



TANA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SECURITY IN AFRICA

Opening Remarks by H.E. Hailemariam Desalegne, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Your Excellency Omar Hassan Al Bashir, President of the Republic of Sudan,

Your Excellency Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda,

Your Excellency Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud, President of the Federal Re- public of Somalia

Your Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of the Federal Republic of South Africa

Distinguished Guests, Dear Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost, I would like to welcome you all on behalf the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and of myself to the second edition of the Tana High Level Forum on Security in Africa. I feel personally honoured and privileged to make this welcoming address to such a distinguished panel of leaders, world class intellectuals and African security stakeholders from all over Africa. The high level of attendance today is a clear indication that the Forum has indeed taken on a momentum of its own. I would like therefore to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated leadership of the Forum by President Obasanjo and President Mbeki, among others, for a job well done.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you all know, this was intended to serve as a forum that provides opportunities for African leaders and other stakeholders - private and public alike - to exchange experiences and insights of peace and security issues among them- selves - and draw practical lessons that they will adapt to their respective environments. It is also expected that the fo- rum will contribute a substantive, open and transparent African debate on issues of strategic importance to the continent and its regional and sub-regional institution. By fostering an inclusive dialogue and constructive engagement among African stakeholders in peace and security both private, public as well as academic, it will also pave the way for generating African solutions to African problems. The format that the forum uses to con- duct its deliberations is also intend to engender the kind of openness and transparency required of such platforms.

Excellencies,



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Ladies and gentlemen,

It is rather with a mixed feeling both of sadness and pride that we kick off the second edition of Tana Forum today. Sad, because we have, since the inaugural conference last April, lost our visionary leader and the Forum's ardent champion and by far biggest advocate, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. This is indeed a big loss. But we are also proud in equal measure because many have honoured and continue to honour his name by maintaining and building on his legacy. It is therefore fitting that the 2nd Tana High Level Forum pay tribute to his legacy by among other things reflecting on his life-long commitment to the cause of realizing a democratic developmental state.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The topic the Forum will take up over the weekend concerns security and organized crime in Africa. This is a very appropriate subject in more ways than one. As you all know, it has become conventional wisdom in western media and economic literature to describe Africa as the next growth pole. In light of the impressive growth rate that Africa has been registering the last decade or so, it is not entirely implausible to suggest that the 21st century is indeed Africa's century. But there are so many daunting challenges ahead and none is more daunting than the challenge we face in the security sector. One of the many manifestations of this challenge is of course organized crime.

Organized crime in a broader sense includes, but is not limited to, transnational, national or local groups functioning within a structure and engaging in politically or economically motivated unlawful activity. It is widely recognized that Africa faces challenges on account of increasing transnational organized crime, which in many ways also causes threats to governance and security. Among the wide variety of criminal activities affecting Africa the following stand out: the production, trafficking and sale of illegal drugs; the smuggling of illegal immigrants to Europe and the Middle East; people trafficking including abduction and sexual slavery; organ harvesting; the illegal extraction and sale of precious metals under the cover of bloody conflicts; and of course piracy. These problems stem from deep political and economic structural problems; but they are not necessarily caused by political crises.

There is no doubt there is a need to respond to this serious and growing problem. In addition to this there is an equally important need to review existing policies, if any, to tackle the problem. It



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is, therefore, my hope and expectation that this Forum will deal at length on issues such as the root causes of transnational criminal activities in Africa; and lay bare the underlying causes of this scourge. It is also important that the Forum discuss how Africa should respond to the crisis taking into consideration the African traditional value systems and the structural political and economic reforms required to effectively addressing this challenge.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The rampant piracy that we see in the Gulf of Guinea and Gulf of Aden as well as the illegal trafficking of hundreds of thousands of youth to the Middle East and Europe are a stark reminder that organized crime has indeed taken on an enormous life of its own, threatening to cancel out whatever gains Africa made as a result of the economic growth of the last decade or so.

It is my hope and expectation that our deliberations will be both candid and productive. On a lighter note, it is appropriate at this point to remind you once again to heed President Obasanjo's unwritten rule that he wanted to make a tradition of the forum about the dress code we should observe throughout our deliberations. Let's all be attired in a decently informal way.

Wishing you productive exchange of ideas,

I thank you.



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