Statement

by

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before

The New York City Bar Association
Committee on African Affairs

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Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful to the New York City Bar Association for this opportunity to give the United Nations perspective on recent developments in Africa, with a focus on emerging challenges to peace, security and development on the continent, and how partnerships, including an enhanced US-Africa partnership, can effectively contribute to achieving Africa's dreams and aspirations.

Allow me to begin by expressing my admiration for the New York City Bar Association and its African Affairs Committee. Your on-going efforts to advance equality, ensure access to justice and promote respect for diversity have inspired professionals and activists everywhere, in the legal community and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the UN General Assembly stated in its 2005 World Summit Declaration, there can be no development without peace and security, and none of these will be possible without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

UN Member States have reaffirmed this important nexus in the outcomes of the 2010 UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals and the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), both of which emphasized the importance of peace, security, and respect for human rights for achieving inclusive sustainable development.

The African Union's 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, adopted by African leaders in 2013, reinforced the nexus between peace, security and development by underscoring the commitment of African countries to work towards a conflict-free, integrated, people-driven and prosperous Africa, where all Africans live in peace, share the fruits of growth and enjoy lives of dignity. This vision is reflected in the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda as well as in the African Union's Agenda 2063, the continent's ambitious, 50-year transformation strategy.

African countries and the African Union, for their part, have demonstrated growing commitment to peace, security, good governance and human rights. An increasing number of African counties have adhered to

multi-party systems and mechanisms have been established at the national, regional and continental levels to resolve conflicts, consolidate peace and stability, and promote accountability, rule of law and good governance, including the African Peace and Security Architecture, the African Governance Architecture and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). In addition, efforts have increasingly been directed towards post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction in order to sustain post-conflict transitions. The UN has been instrumental in supporting these activities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While the continent has laid important groundwork, clearly much more needs to be done. Africa today is at a critical moment, particularly in light of its changing peace and security landscape.

Over the past two decades, joint efforts by African countries, regional organizations and development partners, particularly the UN, have helped significantly to decrease the number of interstate conflicts on the continent.

But while interstate conflicts have become less frequent, the continent now faces growing threats of terrorism and violent extremism; election-related violence; proliferation of arms; ethnic and religious violence; and organized crime, including maritime piracy and trafficking in persons and drugs. Taken collectively, these smaller-scale challenges have exacted a devastating toll on the continent. For example, in the 20 years to 1989, there was an average of 12 state-involved conflicts a year in sub-Saharan Africa, resulting in approximately 17,000 direct casualties. In contrast, in the 20 years from 1989 to 2009, the region experienced 271 non-state conflicts, resulting in 60,000 direct casualties.

Looking forward to next year as an example, more than 20 African countries will be holding elections, including West African countries such as Nigeria, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. While the possibility of post-election violence exists, these elections could present a great opportunity to deepen electoral democracy and move towards more participatory governance and representative democracies. To do so, however, countries will need to promote genuine inclusion and reconsider "the winner takes all" model that only exacerbates ethnic, religious and regional divisions, frequently resulting in past election violence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The AU's 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration underlined the commitment of African countries to "silencing the guns", ending all wars and achieving a conflict-free Africa by 2020. Taking the lead in the realization of this vision, Africa has increasingly adopted the philosophy of "African solutions for African problems". This has been seen in a number of conflict situations, including in Mali and the Central African Republic, where sub-regional organizations supported by the African Union were the first responders to crises and emergencies. This approach needs increased support from the international community, including by scaling up financial and technical support to the AU and the Regional Economic Communities.

At the continental level, African countries have already taken concrete steps to address emerging challenges, including through the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the adoption of various instruments, such as the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism; the African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance; and the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention, as well as in the establishment of the APRM, which promotes political, economic and corporate governance, and to which 34 African countries have voluntarily acceded.

The promotion of peace and stability in Africa has been supported by remarkable economic growth. Approximately ten years after the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Africa-owned and led continental development agenda, the continent today has a $2 trillion economy, with about a third of its 54 countries garnering annual GDP growths of more than six per cent. Of the top ten fastest growing economies in the world, six are in Africa: Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria and Rwanda. This strong economic progress, combined with innovative strategies and forward-looking social policies, has generated significant advancement towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly in reducing poverty, increasing primary school enrolment, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, strengthening gender equality and empowering women. These are all indicators that Africa is rising and that its future is bright.

That said, Africa continues to face significant development challenges. Despite progress, the continent is off-track to meet most of the MDGs. The continent's economic growth, which was projected to reach 4.7 per cent this

year and 5 per cent in 2015, has failed to translate into job creation and broad-based development. As a result, the continent continues to face persistent poverty and high unemployment, particularly amongst its burgeoning youth population.

With 200 million people aged between 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world. Yet while youth account for a growing proportion of the continent's population, they also represent the 60 per cent of its unemployed. This can pose a significant threat to stability, as has been seen in various urban slums on the continent, where concentrations of unemployed young men have led to the growth of extremism, spread of gangs, trafficking and violent crime. African leaders have realized that the only way to provide opportunities for African youth and capitalize on the continent's "demographic dividend" is to focus on structural economic transformation, with emphasis on industrialization, infrastructure development, and employment and decent work for all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Agenda 2063 is the continent's ambitious, transformative 50-year vision of economic growth, integration, peace and security. The Agenda, which will be adopted by African Heads of State and Government at the next AU Summit in January 2015, features seven core aspirations:

(1) A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
(2) An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance;
(3) An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;
(4) A peaceful and secure Africa;
(5) An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics;
(6) An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth; and
(7) Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner.

Achievement of these ambitious aims will most certainly require strengthened partnership with the international community.

As far as the UN system is concerned, Africa's special development needs remain very high on the UN's agenda. The UN and the AU have developed a deep and comprehensive partnership, encompassing: development and humanitarian assistance; conflict prevention; peacekeeping and peacebuilding; and promotion of democracy, rule of law and good governance. Cooperation between the two organizations has been instrumental in bringing peace and stability to many countries in Africa, such as in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, just to name a few.

The recent joint visits of the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank to the Great Lakes and the Sahel regions, and the financial pledges announced during those visits, demonstrated the renewed commitment of the international multilateral system to support regional integration and human development and to reinforce the nexus between peace, security, good governance and development in Africa.

Today, all six countries on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission are located in Africa: Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone (unfortunately, three of them have been the hardest hit by the Ebola Crisis). In addition, Africa is home to the majority of UN peacekeeping operations, including 9 of the 16 UN peacekeeping missions currently deployed. The UN budget for peacekeeping operations reached more than $ 7 billion this year alone and more than half of it is spent in Africa. One could imagine, however, the huge development gains that could be achieved if guns were really silenced and these resources were directed towards programmes to help eradicate poverty and generate employment.

In addition to peace and security, promoting respect for human rights remains an important pillar of UN engagements with all Member States, including in Africa. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has been committed to enhancing the UN's role in preventing human rights abuses and fighting against impunity. His initiative "Rights up Front" aims to improve the UN's collective response to human rights violations even through robust peace keeping, and is a reflection of the organization's unwavering commitment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Africa has established strategic and mutually beneficial partnerships with a number of countries and regions. These partnerships aim to consolidate growth and create jobs through the promotion of trade,

investment and technical cooperation. These partnerships include US-Africa, China-Africa, the TICAD process led by Japan, the Africa-Europe partnership, and the Africa-India partnership, just to name a few.

Besides their strong focus on trade, investment and technical cooperation, these partnerships have paid growing attention to the issues of peace and security, including peacekeeping, terrorism and organized crime. For example, during the 4th EU-Africa Summit, the EU committed to provide over 750 million euros to the African Peace Facility for the next three years. In addition, as part of the TICAD V framework, Japan committed to allocate $26 million to support the consolidation of peace and stability in the Sahel Region. These are just a few examples of the deepening partnership Africa has enjoyed with its development partners.

The first US-Africa Leaders' Summit, held in August 2014 in Washington DC, was an important step in forming a new strategic partnership between the United States and African countries that builds on the existing cultural, economic and political ties between them. While the Summit focused on trade and investment in Africa, it also highlighted the US's commitment to Africa's security and its democratic development. Along with commitments of over $1 billion dollars for health programmes and $300 million per year for power generation, the Summit also resulted in a commitment to invest $110 million per year for 3-5 years for the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, in order to build the capacity of African militaries to rapidly deploy peacekeepers.

Important US-Africa cooperation mechanisms are already in place and should be further strengthened, including the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which has greatly improved the access of African exports to the US market, and the Young African Leaders Initiative, which will help build the capacity of African youth and bolster entrepreneurship and civil society on the continent. These are a few examples, but there remains much room for growth and expansion.

As Africa charts it way towards its ambitious, transformative Agenda 2063, it will need strengthened and wide-ranging partnerships with all of its development partners, especially the US, and the aspirations are high in Africa that the United States will follow closely the implementation of the outcome of this important Summit.