



THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

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STATEMENT

BY

THE HONOURABLE DR. MAMADOU TANGARA, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ON THE OCCASSION OF THE

**RETREAT/BRAINSTORMING SESSION ORGANISED BY THE PEACE AND Security
COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**8TH SEPTEMBER 2012
KAIRABA BEACH HOTEL
BANJUL, THE GAMBIA**

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellency the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union,

Your Excellency the Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors of AU Member States,

Officials of the Pan-African Parliament,

Officials of the Panel of the Wise,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

This retreat cum brainstorming session organized by the African Union will be both informative and instructive. As the pundits and pace setters of political evolution in Africa, you will over the next two days exchange ideas on strategic issues, particularly those that are related to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction.

I am confident that you will not only identify the problems confronting Africa, but through in-depth discussions and analysis, you will articulate innovative and bold initiatives to promote and propagate peace, security and good governance in Africa.

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Despite the positive commentary published by the Africa Progress Report in 2012, that our continent has experienced accelerated growth with Gross Domestic Product averaging 5.5 percent, the overall political picture is patently gloomy. In the horn of Africa, the unending fratricidal war in Somalia has almost consumed that country and is threatening regional stability. In the Great Lakes area, the raging inferno in the Democratic Republic of Congo has assumed a regional dimension. In Darfur, peace is still elusive with the possibility of war between the two Sudans looming large.

Nearer to us here, the sister Republic of Mali is facing the greatest threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity as adventurists fight to divide the country in the name of religion. Guinea Bissau also experienced political instability, when military adventurists attempted to usurp the sovereign powers of the Government and derail constitutional rule. In the North, Africa was cut unawares by the Arab Spring and our image was dented by the debacles in Libya and Egypt.

These serious developments, which are a threat to our collective security, are compounded by the rising tide of piracy, the deadly activities of religious fundamentalists and sadly, the increasing activities of narco-traffickers who are bent on making many African countries the hub of their destructive trade.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

With these afflictions, it is no exaggeration to say that Africa is under siege and that we must act now before it is too late. Peace and stability in Africa is under threat. Our human resources have been depleted as millions are made refugees by conflicts. Our youths are being sucked into conflicts as child soldiers and sex slaves. Their productive lives and talents are being compromised and wasted. To put it simply, the very foundation and fabric of African societies are being destroyed.

Although the prophets of doom and gloom and Afro-cynics have ascribed Africa's problems to our disunity and indecisiveness, I am happy to see dedicated sons and daughters of Africa as exemplified by this retreat, coming together to identify African problems and prescribing African solutions. Already, the Peace and Security Council and the Political Commission of the African Union have succeeded in articulating a new peace and security regime. Gone are the days of impunity, when Governments could take sanctuary under the policy of non-interference. Today, the African Union has adopted and is vigorously enforcing its policy of care and responsibility and has in practical terms demonstrated Zero Tolerance to coup d'états and other unconstitutional means that bring conflict and suffering to our people.

I am therefore confident that after the next two days of deliberations, you will articulate clear and concrete initiatives to bolster peace, security and good governance in Africa. Times have changed and the situation in Africa requires new and bold initiatives. But in line with that, there is need to re-focus and re-energize the Peace and Security Council and the Political Affairs Department of the African Union in order to give them power and leverage to be able to implement the decisions of the organization.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am also confident that you will place particular emphasis on the strengthening of institutions of the African Union. This will be a welcoming development, because the effectiveness of our organization depends on the viability and efficiency of its institutions. Peace is a prerequisite for stability and development, while I subscribe to the notion; I wish to state that together we should strive to create a culture of peace all over the continent. This means that as Africans we must eschew tribalism and ethnic prejudices. We must learn to celebrate our diversity, because the imperatives that unite us are far greater than the petty considerations that divide us. Your work as peace and security officials and as African Parliamentarians must of necessity be the propagation of a culture of tolerance between all peoples and countries in Africa and indeed the world. We need tolerance for the peaceful co-existence of our people and we need tolerance to dispel religious tensions and conflicts. In this regard, members of the Panel of the Wise have a special and significant role to play. The panel should serve as the institutional memory of our organization as well as its moral compass to guide and provide advice on issues of peace and security.

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I wish to request you to maintain the momentum that will be generated by this retreat. The outcomes and recommendations should be implemented in order to transform our continent into a place of peace, stability and development. I know that you have the capabilities and determination to do so and I encourage you to continue your work with courage and perseverance.

It is our pleasure to host you here in Banjul and on behalf of the President, the Government and people of The Gambia I wish you all a nice stay in The Gambia. I pray that the work of the Peace and Security Council and the Political Commission of the African Union will be crowned with success.

May God Bless you and may God bless Africa.

Thank you for your attention.