



TANA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SECURITY IN AFRICA

Keynote Address by Kofi Annan

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Mr. Chairman, Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen. At the outset of these remarks, allow me to thank our Chairman for inviting me to the Tana Forum.

This is the first time I am attending this prestigious event, which brings together many distinguished participants who share a deep, mutual interest in the security and well-being of Africa.

Our topic this afternoon is Africa and the Global Security Architecture.

During the Cold War years that would have not been a subject for much discussion. In those days, we looked for big-power champions who could provide diplomatic and security cover.

The contemporary world is far more complex.

And, as the awful atrocities that have been perpetrated in West, East and North Africa have shown, the continent is not immune to the security threats that many countries around the world now face.

But I want to start with some good news. Africa is actually doing better than many people may realize in terms of the security of its citizenry.

Today, and despite a few egregious exceptions, armed conflict is actually a smaller risk to most Africans than traffic accidents.

This improvement of the security situation helped set the stage for rapid economic growth of 5-6% per year for the last fifteen years.

As a result of this sustained period of growth, extreme poverty has fallen by 40% since 1990.



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And Africa's growth can no longer be explained just by global demand for its commodities.

Two thirds of Africa's growth over the last decade has come from increased domestic demand for goods and services in thriving sectors such as telecoms, financial services, manufacturing and construction.

As a result, today, inflows of private investment dwarf international aid.

They have been encouraged by the efforts of governments across Africa to improve their macro-economic environments.

Although there is still some way to go, we have seen encouraging steps towards gender parity, and the continent is moving towards universal primary education.

The spread of HIV/AIDS is in decline, and the number of deaths from tuberculosis and malaria is falling.

Democracy is extending its roots as Burkina Faso, Guinea and Nigeria have recently demonstrated.

Other countries like Cote d'Ivoire, have emerged from the abyss of conflict and are making strides towards a better and more democratic future.

In other words, our continent is generally heading in the right direction.

This encouraging analysis will come, I know, as very cold comfort for those millions of people who are still living every day in the shadow of violent conflict and abject poverty.

Progress remains uneven, and the dangers today are both internal and external.

Rebel groups have flourished in the impoverished parts of weak states that feel hard-done by their governments, where the population is often abused by the security forces, or where they do not trust the courts to deliver justice.

External forces are taking advantage of these shortcomings. We cannot ignore that from Mauritania in the west to Somalia in the east, the flag of Jihad is being raised.



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More than a dozen sub-Saharan countries are concerned, and tens of thousands have already died as a result.

Boko Haram actually killed more people last year than the Islamic State. Attacks in many places are a daily or weekly occurrence.

And local extremist groups are now linking up to each other across borders, and even to global franchises like Al Qaeda or Islamic State.

Precisely because of these affiliations, these conflicts are generally seen through a unique prism: the global war on Islamist terrorism.

This neglects what they have in common with other insurgencies on the continent, which have nothing to do with Islam.

It is no secret that unemployed young men are especially vulnerable to the temptations of violence and easily instrumentalised for that purpose.

This is not a specifically Muslim problem: a World Bank survey in 2011 showed that about 40% of those who join rebel movements say they are motivated by a lack of jobs.

In Africa, as elsewhere, the answer does not lie in a purely military response that fails to deal with the root causes of disaffection and violence.

As I constantly repeat, you cannot have peace and security without inclusive development, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. These are the three pillars of all successful societies.

It is largely because these three pillars are quite fragile in parts of Africa that we are still seeing instability and violence.

The truth is that the economic growth in Africa over the last fifteen years, though impressive, has been neither sufficient nor inclusive.

In fact, Africa has become the world's second most unequal continent, according to the African Development Bank.



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Too much of that growth has enriched a narrow elite and not enough was spent on infrastructure, health or education, which would have fostered development.

It is no coincidence that Boko Haram originated in one of the world's poorest and most deprived areas of the continent.

Not only does wealth not trickle down, but it is barely taxed, depriving the state of resources to provide public services.

It is not just that Africa is unequal: it is also unfair. An African Union report has estimated that up to one quarter of the continent's GDP is syphoned off every year through corruption.

The trafficking of drugs creates an especially difficult challenge. Drug money is insidious and invasive. It corrodes political institutions.

We must focus on the money trail. We have been locking up the minor offenders while the big fish swim free.

The fight against violent rebel movements is necessary, and will require enhanced inter-African as well as international cooperation.

But this is not enough because the challenge of security in Africa is often a political challenge revolving around the acquisition and use of power.

As a result, elections are a source of tension and repression rather than an opportunity for the free expression of political will.

Leaders who hang on to power indefinitely by gaming elections and suppressing criticism and opposition are sowing the seeds of violence and instability.

African leaders, like leaders everywhere, must remember that they are at the service of their citizens, and not the other way around.

They have a mandate given to them, in trust, by their people, who can also take it away from them if they are found wanting and to have outstayed their welcome.



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So looking forward, I see five critical challenges for Africa as it fashions its role in the global security order.

First, at the global level, Africa must have a strong and consistent voice at the pinnacle of the international security architecture – in the Security Council.

Ideally, this means African permanent seats. But until that can be accomplished, Africa must ensure that its positions on international security concerns – and not just African issues - are carefully coordinated and well presented.

Second, at the regional level, we should recognize and applaud the work of the AU and the sub-regional organisations, which have acquired considerable and commendable experience in mounting peace operations.

This effort must continue. But African states will have to give the AU the means to do so and, in future, rely less on outside funding.

Third, looking to the national level, the most urgent challenge is to create enough jobs for the continent's youth.

According to the World Bank, eleven million young people are expected to enter Africa's labour market every year for the next decade.

If these young people cannot find jobs, and do not believe in the future, they may be tempted by rebel movements of all kinds, as well as crime and migration.

Wherever I am in Africa, I am always struck not just by the number of young people, but also by their energy, their creativity and their talent.

We should invest in them, harness their talent and ensure that the next generation of leaders will do better than we have done.

Another major challenge lies in building confidence in the integrity of the electoral process.

Elections should be the vehicle for popular choice in which the winner does not take all and the losers do not lose all.



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Those who win must recognize that they do not have a licence to rule without restraint or remain in office in perpetuity.

Let us not confuse legality with legitimacy. Elections that meet legal form but fail the test of integrity are only pyrrhic victories that usually store up trouble for the future.

Finally, I want to mention the quality of national security forces. Madiba once said that “freedom would be meaningless without security in the home and in the streets”.

That security in the home and in the streets depends in good measure on our security forces.

We must invest in them but also make them fully accountable as part of our democratic societies. They must be trained to protect the individual and his or her family and property, to earn their trust and work with the people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have come a long way from the Cold War days.

Africa is now part and parcel of the global security architecture.

We can and must step up to that role by investing in our people and by protecting rights and not just regimes.

If we do that, I am convinced that our future will be more peaceful and secure than our recent past and Africa will exert a powerful and constructive influence within the global security architecture.