THE CONTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND SUB-REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

For SG Keynote address to Woodrow Wilson Center

1   BACKGROUND AND NATURE OF CONFLICTS

1.   My talk today will first describe conflict in Africa and the cost it imposes on the continent's economies. I will then talk about changing trends as a result of efforts by African leaders and institutions over the last fifteen years to proactively address conflict through a wide range of mechanisms and approaches. Democracy and governance efforts on the continent will briefly be discussed and then I will conclude with a few remarks about the future.

Of the 53 (52? Isn't Morocco out?) Africa Union Countries, 48 have suffered post independence armed conflict. Most of these conflicts have been intra-state rather than inter-state, and have largely taken the form of rebellions against the central government, including civil wars and insurgencies with armed factions. Although most of these conflicts have been intra-stat, they have often exhibited transnational characteristics, particularly attributable to the porous borders between the states coupled with cross-border ethnic communities as a result of the arbitrary colonial delineation of boundaries.   The transnational character of these conflicts has been manifested by an influx of small arms and light weapons, large refugee outflows, illicit trade in natural resources, and cross border rebel movements, all of which inevitably affect the security situation in neighboring countries. In some instances, rebel groups have fled to neighboring states to launch their insurgencies such as the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) rebels of northern Uganda operating from South Sudan; rebels from Sierra Leone operating from Liberia, and Rwandan rebels operating from the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

1.1 CONFLICTS IN THE REGION

2.   These conflicts have no doubt hindered Africa from attaining its full economic potential, particularly given the vast natural and human resources otherwise available in Africa. In the Horn of Africa, a 21 year old conflict between the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) of South Sudan and respective governmental regimes of Sudan festered with almost

2 million people losing their lives since the early 1980s. Sudan has seen conflict since 1956 with only a brief period of peace following the 1972 peace accord. Barely was that conflict resolved through the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that another one broke out in Darfur in the western part of the country. This conflict has been described as the wolrd's worst humanitarian disaster which has also spread into Chad. Neighboring Somalia earned the title of a collapsed state following a series of conflicts that has left it without a central government since the early 1990s. This long war, which has also drawn in other countries in the Horn, particularly Eritrea and Ethiopia, has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and resulted in over 800,000 refugees and over one million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Humanitarian agencies claim close to 2 million people are suffering from food shortages in Somalia today. Despite 15 peace processes, with the last one establishing a government for Somalia, the conflict is still ongoing. The Horn is also the location for one of Africa's few inter-state conflicts between Ethiopia and Eritrea over a disputed border. The conflict reached a crisis between 1998 and 2000 with over 70,000 persons losing their lives. Although a negotiated settlement was reached in 2000, tensions are still high. This brings out an important observation that signing of peace agreements, or even cessation of hostilities, does not necessarily translate to peace. Real peace requires that the structural causes of the conflict be addressed.

3. In the Great Lakes Region the inter-relashionship of the different conflicts allows them to be loosely referred to as a conflict system, which has largely taken on ethnic dimensions. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda, that resulted in the killing of clost to 800,000 persons from one ethnic community is still very fresh in the minds of many. This genocide became a defining moment for Africa and the world at large, forcing a review of the lack of intervention strategies in internal conflicts. The Democratic Republic of Congo has been the scene of a civil war since 1998, although there have been internal clashes since independence in the 1960s, currently appears to be the epicenter of this conflict system. The internal conflict drew in several neighboring countries, including Uganda and Rwanda on one

side supporting the rebellion, and Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola supporting the Government, earning it the label of "Africa's First World War". The Burundi civil war broke out in the middle 1960s and continued intermittently until 1993 when it intensified into a full blown armed conflict. Like the other conflicts in the Great Lakes, the Burundi civil war took on and exhibited ethnic dimensions in addition to the political tensions. The conflict has since been resolved and the country is now undergoing reconstruction.

4. The 20 year-old Angola civil war was one of Africa's longest civil wars and was the most significant conflict in the Southern Africa region. The country is now in its fifth year of post conflict reconstruction. Southern Africa has also seen the civil war in the Comoro Islands which have witnessed over 20 coups or attempted coups and a succession crisis.

5. Conflicts in the West African region have for the most part, involved various armed groups challenging the central government. Liberia's seven year old civil war started in 1980 after Samwel Doe's military coup and saw the displacement of over half of the country's population; while the Sierra Leonean conflict lasted for eight years after it broke out in 1991. Both produced an outflow of refugees into neighboring countries. Fighting in Cote d'Ivoire, like Darfur, is one of the newer conflicts. The result has been a once stable and prosperous nation degenerated into a complex five year civil war following a failed military coup that effectively split the country into two.

6. It is important to note that although most of these conflicts are linked to governance related issues, they have been exacerbated by other factors such as the exploitation of natural resources demonstrated by the conflicts in the DRC, Sierre Leone and Sudan, and external interference from both neighboring states and other international players.

1.2 COST (IMPACT OF THE CONFLICTS)

7. These conflicts have no doubt had a devastating effect on the economic growth of the continent and have seriously

negatively impacted on the realization of regional objectives such as sustainable economic development through regional economic and social integration. At the turn of the century, conflicts in Sub-Sahara were estimated to reduce Africa's economic growth by approximately 2% annually. To accurately cost conflicts is a difficult task because conflicts are complex and multi-faceted and often give rise to chain reactions that perpetuate and extend the conflict. However estimates indicate that Africa has been losing an estimated US$15 Billion yearly due to conflicts.

8.   In 2004, the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs reviewed the conflicts in the region and among other costs, highlighted the following as some of the factors that have had a negative impact on the economy of the region:

- Over ten years without central authority and major insecurity in Somalia deprived neighbors such as landlocked Ethiopia of access to ports and conversely deprived Somalia of much needed revenue from the use of its ports;

- The border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea has deprived Ethiopia of a convenient port for its northern and central regions, while Eritrea has lost the opportunity to tap into cheaper electrical power from Ethiopia;

- Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo hindered economic development and growth within that country, and denied opportunities in investment and trade with neighboring countries. Instead, the country has suffered the illegal exploitation of its vast mineral wealth which could have contributed to economic prosperity and poverty alleviation;

- Lack of security in the Great Lakes region has hindered secure access to waterway routes, such as using Lake Tanganyika and the port of Mauling in Zambia, which used to be vital for trade between Burundi, Rwanda and Zambia. Furthermore, as a result of sanctions imposed on Burundi from 1996 to 1998, in the aftermath of the unconstitutional take over of the government, trade with countries within the Arusha Peace Process, most of which are also member states

of COMESA, suffered extensively. For instance, Zambia suffered loss of export earnings in sugar and cement exports to Burundi; and

- Loss of use of Angola's Beguile Railway, which provided an alternative and shorter route to seaports for Zambia's goods, was costly for Zambia. Now the Railway line will require de-mining and rehabilitation at a very high cost.

9.   COMESA has recently embarked on a research project to calculate the actual cost of conflicts in the region. First it was necessary to develop sound methodologies to calculate the cost of conflict. This methodology can be used to ascertain the impact of conflict and help inform post conflict reconstruction efforts, which sometimes overlook cost factors such as indirect costs. Some of the factors to be considered include direct military expenditures, loss of productivity, damage to infrastructure, loss of government revenues, degradation of health and education and numerous other opportunity costs. There are also human costs including losses to the economy due to premature death and unexpected medical expenses; reduction in agricultural productivity which is critical given that most African economies are agro-based; capital flight and others.

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2.   CHANGING CONFLICT TRENDS

10.   Although I have painted a rather gloomy picture of Africa up to now, I want to note that the continent has changed and it is now witnessing fewer new conflicts with more being resolved than are starting. There is thus renewed hope for the continent. During the decade after the Cold War, between 1990 to 2001, there were 19 major wars in Africa (do not read all of these: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Chad, Republic of Congo, DRC (2 conflicts), Ethiopia, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan (North-South) and Uganda), but now there are only five active armed conflicts. Since one of these is new, Darfur[1]; this reflects an impressive 80% rate of resolution or double the 40% global reduction figure

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[1] The other current ongoing conflicts include Algeria (vs armed Islamic group); DRC (east vs. indigenous rebels) and Uganda (LRA insurgence)

for the same period.   It is also noteworthy that among the ongoing conflicts is the LRA insurgency which is also on the brink of resolution through an agreement expected to be signed next month.

3.0. MANDATE AND STRUCTURE OF CONFLICT PREVENTION MECHANISMS IN AFRICAN REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

11.   There are several reasons for the remarkably high success rate of African conflict resolution since 2001. I certainly believe that African leadership and African institutions need to be given some of the credit, including the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It is noteworthy that the post 2001 period which coincides with the replacement of the former continental body, the Organization of African Union (OAU) by the African Union (AU) in July 2002 reflects the period with the fastest rate of conflict resolution. The major change under the AU was a renewed emphasis on building a continental security regime that is capable of managing and resolving African conflicts. Very specifically, the AU, unlike the OAU laid out provisions to intervene in the internal conflicts of member states, thus over-riding the principle of sovereignty and non-interference, which had guided the OAU and was the most significant factor limiting the past effectiveness of the OAU.

12.   A key element of the peace and security architecture of the AU is the Peace and Security Council (PSC).   The PSC is supported by the AU Commission through its Chairperson. There are four other pillars that include a Panel of the Wise, a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), a Stand-by Force (ASF) and a Special Fund.

13.   This structure has been strengthened by the peace and security mechanisms of the eight recognized RECs . These form key building blocks of the AU. Their focus is designed to meet the specific needs of each region, but what is common to all these mechanisms is that they were established because of the recognition that conflict in each region was adversely affecting the REC's primary objectives namely regional economic

integration. The critical link between sustainable development and violent conflict is thus fully recognized by regional African bodies.

4. **EFFORTS BY AU, RECS AND OTHER REGIONAL MECHANISMS IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

14. The specific accomplishments of the AU and the RECs include: peacemaking through mediation and preventive diplomacy, and peacekeeping through military interventions. Other efforts and accomplishments include the provision of early warning systems, support to the democratization process of member states, and efforts at post conflict reconstruction and development.

4.1 Peacemaking through preventive diplomacy

15. As observed earlier, 80% of the conflicts in Africa have been resolved since 2001. African mediation has been crucial to the resolution of these conflicts, coupled with support from the international community. For instance, African mediation resolved the 21-year old north-south conflict in Sudan, led by Kenya under the auspices of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 2005 resulting in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). IGAD also tried to mediate the Somalia conflict although conflict broke out again after the signing of the Agreement. The most protracted conflict in the Great Lakes region, involving several African countries, was resolved after major effort by African leaders. The Lusaka Accords, which were signed by the DRC and five of its neighbors, were reached due to the persistence of Africans, under the leadership of the Zambian President with major support from the South African Development Community (SADC). The internal conflict in the DRC was with the former President of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire as the chief mediator during the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. Burundi's conflict was resolved through the concerted mediation efforts of two former presidents, first the late Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and then after his death, Nelson Mandela former President of

South Africa. Mediation of the ongoing conflict in North Uganda, which is on the brink of resolution, has been led by the former President of Mozambique Joachim Chissano and has included the Government of South Sudan.

4.2 Peacekeeping

16. With respect to the resolution of conflicts in West Africa, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) is an excellent example for the continent. ECOWAS interventions have been bold and on several occasions have supplemented mediation with military intervention through its military force, the Economic Community Military Observer Group (ECOMOG). ECOMOG's interventions started with the Liberian conflict and proved to be instrumental in providing an environment conducive for negotiations and civilian protection. Similarly, mediation efforts in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau were also supported by ECOMOG.

17. Such strategies of supporting diplomatic efforts with peacekeeping military intervention were also employed by the African Union in Burundi and Darfur, Sudan. In Darfur the current peace process is supplemented by military operations to ensure a ceasefire and to protect civilians. Until late last year, the African Union Mission in Darfur consisted purely of an African force but faced with severe financial and logisitcal challenges, the international decision was to reinforce it with a United Nations mission.

18. With respect to peacekeeping it is worth noting that the AU is in the process of establishing an African Standby Force (ASF), as one of the four pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture. The ASF will be made up of bridges from the "four regions" of Africa. It will be coordinated by RECs except for the Eastern and Northern Brigades which will be coordinated by regional mechanisms created for that purpose.

OTHER PEACE BUILDING EFFORTS – THE COMESA TRADING FOR PEACE PROJECT

19.	COMESA's "Trading for Peace Project" proides an example where a REC has attempted to directly exploit the synergies between economic and conflict dynamics. This Project aims to enhance the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources in the Great Lakes Region in the interest of regional stability and ultimately, poverty eradication. The Trading for Peace project is informed by the cyclic relationship between trade, development and conflict.

20.	COMESA recognizes that effective development work in unstable countries or those just emerging from conflict needs to be done differently from development work in countries that exist in relative peace and stability. As noted earlier, research has shown that countries emerging from conflict have a much greater likelihood of relapsing, particularly if the structural factors of the original conflict are not addressed. It is thus important to employ conflict sensitive approaches to development. There is a direct link between conflict and poverty. Although conflict may stem from specific concrete grievances, it can be exacerbated by individual economic interests (war economies) that gain influence over time. These economic interests often become a greater obstacle to peace than the original grievance. Furthermore development, which is intended to decrease poverty can help to prevent violent conflict, yet at times it can also contribute to it.

21.	Trading for Peace seeks to address the economic dynamics that fuel violent conflict such as inequality and war economies by identifying approaches that will address siome of the conflict-generating impacts of development and trade. This Project also intends to take advantage of the emerging peace, security and stability to encourage trade that can lead to long term development. This can be done by designing and implementing activities through a conflict sensitive lens. Part of the project aims to improve communication and information sharing between traders and government officials. For instance, as a result of lack of information, many traders perceive that legal trade is not profitable due to the numerous high tariffs and they are unaware of COMESA's simplified Trade Regime that has reduced the cost of doing business legally. Thus, capacity

strengthening will be provided to both traders and government officials on the borders so that they appreciate the real rules of the game. The creation of informal space for dialogue between countries at local levels is also expected to contribute to stabilization at the border post.

4.3   OTHER EFFORTS AT CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

4.3.1 Conflict Early Warning

22.   As noted earlier, one of the four pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture is a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). To support this, the AU established a CEWS consisting of an observation and monitoring centre and a situation room responsible for data collection and analysis. This is further linked to observation and monitoring units at the regional level. The AU has now developed a set of indicators to track conflicts in Africa. The AU is in the process of putting in place a CEWS Portal, which will link the eight RECs through VSAT technology and will provide news briefs and rapid news services. Similarly, the RECs will provide early warning information to other RECs, acting as a building block for the CEWS. T woRECs, IGAD and ECOWAS, already have functioning early warning systems (CEWARN and ECOWARN respectively) that have been instrumental in providing alerts to the respective RECs to forestall conflicts. The other RECs are developing establishing their early warning systems and COMESA's will also monitor conflicts that are rooted or propagated by war economies.

4.3.2 Post Conflict Reconstruction Efforts

23.   The biggest challenge now facing the African continent is post conflict reconstruction. Research indicates that protracted conflicts, once resolved, have a fifty percent chance of recurring within five years. Signs of this were seen in Sudan after the South temporarily withdrew from the Government of National Unity only three years and nine months after the signing of the CPA. The dispute is over the administration of the Abyei Region between the north and the south. Although clearly addressed in the CPA, disputes over its implementation have resulted in a

military build-up by both the Government of Sudan and South Sudan over the last couple of months. This issue is still needs final resolution. Similarly, the Eritrea-Ethiopia border dispute, although resolved through the EEBC ruling of 2000, still produces incidents of accusations, counter-accusations and military buildup over the implementation of the ruling.

24.   In view of these types of challenges that follow the signing of peace agreements, the African Union developed and adopted a Post Conflict Reconstruction Policy, the first of its kind. The Policy sets out a framework for post conflict activities in Africa. The Policy, which attempts to ensure coordinated and collaborative efforts among the interveners has six constitutive elements. These are: peace and security; political governance and transition; human rights, justice and reconciliation; humanitarian and emergency relief; reconstruction and socio-development; and gender. It is under-pinned by several principles including: African leadership; national and local ownership; inclusiveness; cooperation and coherence and capacity building for sustainability. Partners and stakeholders planning on doing post conflict work in Africa should review the Policy and use it to guide their planning.

4.3.3 Democracy and Good Governance

25.   Another challenge to peace and security in Africa has been the institutionalization of democratic governance. Just as there has been progress towards resolution of conflicts, this is another area that has recorded remarkable improvements over the last decade. One factor fundamental to democratic governance is the holding of credible democratic elections. While credible elections do not guarantee democracy and governance. Other elements such as citizen participation, human rights, the rule of law and so forth must also be supported. The absence of, or the perception of uncredible elections, can be a source of grievance, tensions and instability and can become an hindrance to democracy. Elections that are not perceived as credible can become a trigger for conflict as was witnessed in Kenya earlier this year and now in Zimbabwe.

26.   Both the AU and RECs have been actively involved in the election observation, including in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo post-conflict. This function has also been carried out by the Pan African Parliament, the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the ECOWAS Council of Elders and by COMESA ambassadors.

27.   In reference to governance, it is important to mention one of the instruments of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), known as the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The APRM is a self monitoring initiative for good governance designed to ensure that policies and practices of participating countries confirm to the values, principals, codes and standards enshrined in the Declaration of Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. The APRM includes the dissemination of best practices and the ratification of underlying deficiencies in governance and socio-economic development processes among the African Union Countries.

28.   The APRM is a voluntary mechanism and 26 countries have so far acceded to it since 2003. Out of these the APRM has launched reviews in 13 countries; fielded country review missions in five countries (Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa and Algeria) while reviews at the heads of state level have been conducted in Ghana, Rwanda and Kenya. For most of the remaining countries, work has already started including review and country support missions.

29.   Although a self monitoring and voluntary mechanism the peer review aspects of the APRM make it a tool that can hold leaders accountable and also ensure transparency at all levels of government. It is also intended to seek collective and sustainable solutions to common African problems and to ultimately translate in improvements in a country's political and economic governance, poverty situation, trade competitiveness and in achieving the millennium development goals. Several challenges still faet the APRM, which will need to be addressed as it continues to take shape. Among

these are the lengthy procedures and lack of resource to implement the recommendations.

Conclusion

I'd like to end here having described the extent of conflict on the continent and then how African leadership and institutions have been successful at reducing it in recent years. But, I do not want to paint too rosy a picture. In many cases, although conflict has abated, the root causes still have not been addressed so it may flare up again. In other cases, the winners who profit from conflict , corruption, and poor governance will not tire easily and will lie in wait for opportunities to destabilize countries and whole regions if they can. A Maasai proverb talks about progress as a zigzagged path which is appropriate in this context. But, African institutions, both governmental and non-governmental are ready to continue tackling the challenges. While they want to lead, they recognize the lack of institutional capacity and welcome the opportunity to partner with outsiders. Recent signs of renewed interest in security issues on the part of the United States, with its creation of AFRICOM, and interest by European Union countries and others suggest that opportunities abound for true progress to be made in establishing a continent that can take advantage of the riches with which it has been endowed.