Ending Conflict and Building Peace in Africa: A Call to Action

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President

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Your Excellencies, Heads of States,

Your Excellency, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Summit. I will be brief.

When I asked President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, I was aware of how busy she is. I want to express my utmost thanks to President Sirleaf for accepting to Chair the High Level Panel on Fragile States alongside the remarkable team of eminent persons here today.

I am truly grateful for their work and recommendations which will go a long way in better supporting the countries and regions in post-conflict reconstruction, to help you succeed in the process of rebuilding those countries’ economies once the guns have gone silent.

In spite of uncertainties in the global economy, Sub-Saharan Africa will see growth accelerating to around 6.2% in 2014. A dozen countries will even surpass that.

You will understand that there is a gap to deal with, both in perception and reality.

In addition, step back and observe the centrifugal forces affecting the African society today, demographics, massive urbanization, natural resource findings, the IT revolution, inequalities, growth with few jobs, etc.

We see that, everywhere we go, massive socio-economic forces are affecting the political trend as seen in Africa today.

The recent sad events in South Sudan and the Central African Republic remind us of the urgency to find enduring solutions in order to ensure that our continent achieves durable peace and sustainable development.

I wish to take this opportunity to salute the valiant efforts by IGAD, the African Union and the United Nations to find lasting solutions to these crises.

The African Development Bank’s mandate is to promote and finance the socio-economic development of Africa.
Late last year, Dr. Zuma, the UN Secretary General, the World Bank President and I toured four countries in the Sahel. We confirmed if ever there was a need that security and development are inseparable. The report on peace and security and your discussions earlier are testimony.

In 2005, at the request of the then Leadership of the CAR, the Bank began a process of helping CAR reconstruct. We had to work through their debt arrears, build institutional capacity and put in measures to kick-start the economy.

I went to Bangui myself to open our office and launch these programs, hoping to reignite the economy and repair socio-economic infrastructure.

I was extremely hopeful, but when recently the rebels took over the capital everything in our projects was looted and damaged. Including our offices in a similar vein. On the day fighting started in Juba, the Bank had just approved a 26-million dollar power project.

In both countries, we will have to go back to drawing board once peace is back. We fully understand that post-conflict reconstruction is within our domain of responsibilities.

In doing so, we have to learn on the job. There is no toolbox, no manual, as each country, each conflict is different.

In 2003, the Bank set up a mechanism to help clearing external debt arrears.

In 2007, we set up a ring-fenced specialized facility for post-conflict states endowed with about 700 million dollars.

This last September that facility, having proven its worth, was beefed up to the tune of just under one billion dollars.

We concentrated on three areas we considered vital:

- Clearing the external debt arrears over which we have spent about 750 million dollars;
- Building state institutions and capacity to the tune of about 150 million dollars;
- Kick starting the key social economic infrastructure. Indeed, on the day fighting started in Juba, we had that project approved.
This is what we have done, for Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Comoros, etc.

This is indeed the task that awaits us in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and of course Somalia and Sahel. Once your efforts to stabilize the countries have borne their fruits.

President Sirleaf and the Eminent Panel members have helped us understand:

- The link between exclusion of all sorts and conflict recycles;
- The pernicious link with poverty;
- The hopelessness of young people who are easily exploited by those with other agendas;
- The role of the extractive industry.

We have learnt that every single country is vulnerable because of those tensions.

Because of what happens next door, the spillovers, whether it is refugees, small arms, drugs or jihadists.

There is no one category of countries to which this type of fragility applies. It is a potential risk for us all.

The High Level Panel Report has made extremely pertinent observations. Some are relevant for financial institutions. Others are very pertinent for countries themselves, which Madam President has ably outlined.

As the Panel says, Africa is changing at an extraordinary pace. Outside the pockets of instability, Sub-Saharan Africa will grow over 6.2%. There are many disruptive forces due to those changes, which we need to manage. Fast growth, urbanization, issues of inclusion, jobs. We are at a point where security, development and the environment are so intertwined they must be addressed together. This report, whose recommendations, I hope you can endorse.

Thank you.