

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL DELIVERY
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UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS TO 32nd ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION
Addis Ababa, 10 February 2019

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Your Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Chairperson of the African Union,
Your Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this august Assembly.

I commend President Kagame for his leadership over the past year, and I congratulate incoming chairperson, President Al-Sisi.

Let me begin on a personal note, linked to the theme of this year's meeting.

In the search for durable solutions to forced displacement, the world – and, indeed, I personally – have drawn constant inspiration from African leadership, African vision and African compassion.

Africa hosts nearly a third of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons.

Despite the continent's own social, economic and security challenges, Africa's governments and people have kept borders, doors and hearts open to millions in need.

Unfortunately, this example has not been followed everywhere.

Africa has set the gold standard for solidarity.

Five decades ago, the continent adopted the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention – which goes beyond even the landmark 1951 Refugee Convention by expanding the definition of a refugee.

Ten years ago, you took a step further in adopting the Kampala Convention on Internally Displaced Persons – the first and only regional convention of its kind.

In 2015, the Abidjan Declaration was a pioneering moment in the global fight to eradicate statelessness.

And last year, African leadership helped secure the adoption of two pivotal Global Compacts – on Refugees and on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

I have seen the words of these crucial Conventions and Declarations come to life in every corner of this continent through the spirit of African compassion.

I will never forget seeing Liberian farmers share their seed rice for the next planting season to feed desperate newcomers fleeing civil unrest in Côte d'Ivoire.

I will always remember the electric air of joy as I stood with Congolese returning from Tanzania, joined a repatriation convoy to South Sudan or rode on a truck carrying Liberians home from Sierra Leone.

And my heart still breaks as I recall people such as Musleema, a Somali woman refugee I met in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia.

She walked two weeks and lost three of her six children along the way before finally finding desperately needed safety and care.

Over many years, it has become clear to me: Africa's generosity to those seeking havens from war and persecution is unmatched.

As High Commissioner for Refugees, I greatly admired and depended on that solidarity.

And from day one as Secretary-General, I have been determined to forge ever closer ties between the United Nations and Africa.

Indeed, there has been a quantum leap in our strategic cooperation with the African Union.

We have signed Joint Frameworks on Peace and Security and on Sustainable Development.

We have institutionalized UN-AU Annual Conferences at the summit level.

We have conducted numerous joint high-level visits across the continent.

Chairperson Faki and I recently signed a Joint Declaration on cooperation for peace support operations.

And the AU Commission and the UN Secretariat held our first Human Rights Dialogue – an encouraging step on a critical issue.

Excellencies,

We have much to show from our combined efforts – and are better positioned to address our shared challenges.

I would like to highlight three such challenges today: peace and security, sustainable development and climate change.

On peace and security, strong winds of hope are blowing across the African continent.

The African Union's efforts to "silence the guns" by 2020 are gaining ground.

The UN surge in diplomacy for peace is producing results.

The fruits of our strategic partnerships are making a difference.

Ethiopia and Eritrea have signed a historic peace accord.

In the Central African Republic, the signing of a peace agreement this week – led by the AU with UN support -- can prove to be an important step on the long path to ending bloodshed.

In South Sudan, the agreement – facilitated by IGAD -- between the parties to the conflict has revitalized chances for peace.

And, in Libya, the ceasefire in and around Tripoli brokered by the United Nations is still holding. Our efforts have helped stabilize the currency, brought some measure of economic relief and enabled a realistic prospect for security reform.

Now it is time to help unite the Libyan people to advance the political process through a National Conference paving the way for reconciliation and future elections.

All this represents remarkable progress in conflict resolution in Africa.

A similar story is unfolding with respect to prevention.

I welcome the first peaceful transition of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since independence in 1960.

In Mali, presidential elections were successfully organized in line with Mali's constitutional and legal frameworks.

In Madagascar, the peaceful presidential elections are testament to the responsibility of national stakeholders and our close cooperation.

And in Guinea Bissau, we are working with ECOWAS, the AU and other partners to promote free and fair elections. Parliamentary elections are already scheduled.

Excellencies,

It is in this context of renewed hope that we increase our mutual support to peace operations in Africa.

To consolidate and build on our gains, I launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative to enable our missions to be more effective, better equipped, safer and more robust.

I thank African Member States and the African Union Commission for endorsing this effort.

African countries provide nearly half of all Blue Helmets deployed worldwide, including some two-thirds of all women peacekeepers and the majority of United Nations police.

Their service and sacrifice are always at the forefront of our minds.

Just yesterday, three Ethiopian peacekeepers serving in the United Nations mission in Abyei were killed when their helicopter crashed. I want to extend my deep solidarity and condolences to their families as well as to the government and people of Ethiopia. I wish a speedy recovery to all those injured.

Thanks to our peacekeepers' dedication, the missions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia have concluded in the past two years, consolidating the successes of other United Nations operations in West Africa.

And, in Sudan, where the security situation in Darfur has improved markedly since the height of the conflict, our two organizations are drawing down UNAMID -- the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur -- with a view to a potential exit in 2020.

But our peacekeeping operations are increasingly being called into areas where there is no peace to keep.

That is why I have been repeatedly expressing my support for African peace enforcing and counter terrorism operations.

I salute the sacrifices of the African soldiers in AMISOM, the G5-Sahel Joint Force, and the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin.

To be fully effective, these African peace operations require robust mandates from the Security Council and predictable, sustainable financing, including assessed contributions.

You can count on my continued full support.

I also welcome our joint advocacy for women's leadership in peace processes and political agreements.

Groups such as FemWise and the African Women Leaders Network are making invaluable contributions and are important initiatives for joint UN-AU collaboration.

Women's equality, meaningful participation and leadership are critical to lasting peace.

I welcome the two joint high-level UN-AU missions on women, peace and security co-led by my deputy, and I encourage that these become an annual practice and inform concrete action.

Excellencies,

We all know there cannot be durable peace without sustainable development.

All our gains in peace and security need to be consolidated by addressing the root causes of conflict.

The United Nations is strongly committed to supporting the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

But the global community is falling behind in addressing two key challenges: meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and tackling climate change.

The world is not moving far enough, or fast enough, to translate the promise of the SDGs into reality.

At present trends, we will only get half the job done.

Financing is critical.

Developed countries must fulfil their obligations under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

I salute African countries' efforts to create conditions for mobilizing domestic resources, including through tax reform, fighting corruption and other good governance measures.

At the same time, the international community must take much more effective steps to fight illicit flows of capital, money laundering and tax evasion, which continue to drain vital resources from the African continent.

We need to do more to mobilize more resources, and we need to align national and global financial strategies behind the SDGs.

That is the heart of the Strategy for Financing the 2030 Agenda that I launched in September.

Excellencies,

We have another mighty challenge before us.

Climate change is still moving much faster than our efforts to slow it.

Just this past week, the World Meteorological Organization confirmed that the last four years have been the hottest since records began – emphasizing the urgency of accelerated climate action.

Climate change is an existential threat -- particularly here in Africa, which has least responsibility for the crisis but will shoulder some of the heaviest burden.

At the UN Climate Conference in Katowice, we were able to revitalize climate action by adopting the work programme for the Paris Agreement.

But global emissions continue to rise and the essential target of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees becomes ever more elusive.

We need more ambition – ambition on adaptation, ambition on mitigation, ambition on finance and ambition on innovation.

I will convene a Climate Summit in New York in September to spur action by political leaders, the business community and civil society.

This includes mobilizing the \$100 billion dollars a year for climate action pledged by developed nations.

We need to catalyse a quantum leap in political will for climate action as the only way to achieve sustainable development and prevent climate-related catastrophic disasters, conflict and displacement.

Excellencies,

Great challenges remain, but winds of hope are blowing throughout our shared agenda.

Africa is on the move and there are real reasons for optimism.

The United Nations will continue to work together with you for a peaceful and prosperous future for all Africans.

Thank you.