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# ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA



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## I. INTRODUCTION

In Africa, the absence of durable peace, security and stability have remained a major source of concern to policy makers within and outside the Continent. The wide spread nature of the state of insecurity in Africa continues to threaten and undermine efforts aimed at promoting peace and development. Indeed, instability as a result of the many protracted conflicts has attracted the attention of scholars and policy makers alike. For policy makers, the central issue has been to develop modalities and mechanisms and take appropriate measures to address the scourge of conflicts in Africa. To some academicians, the issue has been, by and large, the development of theoretical constructs for understanding the typology and for explaining the root causes of such conflicts. But, to other academicians, the focus has been on how these conflicts have impacted negatively on the capacities available within the Continent for improving the living conditions of the majority of the population on the Continent.<sup>1</sup>

The preoccupations of policy makers on the issue of insecurity in Africa as a result of the prevalence of conflicts received a sharper focus in 1990<sup>2</sup>. This was the year when the African Heads of State and Government, declared in Cairo, that security and development were two sides of the same coin, and that both must be addressed simultaneously. In doing so, the African Heads of State and Government were conscious of the present reality on the Continent. They recognized that there can never be peace without development and that development without peace was not durable.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the Heads of State and Government admitted that" ... *conflicts have*

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1 A survey of literature on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution would testify to this point.

2 Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World, Addis Ababa, 11 July 1990,

3 1990 Declaration Op cit.



*brought about death and human suffering, engendered hate and divided nations and families. Conflicts have forced millions of our people into a drifting life as refugees and internally displaced persons, deprived of their means of livelihood, human dignity and hope. Conflicts have gobbled-up scarce resources, and undermined the ability of our countries to address the many compelling needs of our people ...*<sup>4</sup> "

In the Cairo Declaration, the Heads of State and Government have recognized and indeed placed emphasis on what has increasingly become a reality in the political economy of the Continent, namely, that peace, security and stability in Africa were the conditions imperative for the socio-economic development in the Continent. This conclusion is also shared by the United Nations.<sup>5</sup>

The World Bank has of late, recognised the need to address the challenge of managing conflicts through development. The establishment of the Post Conflict Unit within the Social Development Department of the World Bank is a demonstration of the commitment on the part of multilateral financial institutions to address the scourge of conflicts in Africa<sup>6</sup>. The World Bank has now admitted that since the end of the Cold War, the link between poverty and conflict has become more evident and that nearly one half of all low-income countries have experienced a major conflict since 1990<sup>7</sup>. For the World Bank, the sustainable reconstruction of countries emerging from long periods of conflict is a challenge that the Bank cannot ignore at its peril.<sup>8</sup> In the view of the World Bank, this is not an issue that

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4 Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the Establishment, Within the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

5 See Agenda for peace, published in 1992, agenda for development published in 1995 and agenda for democracy, published in 1996.

6 The Post Conflict Unit is within the Social Development Department of the World Bank.

7 The World Bank and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Post Conflict Unit/Social Development Department, The World Bank, Washington DC.

8 James D. Wolfensohn, President, The World Bank. Emphasis mine

the Bank can afford to relegate to the side lines of development.<sup>9</sup> Other institutions within Africa such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the African Development Bank (ADB), as well as Regional Economic Groupings (RECs) within Africa, are increasingly placing emphasis on peace and sustainable development.<sup>10</sup>

This renewed preoccupation by Africa and its development partners, challenges the old paradigm of economic development in Africa. It calls for a major review of the basis upon which experts in politics and economic development anchored their thought processes and theoretical models. After 35 years of applying these theoretical propositions and development models, and given the state of conflict and socio-economic development on the Continent, there is now an imperative need for scholars and policy makers to develop a new paradigm that will ensure Africa's position and its contribution to the international system during the next Millennium.

The challenge ahead in the new Millennium is therefore how Africa could best develop a new paradigm which brings into a sharper focus the interplay between politics and economics in the trajectory of Africa's development process. The new paradigm should be able to address the multi-faceted nature of the agenda for peace and development in Africa. Indeed, there are credible suggestions that "the agenda must be able to address the issue of poverty alleviation, help reduce the epidemic of violence in Africa, preserve regional peace and stability, prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, promote sustainable economic and social development, champion human rights and fundamental freedoms, and alleviate

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9 James D. Wohlfenson Op cit.

10 The UNDP, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), have organised three major Conferences in Africa under the African Governance Forum (AGF). The latest is to be held in Bamako, Mali, from 28 - 30 June, 1999. This particular forum will focus on good governance and conflict management for durable peace and sustainable development.

massive human suffering <sup>11</sup>"According to Carnegie Commission on "Preventing Deadly Conflicts," each is an important statement of the broad objectives of peace, development and democracy as well as a valuable road map, to achieve those objectives.<sup>12</sup>

It would also be correct to argue that the challenge in the new millennium is not so much that Africa has to develop a new paradigm, but rather how to address the "mis-steps in Africa's development". This is particularly so in the political, economic and social fields. Indeed, there is no doubt that it is the African academics that have the assignment to come up with a paradigm.

This paper was originally to be presented to the African Regional Hearing for the United Nations Millennium Assembly, at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The paper attempts to address the challenges of peace and security in Africa. It considers African humanitarian and human rights issues as both the cause and result of conflict within a global context. This paper provides some reflections on the relationship between conflict and African humanitarian and human right issues and in doing so, try to provide the perceptions of the OAU on the issues of peace, security, governance, humanitarian concerns and human rights as major ingredients in Africa's development in the next Millennium

The basic question upon which the approach of the paper is predicated is essentially on how the OAU and its Member States, with the support of the United Nations Systems, should set the agenda for peace and development in the next Millennium. Who should be involved in the formulation of such an agenda, what conditions will be necessary for effective implementation of the agenda. Where

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11 These issues are adequately addressed in the Agenda for Peace published in 1992, Agenda for Development published in 1995, and Agenda for democratization published in 1996.

12 See Preventing Deadly Conflicts Executive Summary of the Final Report, Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Carnegie Corporation of New York, December 1997.

should the resources for financing such an agenda come from. These are key issues that need to be addressed. In order to address these questions so as to reflect adequately on the challenges of peace and security in Africa, as well as to engage in an in-depth discussion on approaching human rights issues within a global context, we see the need to also reflect on four inter-related issues. First, we need to reflect on the current state of security in Africa. Second, we need also to reflect on the negative impact of conflicts on Africa's capacities for socio-economic development. The third issue, is more prescriptive and has to do with the role of good governance and democracy, preventing conflicts and in promoting sustainable economic and social development. The fourth and last issue is how to set Africa's agenda for peace and development for the next Millennium.

## **II. THE STATE OF SECURITY IN AFRICA**

Security in Africa, defined as protection of acquired values and defense of threat to basic rights and needs, has been a major source of concern to the OAU and its Member States. This is also the concern of the United Nations, which has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has admitted that conflicts in Africa pose a major challenge to the United Nations efforts to ensure global peace, prosperity and human rights for all.<sup>13</sup> But the provision and/or guarantee for basic human rights is a fore-cry for most of the African countries who cannot even provide the basic human needs for the majority of the population. In other words, the concept of human rights for all has in reality remained by and large an abstract concept. It's difficult to see the extent to which the UN can help Africa translate this abstract concept into concrete reality. According to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, the vast majority of them were intra-state in origin. In 1996

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13 Report of the Secretary General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and development in Africa, Security Council, 53rd year, 13th April, 1998.



alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were afflicted by armed conflict, accounting for more than half of all war related deaths world-wide and resulting in more 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons.<sup>14</sup> There is no doubt that the consequences of these conflicts have and continue to seriously undermine Africa's efforts to ensure long term peace, security and stability and to bring about the much needed economic transformation and social development.

The security concerns of the African Continent have both internal and external dimensions. Often, the interplay between the internal and external factors has produced a syndrome of insecurity within States, between States and among States and has turned the Continent into a State of perpetual instability, often exacerbated by bad governance, human right violations and disregard of absolute fundamental freedoms. All these have impacted negatively on Africa's capacity for economic development and social progress. Moreover, from this perspective, the picture that is being painted by many observers within and outside the Continent, is that of Africa being in perpetual crises.

The notion of Africa as a lost Continent is essentially a derivative of the ideas of those who perceive Africa as a Continent of a people that cannot be redeemed. This notion excludes Africa as an integral part of the international system and indeed of the community of nations. The notion of Africa in perpetual crises and therefore a lost Continent is also a product of the colonial legacy. The partitioning of Africa in 1895 into territorial units, destroyed the geographical cohesiveness of the Continent and undermined Pan-africanism and sowed seeds of discontent between ethnic groups and communities that were arbitrarily divided. While the social fabric of the African society was being destroyed and its natural resources plundered, an alien culture was being introduced, destroying the entrepreneurship capacity of the people and their creativity in perfecting the predominant mode of production.

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14 Ibid.

The fundamental question is whether we can rediscover ourselves, marshal our historic heritage and experiences for purposes of enhancing African unity, promoting regional cooperation and integration and by so doing create propitious conditions for peace, security and stability on the continent. We need to retrieve the energies that we had during the period of decolonization. We also need to revive the spirit of African Unity and of Pan Africanism, that was the driving force in the liberation struggle. Foreign domination was defeated by strong commitment on the part of Africa to reject foreign values. The colonial past is still partly with us, unfortunately. There must be new and creative ways to synthesize inherited western and those African values, that can enhance political, social and cohesion and economic development. The negative sub-cultures that perpetuate corruption, embezzlement of public funds and the misuse of administrative authority must be eliminated. They impede "good governance," weaken public administration, erode public trust and affect the socio-economic development. The African states must look "beyond the colonial past", if each is to make headway on any of the challenges it confronts. New institutions and structures must be put in places to deal with challenges in the new millennium.

We still must accept that the monetization of the African economies through agriculture made Africa to specialise in primary commodity production without the necessary industrial base. This made Africa to consume what it did not produce and produce what it does not consume. In the end, the colonial structures of economic and social development became a major source of insecurity and instability in Africa. Security in Africa was conceived only as a security of the colonial powers. Similarly, socio and economic development of the African peoples was considered relevant only when it was seen to contribute to better living conditions of the colonisers. Hence, the history of Africa has been a history of ensuring the well being and security of the colonial masters. In the post colonial period, the newly independent countries of Africa found it extremely difficult to develop paradigms, modalities and measures that would address the limitations left by the colonial economies and

infrastructures. Ethnic tensions increased as poverty increased and efforts to address these issues were often undermined by the interest of the colonial powers which remained predominant in Africa even after Independence. This has is a major source of security concern to African scholars and policy makers. The link between international politics and regional development is exemplified by the interest of the major powers on the resources found in the Continent.

In this regard, the state of security in Africa must be discussed in the context of the political and economic interest of the major powers in Africa. One may argue that the protracted wars in Angola, Sierra Leone and elsewhere in Africa, are inextricably linked to the economic interests of the major powers in those countries particularly the abundance of strategic minerals and other natural resources in those countries. We cannot therefore address the state of security in Africa without addressing the political and economic interest of the major powers in the Continent. In a world of economic ideology as opposed to political ideology, Africa must take full control of its natural resources and determine its role and place in the international system.

There are also internal factors that have interacted with other factors to influence the state of security in Africa. Africa cannot legitimately blame external factors to all its political and economic problems. Indeed, as Secretary General Kofi Annan has said, "... more than three decades after African countries gained their independence, there is a growing recognition among Africans themselves that the Continent must look beyond its colonial past for the present state of security in the Continent ...".<sup>15</sup> In fact in 1990, the African Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that Africa's development was the responsibility of our governments and peoples. They also reaffirmed that they were now more than before determined to lay a solid foundation for self-reliant, human-centered and sustainable

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15 Secretary General's Report Op cit.

development on the basis of social justice and collective self-reliance so as to achieve accelerated structural transformation of their economies.<sup>16</sup> This was further emphasised in the Cairo Agenda.<sup>17</sup> Through inference and logic, one could as well argue that the state of security of the Continent is first and foremost the responsibility of the African leaders and their governments. It is only the governments that can reject, limit or mitigate the external influence on the state of security in Africa.

It is also important to understand conflicts in Africa within a framework of conflict systems. While it is generally accepted that conflicts have both internal and external dimensions it is also important to understand that conflicts can be examined within the framework of a conflict system that brings into play both the internal and external factors into a condition which requires a broader perspective of analysis. In this case, a conflict system may be defined as the geographical area where the impact of such a conflict is immediately felt and that the mitigation of such an impact requires a geo-political approach. In other words, each conflict is within or can escalate to a broader conflict. The conflict in the DRC has had its impact almost all over the Great Lakes region. In this regard, the Great Lakes region could be defined as one conflict system. So too are the West African conflict system, the Sahelian conflict system with its epicenter cutting across northern Mali, Niger, Chad, southern Algeria, Mauritania and Libya, the southern African conflict system previous engulfed in the wars of liberation and against apartheid. Significantly, without a clear understanding of the nature of the conflict system, we may not be able to appropriately understand a specific conflict that is the subject of analysis. In this regard, the conflict system provides

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16 1990 Declaration of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the political and socio-economic situation in Africa and the fundamental changes taking place in the world, 11 July, 1990

17 See OAU Cairo Agenda Prepared by the joint Secretariats OAU/ECA/ADB, 1996.

both a tool and a framework for analyzing, preventing, managing and resolving conflicts.

In this regard, the OAU and its Member States must be able to define and address security in Africa. In doing so, the OAU and its Member States must be prepared to address the many factors that have become a source of insecurity and instability in Africa. Good governance, democracy and the respect for fundamental freedoms, are major elements in defining security in Africa. Indeed, as the UN Secretary General has said, "long-term distortions" in Africa's political economy and the authoritarian legacies of colonialism which helped produce the "winner-takes-all" and highly personalized forms of governance seen in parts of the continent. With the frequent lack of peaceful means to change or replace leadership and the "often violent politicization of ethnicity", conflict becomes virtually inevitable.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to point out that the colonial past is still partly with us, unfortunately. There must be new and creative ways to synthesize inherited western and those African values, that can enhance political, social and cohesion and economic development. The negative sub-cultures that perpetrate corruption, embezzlement of public funds and the misuse of administrative authority must be eliminated. They impede "good governance", weaken public administration, erode public trust and affect socio-economic development. The African states must look "beyond the colonial past", if each is to make headway on any of the challenges it confronts. New institutions and structures must be put in places to deal with challenges in the new millennium.

Security in Africa has to be defined in broader terms. It should include military security, in terms of its conventional meaning namely: the military wherewithal of the state, its military forces and

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18 UN Secretary General Report Op cit.

the ability of those forces to defend and protect the integrity of the state. Food Security is perceived in terms of the state producing, marketing and storing enough food and is not dependent upon on external food assistance, on an annual basis. Economic Security, within the context of sustainable development, where prosperity, as well as where property and economic rights are protected. Political Security as it relates to the security of the person, the Group, the promotion and protection of human rights in all its dimensions political, civil, economic, social and cultural security of persons i.e. freedom of movement, freedom of speech, freedom from arrest, etc.

The challenge of security in Africa is obvious and it has to do with what governments have to do, namely: enhance internal security by avoiding situations that give rise to internal conflicts. The "promotion and protection of human rights" and also popular participation inclusion in the process of government and development. The de-centralization of power through political popular participation with and involvement in the political and socio-economic development, decision-making process, is the antidote, to potential internal conflict. The security of the state lies with its people, and this presupposes their ability, determination, commitment and desire to protect. It lies above all, with enlightened leadership that is committed to respecting the will of the people, subscribes to the notion of inclusion, accountability, transparency and responsibility.

The establishment of mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution as well as strengthening of modalities for regional economic cooperation and integration must also be brought into sharper focus. Within this framework, Africa must also be able to address related issues that are intrinsically akin to defining security in the Continent. Clearly, issues of ethnicity, nationality and citizenship as well as the proliferation of small arms, drug trafficking, rivalry over resources, transhumance including refugees and displaced persons, shared water resources and energy, cattle rustling, all must be considered as major components in defining security in Africa.



The state of security in Africa has therefore remained precarious and requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. Unfortunately, while Africa has had many development reports and economic surveys on issues such as financial mobilization, trade and finance, human resources, refugees and displaced persons, there has been none to date on the state of security in Africa. The need for such an analytical report is critical considering the fact that none of the other reports would be meaningful if they are not predicated upon the state of security. This is a challenge that we may want to take up as we address issues of peace and development for the next Millennium. A challenge of that will integrate and analyze critical factors that go into defining security on the Continent and understanding their interplay in promoting socio-economic development.

### **III. IMPACT OF CONFLICTS ON AFRICA'S CAPACITIES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

One of the major resources that the African Continent has, is its people that constitute a base of its social capital. Currently Africa's Population in 1997 totaled 743 million, an increase of about 20 million since 1996. The continent's annual growth rate was 2.6%, the world's highest by a wide margin and sufficient to double population size in only 26 years.<sup>19</sup> Yet, this is one of the resources, which is often negatively impacted upon by the prevalence of conflicts in Africa. Estimates indicate that altogether hundred and sixty million people lost their lives as a result of war, genocide and state killings.<sup>20</sup> In 1996 alone, Rupesinghe and Anderlini<sup>21</sup> note that 19 major internal conflicts were being fought world-wide, with a further 42 lower-density and 74 lethal violent political conflicts.

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19 See Britannica Book of the Year Events of (1997) p. 298

20 Newsweek International, 7 December 1998.

21 K. Rupesinghe and S.N. Anderlini, (1998). Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution. London. Pluto Press, p.2

During 1990 alone, conflicts and violence claimed over three million lives with 160 million Africans deprived of their livelihood. It is argued that the figure of three million could well reach five million if one was to factor-in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the current genocide by attrition in Rwanda and Burundi, and the protracted wars in Liberia, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and elsewhere in Africa. This is further compounded by the nature, scale, the time-span and the proliferation of conflicts in the African region are increasingly undermining efforts aimed at effective utilisation of human resource capacity of the Continent. According to the World Bank, conflict decreases living standards by destroying human, social, and economic capital and negating many years of development. Moreover, conflicts deviate international attention and scare resources from pressing social and economic problems.<sup>22</sup> However, little attention is paid to the depletion of human resources through brain drain which continues to condemn Africa's development capacity in key sections.

Most of the physical capital and production facilities including infrastructure such as power plants, transportation and communication networks, including harbours and airports have been destroyed in those countries involved in conflict. The task for post-conflict reconstruction and development is no doubt daunting. Yet, to this, we must add the impact of such conflicts on health and education and other social amenities. The depletion of the social capital and the destruction of infrastructure has had direct impact on the economies in countries of conflict or those emerging from it. Moreover, conflicts have had serious impact on the environment, especially through the depletion of vegetation cover and bio-diversity. This has had serious impact on Africa's Eco systems.

The millions of landmines spread over fertile lands in Africa has deprived the African farmer of agro-land and has therefore had serious impact on agricultural production in Africa. Landmines' long term

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22 World Bank and Post Conflict Reconstruction, op cit

impact on Africa's economies cannot be over emphasized. Landmines constitute major impediments to rural development and food production, preventing access to infrastructure, agricultural land and other productive facilities. While the landmines themselves do not cost much, demining exercises have become increasingly an expensive industry that most African States emerging from war and conflicts cannot afford.

The criminalisation of African economies creating large shadow economies, is a product of conflicts in Africa. Very often, in countries in conflict, considerable segments of the economy lie outside the state's control. Criminal alliances among traders, arms and drug dealers, with the connivance of some government officials often develop during conflicts. These groups may have a common vested interest in perpetuating an environment of scarcity generating quasi rents and maintaining the war machinery. The experience of the Sierra Leone, under the executive outcome and diamond mining conglomerates in Angola and elsewhere, provides an illustration to this fact.

#### **IV. GOOD GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

##### ***(i) Good Governance and Democracy***

The on-going debate on governance and democracy in Africa seems to have been more engulfed in theoretical propositions than in addressing the real democratic aspirations and demands of the African population. This situation is even more complicated by the fact that the thinking about democracy in Africa continues to be muddled. We seem not to have a precise understanding or even an appropriate working definition of what Africa perceives as democracy. The Westminster model of democracy seems to have caused more confusion about democracy in Africa than to support the legitimate aspirations and demands of the African people in their nation building endeavours. The confusion is not so much

about the principles of democracy but rather on what democracy is all about. At any rate, the concept of democracy in the world has changed its meaning more than once and in more than one direction.<sup>23</sup>

The confusion notwithstanding, most African countries have over the years, embarked on the democratisation process and have increasingly accepted the need for popular participation of their people in development. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the OAU has been invited to observe over 60 elections within its Member States. In other words, democracy new or old, or whatever form, Westminster or otherwise, is gaining root on the Continent. What is clearly noticeable on the Continent is the shift from one party democracy to some form of multi party and parliamentary democracy. But the democratisation process has brought in within the Continent some in-built problems that the policy makers must grapple with as they are increasingly becoming a source of tension and conflict.

Election per se does not necessarily constitute democracy. It is merely a process towards democracy. And even when the process is completed we can hardly talk of democracy. In most African States, one has to look not into the percentage of the population that registered and voted. For 98.9% of the votes does not mean anything if only 10% of the population participated in the elections. Moreover, one has also to consider the level of education of the 10% of the voters and their understanding of democracy as a major tool in national development process. Significantly, even the 10% of voters may not be a representative sample of the general population. Often they belong to the elite and they have capacity to manipulate electoral process and to buy votes. The trend across the continent is that the vote has become a very precious commodity that you can exchange for direct cash or political favours. Indeed, given the level of poverty, the candidate determines the price of the vote. There is of lately huge amounts of

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23 The notion of the changing meaning of democracy is well articulated in C.B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy*, CBS Massey Lecture Series, Toronto, 1995.

money being used by some individual candidates to secure votes and go through the election. In this way, the ordinary person on the street has no possibility at all of becoming a member of parliament.

Democracy imbued in a cult of force and predicated upon winner-takes-it-all is dangerous and is as good as no democracy. But the notion of a coalition government in Europe and elsewhere is not quite the same as that of government of national unity which seems to be recommended to African countries emerging from conflict. The prescription of the Government of national unity is usually for States emerging out of conflicts. In such situations the idea is to build broad consensus on the basis of which the unity of the country is considered as a rallying point in sustaining peace and security and in providing an enabling environment for post conflict reconstruction and development leading to a general election. The argument is that a government of national unity avoids politics of exclusion which often constitute a source of internal conflict. Therefore, the winner-takes-it-all philosophy undermines national reconciliation efforts and promotes politics of exclusion. But, a government of national unity is not the same as a government built on coalition. Whatever the logic of the two notions, what is definitely common in them is that they illustrate a system of power and the relations of power between those who govern and those who are governed.

From this perspective, it is possible to accept the argument that whether in the Westminster model or other try-and-error models common in Africa, democracy remains essentially as a system by which power is exerted by the state over individuals and groups within it.<sup>24</sup> The issues here are how a state or a government acquires that power and what distinguishes the use of power between a democratic and a non-democratic government. It is important to note here that this is a major question that the leadership on the Continent ought to address. What is commonly agreed is that a democratic government

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24 See CB Macpherson op cit

exists to uphold and enforce a certain kind of society, a certain set of relations between individuals, a certain set of rights and claims that people have on each other both directly, and indirectly, through their rights to property.<sup>25</sup> What this means, is that a democratic government is a government that guarantees the fundamental freedoms and with that has the capacity to dispense a just, fair and transparent management and control of production relations between individuals and within societies. In other words, a government that operates on the basis of politics of exclusion or a government that does not allow popular participation in development or a government that does not represent the will of the people however defined, is by all standards, not a democratic government. The history of Africa in the last Millennium is full of such examples and the challenge for the next Millennium is to transcend the problems and difficulties of the last Millennium in democracy and nation building in Africa.

## ***ii. Humanitarian Concerns***

The propensity for human disaster requiring humanitarian intervention of international dimension in Africa, is often the result of the absence of good governance and effective mechanisms to ensure the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The perception of the Continent as a Continent in crisis and a theater of humanitarian disaster are more often than not linked to what is often referred to as a crisis of democracy in Africa. What surprises many political observers is the fact that despite the amount of humanitarian assistance poured into the continent, there is little hope that the continent is changing for the better. The prevalence and changing nature of conflicts in Africa has resulted in massive exodus of refugees and massive displacement of people and livestock.

Most of the conflicts in Africa are predominantly internal rebellions, which involve, on the one hand, Government armed forces, and on the other hand, a group or groups of armed citizens of the same

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25 Ibid



country. This has given rise to the phenomenon of parties in conflict who are not accountable to any political authority, whether local or global, and who cannot be effectively circumscribed by existing rules of warfare. The worst atrocities continue to be inflicted on innocent civilians, particularly on women and children, and existing mechanisms cannot guarantee effective prevention or protection from such brutalities. Africa has witnessed with horror such bestiality being perpetrated on the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone, to name only two recent examples. The most barbarous manifestation of such horror was the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.<sup>26</sup>

The Secretary General of the OAU, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim has argued that the worst form of degeneration in contemporary conflicts, from our experience, occurs in situation where there is a total collapse of institutions of government as in the case of Somalia and the prevalence of regimes of 'warlords'. Factional violence that ensues in such a situation has made it extremely difficult to effectively protect victims of conflict, using the traditional approach. The multiplicity of belligerents and fragmentation of the factions complicate the process of intervening in such situations. Indeed, it has not been uncommon lately to hear of humanitarian workers being savagely attacked or taken hostages by a party in conflict in such situations<sup>27</sup>.

The phenomenon of 'armed refugees' is also another manifestation of the changing character of conflict in Africa. In a number of cases humanitarian work has been hampered by the existence of refugees who possess weapons and create havoc within and around the camps. In some cases, such refugees use the safety of their camps as a rear base and continue to launch attacks on their adversaries. According to OAU Secretary General Salim, incidences of this nature have not only complicated humanitarian assistance to

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26 Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General of the OAU, address to the Third Wolfsberg Humanitarian Forum, 25 May, 1999

27 Salim Ahmed Salim, Third Wolfsberg Humanitarian Forum, Op cit.

genuine victims of war, but they have also led to the straining of relations between countries, as is currently the case in the Great Lakes region. The concern over armed refugees has even led to the proliferation of conflict. Furthermore, the phenomenon of armed refugees has created a hostile environment, hitherto extremely rare in the Continent for the bona fide refugees.<sup>28</sup>

To a large extent, the conventional perspective that the work of protecting victims and providing humanitarian assistance is best performed by neutral non-political agencies has contributed to the poor development of humanitarian capacity both within the OAU as well as among the African Regional Organizations. While we have concentrated on building capacities for conflict prevention, management and resolution at a political level, our ability to address the humanitarian catastrophe remains very weak. Recent experience has underlined the need to incorporate the humanitarian dimension.

The increasing influx of refugees in Africa and the mounting problem of displaced persons has had serious impact on both the capacity and political will of the countries of asylum and those who have provided shelter to those displaced. The compassionate fatigue has produced a withdrawal syndrome on the part of those countries that were on the forefront in providing support to refugees and displaced persons. Yet, the number of refugees and displaced persons is increasing and not diminishing, making it necessary for the international community to work out new modalities for addressing the compassionate fatigue.

The problem of armed refugees will also require special and urgent attention. This has had serious implications on the adherence to international humanitarian norms, especially the protection of civilians and children in situations of conflict. The emergence of the problem of armed refugees in humanitarian emergencies has further

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28 Ibid

complicated the humanitarian concept, which is currently undergoing a process of diversification and change in direction.

New concepts have emerged which makes the whole issue of humanitarian intervention a subject of international debate. Originally, a humanitarian concept was conceived as a life saving device with a possible mechanism to mitigate the impact of disaster or other humanitarian catastrophes on the population. It was premised on a moral prerogative and responsibility on the part of those who had the capacity to assist. In other words, it was an undertaking to save human lives. In this perspective, the means that constituted humanitarian intervention were well defined. They were essentially predicated on relief and rehabilitation. In the event that the provision of such assistance required military support, it was not meant to produce military results. However, the proliferation of concepts such as military- humanitarian operations, military strife for humanitarian purposes, the setting up of a standing force for humanitarian action, humanitarian corridors and humanitarian safety zones, need to be given special attention with a view to clarifying their use and application in humanitarian affairs.

The development and current usage of these concepts tends to pervert the original philosophy of classic humanitarian action. It is difficult for example, to establish neutrality and impartiality in either military strike for supposedly humanitarian purposes or military-humanitarian operations in a situation of multiplicity of interest and conflicting goals. Even more disastrous is how does one ensure independence vis--vis the military and political authorities in a situation that requires massive humanitarian assistance. The current trend in humanitarian assistance is that the means justify the end. Indeed, humanitarian intervention as used in the 1960s in the Congo has met with a lot of skepticism and mistrust. The challenge is to be able to return to the classic meaning of humanitarian action without losing sight of the emerging complexities in the politics of humanitarian actions. Finally, it is important to bear in mind that when military forces were involved in operations with the humanitarian objective, it was within the framework of peacekeeping or, in some

rare cases, peace enforcement operations. But this is not to suggest that we should be contented with the accumulated wisdom of the past. Boutros Ghali was right in suggesting that old ideas must be repackaged and infused with new substance to meet the changing needs of the present. In the words of Boutros Ghali Ideas must be woven together into a viable and coherent strategy. Each controversy, conflict, or diplomatic problem will generate or respond to a particular idea or set of ideas. But the ideas must fit into a larger scheme. Individual ideas, which may appear to be workable in specific case, may fail to solve the problem and may even worsen it in the absence of a viable and coherent strategy<sup>29</sup> a comprehensive and fundamentally coherent overall strategy must be used to define and test the validity and practicality of various ideas. Without such a strategy, concepts will not serve to resolve conflicts; they will simply add larger ideas that themselves may be incompatible and contend against each other. We should avoid cases where military alliances are simultaneously engaged in warfare and at the same time claim to conduct humanitarian operations under whatever pretext.<sup>30</sup> It is also important not to forget the need to ensure a principled and coordinated approach to humanitarian assistance that will best address human needs and facilitate the preparation of a coherent and effective strategy for recovery, reconstruction and reintegration.

### ***iii. Human Rights***

The issue of democracy as a system of popular participation in development is also linked to that of human rights in Africa. Democracy and human rights are prerequisites for peace and sustainable development in Africa. There is no doubt that non-respect of human rights impedes socio-economic development. In other words, violations of human rights constrains efforts of the African

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29 Boutros Boutros Ghali, *Leadership and Conflict in Essays on Leadership* , Carnegie Corporation of New York

30 Most of these ideas are amply articulated in the Third Wolfsberg Humanitarian Forum, 25 - 27 May 1999

people aimed at building peace and sustainable development. Inversely, low level of economic performance may lead to violation of economic, social and cultural rights and the proliferation of conflicts. The hypothesis here is that low level macro economic performance may lead to conflicts, conflicts may lead to human rights violations and human rights violation may also lead to conflict. All these may result into social stratification, misery and abject poverty and therefore more conflict. This is what is commonly being referred to as the new vicious cycle in Africa. In other words, what is intrinsic in this new vicious cycle is that the higher the proliferation of conflicts, the higher the degree and levels of human rights violations and the lower the level of macro economic performance and socio-economic development.

It is important to note that the issue of human rights has increasingly become an important agenda of the OAU. This was particularly so in the late 1980s and more significantly in the 1990s. The OAU Member States have recognized that the process of democratization and building good governance go hand in hand with the observance of and respect for human rights. In many of the OAU Member States, we note the emergency and to some extent, proliferation of institutions dealing with the promotion of human rights and respect of the rule of law. Such institutions at national, sub-regional and regional levels are gradually gaining experience and credibility.

There are, however, those who would argue that the record of African States in the protection and promotion of human rights over the last three decades has, at best been mixed. Such critics go even further to suggest that in many states, the promotion and protection of human rights has been poor and, in some cases a danger to peace, security and stability not only within Member States but even at the continental level. Of course, at this level of argument, most of these critics would suggest that the first set of rights to be violated have, over the years, been political liberties.

But, it cannot be disputed that OAU Member States have explicitly or implicitly come to accept the standards set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

Indeed, in articulating the purposes of the OAU, the founding fathers of our continental organisation decided to include in the Charter, the promotion of unity, and solidarity of the African States, the co-ordination and intensification of cooperation and efforts to achieve better life for the people of Africa and the promotion of international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In doing so, the African leaders were encouraging the promotion and protection of human rights within member States. They were advocating the right to life, liberty and security of person; equality before the law, the right to freedom of movement, assembly and association, and the right to take part in government. The founding fathers were also advocating the right to work, the right to form and join trade unions, the right to education, and the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community. This means that the OAU and its Member States recognized the imperative need of promoting the standards that together constituted what is commonly known as International Bill of Rights. Yet, some critics may ask why did it take 16 years after the founding of the OAU for the Member States to put in place an African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

## **V. AFRICA'S AGENDA FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE NEXT Millennium**

As it has been suggested " The century now stumbling towards its close is by common acknowledgement, the bloodiest in history" Clearly, there is an imperative need to understand the causes of conflict with a view to put in place measures to support efforts aimed at turning back this tide of violence. This is no doubt the most



immediate necessity facing human kind as the twenty-first century comes into view. Obviously, the issue of peace and development must be considered as a priority in setting up Africa's agenda for the next Millennium. But for the agenda to be meaningful it has to be formulated on the basis of Africa's history and experiences during the last Millennium. In other words, Africa's needs in the next Millennium should be determined by Africa's successes and failures in the political, military, diplomatic, social, economic fields during the last Millennium. The issue is who should formulate the African agenda and what should be the priority areas. Secondly, where should the resources for the implementation of such an agenda come from, who should pay and for what reasons.

Like Albert Einstein said "in a moment of crises, only imagination is more important than knowledge". This is the time for Africa to be imaginative in the formulation of the agenda for the next Millennium. Africa has never been short of ideas. But, Africa has always found it difficult to experiment with its own ideas. The Continent has been flooded with ideas that do not necessarily take into account the specific conditions and cultural values of the people on the Continent. Over the last Millennium, the Continent has been turned into a theatre of experimentation with ideas from outside Africa but about Africa. In this exercise, we should be able to see what others see. But, what is more important, is to be able to think what no one has thought and that really should constitute our capacity for imagination and action.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Africa needs and counts on the support of the United Nations. The United Nations as a primary organization for the maintenance of international peace and security and for the promotion of social and economic development, must also work for the Continent. The Conflicts in Africa should as much be the concern of the United Nations as it is for the OAU and its Member States. It is dangerous to consider the conflicts going on in the Continent as

underdog conflicts. The loss of human life in Africa should be a concern for all just as the loss of life in Bosnia or elsewhere in the world. In this regard, the imbalance in the international community's intense concern for conflict in one place and neglect or disregard for more devastating situations elsewhere, is an issue that must be avoided in the next Millennium. Conflicts in Africa have as much impact to humanity as conflicts in the developed industrialized world. The United Nations has the primary responsibility to address such conflicts whether in the developed or in the developing world, with much intensity and with same commitment, courage and resources. It is the hope of everybody with interest in Africa, that the Millennium Hearing will provide critical ideas.