

Remarks by Salim Ahmed Salim at the Opening of African Union Panel of the Wise Thematic Workshop, Monday 5th December 2011, Diamonds Dream of Zanzibar Hotel, Zanzibar, Tanzania

I would like to join those who have preceded me in extending to you all a very warm welcome to Zanzibar and to Tanzania. We are very pleased that this thematic workshop of the Panel of the Wise, focusing on strengthening political governance for peace, security and stability in Africa is taking place here. This theme is particularly relevant and important at this juncture given the challenges and opportunities that confront our continent and more especially the significant and even dramatic developments that we have recently experienced.

Allow me to start by referring to the historic development that has taken place here in Zanzibar. For a long time the

people of these Islands have experience division and bitterness almost bordering on animosity due to political differences among the major political forces. Repeated and persistent efforts made over several years in an attempt to bring about understanding and reconciliation were of no avail. Indeed for more than fifty years every election held in ^{Zanzibar} (these Islands) resulted in some disputes, misunderstanding and quite often in violence. But last year the people of Zanzibar and their political leaders decided enough is enough. With the objective of restoring understanding and promoting unity which for decades have deluded the Islanders, the two major political parties namely the Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and the Civic United Front (CUF) entered into an agreement which was later supported and consolidated through a referendum.

That agreement, which was signed before last year's elections, had clearly stipulated that there will be a government of national unity irrespective of the outcome of the elections. It is thus important to observe that the Government of National Unity of Zanzibar was based on previous experiences of turmoil and misunderstandings and the desire of the people of Zanzibar to get together, to understand each other, to reconcile and to face head on the reality that Zanzibar cannot fully harness its potentials and energy for development if it continues with divisions and bickering which are invariably compounded during the elections. Significantly last year's election was peaceful and characterized by internal and external observers to be free and fair.

• Ladies & gentlemen,

• This session is taking place at the time when we are witnessing major developments in Africa including the events in North Africa. We have seen the changes of administration and governments where young people in particular have been in the forefront to bring them about. These changes now and especially in the case of Tunisia and Egypt have been followed by concrete steps towards democratization. *not standing Problem occurring here & there.*

The events in Libya however call for a somber reflection. An unmistakable uprising of some sections of the Libyan people starting especially with Benghazi was met with a ferocious and unacceptable display of military onslaught by the government forces. Attempts to find a less violent and negotiated solution to the crisis spearheaded by the African Union were effectively frustrated by the ardent desire to use the tragic situation to bring about regime change. Is there

anything more the AU and African states could have done?

What lessons do we draw from all this Libyan saga? I look forward to the session dealing with the uprising in North Africa and implications for the region and Africa.

The developments in Sudan and South Sudan continue to be a source of major concern. Some of us had always hoped that the conditions would have been created so that Sudan which until the recent separation was the biggest country in Africa, would serve as an example for our continent in dealing with issues of unity in diversity through a democratic dispensation. For Sudan was a microcosm of Africa in terms of racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and political diversity. But as you all know this has not been possible. Now we have the reality of two Sudans. What is of crucial importance is to support the people of both these countries so that they overcome the current difficulties and

move towards the resolution of outstanding problem areas. For the fact remains that even as separate nations the two countries have a lot in common. They need each other. They have to work together and above all avoid the misery and destruction that are inherent in any resumption of conflict. Here I would like to recognize and pay special tribute to the important work being pursued by the AU High Level Committee led by former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. We wish them well as they pursue the difficult but essential role of striving for a just and durable solution.

The situation in Somalia and its devastating consequences for the people of Somalia and beyond is very well known to us. This is an issue of great importance both to Africa and ^{the} International community. It's an issue whose repercussions are clearly felt by the countries of the region who are compelled to devise ways and means to limit its damages.

It is important to bear in mind the struggle and the efforts at strengthening political governance for peace, security and stability in Africa is an ongoing process. It has its ups and downs but by and large we can take comfort at the fact that the continent is marching in the right direction.

But as we talk of security, peace, stability, unity and reconciliation we must always bear in mind that the bottom line is that all these factors can only be possible in a situation where people are allowed to take part fully in the affairs of their countries, to decide their destiny and above all to be able to decide who should lead them, for what period and what circumstances. In other words, the sovereignty of the people must continue to be supreme and be so observed.

Let me conclude by once again welcome you to Zanzibar and express my sincere hope that you will not only be able to have an in-depth discussion of the many issues before you, but will also take the time to see a little of our Islands.

Thank You.