

AFRICAN UNION

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**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR RAMTANE LAMAMRA TO THE 33RD ORDINARY
SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
AU FLAGSHIP PROJECT ON SILENCING THE GUNS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE
AU THEME FOR 2020**

ADDIS ABABA, AU HEADQUARTERS, 9 - 10 FEBRUARY 2020

**Your Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South
Africa and Chair of the Union,**

**Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government, Distinguished Heads
of Delegation,**

**Your Excellencies our Former Heads of States and former Leaders of the
OAU/AU,**

Esteemed Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All Protocols observed,

I am deeply honored to introduce the Theme of this year to your august
Assembly. Allow me first to commend the Chairperson of the
Commission H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, for his leadership on the theme

of the year and the objectives to be achieved. I would also like to commend the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, and his team in the Peace and Security Department, for their daily work on the Theme of the year : “Silencing the Guns: Creating conducive conditions for Africa’s development”, as reflected in the Orientation Concept Note and its Matrix of activities. A similar tribute goes to other Commissioners and Departments of the African Union Commission for their unwavering contributions to the multi-dimensional task of silencing the guns in the Continent, as well as to all Peace and Security Council (PSC) Member States and also International Partners.

Looking at the achievements made in promoting peace and security in the continent, in recent decades, particularly since 2004, with the operationalization of the AU Peace and Security Council, the noble objective of silencing the guns and ending wars in the continent is achievable. In retrospect, from around 30 active conflicts in 2004, we must celebrate the fact that we are now addressing fewer conflicts than then. I must state with emphasis that a lot of work has, therefore, been done and continues to be done, to ensure a conflict-free Africa in line with the aspirations enshrined in the Solemn Declaration adopted by this Assembly on 25 May 2013 on the occasion of the OAU/AU 50th anniversary and Agenda 2063.

Indeed, Africa has a robust blueprint for promoting peace, security and stability, as well as advancing good governance, respect for human and people's rights and constitution. This blueprint is the combination of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA). The PSC has led and continues to effectively lead the implementation of this blueprint.

This begs the question as to what else can be done to further enhance our concerted efforts in conflict prevention and resolution. Here, the determining factor is the political will of Member States. Prevention and resolution of conflicts is done on national territories, and therefore political will is very crucial. In other words, while the respect for national sovereignty is paramount, this should not undermine our efforts to scale up conflict prevention and, if and when necessary, take collective action in the name of the principle of non-indifference as enshrined in the Constitutive Act.

Cognizant of the fact that civil conflicts are triggered by series of disagreements, disparities within or between individuals, communities and factions, we are faced with the challenges of being more creative in conceptualizing and implementing innovative solutions to conflicts. In

this perspective, our focus should primarily be to ensure preservation of national unity, functioning of state institutions and overall sovereignty of the people.

In this context, it is imperative to conceptualize inclusivity in all facets of conflict resolution as one of the essential ingredients in silencing the guns in the continent. Put in the field, this means involving all layers of society, particularly women and youth. It is an established fact that causes of conflicts in our continent are varied and multifaceted. A significant proportion of these conflicts have been predominantly driven by ethnic rivalry over political succession, disagreement over modalities for conduct of national elections or over the outcomes of elections, as well as power struggles within the state. Conflict also arise due to struggle over control and access to natural resources and the accruing benefits.

Furthermore, it is a fact that parts of the African continent are still facing struggles for national and transnational identities and this can generate challenges to national cohesion. The consequences are manifold, ranging from deep-seated hatred and destructions with their attendant manifestations of mistrust, inequality, risks of genocide, etc...

While we continue to deploy conventional methods of conflict resolution through processes that involve the use of wise Pan-Africanists, international and regional organizations, the involvement of neighboring countries, peace support operations and civil society organizations, we should be cognizant of the nature, scope and cultural settings of these conflicts. With this approach, one can then forge a tailored comprehensive strategy, including the use of formal and informal mediation mechanisms at the village, community, state, regional and continental levels.

In other words, lessons learnt underscore the point that convention-centric approaches combined with inclusive local processes is more likely to contribute positively to silencing the guns in the continent. This is obvious in case of conflicts instigated on the preservation of traditional social entities such as extended families, lineages, clans, 'tribes', religious brotherhoods and ethno-linguistic groups, etc.

In these types of conflict settings, there is need for a hybrid conflict management mechanism that will take into consideration traditional/indigenous methods of interventions in search for a balanced solution between the centres and the peripheries, in order to preserve national unity with due respect for diversities. The overall objective of this hybrid

approach is the preservation of national unity without infraction on the existing religious and linguistic factors.

Given the experiences gained and the results achieved in the past decade or more, the African Union needs more than ever to spearhead and strengthen its conflict mediation efforts and lead action aimed at more operationally bringing together all African and international actors, including the United Nations, in conducting enhanced collaborative efforts to silence the guns and create conducive conditions for socio-economic development in the continent. This should be translated into concrete steps to be immediately undertaken to silence the guns in Libya, Mali, and the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, as well as in Somalia and other hotspots. Africa has the will and ability to defeat terrorism as it defeated colonialism and Apartheid. The African people do expect such victory that will indeed lead to a permanent silencing of the guns in the Continent.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need to review and adjust our conflict prevention and resolution tools in order to effectively and efficiently respond to the ever changing nature of conflict, violence and criminality on the continent. I reiterate, once more, that silencing the guns is an achievable task that can help us to promote the sovereignty of

our people and further advance our Panafrican integration and development objectives.

I thank you.