

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND
SOUTHER AFRICA**



STATEMENT BY

**MR. SINDISO NGWENYA
COMESA SECRETARY GENERAL**

AT THE

**ANNUAL BRIEFING OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES
TO MEMBER STATES AND UNITED NATIONS ENTITIES**

ON

**SILENCING THE GUNS IN AFRICA: THE NEXUS BETWEEN PEACE, SECURITY,
GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

12TH October 2015

15/em/SN

**H.E Mrs. Fatoumata Sibide Kaba, Chair of the African Union Peace and Security Council
for the Month of October;**

H. E. Mr. Maged Abdel Aziz, Under Secretary General of the United Nations and Special Advisor of Africa

Representatives of Member States of the United Nations

Representatives of United Nations Entities

Fellow Chief Executive Officers of Regional Economic Communities of Africa

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honored to address the 2015 Annual Briefing by African Regional Economic Communities that seeks to explore the nexus between peace, security, governance and development and particularly to speak on this year's relevant theme on silencing the guns by 2020.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

With only five years to go before we can evaluate our successes towards silencing the guns by 2020, the under-Secretary has raised pertinent questions that need to be addressed before we can evaluate our preparedness towards achieving the goal that was set for us by our Heads of States and Governments to end all wars by 2020. The first step towards ending wars is accurately diagnosing what causes them because we shall not succeed if we do not clearly understand the root causes and propagating factors to conflicts including their dynamics and manifestations. The sources, dynamics and manifestations are well understood as rooted in democracy, governance and underdeveloped propagated by a vast number of other factors.

Over the years there have been significant shifts in the conflicts dynamics and more and more, the conflicts have been intra-state rather than inter-state conflicts. These have mostly taken the form of rebellion against the central government including civil wars and insurgences with armed factions and although most of these have been intra-state conflicts, they have frequently exhibited transnational characteristics. This is attributable to various factors including the porous borders between the states coupled with the sharing of ethnic communities across borders, a result of colonial delineation of borders. The transnational character of the conflicts have been manifested by the influx of small arms and light weapons, the flow of refugees, the illicit trade in natural resources and cross border rebel movement. All these inevitably affect the security situation in neighboring countries and thus warrant regional solutions. The Somalia conflict is an example, where the long absence of a functioning government has had very dire consequences on the economies and security beyond the neighboring countries and has now spilt over the global arena. This has been felt through the effects of piracy off the Somalia coast and the increased threats of terrorism. The conflicts therefore, despite being mostly internal

conflicts continue to bear serious regional and international consequences and their resolution is to the interest of the whole region and the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am also confident that the region has done very well with respect to developing tools to address the conflicts, particularly the African Peace and Security Architecture which is comprised of the Continental Early Warning System for conflict prevention, a panel of the Wise and other similar mechanisms of the RECs – such as the COMESA Committee of Elders; the African Standby force for peacekeeping and African Union's central decision making organ the Peace and Security Council. In addition, the architecture has attempted to adhere to the principle of subsidiarity with most RECs having similar mechanisms. The problem has not been with the tools but with implementation. For example, while good early warning reports have been issued in the past, the challenge has been linking the early warning provided to early response action. The systems of the AU and RECs are mandated to provide the warning with recommendations and it is up to the policy makers and other decision making organs to respond to the warnings by developing and implementing early actions. Their inability to respond appropriately has often been constrained by capacity issues or even political will and priority.

Your Excellences,

I now wish to focus on the role that COMESA is playing towards achieving the objectives of silencing the guns by 2020.

Since the commencement of formal structures to address peace and security in 1999, COMESA has developed programmes that respond to the whole spectrum of the conflict life cycle. We have, however, curved our niche around the economic and other structural factors of conflict, resulting in an architecture that includes,

- a. Structural prevention of conflict through the establishment of a conflict early warning system (COMWARN), which is focused on structural vulnerability assessments. COMWARN is anchored on a composite target variable, the COMESA Peace and Prosperity Index (CPPI) which is designed to identify structural drivers of conflict for respective countries. After several years of developing the model and defining the indicators, COMESA disseminated its Country Structural Vulnerability Assessments this year and made several recommendations to member states. We are however cognizant that the challenge of linking early warning to early response is very real for COMESA

because while member States perceive the importance of addressing the structural factors, they may choose to address prioritize that they foresee as more urgent at the expense of the structural factors.

- b. Support the management and resolution of existing conflicts through its Committee of Elders that are mandated to supporting my office with preventive peacemaking assignments. COMESA normally plays a supportive role where other RECs take the lead . for example, support IGAD's initiative in Sudan; SADC's in Madagascar etc. The Committee of Elders has been very active and this year I deployed them to work in close collaboration with EAC Eminent Persons to support peaceful elections in Burundi. The process resulted in some crisis that required the convening of several Extra-Ordinary Summits of the EAC. The COMESA Committee of Elders with the EAC Eminent Persons made several briefs to the Extra-Ordinary Policy Organs. In addition COMESA Committee of Elders was invited to support the Burundi National Dialogues.
- c. Support post conflict reconstruction by exploiting the nexus between trade, development and conflict prevention. COMESA has been supporting border communities of the Great Lakes region to enhance cross border trade using the COMESA Simplified Regime. Equally, COMESA is supporting the development of infrastructure at the borders including border markets. In addition to supporting interaction through trade, these programs are intended to improve livelihoods of the border communities and reduce the recruits for conflict activities.
- d. Support to address security – COMESA is contributing to regional maritime security by focusing on addressing money laundering crimes. This is a structural solution that goes beyond attempting to capture pirates ,which itself is an important aspects but once pirates are captured then it is easy for new recruits to be drawn from a wide pool of unemployed youth. However, if we address the financiers of piracy then we are making it difficult for them to operate at all. Although this is done to prevent maritime insecurity, addressing money laundering crimes also support prevention of other trans-border crimes such as terrorism, drug and human smuggling.
- e. COMESA is also supporting democratic governance which is done through observation of elections and submission of recommendations to ensure more successful future elections. In addition, COMESA occasionally involves in pre-elections missions that are aimed at identifying any areas that require support. This has been done for countries that have emerged from conflicts or crisis such as DRC, Egypt after the first revolution and Kenya after the post elections violence of 2007/8. In addition COMESA has established a Electoral Management Bodies Forum (EMBs Forum) for peer support and to target for capacity building.

Your Excellences,

Although I commend our continent for its accurate identification of the factors that contribute to conflict and my confidence in the tools that have been developed to prevent and resolve the conflicts, I am not as confident in the region's preparedness to end all wars by 2020 unless we can address several factors;

- a. Firstly, I believe we will need to invest a lot more resources in the structural prevention of conflict. Currently most resources have been allocated to peacekeeping efforts with much less resources allocated to structural conflict prevention. While on the subject of resources, it will also be important for Africa to raise more its own resources to prevent and resolve the conflicts;
- b. Secondly, we need to be cognizant of the numerous actors and initiatives that exist with the objectives of preventing and resolving conflicts and we should therefore pay more attention to issues around collaboration. In that regard, I believe UN and its agencies together with the AU should take a leading role to coordinate the existing efforts; and in the same token, the principle of subsidiarity will need to be adhered to
- c. Third, recognizing the complexity of conflicts, it will be important to engage the less traditional stakeholders such as the Non-state actors and parliamentarians, who have a very crucial role to play. Civil Society organizations are near the ground and they are hence able to identify factors to conflict at an early stage. Civil society organizations have also got strength in advocacy and have traditionally played the watchdog role very effectively. This is something that COMESA identified as early as in 2001. In response to Decisions of the COMESA Authority COMESA commenced an accreditation process in order to incorporate CSOs to its decision making processes. What needs to be done is to build their capacity to enable them to engage constructively with policy maker and therefore provide positive contribution to conflict prevention and economic development goals of the state.

Your Excellencies

There is also a need to enhance coordination , not only between the UN/ AU/ REC's but with regard to the various actors of the UN System in supporting Africa. in addition ,there is also the need to increase the effectiveness of resource and assistance provided by the UN and International Partners, and to be aligned to Africa's priorities.last but not least , we have to enhance communication and information sharing between the UN on one side and the AU and the REC's on the other.

On illicit weapons and arms trafficking African counters have made significant efforts to prevent and ready ate the illicit trade of small arms. However, limited resources remains a challenge .Consequently, the support by international partners should include aid programs that target illicit arms trade , funding the destruction of small arms , and securing at,storage facilities.

Further, support is needed to assist African countries in up grading their capabilities , inter- alia, by providing equipment and training to control,land borders and sea ports .To effectively combat trade in small arms there is need for transparency and accountability with regard to small arms production and transfers , and strengthen regulations .

In conclusion, **Your Excellences Ladies and Gentlemen**, I believe that that the UN can play a very important mapping and coordination role because there is, currently a multiplicity of actors and programmes that need to be channelled towards the goals of conflict prevention and economic development. If it is clear about what the different actors are doing then it will be possible to exploit synergies for greater impact

I thank you all