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PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE AFRICAN UNION

Key Note Address by

**His Excellency Jean Ping,
Chairperson of the African Union Commission
(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)**

April 29, 2010, Durban, South Africa

**H.E. Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of South African
Department for International Relations and
Cooperation;**

**H.E. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Sierra Leone Minister of
Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation;**

**H.E. Ambassador Baso Sangqu, Permanent
Representative of South Africa to the United Nations;**

**H.E. Ambassador Anne Anderson, Permanent
Representative of Ireland to the United Nations;**

The Executive Director of ACCORD, Vasu Gounden;

Excellencies, members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a great honour for me to be here today in the beautiful city of Durban that is already in the festive mood of the football jamboree-the World Cup that is being staged on African soil for the first time.

Let me on behalf of the African Union thank the Government and people of South Africa for the warm welcome and the brotherly hospitality that we have received since we arrived here.

My special thanks go to the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa in partnership with the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Conflicts (ACCORD) for initiating, organizing and hosting this very important seminar on the theme: “Securing Sustainable Peace in Africa: Coordination, Coherence and Partnerships.”

I will focus on “**Peacebuilding in Africa: Perspectives from the African Union.**” Africa has made remarkable progress in resolving the myriads of complex conflicts across the continent. Despite this progress, millions of people still continue to be adversely affected by the consequences of violent conflicts, hence the need for long-term commitment and engagement, mobilization of massive resources and political will, as well as cooperation and coordination. It is in line with this that the African Union has set aside 2010 as the ‘**Year of Peace and Security in Africa**’ which aims at giving added impetus to seeking for coordinated and sustainable responses to the challenge of conflict in Africa.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitutive Act and the Protocol Relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the AU decided that it was time to focus attention on post-conflict reconstruction

and development/peacebuilding in countries emerging from conflict in July 2005. Subsequently, the AU draft policy framework on Post-conflict Reconstruction was adopted in Banjul, The Gambia in July 2006.

The objectives of the AU PCRDR policy are to improve timeliness, effectiveness and coordination of activities in post conflict countries and to lay the foundation for social justice and sustainable peace, in line with Africa's vision of renewal and growth. The policy serves as a tool to:

- a) Consolidate peace and prevent relapse of violence;
- b) Help address the root causes of conflict;
- c) Encourage and fast-track planning and implementation of reconstruction activities; and
- d) Enhance complementarities and coordination between and among diverse actors engaged in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding and development processes.

The AU post conflict policy is underpinned by five core principles, which constitute the basic minimum values and standards that inform action across all post conflict activities and programmes. In particular, the AU PCRDR principles are:

- (i) African leadership,
- (ii) National and local ownership,
- (iii) Inclusiveness, equity and non-discrimination,
- (iv) Cooperation and cohesion, and
- (v) Capacity building for sustainability.

The policy constitutes a crucial guide for the development of further tools (domestication) at sub-regional (RECs) and national levels and with effective AU oversight and coordination mechanisms to facilitate the efforts of post of post conflict societies to move from recovery and reconstruction into long term development.

Following the violent conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR), the African Union took major steps to assist in stabilizing the country together with its partners, particularly the United Nations. A multidisciplinary experts' mission was deployed, April 2006, to take stock of the socio-economic and security situation in CAR, identify the various needs and come up with recommendations on the assistance Member States and bilateral and multilateral partners could provide to CAR within the context of post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development.

The AU has established a Liaison Office to work closely with the CAR authorities in reconstructing the country and building peace. A lot has transpired and more is still to be done. Elections are scheduled for this year and the AU will continue to work with the all stakeholders including the UN Peace Building Commission to ensure that peace and security is maintained before, during and after the elections. It is our wish that efforts would be accelerated in reconstructing the country's infrastructure and pacifying the country still threatened by insecurity and the presence of armed groups and rebellions.

In recognition of the difficulties and challenges facing Sierra Leone and Liberia and the need to avoid relapse into conflict, the AU dispatched a Multi-Disciplinary Team of experts to Liberia and Sierra Leone in February 2009 in order to conduct an assessment of the post-conflict situation in the country. The team was also mandated to come up with concrete recommendations on the nature of assistance that the AU and its Member States could provide to the country within the framework of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD). The African Union (AU) has a critical role to play in this direction.

The Government of Sierra Leone in particular, together with international partners, has made great strides towards improving the security environment through security sector reform and other peacebuilding activities. Efforts are being made towards ensuring good governance and delivery of justice throughout the country as well as the provision of basic social services and economic renewal, in a general policy framework for post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding. The final report of the AU Mission gives a detailed sector by sector assessment and proffers recommendations that need to be closely followed up and implemented.

Also, the AU is taking the measures required to significantly strengthen its contribution to post conflict reconstruction in the DRC and Burundi. In this regard, an AU Multidisciplinary Mission visited DRC and Burundi from January 21-February 22, 2010. The objective was to

evaluate the situation and make recommendations on areas where the Commission and the Member States of the African Union could provide increased support in the process of reconstruction and consolidation of peace in both countries.

The vital role AU has played in Burundi since the establishment of the Liaison Office in Bujumbura in 2003 cannot be overemphasized. Peacebuilding therefore remains an important area of intervention as far as the process of peace consolidation is concerned. The capacity in the AU Liaison Office needs to be enhanced accordingly. Permit me to express the gratitude of the African Union to the Government of South Africa for the key role South Africa has played, and sacrifice made in bringing stability and peace in the Republic of Burundi.

Guinea Bissau remains a fragile state ever since the series of top level assassinations that hit the country in 2008 and 2009. The April 1, 2010 events reveals deep crisis governance that has characterized the country with coups and attempted coups, mutinies and general military discontent since the country ascended the podium of independence in 1974 after a protracted war of liberation against the Portuguese.

Sustaining peace in Guinea Bissau in the medium to long term, will require developing a national architecture for peace that will promote, enhance and facilitate genuine dialogue, through the AU-UN-ECOWAS cooperation and the PBC offers, such an opportunity to support the development of an institutional framework of building local

capacity for dialogue and sustainable peace in Guinea Bissau.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants;

Let me seize this opportunity to emphasize that the AU is committed to the full implementation of its PCRDR Policy. Post-conflict reconstruction is a multi-disciplinary and cross cutting process that links together many actors and stakeholders both at local, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. The AU Liaison Offices in countries emerging from conflict need adequate capacity to play an effective role in supporting national capacity in post conflict reconstruction. The people are yearning for the peace dividends. Let us not allow their hopes to fade.

Of course, the AU will not accomplish all these tasks alone. The AU and the UN, particularly the UN Peacebuilding Commission, have been consulting at various levels. The most recent of such consultations include the “Partnership for Peacebuilding” meeting in New York, March 23, 2010; and the AU Peace and Security Council meeting on the UN Peacebuilding Commission held few days ago, on April 19, 2010, that involved the Facilitators (here present with us) appointed by the UN General Assembly to facilitate the review of the Peacebuilding Commission with a view to making recommendations that will enhance its effectiveness.

This seminar therefore provides an opportunity for us to critically examine the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in the context of the guiding questions that the organizers have ably provided. Let me also say that I agree with those who say that peacebuilding is a process. Therefore, we can affirm that the journey to peacebuilding is progressing and this is an opportunity for us, the stakeholders, to pause and look back in order to make the appropriate leap forward.

It is my hope that the role of civil society, and women especially as 2010-2020 has been designated as the “African Women’s Decade”, will be articulated at the end of this seminar. National ownership and appropriation of all processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction is vital for sustainable results.

In the search for resources and means to execute this noble agenda, the UN and the AU as well as the RECs and all stakeholders should not be seen to be competing or replacing one another.

Rather, the principle of complementarities, comparative advantage and collaboration as partners, should vividly guide our endeavours and actions.

Indeed, building effective partnerships between the AU, the UN PBC and all the relevant stakeholders is not an option, it is a necessity.

I wish you all a successful seminar.

I thank you for your kind attention.