

Economic and Social Governance Dimension of Linking Emergencies to Human and Social Development

International Symposium on "Building the Capacity and Resource of African NGOS" Sponsored by the African Humanitarian Action (AHA)

Statement by

K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA)

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Dr. Salim A. Salim, Chairman of the African Humanitarian Action,
Your Excellency, Girma Wolde Giorgis, President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia,
Your Excellency, Alpha Omar Konare, Chairperson of the African Union,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to first express my gratitude to Dr. Dawit Zawde, President of Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA), for inviting me to address this international symposium.

I am sure you will all also join me in strongly commending the noble efforts of Dr. Dawit and his colleagues from Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA) over the past ten years.

They have truly played a significant role in filling the local capacity void in the response to humanitarian emergencies in the region.

Their work since that first key intervention during the tragedy of the Rwanda Genocide has been vital at a time when conflicts in Africa have caused an unprecedented massive displacement of people, extreme suffering and human insecurity.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of building and developing the capacity of indigenous Non Governmental Organizations, NGOs such as African Humanitarian Action (AHA) is intricately linked to the challenge of building the capable state in Africa.

A capable state is one in which peace and security are guaranteed and over a sustained period of time. We all know that conflict is the enemy of development. Without peace there can be no long-term development. And without good governance there is seldom peace.

A focus on meeting the requirements of a capable state therefore calls for comprehensive efforts to end ongoing conflicts, prevent new ones, and rebuild countries that have been in conflict.

We must do more to resolve conflict in a sustainable way. Above all, there is a need for greater co-ordination and programme innovation when dealing with crisis states so that there is a smooth management of the transition from crisis to peace and long-term development.

The rationale for this approach is evident. It is difficult in many cases to sharply separate situations of conflict, which require humanitarian relief; and post-conflict situations, where rehabilitation of physical and institutional foundations and the transformation from a war economy to a developing economy takes place.

While conceptually separate, these phases actually overlap and it is critical that we manage the bridging of these phases far better. This overlap underscores the need for a holistic approach to assisting countries emerging out of conflict.

We must therefore move away from the model that makes a clear distinction between humanitarian emergency

aid, usually granted during war and immediately afterwards, and development assistance, which commonly comes into play three or four years after the conflict has been resolved. For, often in the gap between these phases a peace process can fail to become fully embedded.

In other words, we need a response that aims to break the artificial distinctions between military intervention, peacekeeping, peace building, post-conflict resolution and reconstruction.

Such a response can fill the gaps between humanitarian and development financing by focusing simultaneously on the immediate restoration of security for individuals or communities, a minimum level of government and provision of emergency assistance, and longer-term development, including skills and the creation of employment opportunities.

On a practical level, it calls for the deployment of post-conflict reconstruction practitioners and resources alongside peacekeepers and humanitarian emergency organisations at a much earlier stage in a given peacekeeping mission.

It also means that donors must support and provide the resources for such efforts. The challenge is to integrate, rather than simply to coordinate, security, emergency assistance and development objectives within the framework of a common long-term strategy.

These are among the many issues in the area of governance and peace and security that the Commission for Africa, on which I am honoured to serve, is now examining.

In our report, which will be launched next year, we aim to set out comprehensive, coherent and practical proposals for actions to promote economic growth and human development, underpinned by strong effective states, and peace and security.

Of direct relevance to this Symposium's discussions, is our investigation of the role of African civil society and religious and traditional authorities in areas of conflict or potential conflict.

How, for example, they can best add to the capacity of the African Union and sub-regional organisations in undertaking early warning as well as early action activities and in mediating conflicts?

We are presently also reviewing different ways in which non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can be more involved in delivering services where countries are emerging from conflict.

The proposals will be especially relevant to those cases where a state's machinery is so ineffective that it may not be productive to channel all of the large volumes of aid needed to ensure that a peace process takes root properly through governments.

The idea is to make recommendations for a greater role of NGOs in these instances that supports the building of an effective state, rather than competing with it.

Mr. Chairman,

As you know, due to your personal involvement on the United Nations High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, at the global level, the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, is also encouraging new thinking on how the UN system and the wider international community can face up to the many challenges of the 21st Century.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend you and your esteemed colleagues who served on the High-Level Panel for your excellent work. Your report, released last week, provides a strong case that poverty and the danger of collapsing and failed states are global threats that are as important as the threat of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Indeed, the Panel's argument that they are all linked because of globalisation is most convincing.

I am sure that the report will now be very useful to efforts to improve the work of the UN across the board. Of greatest significance to this meeting, however, are those sections concerning what the High-Level Panel terms the "larger peace building task" in the world today.

Indeed, its investigation has produced some stark findings regarding failures to date in Africa in this regard.

For example, the Panel report notes that if two peace agreements, the 1991 Bicesse Agreement for Angola and the 1993 Arusha Accords for Rwanda, had been successfully implemented, deaths attributable to war in Africa in the 1990s would have been reduced by several million.

Based on these and other findings the High-Level Panel puts forward a new vision of collective security and makes several cogent recommendations to address the major threats to international peace.

They include a call for a new single intergovernmental organ dedicated to peace building that will be empowered to monitor communities at risk, ensure concerted action by donors and also to mobilise resources for sustainable peace.

This proposed UN Peace building Commission would serve to fill what the panel has found to be a key institutional gap: there is currently no place in the UN system explicitly designed to avoid State collapse and the slide to war or to assist countries in their transition from war to peace.

The panel has also called for a standing fund of \$250 million US dollars that can be used to finance the recurrent expenditures of a government in immediate post conflict situations as well as critical programmes in the areas of rehabilitation and reintegration.

At the same time it recommends a greater role for national mediators, regional organizations and non-governmental organisations in conflict resolution and peace building.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are all recommendations, which we in Africa must endorse as they will underpin the drive to meet our regional requirements in particular.

As I have stressed earlier, there is a clear need for international responses to crisis situations in Africa that are more forward looking. These responses must be anchored on coordinated, coherent and integrated partnerships between African governments, and inter-governmental organizations and development partners as well as local NGOs.

In this regard, humanitarian and complex emergencies in conflict-prone societies in Africa should, increasingly, be seen as an integral part of the partnership challenge faced by various stakeholders.

For, they require that governments, civil society, and the international donor community collaboratively work together to bring not only relief to conflict areas, but also work together effectively during the critical transition from relief to sustainable development.

Africa, through the African Union and regional communities, which are the union's building blocks, is taking bold steps to build and institutionalize capacity in the areas of conflict resolution, peace-support operations and post-conflict reconstruction at continental, regional and sub-regional levels.

Additionally, the leaders of the major donor nations have promised their support for these regional peace and security efforts through recent G-8 Summit resolutions and Africa Action Plan on famine and complex emergencies.

Clearly, NGOs now also merit increased assistance from those concerned with peace, development and good governance in Africa, as an enduring peace requires a strong, viable, and assertive civil society.

Therefore it is important that support is provided to build the capacity of African NGOs who have local knowledge and who can play a central role in promoting and maintaining the momentum for peace and reconciliation.

Mr. Chairman,

NGOs such as African Humanitarian Action, indeed, have great potential to support peace-building efforts and play a wider role in development.

This symposium is evidence of your dedication to rise to the challenge before you.

I therefore hope that your discussions will lead to concrete recommendations for the creation of a coordinated, coherent and integrated development partnership framework between governments, the international community and local African NGOs.

Thank you.
