

**Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector**

**Remarks for the Freedom from Fear Cluster, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2005.**

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Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Peacebuilding Civil Society Organizations from West Africa, I am most grateful to make the following few remarks.

We have read with much appreciation the draft outcome document to be discussed by Heads of State and Government in September 2005. Many years of conflict and political turmoil have left Africa devastated and lagging behind on all indicators of human development. Domestic and international resources have been committed to the execution of wars, provision of relief and to peacekeeping and rehabilitation. These are resources that could be used to improve the quality of the lives of people, thus contributing to the prevention of violent conflict.

We are convinced that:

- A conflict-ridden and underdeveloped Africa will continue to be a constraint on the achievement of any development goals.
- The cost of proactive prevention of violent conflict, in the long run, is cheaper than that of managing conflicts and their consequences
- A shift from reactive to proactive approaches to conflict, and from state security to human security, is desirable and possible
- Resources need to be committed to support ongoing peacemaking and democratic reform efforts, and to support reconstruction and reconciliation after signing of peace agreements.

In this regard, we propose the following be prioritised within the context of the draft outcome document:

- Addressing structural causes of conflict such as abject poverty, debt burden, trade justice and governance. (We laud the efforts of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and other leaders for their courage and leadership in dealing with Africa's debt burden. We urge an all out debt cancellation for all African countries and not debt relief on the model of the contentious Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HPIC) initiative).
- Long term support for the ongoing peacemaking and reconstruction efforts in Africa in order to prevent a relapse to conflict
- Backing Africa's democratic reforms and economic development initiatives with the necessary financial and moral support
- Supporting the development of the capacity for operational prevention within Africa through capacity building of regional bodies such as the Economic Community for West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU)
- Promoting multilateral and holistic approaches to global security threats

- Recognising and promoting the role of CSOs (including grassroots and faith communities and women movements) in promoting a culture of peace, building capacity and skills in conflict resolution and promoting dialogue and reconciliation in conflict settings.

Within the spirit of the values and principles of the draft outcome document, we make the following concrete proposals:

- The UN, African governments and inter-governmental organizations should recognize, articulate and promote the role of CSO's as partners in advocating for the various protocols and declarations on conflict prevention and peace building at local, national, regional and international levels.
- The UN and the international community should recognize the relevance and legitimacy of African institutions and initiatives on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. They should work to build the capacity of the AU to enforce the implementation of its peace and security policies.
- The UN should complete a paradigm shift from reactive to proactive approaches to conflict through appropriate implementation of preventive strategies as enshrined in existing sub-regional, regional and international protocols, conventions and declarations.
- The UN should strengthen partnerships among all relevant stakeholders as a key element in working towards preventing violent conflict and building sustainable peace.
- The UN should use collective strategies and action towards the ratification and implementation of protocols relating to the proliferation of arms, ammunitions and other materials as a way of curbing their availability. They should work to domesticate these conventions by encouraging national legislation on these protocols.

In addressing the conditions that breed violent conflicts in Africa, we further recommend:

- That the international community should concretely support the African Union's attempts at enhancing good governance and sound economic management by its members, especially through its NEPAD initiative. Promises by the G8 countries to support this initiative should be fulfilled.
- The African Diaspora should form a strong coordinated pressure group to lobby and advocate for African agendas.
- The African Union and the international community should set up a revolutionary strategy to address the youth problem in Africa that has resulted in treacherous exodus to Europe and America. Governments should establish viable youth policies and structures that provide job creations for youth.

In dealing with the external causes of conflicts in Africa, we recommend that:

- Civil Society, African governments and the international community should investigate, name and shame the perpetrators and economic beneficiaries of violent conflicts in Africa;
- The UN should encourage member states to reinforce and implement the “Nairobi Declaration on Illicit Small Arms” and other legally binding agreements on the regulation and control of arms
- The AU with the support of UN should pass a resolution banning the use of mercenaries in Africa.
- The UN should implement the recommendation from the Secretary-General’s *High-level Panel on Threats Challenges and Change*, paragraph 92, that states “The UN should work with national authorities, international financial institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector to develop norms governing the management of natural resources for countries emerging from or at risk of conflict.”

Finally, in responding to the challenges of global security and threats, we recommend that

- The international community should increase investment in development assistance by at least US\$ 50 billion, in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Africa by 2015.<sup>1</sup> We support the call made by the High Panel on Threat Challenges and Change for a second UN Security Council meeting on HIV/AIDS and expand it to include malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.
- The UN and the international community should enforce laws that protect political, social and economic rights, especially the rights of women, children, and minority or indigenous groups.
- The UN, in collaboration with CSO’s, should encourage the enforcement of peace and security policies by its member states and develop a common foreign and security policy.
- We strongly recommend the upholding of the supremacy of International law. The UN should be the sole authority imbued with powers to police the world and address impending security threats. The UN should encourage its member states to ratify, domesticate and enforce all international laws and conventions on human rights and good governance.
- The UN Security Council Resolution should mainstream Conflict Prevention and denounce the use of violent means as a means for interaction among states consistent with the existing UN Resolutions on Peace and Security.

Thank you Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Africa needs dramatic aid boost, UN officials and African leaders say’, Press Release of a forum discussing Africa’s development challenges at UN headquarters, UNDP, 29 September 2004.