

Peace and security challenges in Africa

Thank you for this welcome opportunity to present some reflections on an extremely complicated theme - peace and security in Africa. Giving such a presentation in this institution – a center of excellence on this important topic - is both inspiring and challenging. Let me at the outset acknowledge the work being undertaken by the ISS in terms of analyzing key developments in Africa and making this knowledge available for a broader audience. The work of the ISS is also contributing to enhancing the understanding of these complex challenges by policy makers, government officials and the civil society in Norway, and thus providing us with a better basis on which to make difficult policy choices in areas where it sometimes could be quite fatal to make the wrong decisions.

Contributing to peace and reconciliation is at the very top of our foreign policy agenda. In implementing our policy, multilateral approaches and unrelenting belief in the power of dialogue are essential aspects. Indeed, multilateral peace building efforts is an important dimension in addressing some of the challenges presented by globalization, including preventing huge refugee flows and trafficking in human beings. Stability and prosperity in Africa would be a

tremendous contribution to global welfare and is in our self-interest. We need peace and security “out there” if we are to be safe “back home”.

We need a holistic approach to the peace and security agenda. The root causes for conflict – poverty, human rights abuses, lack of democracy – must be tackled. Many Africans have underscored the need for enhancing focus on conflict *prevention*. I fully support this approach, which include both sustainable social and economic development to prevent conflicts in the first place and post-conflict efforts to prevent them from re-igniting. While it is often more easy to raise money for humanitarian efforts than longer-term development assistance, it could in fact cheaper to prevent conflict than to pay for the damage done afterwards.

Although each African country is unique and each conflict has its own dynamics, and thus require tailor-made solutions, much of what is learned from one process can be applied to the next. Conflict after conflict demonstrates the importance of good governance and viable government institutions. Unequal distribution of economic and political power causes conflict, and governance deficits make conflicts unmanageable. Our development cooperation is now consciously geared towards contributing to peace building and conflict prevention.

Conflicts are often both caused and fuelled by exploitation of natural resources. In fact, sustainable natural resource management could be one of the most important tools for preventing conflicts. In this respect I welcome the fact that several African countries now have committed themselves to implementing the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and we are proud to be hosting the EITI Secretariat now being established in Oslo.

The perhaps most important lesson learned from peace processes is that in the end you have to find a political, negotiated solution to conflicts. Dialogue, internally in countries and across borders, are of the essence. States and political, social and religious groups must be pulled into the political processes. We cannot afford to leave them stranded on the outside. I think the most prominent and successful example of this approach is the transition from a brutal repressive racist regime to a colorblind democracy here in South Africa.

Being an impartial facilitator does not mean suspension of values. Norway has often been asked to contribute because of our high profile on human rights and international humanitarian law. We are impartial, but not neutral. We mainstream values into peace engagements. Human rights is a key example, gender equality another. The horrors of war and armed conflict often affect women and children especially, being the most vulnerable and disempowered. Therefore, the importance of SCR 1325 on the protection of women in armed

conflict and peace operations and SCR 1612 on children in armed conflict cannot be emphasized enough. As one of very few countries we have prepared an action plan for the implementation of SCR 1325.

Africa is the continent hardest hit by the proliferation of small arms, which is an important – but sometimes ignored – factor behind instability and violence.

Norway has a long tradition as an active partner in the efforts to bring illegal trade and use of small arms in Africa under control and we greatly appreciate the cooperation with African countries in implementing the UN Programme of Action against the illicit trade in small arms. However, we are concerned over the slow progress in this area. Multilateral efforts to fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons clearly need to be reinvigorated.

Africa has during the last decades seen a number of violent conflicts that have seriously hampered development, caused severe destruction and human suffering, and led to instability. However, encouragingly, the number of conflicts has decreased significantly. We have seen how Africans themselves increasingly have taken responsibility for preventing conflicts and building peace. The AU has embarked on an ambitious journey - to take ownership and responsibility for peace and security on the African continent, develop a continental security architecture and establish an African Standby Force (ASF), and to engage in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. It is crucial

that African countries themselves show this kind of leadership and ownership, and African states have often emphasized that African conflicts should be managed by Africa itself. This is a commendable approach. It reflects a genuine willingness to put one's own house in order.

That said, the complexity and magnitude of some challenges obviously suggest that substantial support from international partners is required. In particular, the experience with AMIS – and now AMISOM – may have increased the understanding for the organisational, financial and political challenges facing the operationalisation of AU's security architecture on the ground.

These challenges underline the need for closer cooperation between the AU and the international community, in particular through the UN, but also through other relevant international organizations, such as NATO. Improving coordination and cooperation between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council is urgent and must be prioritized. At the same time sub-regional organizations, such as SADC, ECOWAS and IGAD should be better linked up with the all-African peace and security institutions to ensure that efforts are well coordinated and that all stakeholders are involved.

The United Nations' Peace Building Commission (PBC) is now operational, with an initial focus on two African countries, Burundi and Sierra Leone. As

you know, Norway is sharing the PBC's Burundi format. We will through this role attempt to enhance the international attention to peace building efforts in Africa. We need to ensure transparency in the Commission's work, and civil society's active participation in its meetings is crucial.

Finding the appropriate balance between military operations, fulfilling humanitarian obligations and building civilian capacities is a difficult, but crucial task. In developing doctrines and operational guidelines for the African Standby Force, AU should ensure that civilian police and civilian resources are an integral part of the strategy. In this respect, Norway has for more than 10 years worked to help build African capacity for civilian participation in UN peace operations through the Training for Peace programme, where ISS is one of the main partners. Let me stress that the civilian dimension should not be regarded as an add-on to be addressed retroactively, but has to be an integral part of the ASF concept right from the start. This would be in line with the UN emphasis on integrated missions and would help facilitate UN support.

Let me now turn to some of the most serious conflicts and crises ravaging Africa.

Like most others, I am deeply concerned about the crisis in Darfur. The humanitarian situation is still very fragile and NGOs are increasingly being

pressed out of the region. We fear that the UN humanitarian operation may collapse. In fact, especially during the first years of the Darfur crisis, the NGOs were the only actors to provide protection for the population.

Protection of the population is still the most important issue, and AMIS is doing a courageous job, but has insufficient financing, manpower and supplies. AMIS also lacks sufficient political support and a strong mandate to protect the population. It is now vital that the complete UN support package to AMIS is accepted by Khartoum and deployed as fast as possible. The whole operation in Darfur may otherwise collapse, with grave humanitarian consequences.

Norway and Sweden have offered a joint engineering troop to the UN/AU operation in Darfur, and are currently discussing this with the UN. We are concerned that the resistance by Khartoum against foreign troops from outside of Africa may undermine global participation through the UN to protect civilians in Africa and elsewhere. More pressure must be put on Khartoum to stop the attacks and Janjaweed in Darfur and to accept the full UN/AU operation.

The efforts to bring about a new peace agreement for Darfur are vital and must be stepped up. Representatives of the civil society, internally displaced persons, women groups and other Arab groups should participate in the talks. We are

grateful for increased engagement by the AU and UN in this regard. It is now important to merge all the different peace initiatives involving the UN/AU, Eritrea and regional actors.

We are very concerned over the regional implications of the Darfur crisis, especially in Chad and the CAR, countries with very weak central governments. These areas might easily be safe heavens for negative forces. In this respect, we are also worried about the still unresolved conflict in Northern Uganda, and the deteriorating situation in Eastern DRC after the successful elections a few months ago. Obviously, the individual conflicts cannot be addressed in isolation.

But we must not forget the north-south peace agreement – CPA - which is the main pillar of the peace process in Sudan. The CPA must be fully implemented, and the SPLM should be more engaged in national politics in Sudan. The SPLM will now, with Norwegian support, be engaged in an effort to unify all the rebel movements, who still are hopelessly divided. Norwegian support to Sudan has amounted to 100 mill. USD annually over the two last years, which is more than we have pledged. This includes both humanitarian support to Darfur and more longer-term development assistance in the south.

The Horn of Africa faces a regional system of insecurity in which conflicts and political crises feed into and fuel one another. We continue to be very concerned

about the situation in Somalia. The security situation is still volatile, and the humanitarian conditions are very critical.

It is a serious concern that only Uganda so far has contributed troops to AMISOM, and that the AU peace mission is desperately short both of troops and financial resources. If the Ethiopian troops should be withdrawn from Somalia before a full AMISOM is in place, there might be a serious security problem. We support the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), but we also remind them that the only way to achieve peace and stability in Somalia is through a genuine and inclusive process of dialogue and reconciliation with all major actors in the Somali society.

The protracted border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea continues to undermine the development of the two countries and has regional ramifications. Tension between the parties is increasing and we fear this may escalate into full war. There is a clear link between the situation in Somalia and the relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia. A solution to the boarder conflict is therefore key to stabilizing the Horn of Africa.

We now need renewed diplomatic efforts to prevent military escalation and to ensure progress in due time before November 2007 when EEBC (Ethiopia Eritrea Boundary Commission) will regard the virtual demarcation as fulfilling

the Commission's mandate. We are concerned over the long-term consequences of the ongoing undermining of the Algiers Agreement and the authority of the UN and the Security Council. We therefore must continue to hold the parties responsible to the Algiers Agreement and the EEBC decision, and expect them to fulfil their international obligations.

Ethiopia must fully and practically abide by the decision of the Boundary Commission. This has to be communicated by all international actors as the necessary first step towards a resolution of the border conflict. Eritrea must withdraw from the security zone and lift restrictions on UNMEE (United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea). We must firmly and coherently communicate that resolving the conflict by military means is totally unacceptable. This will never bring a final solution to the disputes and would be a serious violation of international law. The Norwegian Government intends to maintain close contact with both parties and wish to cooperate with other international partners for constructive international engagement for resolving the conflict.

On a more positive note, the final ceasefire agreement between the government and the FNL in Burundi seems to be holding. Other African countries, such as Tanzania and South Africa have been instrumental in bringing about the ceasefire. Both the AU and the UN PBC have taken on a challenging task in

Burundi. It is important that all stakeholders together with the Governments concerned succeed in this undertaking. We take our role as lead on Burundi in the Peace Building Commission very seriously, and will support the country through both bilateral and multilateral channels. The Norwegian minister of international development will co-chair the up-coming Round-Table in Bujumbura.

ECOWAS is a very important factor in the bringing about peace and security in West Africa and we support the organization's peace and security work financially. That being said, it is important to keep in mind that the organization is not stronger than its member states.

As regards the Ivory Coast, we welcome the recent peace accord and congratulate the two parties as well as ECOWAS on this achievement. Putting an end to the Ivorian crisis will enhance regional stability and strengthen the prospects for sustainable and peaceful development in West Africa. However, international commitment and assistance is crucial to ensure a lasting peace. The 2008 elections in the Ivory Coast will show the real results of the peace process. The international community should contribute to ensuring UN certification of the election process.

Turning now to region where we find ourselves, let me say a few words on the situation in Zimbabwe. Norway has been a supporter of Zimbabwe since the liberation war and we are sad to note the rapidly deteriorating situation on all fronts in the country. The people of Zimbabwe is suffering and the problems also spill over to other countries in the region. We appreciate and support the active role SADC and South Africa now have taken in trying to create a framework for a national dialogue and free and fair elections next year. We have stated that we are ready to assist in any way possible. In our view the burden now is on the Zimbabwean authorities to show signs of compromise and stop the excessive human rights abuses we have seen this year. This is a prerequisite for any mediation effort to succeed.

Finally, a few words on one of the often forgotten conflicts in Africa. We are deeply concerned about the situation in Western Sahara. We have always fully supported UN's efforts to reach a fair and lasting political solution that is acceptable to both parties - a solution that safeguards the Saharan people's right to self-determination in accordance with international law and SC resolutions. We welcome the recent SCR 1754 adopted on 30 April 2007, which has given a strong political signal to the parties.

Both Morocco and Polisario are now showing willingness to move the process forward and negotiate under UN auspices. This is a window of opportunity. We

are ready to explore the possibilities for supporting the process, in accordance with the recent SCR that “invites Member States to lend appropriate assistance to such talks”. We consider it to be absolutely vital that the UN and the international donors continue their humanitarian efforts in the refugee camps in Algeria, until the refugees may return safely to Western Sahara. The Norwegian Government supports this work through its financial contributions to the UN organisations and to Norwegian NGOs.

By way of conclusion, I would again thank the ISS for this opportunity to present my government’s thinking and views on a very important topic and some of the most pressing challenges that Africa is facing today. I now very much look forward to hearing your views, comments and questions. Given the deep knowledge many of you possess with respect to these issues, I’m confident that you will contribute to enhancing my understanding of these complex matters and therefore also contribute to strengthening the basis for our policy making.

Thank you.