



AFRICA FORUM

FORUM FOR FORMER AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

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STATEMENT OF THE AFRICA FORUM ON THE SITUATION IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Pretoria, 5 September 2013

We, members of the Forum for Former African Heads of State and Government, commonly referred to as Africa Forum (AF), have been deeply concerned about the protracted civil war in Syria, which has now raged for two-and-a-half years.

It has been our understanding from the beginning that this conflict was occasioned by serious differences among the Syrian people concerning their country's constitutional and political system. It was also our understanding that the root cause of the conflict was and remain essentially political. Accordingly, its solution could only be political, and not military. Against this background, we have therefore held the view that the Syrian belligerents must urgently enter into inclusive negotiations to end the civil war through a peaceful process.

Consequently, the international community has had the solemn responsibility to encourage and assist all the Syrians to engage in these inclusive negotiations. In this regard, as Africans, we have been ready to give all necessary support to the two eminent Africans, Kofi Annan and Lakhdar

Brahimi, who were given the onerous responsibility to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict.

We, therefore, support the fundamental position agreed by major players in the world concerned about Syria, in favour of a peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict, as reflected in the June 6, 2012 Final Communiqué of the Geneva Conference on Syria. Accordingly, we have been and are opposed to all international interventions which have added and would add fuel to the fire, by arming any and all the Syrian belligerents. We have received with horror the news that chemical weapons have been used in this conflict, and strongly condemn this. We are therefore convinced that all Member States of the United Nations (UN), without exception, should rely on the UN to establish the truth, to the best of its ability, with regard to various important matters. These are whether and what chemical weapons were used, where and when, and who used them.

As Africans we remain acutely conscious of the elaborate disinformation campaigns in which major powers engaged, among others by using world media outlets, to propagate falsehoods to justify their armed interventions in Iraq and Libya. The only correct response even to the use of chemical weapons is not further to escalate the violent conflict, but radically to intensify and accelerate the effort towards a negotiated peaceful resolution of the Syrian civil war.

Therefore, as Africans, we strongly urge that all Member States of the UN, again without exception, should desist from taking any military action in Syria of any kind, including using the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government as justification for such action. The speedy and correct resolution of the conflict in Syria demands the exercise of courageous and stellar statespersonship, without regard to the personal and national short-term interests of particular politicians in our various countries.

We strongly urge that no foreign power whatsoever should insert itself in the immensely destructive Syrian civil war as a belligerent, even on the basis that it seeks to deter the use of chemical weapons. All those who would be statesperson players on the global stage, today, must understand what motivated the statespersons of the day, at the end of the Second World War, to insist on the establishment of international institutions, processes and law to help ensure the peaceful resolution of conflicts within and between countries.

That insistence by the Allied Powers against Nazism resulted, among others, in the adoption of the UN Charter, which is a fundamental and inalienable part of contemporary international law. We, on our part, as Africans, are directly interested in a law-governed rather than an arbitrary system of international relations, imposed on the world by those who exercise military and other might.

For this reason we insist that any action which practically repudiates the UN Charter would be an historical regression that takes all humanity backwards towards an unacceptable past, thus to repudiate the inalienable right of all nations to determine their destiny. International law upholds the view and sets the norm that conflicts within and between States should be resolved peacefully, rather than through resort to force.

We strongly support the view that, in the main, international law prohibits that any State should intervene in any other to encourage the violent overthrow of the Government of the day. This international law also regulates all such interventions as would be said to discharge the so-called 'responsibility to protect' peoples subjected to unacceptable human rights violations by their own Governments. Consistent with all the foregoing, we are convinced that the international community has a solemn obligation to do everything possible to help end the Syrian conflict by peaceful means.

We urge that all African Governments, and all other Governments throughout the world, working through the UN, must act urgently to help achieve this outcome, in the fundamental interest of the peoples of Syria and the rest of the world.

It is our hope and expectation that all relevant multilateral organisations, including the African Union (AU), led by the UN, will, at last, discharge their responsibility aggressively and faithfully to represent the view of the peoples of the world in favour of peace, refusing to be intimidated by those who exercise inequitable global political, military and other power.

Signed by:

MEMBERS OF THE AFRICA FORUM

1. HE Nicephore Dieudonne Soglo, Former President of the Republic of Benin and Vice Chairperson of the Africa Forum
2. HE Sir Quett Ketumile Joni Masire, Former President of the Republic of Botswana
3. HE Festus Gontebanye Mogae, Former President of the Republic of Botswana
4. HE Pierre Buyoya, Former President of the Republic of Burundi
5. HE António Manuel Mascarenhas Gomes Monteiro, Former President of the Republic of Cape Verde
6. HE Pedro de Verona Rodrigues Pires, Former President of the Republic of Cape Verde
7. HE Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, Former President of the Republic of The Gambia
8. HE Flt Lt Jerry John Rawlings, Former President of the Republic of Ghana
9. HE John Kofi Agyekum Kufuor, Former President of the Republic of Ghana
10. HE Henrique Pereira Rosa, Former President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau
11. HE Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, Former President of the Republic of Kenya
12. HE Emilio Mwai Kibaki, Former President of the Republic of Kenya
13. HE Prof Amos Claudius Sawyer, Former President of the Republic of Liberia
14. HE Dr Elson Bakili Muluzi, Former President of the Republic of Malawi
15. HE Alpha Oumar Konaré, Former President of the Republic of Mali
16. HE Cassam Uteem, Former President of the Republic of Mauritius
17. HE Karl Auguste Offmann, Former President of the Republic of Mauritius
18. HE Joaquim Alberto Chissano, Former President of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairperson of the Africa Forum
19. HE Samuel Daniel Shafiishuna Nujoma, Former President of the Republic of Namibia

20. HE Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari, Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
21. HE Dr Abdul Salam Abubakar, Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
22. HE Matthew Olusegum Obasanjo, Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
23. HE Gen Dr Yakubu Jack Dan-Yumma Gowon, Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
24. HE Miguel Dos Anjos Trovoada, Former President of the Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe
25. HE Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, Former President of the Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe
26. HE Alhaji Almad Tejan Kabbah, Former President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
27. HE Nelson Rolihlahla Dalibhunga Mandela, Former President of the Republic of South Africa and Patron of the Africa Forum
28. HE Thabo Mbeki, Former President of the Republic of South Africa
29. HE Sadiq Al Mahdi, Former President of the Republic of Sudan
30. HE Benjamin William Mkapa, Former President of the Republic of Tanzania
31. HE Ali Hassan Mwinyi, Former President of the Republic of Tanzania
32. HE Dr Kenneth David Kaunda, Former President of the Republic of Zambia
33. HE Rupiah Bwezani Banda, Former President of the Republic of Zambia*
34. HE William Eteki Mboumoua, Former Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)
35. HE Dr Boutros Boutros Ghali, Former Secretary General of the United Nations (UN)
36. HE Kofi Atta Annan, Former Secretary General of the United Nations (UN)
37. HE Prof Adedeji Adebayo, Former UN Under-Secretary General and Executive

Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
38. HE Chief Eleazar Chukwu Emeka Anyaoku, Former Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations
39. HE Dr Babacar N'Diaye, Former President of the African Development Bank (AfDB)
40. HE Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, Former Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)
41. HE Edem Kodjo, Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Togo and Former Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)
42. HE Abdoulie Janneh, Former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
43. HE Jean Ping, Former Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU)

*To be confirmed by the General Assembly