

## **PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA**

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## **Introduction**

The state of peace and security on the African continent remains a pre-occupying phenomenon, with successes and continuing challenges. Indeed, alongside the steady progress in the establishment of the African Union (AU) continental peace and security architecture and the promising achievements, the geopolitical map of Africa continues to bear the marks of several latent crises. There are also marks of multiple full-blown conflicts in the face of which peace efforts are often met with opposition or simply foiled by the existence of diverse challenges. The diverse challenges are often based on the logic of confrontation and on rivalries, to the detriment of concepts that are more receptive to the exigencies of peaceful solutions anchored on dialogue, compromise and win-win for mutual benefit.

In this paper, I shall take you through how Africa has gone about resolution of conflicts on the continent. In particular, I shall argue that resolution of African conflicts is best achieved by seeking African solutions through the involvement of all concerned parties. I shall also examine the challenges, especially those relating to confidence building, peace processes and peace support operations where agreements have been reached. I will also talk about the role of the international community, especially the United Nations (UN).

### **Why Peace in Africa?**

Although it is instructive to note that not all the continent is beset by conflicts, where they exist, conflicts have led to devastating effects, including: deaths to innocent civilians, refugees across borders, internal displacements, loss and

destruction of property, disruption of socio-economic activities as well as costs relating to their management and resolution. The innocent people of Africa deserve a settled life to fully exploit their potential. In fact, it is a human right that they live in dignity. This aspiration is one of the considerations enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, to promote peace, security and stability on the continent.

Africa is endowed with a wealth of resources; both human and natural. Without peace, these resources cannot be fully and optimally harnessed to ensure the much needed development on the continent. Indeed, the scourge of conflicts in Africa constitutes a major impediment to the socio-economic development of the continent. "Without peace, development is not possible", and also true, is the maxim that "Without development, peace is not durable". Hence the spirited efforts we the leaders of the continent are involved in to achieve peace and development.

In this globalised world, it is a truism that many African countries are small and uncompetitive. The most important agenda of the African Union, and indeed, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), is therefore, promotion of regional and continental integration. This position is also inspired by much richer nations in the world which have found it necessary to embrace integration for bigger markets and production lines as well as social and political stability. Ridding the continent of the lingering conflicts would, therefore, provide a conducive environment for faster integration, stability and development. The AU Heads of State are working seriously on the strategic integration agenda.

The African peoples are the most important resources of our continent. The population of Africa is currently at about 750 million people. In a decade's time, the population is estimated to reach 1 billion. This population should also be of interest to the international community. Peaceful conditions in Africa, brought about by Africa in collaboration with the international community, would ensure a quality population.

This in turn would increase global demand critical for international trade and an expanded world economy. This would benefit not only Africa but the entire humanity. The benefits would be much higher than under the current status quo where Africa's contribution to international trade is a paltry 2% and where the current development assistance to Africa has not created the necessary effect. Moreover, peace all over the world is not only the expressed desire but also commitment by all member states of the United Nations.

### **Regional Efforts**

On the basis of our observation and engagements over the years, there is no doubt that there is a desire and commitment, on the part of Africa and the international community, to resolve conflicts on the continent. This desire and commitment are well expressed in the Constitutive Act of the African Union and in the current collaborative efforts with the international community. Ultimately, though, Africa (with the support of the international community) is primarily responsible for shaping its destiny.

Examination of regional efforts towards long lasting peace in Africa reveals that they have been successful where they have occurred. Where the conflicts have persisted, the problem has been lack of implementation of agreed positions

because of various reasons, including external interference, and our own internal constraints. It is therefore, my submission that we continue to be inspired by past experiences where solutions to African conflicts have been possible, because of active involvement of all the African parties concerned and African ownership and drive of the peace processes.

## **The Democratic Republic of Congo**

You will recall the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1998. That conflict, pitting the government of Congo and armed rebel groups opposed to it, sucked in neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Uganda and Angola as well as Zimbabwe and Namibia. There were outcries of invasion of the DRC by the neighbouring countries and rebellion by the Congolese rebel groups. Ultimately, all the parties sat together in a regional effort and considered all internal and external dimensions to the conflict.

The resultant Lusaka Peace Agreement addressed the concerns of the rebel armed groups and those of the neighbouring countries. Consequently, forces of neighbouring countries withdrew and eventually, elections were held in the DRC. However, whereas the internal concerns were addressed leading to elections, addressing the external concerns of neighbouring countries remained on paper. Rwanda, in particular, was concerned about the DRC's continued harbouring and supporting, on its territory, of Ex-FAR/Interahamwe who committed genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

This omission or commission, to a large extent, explains why we are still grappling with the conflict in the Great Lakes Region. Indeed, it is only recently that Congo decided to do

what it should have done in 1998 that we have witnessed progress on that front. The DRC and Rwanda agreed and undertook joint operations against the Ex-FAR/Interahamwe in February/March 2009. The same applies to the DRC and Uganda, with the participation of Sudan, in the joint operations against the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in the DRC in February/March 2009.

The joint operations signified a new spirit of regional commitment and cooperation which is being built on. The Tripartite Plus Joint Commission involving Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and DRC played a key role in building confidence and trust among these countries and paved the way for these bold measures.

## **Burundi**

In Burundi, regional efforts, under the chairmanship of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, delivered the Arusha Peace Agreement of 2000, facilitated by the late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and later former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, and then South African Vice President Jacob Zuma. The consistent regional efforts eventually brought on board the two remaining armed groups; namely the CNDD and the FNL/Palipehutu. Burundi has been a classic example of the success of regional efforts, and also an example that incremental progress can build into a concrete solution. Burundi is now enjoying relative peace, but grappling with challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. Burundi has even contributed peacekeepers towards the Africa Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), using their experience to drive the point home for peace.

The Great Lakes Region, as earlier alluded to with regard to the conflict in the DRC, has exhibited one of the most complicated situations in the history of conflicts in Africa. None of the conflicts in the region could be resolved without reference to the other(s). Indeed, it is because of the

intertwined nature of the conflicts in the region that the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region was launched in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2004. The Conference, supported by the international community, developed a master plan for lasting peace in the region. It did not only come up with regional mechanisms addressing every body's concerns but also plans to address post-conflict reconstruction and development needs in conflict areas.

The letter and spirit expressed in the final document of this Conference confer obligations on the regional countries and demonstrate a model partnership with the international community during and after conflicts. The challenge is to deliver on the commitments, taking into account that conflicts can re-occur if the post conflict phase is not handled effectively and efficiently.

### **The Conflict in Sudan**

This conflict concerned the marginalization of Southern Sudan and had for long eluded the region. Yet, it was no longer an internal matter for Sudan; as it became an example of conflict export. Neighbouring countries, including Uganda, became adversely affected. The heinous crimes committed by the LRA in Northern Uganda, in Southern Sudan and in Eastern DRC were as a result of the support the LRA were receiving from the Government of Sudan. The internal conflict had to be resolved; and the region stood its ground.

Under the auspices of the regional organization, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) negotiated and concluded the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA resolved the internal differences in Sudan; and it also brought to an end, hopefully, the external dimensions. Current efforts are devoted to its post-conflict reconstruction

and development. However, the challenge now is for the Sudanese parties to fully implement all the provisions of the CPA, especially those related to border demarcation, sharing of oil revenue, the status of Abyei, operationalization of the Joint Integrated Units, elections this year and the referendum (to decide whether Southern Sudan remains part of Sudan or secedes) next year.

Because of its regional implications, the CPA remains one of the most watched over agreements in the region. All the countries in the region, including Uganda, are rendering unreserved support to the parties concerned to ensure the implementation of the letter and spirit of the CPA.

Besides South Sudan, there is another conflict in Darfur which remains protracted. Peace efforts jointly spearheaded by the United Nations and the African Union have not yet yielded a resolution to the conflict. It's possible that the design of the mediation remains wanting; but also, many other issues have come in to make the Sudanese parties cling to their hard positions. These include the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of President Bashir, who is required to account for alleged human rights violations in Darfur. The position of the African Union on the ICC indictment is not to condone impunity; but also to strike a balance between accountability and reconciliation in Sudan, in general.

## **Somalia**

Somalia is another conflict that our region has been handling. Under the auspices of IGAD, the warring Somali parties negotiated and signed a Charter in Nairobi in 2006, for power sharing. This brought in the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and other Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) including the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP).

Another agreement signed in August 2008, the Djibouti Agreement, brought in a new opposition armed group (The Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia) and establishment of a new Government. The change of Government in the circumstances, was democratically done.

The new President in Somalia, Sheikh Sherif Sheikh Ahmed, has committed himself to the promotion of dialogue with the insurgent groups still outside the peace process and fighting the government.

The main challenge in Somalia is that of a weak government with weak institutions. Like the DRC, Somalia needs urgent assistance to strengthen its state institutions, especially those in the security sector. This can be done alongside humanitarian assistance being provided to the victims of the conflict.

Two other conflicts in the Horn of Africa are unique in the sense that they are purely inter-state. But they have other ramifications. The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is in a stalemate; but has the potential to re-erupt violently, though it is solvable provided good will emerges.

The conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti has other ramifications of a possible proxy war between Eritrea and Ethiopia on Djiboutian soil. The proxy war is also threatening the peace process in Somalia, as there is now evidence that Eritrea is actively supporting the insurgents in Somalia on the pretext that the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is there on behalf of Ethiopia.

Some countries in the region have not been supportive of the regional and international efforts to stabilize Somalia. In fact the AU has requested the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on these countries for undermining the regional efforts aimed at stabilizing Somalia. We hope this will bring

pressure to bear on them to embrace regional peaceful processes.

### **Other Conflicts In Africa**

Among the measures put in place to stabilize the African continent, I should also mention the Ouagadougou 2000 Decision of African Heads of State to suspend any government of a Member State of the African Union that carries out removal of a democratically elected government by unconstitutional means. It is in implementation of this that Mauritania, Guinea Conakry and Madagascar have been suspended from the AU until the constitutional order has been restored.

In Comoros, after several months of sanctions and mediation made no progress, African troops supported the Comorian armed forces to remove self-styled 'President' Mohammed Bacar from power in Anjouan in March 2008.

The African Union did so at the request of Abdallah Sambi, the President of the Union of Comoros. Other examples include Liberia where the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) played a pivotal role in stabilizing the country that had been ravaged by a fratricidal war. Even in Zimbabwe, a negotiated solution was recently signed with the lead role of African Statesmen including former South African President Thabo Mbeki.

In light of the above panoramic view of conflicts in Africa, it is clear that Africans are doing more for and by themselves. In all these cases, solutions have been found because of the leadership roles that African countries are playing in addressing some of the most intractable conflicts and the support that has been given by the international community.

No doubt, African engagement has served as a catalyst for international support and the return of UN peacekeepers to

Africa (MONUC in Congo, UNMIS in Southern Sudan, UNAMID in Darfur) after the tragedies of Somalia and Rwanda in the early 1990s.

Today, Africa is the continent with the largest UN commitment on peacekeeping with eight of the seventeen active UN peace missions in the world. Although non-African countries fund these missions, all have a significant contribution of African troops and police, as burden sharing has come to characterize the search for peace and security.

## **Challenges**

Many challenges remain, of course. It would be wrong to assume that Africa is able to engage substantively on its own with conflicts such as those in Darfur, Somalia, the Great Lakes Region or between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Many of the challenges, relating to African-led peace processes, have been implied in this presentation. For now, we examine challenges relating to African peace support operations where agreements have been signed.

Whereas the African Union and the regional organizations have been compelled to deploy peace support operations, they continue to experience difficulties in financing them. In Somalia, the African Union deployed the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The mission, which is supported by international partners, requires more support to effectively carry out its mandate. In Darfur, the UN/AU joint mission, UNAMID, requires more air support and ground transport equipment, including helicopters.

The issue here is finding a dependable and assured mechanism to finance African peace support operations. Negotiations are continuing with the UN Security Council for this financing to come from UN Assessed contributions, since Africa would be acting on behalf of the UN Security Council, the body responsible for international peace and security according to the UN Charter.

In the African Union Peace and Security Architecture, we established the African Standby Force (ASF). The ASF is intended for rapid deployment for a multiplicity of peace support operations that may include preventive deployment, peacekeeping, peace-building, post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, re-integration and humanitarian assistance.

The ASF shall be constituted by five brigades from the five regions of Africa. The forces shall be within the national armies but on standby for AU calling as and when need arises. The challenge is that the ASF is still in its infancy of establishment.

Whereas the partners are supporting the initial stages of establishment, there is no assurance that the required future massive funding shall be met.

### **Japan's contribution to conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction in Africa**

With the return of peace and security to Northern Uganda, the Government has developed the Peace Recovery and Development Program (PRDP). This programme has three major objectives: to strengthen coordination of recovery interventions in the North and North-Eastern regions; to enhance monitoring of recovery programs and to undertake resource mobilization.

Government has budgeted for a total of US \$ 606 million for a three-year period for this programme. Of this budget, Government shall contribute 30% while 70% is to be contributed by development partners.

Uganda appreciates the humanitarian assistance Japan Government has contributed to Northern Uganda over the years.

As Uganda Government begins to implement the PRDP, we look forward to further support from Japan Government in the areas of economic recovery and development.

Uganda and Japan share mutual concerns on the situation in Somalia. As a result of the anarchy and piracy, coupled with recurring droughts and floods, there are an estimated 3 million people in Somalia in desperate need of humanitarian aid.

Uganda supports the strengthening of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and is closely following the political situation on the ground. We are also actively participating in the debate in the UN Security Council regarding the possible deployment of a UN peacekeeping force.

Uganda appreciates Japan's intervention to conduct maritime security operations off the coast of Somalia. It is however important to note that piracy in Somalia, is only a manifestation of more fundamental underlying problems caused by the anarchy and complete collapse of state institutions in Somalia. We therefore call upon the international community to support the region in addressing these problems. Uganda will continue cooperating closely with Japan on international matters, particularly now that our two countries are non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council for the period 2009-2010.

## **Conclusion**

The need for a conflict-free Africa need not be over-emphasized. On their part, African countries continue to spearhead peace processes aimed at the peaceful resolution of existing conflicts. The resolution of the conflict in Burundi was a classic example of a region-led initiative supported by the AU, the UN and a high profile Facilitator.

The main challenge to Africa is lack of assured means of financing these efforts, especially peace support operations which require huge amounts of funding, and post conflict reconstruction. Support and more support from development partners shall continue to play a significant role. The other form of support would be in the current negotiations for a funding role by the UN. On our part as Africans, we are determined to consolidate and preserve the hard-won gains and to ensure peace prevails on our continent for sustainable development to ensue.

**ARIGATO GOZAIMASU!!**