“Has Africa Any Role in the Current Efforts against World Terror?”

“THE AFRICAN LEADERS’ LECTURE SERIES”

by

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Excellencies,
The Director of African Orbit, Prof. Angelicus-M. Onasanya,
Head of the Dept. of Anthropology and Africa Group, Dr. P. Leis,
The Faculty and Staff of the Watson Institute for International Relations,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I. Introduction

It is indeed a great honour and privilege to be invited to speak at “The African Leaders’ Lecture Series” on the topic, “Has Africa Any Role in the Current Efforts against World Terror”. This is a particularly timely question in the face of growing insecurity in the world. Wars and conflicts have been the major source of insecurity in Africa threatening the lives of millions and diverting the resources of the continent from socio-economic development. Nonetheless, the peace and security concerns of Africa cannot be divorced from those of the international community and vice-versa. Hence Africa would benefit from multilateral efforts to combat the old as well as new threats to global security such as terrorism while also contributing to such efforts.

II. Global Context of Efforts Against Terrorism

In this regard, the tragic events of September 11 remind all of us of three main facts: that we live in a dangerously insecure world; that security is indivisible and finally that the growing indivisibility of security underscores the need for global cooperation in tackling global challenges. Moreover, the idea that security is also a function of military supremacy has been proven wrong and perhaps redundant in this world of increasing globalization. The impact of endemic poverty; volatile international financial markets; transnational organised crime; HIV/AIDS pandemic; environmental degradation and international terrorism have also challenged the assumption that the world can be divided into safe and unsafe areas.

We must also recognize the fact that the terrorist networks find it easier to breed and prosper where organized crimes reign, where political and administrative machinery and state institutions are weak or malfunctioning, where ideology and religious fanaticism have replaced reason and morality and where despair has destroyed a sense of purpose. However, when terrorists strike, no one is spared. Their acts affect us all: rich and poor, strong and weak states, developed and under-developed world, East and West, North and South. In 1998, terrorists struck in Tanzania and Kenya, but in 2001, it was in the United States of America and in 2004, it was in Spain, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. The intended consequences of their acts include the creation of widespread fear, uncertainty and insecurity. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed out, in his celebrated Commencement Address at Harvard University, “today, the strong feel almost as vulnerable to the weak as the weak feel vulnerable to the strong (June 10, 2004)”.

Hence, there is a strong case for building strong and lasting global coalitions to combat old and new threats to international peace and security, especially terrorism. As the then Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, put it, “only on the basis of such a
coalition is it possible to create an atmosphere of total rejection of terrorists’ actions and to banish them from their last nests. Indeed, the present solidarity against terrorism provides a unique chance to begin constructing a system of international security adequate to address 21st Century threats” (New York Times, January 27, 2002).

That solidarity was clearly demonstrated on 12th September, 2001, when both the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted resolutions strongly condemning the attacks and calling on all states to cooperate in bringing the perpetrators to justice. The Security Council then passed, unanimously, a second and more detailed Resolution 1373 which mandated all Member States to take a broad range of measures targeting terrorists and all those who harbour, aid or support them. The Council then established a follow-up mechanism through its Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) to combat terrorism.

In order to assist the Council’s Counter-Terrorism Committee, an Executive Directorate was established for an initial period ending 31 December 2007. On 29 June 2004, the Secretary-General appointed Ambassador Javier Ruperez (Spain) as Executive Director of CTC. He submitted the organizational plan to continue the Committee’s efforts to increase the capabilities of Member States to combat terrorism; to identify and address their problems in implementing resolution 1373 (2001); to facilitate the provision of technical assistance adjusted to the countries’ needs; to encourage the largest possible number of States to become parties to the international conventions and protocols related to counter-terrorism; and to strengthen its dialogue and cooperation with international, regional and sub regional organizations acting in the areas outlined in resolution 1373 (2001).

The Committee has now began preparations for its first visit to a Member State, aimed at promoting a climate of cooperation and for providing technical assistance based on more accurate assessments of the country’s needs. The development of cooperation with international, regional and sub regional organizations would remain one of the Committee’s priorities. The Committee has accepted the proposal by the League of Arab States to host its next meeting with international organizations to be held in November-December 2004 in Cairo. Furthermore, on 8th October 2004, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1566 expanding the definition of terrorist groups and individuals to include entities other than those affiliated with Al Qaida. Through the Resolution, a working group is to be set up to make recommendations on how to deal with entities associated with terrorist activities.

Notwithstanding these concrete steps to combat terrorism, Secretary-General Kofi Annan reminds us, “none of the issues that faced us on September 10 has become less urgent”. According to him, “The number of people living on less than one dollar a day has not decreased. The numbers dying of AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and other preventable diseases have not decreased. The factors that cause the desert to advance, biodiversity to be lost, and the earth’s atmosphere to warm, have not decreased. And in the many parts of the world afflicted by the scourge of war, innocent people have not ceased being murdered or mutilated, dragged or driven from their homes. In short, the agenda of peace, development and human rights set for us in the Millennium Declaration
is no less pressing.” These are also the main challenges which Africa is grappling with and for which the support of the international community is essential in the context of a new partnership.

Meanwhile Secretary-General Kofi Annan has established a High-Level Panel on New Threats, Challenges and Change whose Report is to launch a comprehensive review of the substantive concerns, structure and method of work of the United Nations. The Panel is expected to identify new and old, “hard” and “soft” threats to peace and security and make recommendations to address them. In this regard, the Secretary-General acknowledged that: “all of us know there are new threats that must be faced or, perhaps, old threats in new and dangerous combinations, new forms of terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.” He observed, however, that “while some consider these threats as self-evidently the main challenge to world peace and security, others feel more immediately menaced by small arms employed in civil conflict, or by so-called ‘soft threats’ such as the persistence of extreme poverty, the disparity of income between and within societies, and the spread of infectious diseases, or climate change and environmental degradation” (Address to the General Assembly, 2003).

III Africa’s Regional approach to the Efforts against Terrorism

The raison d’ etre of the United Nations is to rid the world of the scourge of war. Hence the Charter made provisions for enhancing peace and security while encouraging all peoples to “practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another”. Furthermore, in some circumstances, the Organization and the international community may adopt measures to deter threats to peace and to combat “acts of aggression or other breaches to peace”. In this regard, the Security Council has been assigned the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In the discharge of its responsibilities, two distinctive approaches were provided for the Security Council: first, conflict prevention with a long-term approach contained in Chapter VI and, second, peace enforcement through the collective security principles based on Chapter VII of the Charter. Moreover, the Charter has provisions in chapter 8 for cooperation between the United Nations and of regional organisations including NATO, EU and OAU (now renamed African Union), as partners in peace making; peace keeping and peace enforcement. And in recognition of that partnership, most of the regional organisations, especially the OAU, refer to the UN Charter in their own Charters.

In July 1999, the African States signed, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity, the Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Algeria. This Convention has entered into force on 6 December 2002. A Plan of Action to operationalize this Convention was later approved by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the successor organization, the AU, in Maputo in July 2003. The signing of this Convention has led to other initiatives in the region aimed at strengthening the mechanisms to combat terrorism in the African continent such as the Bamako Declaration of December 2000, on African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation
and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons; the West African States Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa; and the Nairobi Declaration of March 2000 and the Ministerial Follow up in August 2002 on the problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. These instruments and initiatives can only make a difference if they are followed by concrete actions to implement them.

The broad approach to combating terrorism has involved two types of activities at the level of African Union and at the level of sub-regional organizations: the design of instruments to facilitate action at the national level and co-operation between the states and undertaking operational measures to prevent, deter and combat terrorist acts.

1. Activities on the Legislative Front:

   a. Review of the African States’ national legislations and the establishment of criminal offences for terrorist acts and make such acts punishable by appropriate penalties that take into account the grave nature of such offences;

   b. Accelerating the signing or ratification of, or accession to the related international instruments aimed at combating terrorist acts. For example, the New York Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected persons, International Conventions on Hostage taking, Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, etc.

   c. Enactment of legislation and establishment as criminal offences of certain acts as required in terms of international instruments referred to in paragraph (b) above and ensuring that states ratify and agree to make such acts punishable in appropriate ways which take into account the grave nature of those offences;

   d. Notifying the Chairperson of the AU of all the legislative measures that each country has taken and penalties imposed on terrorist acts, within one year of its ratification or accession to the Convention.

2. Activities at the Operational Level:

   a. Preventing African states territories from being utilized as sanctuaries, or bases for planning terrorist acts, participation or collaboration with terrorist groups by monitoring the developments and creating preventive measures;

   b. Developing and strengthening methods of monitoring and detecting plans or activities aimed at the illegal cross-boarder transportation, importation, export, stockpiling and use of arms and ammunition and explosives and other materials as means of committing terrorist acts;
c. Developing and strengthening methods of controlling and monitoring land, sea, and air borders, and customs and immigration check-points in order to pre-empt any infiltration by individuals or groups involved in the planning, organization and execution of terrorist acts;

d. Strengthening the protection and security of persons diplomatic and consular missions, premises, or regional and international organizations accredited to the State Party;

e. Promoting the exchange of information and expertise on terrorist acts and establishing data bases for collection and analysis of information;

f. Taking necessary measures to prevent the establishment of terrorist support networks in any form of whatsoever.

Although regional approaches promote coordination, sharing of resources and experiences and common planning, the ultimate test to combat terrorism lay in the ability of individual states to implement at the national level the Convention and other regional initiatives at the national level.

IV Efforts by the African Union on Broader Peace and Security Issues

The African Union (AU) approved a new Peace and Security agenda at its Summit Meeting in Maputo from 9-12 July 2003. It includes the following:

a. Developing Mechanisms and institutions and support to instruments for achieving peace and security in Africa;

b. Improving Capacity for, and coordination of, early action for conflict prevention, management and resolution including the development of peace and support operations capabilities;

c. Improving early warning capacity in Africa through strategic analysis and support;

d. Prioritising strategic security issues as follows:

   ▪ promoting an African definition and action on disarmament demobilization and reconstruction efforts in post-conflict situations;
   ▪ coordinating and ensuring effective implementation of African efforts aimed at preventing and combating terrorism.

e. Ensuring efficient and consolidated action for the prevention, combating and eradicating the problem of illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons;
f. Improving the security sector and the capacity for good governance as related to peace and security.

g. Assisting in resource mobilization for the African Union Peace Fund and for regional initiatives aimed at preventing, managing and resolving conflicts on the continent.

Prior to its Summit in Maputo, the AU also adopted in July 2002 the Peace and Security Protocol, an enabling instrument for the AU to play an effective role in peace and security matters and conflict resolution. One of the most attractive aspects of this Protocol is the establishment of the African Peace and Security Council as a standing decision-making body for the prevention and management of conflicts and promotion of peace in the continent. The Council is charged with the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa, from early warning to peace-building activities. The Peace and Security Protocol has now entered into force. The African leaders also adopted a Common Security and Defence Policy at an Extra-Ordinary Summit in Libya on February 27 and 28, 2004.

Furthermore, through NEPAD, African leaders established the African Peer Review Mechanism, a voluntary but important instrument to promote good governance at the political, economic and corporate levels. The expectation is that through the sharing of experiences, reinforcing successful best practices, including identifying deficiencies and assessing capacity building needs in the areas of peace and security, Africans would be addressing the root causes of conflicts and wars and also promote development.

V Conclusion

There is a sad paradox that Africa is perhaps the richest continent in terms of natural and mineral resources but contains the world’s poorest peoples. Thirty four out of fifty Least Developed Countries in the World are in Africa. And if present trends continue, the continent is the least likely to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially the first one, i.e., halving those who live in extreme poverty (less than one dollar a day) by the year 2015. These facts point to Africa as a continent that is very susceptible to harbouring terrorists, facilitating their activities and unable to effectively combat terrorism. The continent has a disproportionate share of failed states, weak institutions, poverty, wars and conflicts, incomplete peace consolidation efforts, porous borders and youth unemployment etc.

In order to deal with these issues, Africans need to develop a greater sense of common purpose, common destiny and common agenda, an agenda that is capable of addressing generalized insecurity and eliminating loopholes and weak-points in its security systems. And in partnership with Africa, the United Nations, G-8 countries, the European Union and the international community have important roles to play. Such partnerships would cover many areas, including addressing the root causes of conflict in Africa and enhancing the capacity of African states to engage effectively in conflict management and resolution while building durable peace and security systems. In this
regard, the decision by the Millennium Challenge Corporation established by the US Government invited 16 eligible countries, of which 8 are African, to submit proposals for aid from the Millennium Challenge Account, is a step in the right direction.

One of the key lessons of September 11 for the West is that the security of the North can no longer be separate from the security of the South. On their part, the Africans realise that when terrorists attacked the US Embassies in Nairobi and Kenya, more Africans were killed than the Americans who were the targets and this has implications for the future. This therefore re-enforces the collective desire to find global solutions to global problems. Closer cooperation with African nations and multi-dimensional support from the Western partners for capacity building, technology transfer and additional resources are crucial if the continent is to increase its ongoing role and efforts against world terrorism. This would also be in the self interest of the West. As General Charles Wald, Deputy Commander for the European Command (EUCOM), USAF, said recently at Washington Foreign Press Centre Roundtable on “New initiatives with African Countries,” “terrorist training in the Sahel (in Africa) can be in the United States or Europe in a matter of hours”.

I thank you for listening.