THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION

"SECURITY AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA: KEY CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS"

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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AT THE

SENIOR LEADER SEMINAR ORGANIZED BY AFRICA CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

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ADDRESS BY DR.SALIM AHMED SALIM: SECURITY AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA: KEY CHALLENGES AND ROSPECTS"

Hon. Speaker of the House of Representatives,

Hon. Speaker of the House of Federation,

Hon. Ambassador of the United States,

Dr. Nancy Walker,

Distinguished Participants,

Members of the Armed Forces,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a pleasure for me once again to participate in a seminar organized by the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies. Only a couple of months ago, I had the privilege of participating in another seminar of the Center that took place in Maputo, Mozambique. That seminar brought together practitioners and strategists involved in the challenging task of peace building and its maintenance in the southern region of Africa.

It is indeed a special pleasure for me to be back in Addis Ababa, the capital of our Continental Organization that is leading us in the transformation of our Continent and towards the realization of a long cherished vision of the African people. I applaud the decision of the organizers of this seminar for choosing Addis Ababa to host this seminar, a choice of venue whose symbolic importance cannot be lost. Indeed, this decision reinforces the primacy given to the search for sustainable peace and security in the Continent. On a personal note, let me say that it always a pleasure and source of gratification to be back in Ethiopia, a country where I have spent twelve challenging years enjoying the support, friendship and hospitality of our hosts.

While this seminar is part of a series of such initiatives taken by the African Centre for Strategic Studies, and devoted to the subject of security in Africa, this particular one has a special significance. First, as I have already mentioned, it is being held in Addis Ababa, thus enabling a larger participation of experts from the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa and representatives of African

Member States who are closely involved in the strategic issues of Continental peace and its ramifications. In the case of colleagues from the African Union, I do believe that the deliberations of this seminar can provide some useful inputs into the proposals that are being prepared relating to the configuration of the various Organs of the Continental body as provided for in the Constitutive Act.

The special significance of this seminar is also underscored by its timing. It is being held after a major milestone was attained only a few weeks ago, when the Peace and Security Council was incorporated into the Constitutive Act as an Organ of the African Union. Apart from the requirement of ratifying the amendments to the Act, I believe a major challenge, on the part of the Commission of the African Union, is to devise the necessary measures and steps for putting in place the operational requirements of this important Organ as stipulated in its Protocol of establishment.

Once again, the broad scope engendered for this seminar offers an important opportunity for gaining some insights and making inputs to

the process of launching the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. On the basis of the experience gained by the Mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution since its inception in Cairo in 1993, it would seem to me that unless the issue of resources and logistical support is seriously tackled, the effective operation of the peace and security council will be seriously impaired.

In the wider African scene, remarkable developments are taking place as we enter into a new phase of security configuration in the Continent. While the situation with regard to peace and security is far from being totally pacific, and that new challenges are still emerging – such as the tragic situation in the Cote D'Ivoire – but, on the whole, there is a new positive dispensation emerging in the Continent. Africans are determined to establish peace and security in their Continent. Indeed, all warring parties are committed to seek negotiated settlement to their differences. In fact, at this point in time, whether in Eldoret and now Nairobi, in Machakos, in Sun City, Dar es Salaam, Lome and Libreville, African representatives are busy

around negotiating tables in search of means of ways of bringing to an end the suffering and devastation caused by violent conflict. Of course, it is not easy. There are still hurdles to overcome, but this is a new momentum, giving us hope and optimism that we all have to support and reinforce. Indeed despite the hiccups here and there, Africa is serious when it pledges to make the 21st Century to be its century!

At the broader international level, the preoccupation of this seminar with the issue of security is more gravely underlined by the current concern that has gripped humanity on the potential threat to global security and stability that we are currently experiencing. The deliberations in the Security Council of the United Nations, massive manifestations of concern that we witness two weeks ago, from Vanuatu to Iceland and including several capitals and cities such as London, Madrid, Paris, New York, Berlin and Sydney to mention a few on the real possibility of war, as well as the sentiments expressed in the media all over the world bear testimony to the essence of peace and security in the perception of humankind. The fears, the worries,

the impact and implications, all underline how grave the situation can be when security is disrupted. At the same time threat and menace posed by international terrorism continue to be our collective concern and demanding our constant vigilance concerted and coordinated international response.

In linking the challenge of security with the democratic dispensation in Africa, this seminar underscores a very important paradigm. Namely, that security is not simply a matter of the military, the police, the gendarmes, or instruments of state intelligence. The promotion of security has profound association with the political, social and economic organization in society. In fact, the discussions that have been taking place in the last few months, tend to emphasize from all sides that the ramifications of security tend to transcend the corollary to violence and responses through armed forces.

At no other time, and perhaps in no other place has the symbiotic linkage between security and democracy demonstrated itself than in

the experience of African development during the past two decade. While distortions in the democratic framework have triggered insecurity, improper security arrangements and actions have reciprocally undermined democratic development. I hope that in the course of your deliberations you will have an opportunity to explore this linkage in more detail. And in the same perspective, probably other linkages in the political and socio-economic domains could be examined.

There is a new security dispensation evolving in the Continent. To some extent, and I should add, rather sadly, that this new evolution emerges out of developments in the past two decades that were ridden with rampant conflict, suffering of the African people, devastation, social disruption, all of which undermined the capacity to harness opportunities for growth and development. Added to this scourge has been the trauma of the HIV-AIDS pandemic, environmental disasters, and the negative effects of globalization.

At this advent of a new century and a new millennium, it is encouraging to note that, there has been a profound evolution, and in a positive direction, in the security profile of the African Continent. To start with, the whole perception of security has undergone a fundamental shift. There is an overwhelming consensus, at the level of principle, that reference to security should relate not to state and territory in the narrow sense, but it should underline the security of society as a whole. In this respect, instead of the framework and institutions of security to be oriented on protecting mainly borders as well as government and its structures, the main purpose should be to protect and enhance the well-being of all members of society.

I wish to underscore the aspect of 'consensus at the level of principle' in order to distinguish between the principle and its actual realization in the well-being of the African people. There is no doubt that significant steps have been taken to reorient the organs, procedures and activities of security institutions in most of our societies towards protecting and enhancing the welfare of the people. Both in their image and functioning security institutions are showing encouraging

signs of transforming themselves from instruments of repression to institutions whose core function is to defend the overall interests of society. However, the situation is far from being fully satisfactory. In different parts of the Continent accounts of violations of basic rights either ascribed to state institutions or to one part of society against another have not been uncommon. In many of our societies the vices of crime, violence including repression still pose a serious threat to the comfort of the people.

The experience of the past two decades has demonstrated that whenever security threats have occurred, it has been the people, particularly civilians who have been the main victims. In fact, the phenomenon of the rebel has even acquired a new dimension in which hostility is directed either to sections of society or in some cases the whole society. We are all aware of the sad experiences of chopping of limbs, abduction of children, mass killings of civilians and ravaging of unarmed civilians - that have sadly become part of our continent's recent history. African people remain vulnerable amidst this shift of security from regime to society.

It is in this respect that it behooves a seminar such as this one for participants to undertake a serious reflection on the institutional and operational implications of reorienting a security system from a regime focus to one that caters to the general societal needs. How come that after all these years of institutional building that African societies seem more prone to experiencing breakdown in security thus exposing the people to suffering and devastation. In many instances such experiences tend to be so prolonged and recalcitrant, impervious to many attempts to containing the security situation from further deterioration. Is this a demonstration of the fragility of the security architecture that is being constructed? Or are there any other variables that have not been taken into account in strengthening societal security?

A critical consideration in such a reflection is having a shared understanding of what constitutes the essence of societal security. Is it simply a reconfiguration of the security apparatus? Is it the spatial spread of such organs? Is it the representational character of their

composition? Or is it the procedure and mission? These questions are important because over the years there have been genuine attempts to put on the ground a people's oriented security architecture as a response to the shift from regime to society focus.

An important dimension of the shift however, is the degree to which the issue of security has been demystified from being a subject confined to very narrow circles of the state machinery to opening it up into an issue of popular concern. It is quite obvious that there are some matters that, owing to their sensitivity in the defense of the nation, need to be restricted to certain levels. However, the broader parameters of national and societal security has to be more involving particularly at this stage when Africa is in the process of building a stronger foundation for sustainable peace, security and stability for her people.

It is noteworthy, however, to appreciate the positive movement that is quite evident in a number of African countries where there are parliamentary committees on matters of security, peoples committee

at various levels of the administrative structure, and civil society organizations which contribute to the security and operationalization of the security parameters. In this respect, I would like to congratulate the African Centre for Strategic Studies for contributing to the opening up of the discourse through its various seminars.

Apart from the endeavour in inclining towards societal foci in the security realm, there has also been a shift towards treating the issue of security in Africa to be a matter of collective concern. Indeed, since the beginning of the 1990s, and particularly with the decision to establish the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution the pursuit of peace and security and their maintenance became no longer exclusive prerogatives of individual States in the Continent, that were quite often at that time considered to be manifestation of national sovereignty. The Mechanism was an expression of a recognition that the implications of the existence or abrogation of peace and security extend beyond the confines of a single territory. The repercussions of threats to peace and security are trans-territorial and therefore effective initiatives relating to these

critical elements in society have of necessity to involve all African States.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union has gone further to provide for proactive intervention into a Member State where there are war crimes committed, genocide or crimes against humanity. This is a remarkable commitment by African countries, which is being advanced to concrete action by the bold measures that are now being taken in the launching of a Peer Review Mechanism that will foster compliance to values and standards of governance that all have to comply with. The full operationalization of these tools, together with the various instruments of the Conference on Security, Stability and Development Cooperation in Africa (the CSSDCA) should provide a robust framework for a comprehensive regime containing the ingredients for societal development in our Continent. Of course, the challenge is what measures are being taken to put in place such a framework.

During the last seminar in Maputo, you had an opportunity to review extensively the security architecture in the Continent, particularly the mechanisms for pursuing regional and Continental peace and security. While it may not be necessary to replicate that discussion in this seminar, perhaps the salient observations made in that and the other seminars may be relevant for purposes of making an input to the configuration of the various components of Peace and Security Council of the African Union and its linkages with the Regional mechanisms. It is high time that the process of enhancing the synergy arising out of the linkage of the various security mechanisms and arrangements in the Continent should be persued more vigorously. It has become quite evident that the complementary relationship between the Regional instruments and the Continental mechanisms is very critical in the success towards peace and security promotion in the Continent. The strategic realization of this objective is a process that we all have to contribute to.

The democratization process has gathered momentum in Africa. One can boldly state at this juncture, that this process has reached an

irreversible stage. The majority of African countries have not only embraced pluralistic political systems, opening up the space for political and socio-economic engagement, but they have also successfully gone through the challenge of leadership succession and changes of government. In a number of countries the monopoly of power of the ruling party has been broken and former opposition parties have now assumed the reins of government leadership. At the same time, a strong synergy driven by pressure from the civil society as well as Continental dynamics is increasingly consolidating the movement towards good governance and constitutional order.

Yet, for most of the prevailing conflict areas, the underlying causes tend to predominantly arise from deficiencies in the democratic dispensation. Oftentimes, it has been unacceptable electoral practices as well as outright alienation and marginalization that have triggered conflict and instability. Perhaps it is necessary at this conjuncture to re-examine the movement towards democratization in the Continent not only in terms of ensuring effective participation of the people not only in the shaping of the destiny of societies, but also, in this

connection, in the capacity to accommodate political tension and divergences. The degree of robustness of the democratic framework and its capacity to allow for the prevalence of differences and divergences without degenerating into hostility and violent conflict. Ironically, for much of the resort to conflict and violence, invariably in all occasion the final solution had to be realized through a recourse to peaceful negotiations. War and rebellion have not proved to be an effective solution to political differences in this Continent.

All that I have been addressing up to this point relate to security and its threats in relation to repression and violence either of external or internal origin However, security is a much broader condition of existence. It is a state which is characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to the totality of safety, rights, as well as general well-being. It is safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is in this regard, and in order to capture the multi-dimensional nature of this condition, that the notion of human security has now gained currency.

Its implications to the African reality is that the potential threat to the security of our people is not confined to risks arising from armed conflict only. There are also grave political, economic, social as well as environmental situations that can pose severe threats to well-being of the people. Indeed, it needs no overstating that situations where human rights are not respected, where the rule of law is flagrantly flouted, where principles of good governance are not followed are not only a recipe for conflict, but in themselves, they constitute a threat to security. They inflict suffering, jeopardize safety and create uncertainty to the well-being of individuals and communities.

In the context of Africa, the political ramifications of security are compounded in this era when there is an intensification of the democratization process. The emergence of diversities presents a major challenge to the capacity of society and government to promote tolerance and accommodation. Failure to achieve this, has to hostilities, for example, between government and the opposition,

or among different parties, a situation that has posed a threat to societal security and jeopardized the whole democratic project.

In the broader sense of human security, a more insidious factor condition that constitutes a major threat is the phenomena of poverty and deprivation. Invariably, perversive poverty that pushes members of society to a point of hopelessness and despair often times fuels actions which undermine security. I should hasten to point out that it is not poverty, per se, that generates the negative tendencies, rather it is the sense of alienation and marginalization arising from seeing that another part of society basks in affluence and luxury that tends to trigger negative responses. Reference must also be made to a growing "army" of young men and women, without education, without employment – without hope. They constitute a moving time bomb which can explode anytime with dire consequences for peace, security and stability of many of our countries.

In referring to insidious factors that undermine of security of the African Continent, the HIV-AIDS stands ominously. The devastation

this scourge is causing in our societies, its debilitating effects, and the fact it is ravaging the dynamic base of our Continent, that is - its most productive population – qualifies this pandemic to be the enemy number one of Africa's present security and its future. On another occasion, I have appealed for a total mobilization of our people and resources so as to confront this menacing enemy. HIV-AIDS has taken more lives of the African people than the totality of all wars that have been fought in the last 20 years. It constitutes a major threat to human security in this Continent,

Let me conclude my reflection by reiterating the fact that peace and security constitute a prime agenda of Africa's development. At every level, there is a deeper sense of appreciation of the totality of the condition of security. The establishment of the African Union and the priority objectives of NEPAD underline the synergy between peace and security, good governance, growth and development, the people's well-being, and the fostering of conducive relations in the international arena. The crux of this strategy is the people as a whole, operating in a dispensation that allows them to mobilize their

potential, harness their collective energy and shape their destiny.

This has been the vision that we have all been aspiring for and there

is no reason why we should not realize it.