

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
Security Council
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Remarks to the Security Council Summit on “Africa and the Challenges to International Peace and Security”

Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important discussion.

Ensuring peace and security for the people of Africa is not only at the very core of the UN agenda, it is a top priority for me personally. I wish to act with a strong sense of urgency. I want to emphasize the importance of results, action and delivery.

Many African countries are confronted with daunting peace and security challenges. But encouraging signs are emerging. Progress has been achieved on several fronts. The successful conduct of elections in Sierra Leone is the most recent manifestation of the positive trends. The Governments and people of Africa must be commended for their determined efforts to address the challenges.

But African peacemakers alone cannot tackle the continent's conflicts. That is why the UN is working to strengthen its partnerships with regional organizations, such as the African Union. The goal is to enhance the capacities to address conflicts. Together, we must respond in a more timely and complementary manner to the crises in Africa.

The hybrid operation for Darfur represents an unprecedented partnership between the UN and the AU. It is an expression of our collective commitment to end the tragedy of Darfur. More broadly, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is working with the AU to develop an African standby force to help maintain durable peace on the continent as a whole.

But we must invest more in prevention and mediation so that disagreements do not develop into violence. Efforts to prevent conflict require much less resources than do peacekeeping operations. Next month, I intend to propose to the General Assembly a significant strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs to make more effective use of my good offices. I count on your support.

I also seek your continued assistance in our efforts to consolidate peace in fragile post-conflict countries, to help prevent a relapse into violence. The Peacebuilding Commission has so far helped bring increased international attention to recovery efforts in Burundi and Sierra Leone. We anticipate more referrals, including of African countries, for the Commission's consideration.

Climate change brings additional challenges to Africa, including in peace and security. As underscored at the high-level meeting I convened yesterday, decisive international action to address global warming is crucial. It is particularly important for Africa, as the impact of climate change will fall disproportionately on some of its poorest countries.

Equally pressing is the need to make development work in Africa. Fighting extreme poverty is key to preventing conflict. That is why I recently launched the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group, together with the AU, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and other partners. The aim is to galvanize international action to reach the Goals on the continent by 2015.

Along the continuum from conflict prevention to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Africa, I am committed to ensuring that the UN plays its role to the fullest extent possible.