



## TANA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SECURITY IN AFRICA

### **Welcome Address**

by

H.E. Obasanjo, Chairperson of the Tana High Level Forum on Security in Africa  
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, 20 April 2013

Excellences, Honorable Ministers, Ambassadors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Second Tana High Level Forum on Security in Africa.

We are gathered here again, under the Baobab tree which symbolizes the Tana Forum, and our traditions, cultures and values, to discuss about the critical issues and challenges that confront our continent.

We are also here today to pay tribute to one of the greatest champions of the Tana Forum and a visionary son of Africa, the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, H.E. Meles Zenawi. His dedication and determination to see not only Ethiopia but Africa out of the plight of destitution, poverty, conflict and insecurity has been exemplary to all of us who worked with him closely and an inspiration to many within and beyond our continent. I ask that we observe a minute of silence in his memory.

Excellences, Honorable Ministers, Ambassadors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, we were here last year reminding ourselves of the pressing challenges the continent faced. Since we met last, the challenges faced by our continent have not diminished. These include the Arab Spring in North Africa which culminated in difficult times for Tunisia, Egypt and Libya; the border disputes between Sudan and South Sudan and the recent situations in Mali and Central Africa Republic.



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However we have cause to celebrate: the success of the African Union Peacekeeping Mission in Somalia, through its regional peacekeeping mission, AMISOM; peaceful elections in Kenya and continuous economic growth in many African nations...

But we should remind ourselves that much work needs to be done, particularly in light of a disturbing trend in our continent with regards to organized crime. Organized crime is a growing phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century adding to the security challenges of Africa, and particularly challenges faced by fragile states.

Organized crime in Africa takes many national and transnational shapes and forms. These include, but are not limited to, the trafficking of narcotic drugs and arms trafficking, trafficking of people and human organs, precious minerals and resources, piracy, money-laundering and trade in counterfeit products ranging from cigarettes to fake medicines.

Beyond the devastating human tragedy trans-national organized crime inflicts, it has the potential to destroy our social fabric, destabilize states and foster insecurity in our continent. The increasingly sophisticated web of criminal networks linking several states necessitate our collective energy, resources and commitment in order to combat the criminals.

This is also an opportunity for us to learn from the experiences of others who are affected by organized crime while highlighting bilateral, regional and international cooperation uniquely positioned to provide African-led solutions...



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The theme of this year's Forum, therefore, could not have been more relevant and urgent. We will once again open the debate on what sustains and perpetuates such illicit activities, as well as interrogate our current responses to these threats towards identifying African-led approaches to this critical challenge facing our continent.

The forum has now become an institution and its board will continue to work tirelessly towards the attainment of sustained peace in Africa hand in hand with our many partners including the African Union Commission.

Lastly, on behalf of the Tana Forum Board, I would like to thank the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and particularly, H.E. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and his government, for recognizing the importance of this Forum and ensuring its continuity.

I will also want to appreciate the services and commend the Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Mr. Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe and the entire team of ninety four people composed of Ethiopians and African nationals of the Tana Forum secretariat led by Mrs. Michelle Ndiaye Ntab. Within a year of the existence of the Forum, progress is obvious not only in the number of staff employed but also in the impact that is being made.



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To our sponsors and financial supporters within and outside Africa beginning with Sheikh Al Amoudi from Ethiopia, the African Union Commission (AUC), Ethiopian Airlines, the Governments of Germany and of the Kingdom of Norway, we say once again thank you for your generous contributions.

Thank you for listening.