace!

Granted that the traditional arrangements for peace and security have been situated in the balance of power and collective security architectures, the post-Cold War era brought to the fore other realities. Today, Cold Peace has replaced Cold War. Competition has become fiercer than ever before. Economic survival, environmental issues, religious ideologies and issues of injustice, hunger, starvation, unemployment, poverty and sustainable development have degenerated into tension, claiming more casualties than in the battlefields and the two World Wars known to man.

The plight of individuals, the quality of lives of individuals within their immediate environments are now of concern. More people have been robbed of their pursuit of a happy, comfortable and joyous livelihood by extraneous consideration because of inept and corrupt leadership across various spheres.

How do we as leaders engender the absence and fear of our hapless, helpless and frustrated citizens?

I have heard stories of economic migrants and how many die in search of peace and greener pastures beyond the Sahara Desert and many perish in the Sahara and on the Mediterranean Sea because of the harsh and economic realities foisted on them by corrupt, inept and clueless leaders at different levels. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees said that human trafficking and migrant flows are on the rise. The UNCHR also warned that with 84,830 people arriving on Italy's shores so far this year from Libya, it represents a 19 per cent increase from the same period last year. Already, over 2,108 had died while trying to make the perilous crossing, often organised by ruthless smugglers in unseaworthy and rickety boats.

These are all signs that peace has taken a flight not because of war but because of ill-conceived and poorly implemented policies and graft by mindless and poor leadership. Today, we live in a world where there is stiff competition, so to speak, for the attention of the international community to build or mediate peace globally. Gone were the days when adequate attention was paid to Africa's peace and security issues. Today, there are stresses and strains across the globe. With crises in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, and the brewing tension around the South China Sea and North Korea, Africa has to begin to look for solutions to its peace and security issues from within.

What is more, many European countries such as Britain, France, Germany and Belgium which, in the past, intervened in African crises now have to grapple with internal attacks by terrorists, whether home-grown or imported. And for the election of President Donald Trump of the United States of America, with his “America first” anti-globalisation policies, we Africans simply do not have the luxury of waiting for outsiders to solve our problems for us. And in any case, their interventions have been mostly inimical to African interest.

There is a conundrum, though. Conflict is an important and inseparable part of human existence. Aside from internal conflicts in a human being, differing interests in the interactions between two or more people have been with us since the creation and/or evolution of man. Conflict arises as a result of serious disagreement between individuals, groups or countries. A violent situation or period of fighting either within a country or between two countries are usually seen in the negative sense. This is usually not the case because, depending on how conflict is handled, it can either be positive (constructive) or negative (destructive). No matter the manifestations of conflict, two issues are germane: The capacity to manage conflicts is crucial. Here, leadership deficit on our continent allow conflicts to fester until they become wars that claim several lives. The second is that unmanaged destructive conflicts usually hinder the progress and development of any society. When conflict blooms, each party to a conflict resolves to win at all cost. This tends to lead to wanton destruction of lives and properties as emotions take precedence over reason.

To underscore this, a cursory look at some recent conflicts in the region will suffice; it is the reason I said advisedly that today’s Africa’s security challenges are inherently caused by Africans, especially self-conceited leaders as:

1. Border conflict such as Eritrea and Ethiopia.
2. Development conflict such as Democratic Republic of Congo and Darfur in Sudan.
3. Marginalisation conflict, real or perceived, such as South-Eastern Nigeria.
4. Poor leadership and bad governance conflict such as Burundi and Guinea Bissau.
5. Electoral conflict such as Central African Republic.
6. Induced conflict such as in Mali and Libya.
7. Resource-based conflict such as in Libya, Sudan-South Sudan and Niger-Delta militancy in Nigeria.
8. Fundamentalist conflicts, religious or nationalistic such as Egypt.

Just as I was mulling on how to script something for this occasion, I watched a report on the BBC where there were allegations of killings by rival militias in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). My mind flipped back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was reported that 3,000 lives have already been lost. The report warned of a particular ethnic militia being armed and supported by state security against other ethnic groups. I sincerely haven’t found time to thoroughly examine the plausibility of the DRC uprising again, so I cannot ascertain the correctness or otherwise of this media claim. What I can, however, state categorically is that the continent cannot afford a fresh humanitarian crisis to break out in that country. We have not been able to successfully cope with what we already had in hand.

Already, elsewhere there is the Boko Haram insurgency that we haven’t completely overcome. It has ravaged the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, as well as parts of Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republics. I was involved in finding out causes and I know the consequences of my action and inaction of those who were supposed to boldly face the challenge. I found out that refusal of the governments to pay compensation as ordered by the Court to the family of Boko Haram leaders who were innocently killed was partly responsible for the escalation of violent extremism. The escalation of insurgent activities in the North-

East of Nigeria and concomitant high cost to human and economic life of people of the region to a disproportionate use of 'stick' rather than 'carrot' in quelling the insurgency coalesced with poverty and youth unemployment to rob the people of their peace and the nation of good governance and dividends of democracy. How I wished that the serious conciliatory solution had been embraced upon at the beginning of the crisis. I cannot but partly blame the escalation of the insurgency in the entire region to inertia of our ruling class!

Coupled with their ineptitude is the putrid tales of how money meant to fight the scourge ends up in the pockets of some notable public functionaries. Supposed peace-keepers and others collected money to consult marabouts when the nation was at 'war'. In one rare operation, security people found, a staggering sum of \$9,772,800 (Nine Million, Seven Hundred and Seven Thousand, Eight Hundred United States Dollars) and another sum of £74,000 (Seventy Four Thousand Pound Sterling) cash, was found in someone's house. At that point, I know what we need is more than re-orientation. It is deliverance we need. For me, addressing violent extremism requires a coordinated, comprehensive approach that addresses underlying structural and economic problems and the symptoms that surface in violent conflicts and insecurity.

Boko Haram insurgency has killed more than 20,000 people and rendered over 2.3 million others displaced and what's more, Boko Haram's accomplice in East Africa, Al-Shaabab, with between 7,000 and 9,000-strong fighters are separately unleashing catastrophes and destruction. You will understand why fundamentalism is a menace that must be tackled headlong because it poses a great threat to the peace and security of all of Africa.

Splinter groups of militants and terrorists may have found a temporary abode in Libya but the place has become an unstable state if not a failed state since the Arab Spring swept through it and with the support of the West, consumed its former leader, Muammar Gaddafi, in 2011.

The stories of conflicts and instability are all over Africa. South Sudan, the youngest sovereign nation in the world, has plunged into a bloody civil war, having spent decades seeking independence from Sudan. Central African Republic hasn't fared better. And we have the entire Sahel Region to worry about as a hotspot for terrorism and violent extremism.

While there are other pull and push factors undermining Africa's peace and security which I will return to shortly, it is of absolute necessity to point out that internal conflicts are the singular most prominent and immediate circumstances hindering peace and security in Africa. When internal conflicts take a violent turn (which they often do), other systemic threats to peace and security, such as human rights violation, displacement of people, malnutrition and diseases often follow. The resultant effects of internal conflicts, as well as their intertwinement, are too numerous: A country devastated by conflict relegates democracy and good governance to the background; its people are often violated by the same institutions that are supposed to protect them; and no sane investors would commit their capital to a country whose climate is destructive. If poverty, hunger and economic underdevelopment are substantially attributed to violence and conflicts, it is apt to note that peace and security are necessary prerequisites for enjoying whatever dividends democracy, economic development and social justice are expected to bring to the table.

In an address I delivered at the Third Tana High-level Forum in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, in 2016, I had undertaken another classification or grouping of conflicts in Africa. They are post-colonial conflicts arising from agitations for liberation from the control of colonial settlers in countries such as Zimbabwe (1980); Namibia (1990); and apartheid in South Africa (1994). Boundary and territorial conflicts such as the Angolan Bush War in South Africa (1966-

1989), the Algeria–Morocco conflict over the Atlas Mountain area (1963), the territorial tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998–2000), the Kenya–Somali war (1963–67), the Somali–Ethiopian conflict (1964–78), the Egypt–Libya conflict (1977), and the Cameroon–Nigeria conflict over the disputed Bakassi Peninsula (1994).

There were also conflicts linked to secessionist ambitions such as the case of Sudan and South Sudan (1983–2011), the age-long Cassamance rebellion in Senegal, the Cabinda agitations in Angola, and the Biafra civil war in Nigeria (1967–70). Resource-based conflicts, such as the Sudan and South Sudan conflict over the Abyei region, the Congo-Brazzaville conflict (2007), the Senegal/Mauritania conflict (1989) and the conflict raging in eastern Congo over the last decade. Identity-based conflicts such as inter-ethnic or inter-tribal conflicts. Examples of these are the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, the Burundi massacres, the Tuareg uprising in Mali, clan fighting in Somalia and Liberia, Algerian Berbers fighting against the ruling Arab class in Algeria; and the ongoing South Sudan conflict.

Poverty, knitted with uncontrolled population growth, is most disturbing phenomenon breeding social vices and conflicts, including and especially youth restiveness. I told a gathering recently that if African youths are not properly educated, empowered and engaged, we are only sitting on a keg of gunpowder which, as a matter of when not if, would explode in our faces in a manner that we could find irredeemable. I know that unemployed young men and women are especially vulnerable to the temptations of violence and could be easily instrumentalised for that purpose. A World Bank survey in 2011 showed that about 40% of those who join rebel movements said they were motivated by lack of jobs. The percentage would be higher today.

Environmental factors are also a threat to Africa's peace and security. In many countries in Western, Central and East Africa, small-scale crop farmers and livestock rearers are the livewire of the food required to feed the larger city populations. Agriculture employs 65 per cent of Africa's labour force and accounts for 32 per cent of Africa's total gross domestic product (GDP). It is also responsible for 60 per cent of the continent's total export earnings.

However, among other factors, insecurity and insurgency are threatening the sustainability of Africa's food production. At the heart of this challenge is the perennial crisis relating to conflicts between pastoralists and crop farmers in many parts of Africa, including Nigeria. Using the same land facilities creates a kind of interdependence and competition between herdsmen and crop farmers. As grazing regions become hotter and drier, pastoralists are left with no option other than to migrate southward if their cattle would have any chance of survival. However, there are other related causes of herdsmen-crop farmers' conflicts: urbanization has opened up more villages and towns, making it easier for pastoralists to penetrate hitherto remote areas; herders migrate from crisis-prone areas; and cultivated areas and cattle herds have witnessed significant expansion and increase respectively, making resources scarcer and more competitive.

The biggest issue that hinders peace and security in our continent stems from our political climate and leadership deficiencies. Many conflicts which degenerate to full-blown violence either begin with a political disagreement or are fuelled by the politics of control of power. Whether it is the political fallout between South Sudan's President, Salva Kiir, and his estranged former Vice-President, Riek Machar, or the recently-renewed and amplified limited agitation for the creation of Biafra in Nigeria, politics is always somewhere at the heart of conflicts in Africa. We need less of politics and more of altruistic governance.

This takes me to what needs to be done. Since Africa's security challenges are mainly African created problems, we should rely less on peacekeepers from outside. The real solution lies in Africa and among Africans. My view is that, to stimulate peace and engender security, we must creatively engage progressive-minded Africans in strategic and proactive management of our geo-political and economic space. Africans themselves must desire and work for peace and security.

For a start, we need to build a crop of leaders with the capacity and acumen to steer respective countries away from conflagration. This crop of leaders must be complemented with the building of institutions that could nip potential conflicts in the bud. There is no reason why elections should be followed by violence. The first duty and responsibility of a leader for his country is to ensure peace and security as the basis of good governance, economic development, social well-being and progress and wholesomeness of the polity and the state. Here, let me strongly suggest that the two organisations hosting this Forum and similar organisations and institutions in Africa must work separately and together for peace and security in Africa.

We need to revisit the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) which is built around structures, objectives, principles and values, as well as decision-making processes relating to the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction and development in the continent. The various components of APSA as well as their roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol of December 2003, that African leaders adopted in Durban, South Africa in July 2002. APSA is supported by structures such as: the Commission, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Peace Fund. It also defines the relationship between the African Union (AU), which has the primary responsibility for promoting peace, security and stability in Africa, and the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs). Through APSA, we have come to realise that collaboration, coordination and partnership between and among both state and non-state actors are crucial for the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa. APSA's peace and security agenda includes the promotion of early warning and conflict prevention; peace-making, peace support operations, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and development; democratic practices, good governance and respect for human rights; and humanitarian action and disaster management. Provisions of this vital document should be implemented to the latter.

I personally advocate African solutions for African problems. Firstly because, like I stated earlier, the international community is already overwhelmed by crises in other parts of the globe and also because African countries have an accumulated wealth of experience and wisdom derived from indigenous cultures that have not been adequately utilised. I hereby call for the strengthening of the African Elders' Council, a mechanism that builds on African cultural values of mediation and reconciliation in preventing, managing and resolving intrastate and interstate conflicts. An example of African solutions for African problems suffices here. When President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria was inaugurated in May 2015, one of his first tasks was to launch a joint military operation to curb Boko Haram attacks. Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Nigeria pulled together human and material resources for the common goal of defeating the group. With understanding of the African Union, though Boko Haram has not been completely annihilated, the successful result of the joint effort is becoming apparent. A similar case was the threatening post-electoral conflict prevented in The Gambia by a collective effort of countries in the West African sub-region early this year.

The point must be made that for disputes emanating from elections, all African countries must take resort to elective dispute resolution mechanisms which are prescribed in every country's electoral laws and regulations to avoid disputes developing into conflicts.

We must at the same time pay attention to the humanitarian challenges caused by food insecurity, drought, climate change and Internally Displaced Persons from conflict areas. In North-East Nigeria alone, over 2 million people are in need of humanitarian support. In South Sudan, as at May 2017, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has rendered humanitarian support to over 2.5 million people, and hopes to provide assistance to up to 5.8 million people. We need innovative approaches from countries in regions prone to crisis through the establishment of common markets and regional economic revitalization plans.

In the long run, our success will depend on how effectively we address the underlying causes of insecurity and instability in our continent by finding lasting solutions to weak governance, weak democratic institutions, and lack of opportunities. Working with regional and international partners, African countries must strengthen their institutions and be more proactive in tackling the security, economic, social, and political and development challenges. Countries must also begin to reconstruct a new social contract with citizens based on trust and inclusion. The keg of gunpowder we are sitting on - our vibrant youth population - has to be educated and meaningfully engaged to be made positively active and taken away from frustration and anger.

Let me conclude by saying we must always act locally, regionally and internationally in our efforts. Such efforts must address the security threat posed by violent extremists and criminal networks including drug barons, money launderers and human traffickers, while building capacity and strengthening institutions. Alone, we cannot solve all the peace and security issues of our continent. However, we must be seen as taking a lead role in proffering workable solutions to our problems and spearheading the implementation of the solutions, ready to pay the price and make the sacrifices that are necessary. The international community will be more than ready to join hands with us if we are proactive.

Once again, I thank you for inviting me to this important occasion. It is my hope that through forums like this supported with action our continent would rise up to its full potential and claim its rightful share of global division of labour and decision-making and of global prosperity in peace and security.

God bless Africa.