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On African cohesion and international cohesion

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Esteemed guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me be bold and try and build on some themes previously expressed by President Thabo Mbeki, mindful of all the challenges that go along with such a huge undertaking.

In one of his speeches delivered while President of the Republic of South Africa, Mbeki challenged South Africans by saying, “Unless we are able to answer the question “who we are?” we will not be able to answer the question “what shall we be?”

In posing that question, President Mbeki touched on the challenge that has confronted a new South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994.

Having emerged from decades, if not centuries of social, economic and racial exclusion, it was critical for a new South Africa to embrace a concept of belonging in which all individuals and groups would live as equals irrespective of past power relations and political beliefs.

President Mbeki argued further that “to achieve social cohesion and the human solidarity we seek, we must vigorously confront the legacy of poverty, racism and sexism.

Of course, as we have come to learn, the challenge set for us by President Mbeki is not an easy one to meet. If anything, our experience has demonstrated that the achievement of social cohesion is not exclusively an African challenge, but it is a global one. Unless, and until, we begin to

address international cohesion, social cohesion at national and regional levels may remain as elusive as ever.

One of the early proponents of African integration was President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who was the first to call for a political union of all newly independent African States. His vision was of a Pan African organization that would enhance the economic, political, social and cultural interactions among African nations by pushing for federated models of integration. Nkrumah genuinely set the tone for the integration of Africa.

The formation of the Organisation of African Union (OAU) in 1963 therefore became the first step towards continental unity. However, several factors hindered the success of the OAU. Among them were the effects of the Cold War and the fact that many other African countries had yet to gain independence from their colonial masters.

Since the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed the emergence of a newer version of African regionalism, starting with the transition from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union, which was formally launched in 2002. From the start, African integration was to be achieved through Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as the building blocks for the envisioned African Economic Community (AEC).

This new African regionalism is, as it were, a multi-faceted dimension, through which economic, political, social, cultural and of course developmental dimensions were, and still are, being pursued. It is a confederated approach of building common values, institutions and systems, and the aspiration that African states will come to abide by values of democracy, human rights and cooperation as captured in the founding documents like the Constitutive Act of the AU, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), amongst others.

With this new dimension reflected on social cohesion, and in the new African regionalism, Africa sought genuine partnership with the outside world, whether it be industrialized or emerging economies, as expressed in initiatives like the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership and the G8-Africa Action Plan, which unfortunately is being treated like a forgotten idea by Western powers. All these continental initiatives were captured in the slogan "no peace without development, no development without peace." For purposes of this important gathering, we could adapt this slogan slightly to read "no social cohesion or integration without development, no development without social cohesion or integration."

All these initiatives speak to the questions of both social cohesion and integration. While the Constitutive Act makes a fundamental link between peace and security, governance, development and cooperation, so NEPAD spells out priorities in the areas of infrastructure, human resource devel-

opment, especially health and education, political governance and co-operation, and partnership with the international community. The APRM in turn remains the continent's most important governance instrument, and emphasizes good political, corporate, economic, and social governance.

However, it is also important to state that there have been more serious challenges facing regional cooperation in Africa. The challenges are manifold. There is the problem of sometimes confusing regional cooperation with genuine regional integration, in which states fail to pool their sovereignties for the greater regional and continental good, particularly in addressing cross-border movements and trade.

Indeed, there has been lacking a sense of continental sovereignty in Africa, and national sovereignty often trumps the regional and the continental. Even, the African regional institutions once foreseen as bearers of Africa's vision of renewal by our illustrious founders of Pan Africanism, such as Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Nyerere, Cabral, and even Mandela, have been reduced to communicating in a muted voice.

This is because social cohesion in Africa is difficult to achieve outside of the context of international cohesion. There is a need for a shared common vision and partnership between Africa and the world to confront poverty and underdevelopment which have become endemic in many countries.

Certainly, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War did usher an era of democratization which brought promises of great hope for the people in Africa. But thus far, the people have yet to reap the anticipated benefits of peace, prosperity and stability. Instead, we have experienced instability, whether it is the uprisings in the North of Africa, Western interventions in Côte d'Ivoire, unending conflict in Sudan, the 19 year-long struggle to build order in Somalia, the introduction of piracy in our seas, and the NATO bombings of Libya.

Yet, recent global economic development studies predict that Africa is on the verge of an economic renewal, even accompanied by sustained growth. These studies declare that the emerging economies of Asia and Europe will need to rely on African mineral resources to build themselves into future super-powers.

In other words, Africa's under-development is being translated by other nations into opportunities that, in fairness, must be exploited by Africans themselves to finance and spur Africa's own developmental renewal agenda.

The only people who seem to be uncertain about what is happening in our continent are our fellow Africans. This is because we lack independent and indigenous researchers who can assure us that these positive declarations of potential prosperity are real, and are not being peddled by foreign

speculators who, yet again, are hoping to profit from the soil, sweat and strengths of African people.

Simultaneously, Africa is perceived as being politically weak, and this has led to attempts at the marginalization of our continent driven by some of the powerful countries of the world, particularly the former colonial masters in the United Kingdom and France. The conclusion they seem to draw is that Africa no longer matters, at least politically. This arrogant and erroneous conclusion has the potential to expand into the socio-economic realm as well. One important question then becomes, how can Africa matter for its abundant resources but not for its voice?

Writing in *The Independent* newspaper on 2 June 2003, columnist Bruce Anderson stated:

Africa is a beautiful continent, full of potential and attractive people who deserve so much more than the way in which they are forced to live, and die. Yet it is not clear that the continent can generate its own salvation. It may be necessary to devise a form of neo-imperialism, in which Britain, the U.S. and the other beneficent nations would recruit local leaders and give them guidance to move towards free markets, the rule of law and - ultimately - some viable local version of democracy, while removing them from office in the event of backsliding.

On 19 April 2008 Mathew Parris published an article in *The London Times* entitled "The new scramble for Africa begins," in which he said:

Fifty years ago the decolonisation of Africa began. The next half-century may see the continent recolonized. But the new imperialism will be less benign. Great powers aren't interested in administering wild places any more, still less in settling them: just raping them. Black gangster governments sponsored by self-interested Asian or Western powers could become the central story in 21st-century African history.

One may be tempted to dismiss these comments, and many more like them, as being the work of conservative or even right-wing ideologues. However, the experiences of Côte d'Ivoire and Libya have demonstrated that these views may be more prevalent than we may wish to admit.

In September 2005, I had the honor to chair very contentious negotiations that produced the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit whose purpose was to review the Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit five years earlier. The negotiations were made controversial by the insistence of major powers led by the combative U.S. Ambassador John Bolton who came to New York especially to remove any references in the Outcome Document that addressed important issues such as poverty, underdevelopment and even non-proliferation and disarmament. Bear in mind, that this was only five years since the Millennium

Development Goals were adopted as a possible solution for addressing poverty, particularly in Africa.

One of the outcomes of those negotiations was the adoption in the UN General Assembly of what has come to be known as “The Responsibility to Protect” (R2P).

As part of its *Outcome*, the Summit Meeting said:

Recognizing the need for universal adherence to and implementation of the rule of law at both the national and international levels, we: Reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the (UN) Charter and international law and to an international order based on the rule of law and international law, which is essential for peaceful coexistence and co-operation among States.

But as we have come to know in both Côte d’Ivoire and Libya, some of the powerful countries have, when it suits their interest, demonstrated their disrespect for “the purposes and principles of the (UN) Charter and international law and to an international order based on the rule of law and international law,” directly contrary to the decisions of the 2005 World Summit Meeting.

Article 39 of the UN Charter states that “the Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Article 41 and 43, to maintain or restore international peace and security.”

The reason the Security Council never authorized the war against Iraq was because it could not determine the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq despite receiving colorful reports from the United Kingdom and the United States.

Whatever actions the Security Council takes in maintaining international peace and security, it is guided by Article 24 of the UN Charter that states: “In discharging these duties (for the maintenance of international peace and security), the Security Council shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations. The specific powers granted to the Security Council for the discharge of these duties are laid down in Chapters VI, VII, VIII, and XII.”

On 17 March 2011, the UN Security Council adopted the infamous Resolution 1973 on Libya which imposed a “no-fly zone” and authorised various NATO Member States “to take all necessary measures...to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya...”

We have yet to see either pictures or independent reports about the Libyan civilians that were supposedly being protected like those that

were shown of civilian camps in Srebrenica, Congo, Sudan and several other conflict areas. The independent International Crisis Group (ICG) has reported that its investigators were unable to locate the Libyan civilians threatened in the conflict and ICG even suggested that the Security Council may have received incomplete information about what happened in Libya.

Furthermore, Resolution 1973 said nothing about “regime change.” However, the fact of the matter is that the NATO bombings had everything to do with the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime which everyone agrees had long earned the wrath of the Libyan people for being a brutal and repressive regime.

On 15 April 2011, in a joint letter, Presidents Barak Obama (United States) and Nicolas Sarkozy (France), and Prime Minister David Cameron (Great Britain) had openly declared their intention to achieve regime change, stating: “Our duty and our mandate under Security Council Resolution 1973 is to protect civilians, and we are doing that. It is not to remove Gaddafi by force.”

And in the same letter they said: “But it is impossible to imagine a future for Libya with Gadhafi in power...There is a pathway to peace that promises new hope for the people of Libya: a future without Gaddafi... Colonel Gadhafi must go, and go for good.”

Beginning tonight as we reflect on the critical importance of social cohesion and integration, we may find ourselves facing three difficult questions:

- How are the Libyan people supposed to go about building social cohesion or even the integration of their own country when powerful countries came and chose sides in their civil war?
- How are the people of Côte d’Ivoire expected to maintain social cohesion and integration when one part of the country believes that a President has been imposed on them, a President whose citizenship is disputed and has the backing of their former colonial master?
- Can social cohesion be possible now that Sudan has split into two unequal countries?

While I do not have any answers to these questions, I am convinced, however, that unless we can build on international cohesion, and develop a common vision about fundamental issues that matter such as development, peace, prosperity and even human rights and the rule of law, we are likely to forever be faced with situations that will make social cohesion anywhere – whether it be local, regional, continental or global – more difficult to achieve.

I am pleased that this conference is ready to tackle these issues. It is about time esteemed people such as yourselves addressed these critical matters. I urge you, most humbly, to treat no issue as a sacred cow and ensure that all relevant matters and levels of social cohesion are placed firmly on your agenda.

I thank you.