

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS TO THE SUMMIT OF THE AFRICAN UNION
Addis Ababa, 29 January 2012

President Mbasogo, Chairperson of the African Union,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government of the African Union,
Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia,
Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Jean Ping,
Excellencies,
Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

Excellencies, congratulations on this outstanding new building and beautiful hall.

And my congratulations, as well, to the People's Republic of China for its generosity in helping to realize this great expression of friendship, and in particular to your guest of honour today, Mr. Jia Qing Lin, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference of the People's Republic. I think this deserves our warmest applause.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is much more than a new conference center.

It is another sign of a rising Africa — a meeting ground for African peace and prosperity for generations to come.

Last week, we celebrated the opening of another office. Far smaller in size, it too speaks to something larger.

For the first time in 17 years, the UN Political Office for Somalia returned to Mogadishu — the fulfilment of a pledge I made during my recent visit to Somalia, the first by a UN Secretary-General in a generation.

After so long... after so much conflict and despair... this one modest office is a symbol. An unmistakable symbol of the struggle and sacrifice of all those who made it possible, most notably the brave soldiers of AMISOM.

It is also a symbol of progress and commitment to Somalia's future.

Above all, it is a symbol of our partnership — the United Nations the African Union, united by hope and the promise of this mighty continent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is my sixth year in office — and my sixth African Union summit.

I believe in the power and potential of Africa. And I have made Africa a priority from day one.

As I begin my second term as United Nations Secretary-General, I thank you for your support.

I carry it with an enormous sense of pride and responsibility.

I salute your efforts to build African prosperity and grow Intra-African trade.

Our challenge is to transform Africa's potential into progress for all.

Excellencies,

We are coming off a year of high drama — a global earthquake with Africa at the epicentre.

It began in Cote d'Ivoire. We stood firm for democracy supported by the AU and ECOWAS.

Yet let us speak plainly. There were differences in Cote d'Ivoire, and Libya

These were not differences of objectives or goals; our partnership is anchored in shared values. These were differences in operational and strategic approaches.

This is natural – even to be expected among organizations with varied mandates and memberships.

The question is how we manage those differences.

We do it through dialogue, engagement and collaboration. Ours is a vital strategic partnership.

I am committed to deepening our ties. And I emphasized that during this month's Security Council session on UN-AU cooperation.

We have seen the fruits of this partnership in our work for peace in Darfur... in our common diplomatic efforts in Guinea... in our cooperation on Somalia.

In dealing with the fallout from Libya in the Sahel, our combined efforts got off to a good start in the recently authorized mission to the region.

Where there are differences, let us continue to find common ground for the future.

For example: let us review how effectively and how quickly we are able to respond to crises.

Let us also examine how we deliver on our common responsibilities under UN mandates.

South Sudan is twice the size of Germany, with less than 100 kilometers of paved roads.

Our peacekeepers are doing all they can — with what they have. Despite severe logistical constraints, particularly air transport, the mission succeeded in saving many lives during the recent crisis in Jonglei.

Yet clearly: without air assets such as helicopters, we cannot do all that we must do to protect people.

Today, I appeal once again to you and to all Member States:

Mesdames et messieurs,

Je crois vraiment qu'en nous unissant, nous pourrions avancer dans les domaines qui comptent le plus pour les gens.

La semaine dernière, j'ai présenté un programme d'action axé sur le changement. Un programme d'action qui nous permettra d'obtenir des résultats concrets dans cinq domaines cruciaux et de bâtir ainsi l'avenir que nous voulons.

Le développement durable... la prévention... l'édification d'un monde plus sûr... l'aide aux pays en transition... l'autonomisation des femmes et des jeunes.

Chaque élément de ce programme présente un intérêt particulier pour l'Afrique.

Commençons par le développement durable.

L'augmentation des prix de l'alimentation et du carburant... les phénomènes climatiques extrêmes... l'insécurité énergétique... la pauvreté... le chômage des jeunes... les écarts qui se creusent... tous ces symptômes montrent que la voie sur laquelle nous avançons mène à l'impasse.

La prospérité économique, l'autonomisation de tous et la lutte contre les changements climatiques sont liés entre eux.

Nous ne pouvons progresser que sur les trois fronts à la fois.

Demain, ici à Addis-Abeba, je recevrai le rapport final du Groupe de haut niveau sur l'écoviability mondiale. Je remercie les coprésidents, le Président de l'Afrique du Sud, M. Zuma, et la Présidente de la Finlande, Mme Halonen.

La conférence sur le développement durable, Rio +20, sera l'occasion de continuer à avancer. Nous devons, ensemble, tout faire pour qu'elle aboutisse.

Je vous demanderai à tous de vous atteler à la tâche, au plus haut niveau qui soit, pour concourir à son succès.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Nous savons que la prévention permet de sauver des vies aujourd'hui – et de dépenser moins demain.

C'est pourquoi nous allons renforcer les équipes de l'ONU qui s'occupent des bons offices, de la médiation et des interventions rapides.

Nous allons aussi redoubler d'efforts dans les domaines de la réduction des risques et de la prévention des crises humanitaires.

Tout en restant concentrés sur la plus grande crise humanitaire d'aujourd'hui, celle qui frappe la corne de l'Afrique, nous devons tout faire pour éviter qu'une autre se déclenche dans l'ouest du continent.

Dix millions de personnes, voire plus, risquent d'être frappées par la famine dans la région du Sahel.

Elles vont avoir besoin de notre aide. Agissons maintenant, avant qu'il ne soit trop tard.

We must also adopt a preventive approach to human rights.

The Arab Spring took many by surprise.

Traditional indicators told us these countries were 'stable' or doing well.

Yet below the surface, there was deprivation, exclusion, abuse.

Events have proved that repression is a dead-end. Police power is no match for people power seeking dignity and justice.

The women and men protesting in streets and public squares across the region are both an inspiration and a reminder. A reminder that leaders must listen to their people... that all of us must do more.

Yes, trade and investment are crucial for development. But Africa's future also depends on investments in civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a promise to all people in all places at all times.

Let me mention one form of discrimination that has been ignored or even sanctioned by many States for far too long — discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

This has prompted some governments to treat people as second-class citizens, or even criminals.

Confronting this discrimination is a challenge. But we must live up to the ideals of the Universal Declaration.

The International Criminal Court has proven to be an increasingly effective tool in standing against impunity and extending the reach of international human rights law.

Let us wish its new chief prosecutor well — an African woman, Fatou Bensouda of Gambia, is the new face of international justice.

Excellencies,

As we push on prevention, we must also help countries in transition.

The Arab Spring brought hope and great expectations.

But democracy is not easy. It takes time.

Yet we cannot let that be an excuse to let a once-in-a-generation opportunity for change slip away.

This year, 25 African countries will hold elections at either the presidential, legislative or local levels.

Let us work to ensure that all these elections are well-managed, transparent and inclusive.

The transition in Tunisia has been a model for other states.

In Libya, our political mission is helping the new transitional authorities to organize elections and improve public security, rule of law and transitional justice.

We are also working closely with the African Union to monitor the after-effects of the Libyan conflict and curb the spread of weapons in the Sahel.

In Egypt, I again encourage the transitional authorities to guarantee the peaceful and early handover of power to civilian government, uphold human rights, release political prisoners and accelerate the pace of reform.

Excellencies,

Let us also intensify our work on peace and security.

Here at this Summit, we welcome the Republic of South Sudan.

Both Sudan and South Sudan worked to end one of Africa's longest-running civil wars.

I now urge both to show the same statesmanship and resolve outstanding issues.

On Somalia, the situation remains fragile – but the prospects for positive change are the best in years.

AMISOM has made great achievements at great cost.

The African Union and others are crafting a comprehensive Strategic Concept for AMISOM together with the United Nations.

We must ensure that there is equally strong political cooperation to complete the Roadmap.

We are also working closely to address threats posed by the LRA in the four affected countries – as well as emerging transnational challenges in West Africa such as terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and the rise of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

With respect to Nigeria, I am deeply troubled by the indiscriminate and unacceptable violent attacks. No cause justifies terror.

We stand in solidarity with the authorities and the people of Nigeria for democratic and accountable governance.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Enfin, unissons nos forces pour donner un avenir meilleur aux femmes et aux jeunes, qui représentent ensemble 80 % de la population de l'Afrique.

Vous avez parmi vous la dernière lauréate du Prix Nobel de la paix. La Présidente du Libéria, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a montré que les femmes ne sont pas que des victimes de la guerre. Elles sont aussi des championnes de la paix.

L'Afrique se distingue par la proportion de femmes – la plus élevée du monde – que comptent les parlements de deux de ses pays : le Rwanda vient en tête avec 56 % et l'Afrique du Sud en deuxième position avec 46 %.

Pourtant, pour l'ensemble du continent, les chiffres sont dans la moyenne mondiale, autour de 20 %. Nous devons faire en sorte que les femmes soient pleinement représentées dans les organes de décision, y compris en Égypte et en Tunisie, où elles ont joué un rôle déterminant.

Et nous devons faire renaître l'espoir et offrir un avenir meilleur aux jeunes de l'Afrique. Le chômage et la pauvreté chroniques nourrissent l'instabilité et créent des tensions. J'entends

nommer un représentant spécial pour la jeunesse, qui ouvrira le dialogue avec les jeunes et dirigera nos efforts.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen.

This is a full agenda for progress and action.

In every sense, Africa is the focus.

And in every sphere, partnership is the driver.

That means all of you in this room.

I am confident that we will work ever more closely to build on the common values that are the foundation of the United Nations and the African Union.

As we dedicate this splendid new building, let us also dedicate ourselves to this great cause for all of Africa.

Thank you.