

Presentation by Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim
“Human Security As An Emerging Paradigm For Promoting Peace In Africa”,
One-Day Summit Level of the Nigeria’s Centenary Celebration,
Thursday, 27th February 2014.

Your Excellency President Goodluck Jonathan;

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegations,

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentleman;

All Protocols Observed.

I am honored to be here with you today for this momentous occasion. I would like in particular to thank His Excellency President Goodluck Jonathan for inviting me to participate in this commemoration of 100 years of what is modern day Nigeria.

Mr President, I wish at the very outset to salute the Nigerian people through you to say we are proud of the commitments and achievements of this great African state. We are conscious and highly appreciative of Nigeria’s contribution and immense sacrifice in the service of our continent.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to begin with personal reflections. I have had the privilege of visiting Nigeria dozens of time and interacting with the leaders of Nigeria and a cross section of society. Naturally, I visited this country more frequently at a time when I served as Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity. Throughout this period I have never ceased to be amazed and impressed by the dynamism of the Nigerian people including in particular the women of Nigeria.

Nigeria has played a leading role in shaping Africa's destiny. Successive Nigerian administrations have all displayed an unequivocal commitment to African struggles for liberation, human dignity and social progress. As Africans, we are proud of this nation

and its people who have stood side by side with their brothers and sisters of the continent during the dark days of colonialism and apartheid. We care for their unity and their strength, as our capacity to achieve our collective African aspirations lies in the ability of pivotal countries like Nigeria to be in the front line.

Mr President,

Africa is currently at a critical juncture with a variety of challenges and opportunities shaping our respective countries and regions. As a continent, we have outperformed expectations by our critics. Many of our countries have soared and surged both economically and socially.

Yet, to all intents and purposes, despite the positive growth story we have achieved as a continent, Africa and in particular the African people are still faced with difficult times in the context of human security. Human security is a relatively new term in the realm of international discourse, but it is something we all have a clear understanding of. Human Security as a concept is defined as the security of human lives outside of the traditional state centered thinking of security, though it still remains as the central objective of national and international security trajectories.

It is now generally accepted that security is no longer just about protecting territories but protecting individuals; it is not just about investing in arms but investing in development. As the Late Mehbub ul Haq aptly put it “Security of all the people everywhere – in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, in their environment.” (Haq 1995 p.115).

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation in its search for the answers related towards the development of its Good Governance agenda in the continent, asserts that human security is an important concept that cannot be ignored as a significant discourse in Africa’s development agenda. It opens up new lines of analysis, allows new understanding of and gives voice to new actors. Its value added to the security field is

that it focuses attention on human beings and integrates non-military mechanisms as means of security and also focuses on downside risks, risks that are usually taken for granted. These include the risks at the family level and to the community level and eventually the state level.

Financial security to provide for our families is at the core of all of our societies and communities. Providing shelter and comfort to our loved ones and community members is something that we all aspire to do. Ensuring the feeling of inclusiveness among our diverse social, economic and political groupings; while making sure that we do not lose the hope and basic expectation that tomorrow will be better than yesterday; and the belief that with an equitable opportunity we can develop our lives if we work hard and aspire to great things, are essential pre requisite for both human security and physical security.

It is when these fundamental needs are circumvented that we have problems and situations that upend peace. When inequality persists and marginalization of groups occur, desperation sets in that causes people to act irrationally in order to gain the human security they feel entitled to.

The continued marginalization of groups from both political and economic power, coupled with a political trend of winner-takes-all remains the primary source of conflict on the continent that undermines human security and therefore peace.

The persistence of extreme poverty and the feeling of social exclusion for particular social groups, even in economies enjoying healthy growth rates, creates conditions of increased fragility. People are more likely to be driven to violence when unemployment and traditional livelihoods are disrupted, with no obvious outlet available. The extreme poor are more easily mobilized by militias and insurgent groups.

Human security has many distinct meanings and provides an umbrella for a variety of things but fundamentally speaking, we cannot talk about human security in the

absence of physical security. Without physical security there can be no human security and in the absence of both, we cannot have political, social and economic progress.

One of the major criticisms of the impressive economic performance in Africa has been the lack of an inclusive growth. The 6-7% GDP that has been recorded by many of our countries hasn't benefited the masses, as I'm sure you have heard many times people continue to ask 'why haven't I felt it in my pocket.' As people are made more and more aware of how much inequality exists and how much they aren't benefitting from the economic growth, resentment and tensions start to rise. It is in these situations where you have political backlash and social unrest. It is the most dangerous when expectations are incredibly high, where people expect their lives to be better than they were yesterday...when in reality their lives become worse. When a significant deficit exists between people's expectations and reality, that is when communities are at the most vulnerable. Frustrations boil over because jobs are still to be had, youth unemployment rages on, development is stagnant and only concentrated in certain areas and opportunities are lost. That, to me, is the crux of where we are today and where human security can be undermined. This is where we are most fragile, and this is where we need to engage vigorously in order to salvage the future for our children, our countries and continent.

All is not lost, however. There are many trends that we can use to our advantage that can shape our future in a more positive trajectory. One of the most rewarding aspects of my diplomatic and political career, both nationally and within the African context has been to witness Africa's transformation, mostly for the better. The vibrancy of our youth is where we really have a significant advantage over the rest of the world. Africa is the only continent where the youth population will significantly expand and in 2035, Africa will have a larger working age population than India or China. This demonstrates to the potential we have, the youth are not a ticking time bomb as we are forced to see it. They are an opportunity that we need to cultivate and empower so

that they feel ingrained into our society. Creating quality livelihood opportunities for young people is one of the most pressing challenges facing Africa.

It is our responsibility to create conditions for the vast amount of young people on the continent to make use of endless opportunities. We need to make young people believe that tomorrow will be better, because if not, we will then lose the raging battle with extremists and criminal enterprises that radicalize our youth

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to revisit the issues of physical security again because I think it is really important not to underestimate its impact. Terrorism continues to threaten our peace and stability but so do internal conflict, violence, trafficking and criminality. Also financial volatility associated with rapid cross border movements of money; job and income insecurity due to global competition; pandemic disease, forced international migration as a result of violent conflicts, political repression, poverty and resource scarcity.

As much as there has been essential focus on terrorism on the continent, we need to pay attention to these threats that directly impact people's day-to-day security. Perhaps the most effective way of reducing violence, as a recent report by the African Development Bank points out, is to tackle the underlying social and economic causes. Unfortunately, in a number of African countries the very institutions that are supposed to safeguard the security of the people are the very institutions that are either corrupt, compromised or at worst undermine the security of the people they are supposed to protect. This has to change.

In the latest Mo Ibrahim Foundation Index, the rule of law among many countries has deteriorated even in the context of improved economic performance and human development. Rule of law and personal safety in the continent has consistently declined demonstrating a need to strengthen the institutions that try to safeguard

these two categories. Personal safety and security have a far-reaching impact on all facets of society, it affects perceptions of doing business, it affects how people live their lives.

Violence is growing within nations and threats to peace are more likely to be found at home than across borders. Conflicts are becoming increasingly fragmented, fought on a smaller scale on peripheries of states, with more non-state actors involved and lines between criminal and political violence blurred. Human trafficking across the continent continues to deteriorate with no substantial efforts to curtailing it; to say nothing of drug trafficking, which has become newsworthy lately but has been a long standing issue in many countries.

As a continent, we need to understand these new trends and threats and be vigilant on how to anticipate them and prevent them. I believe this begins and ends with improving the livelihoods of those who are most vulnerable. Vulnerable people and communities are the ones who are most susceptible to the negative consequences of both the enlarged criminal networks, armed violence and civil wars.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen

Each country in Africa has a role to play and many of the conflicts and challenges we face today transcend borders. Problems are no longer a Tanzanian problem, a Nigerian problem, a Senegalese problem or a South African problem. As we become more and more regionally integrated, the consequences of any internal strife will have a wide reaching impact in neighboring societies. This is why human security in each individual country is no longer a problem of one single country, but a group of countries. Maintaining and improving human livelihoods is a national security challenge that all governments, civil society, private sector, individuals need to take seriously. And to effectively deal with this, a more cooperative and collaborative approach either under our regional systems or bilaterally, is necessary.

Perhaps the best way forward, with Nigeria leading the way in West Africa, is to continue investing on regional and where necessary continental approaches through the African Union to solving conflicts. As we are seeing today, the greater the density of regional or intergovernmental agreements, mechanisms and processes in which African states are involved, the greater their resilience will be. The more African states are anchored in structures of regional cooperation, the more resilient they are likely to be. I hope this is something we can all collectively reflect on as we look ahead so that we continue Africa's progress for the next 100 years.

I thank you very much for your attention.