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Report of the Secretary-General
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The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. On 25 September 1997, the Security Council convened at the level of Foreign Ministers to consider the need for a concerted international effort to promote peace and security in Africa. The Council observed that despite the progress achieved by some African States the number and intensity of armed conflicts on the continent remained a matter of grave concern, requiring a comprehensive response. The Council requested that I submit a report regarding the sources of conflict in Africa, ways to prevent and address those conflicts,

the fact that the framework of colonial laws and institutions which some new States inherited had been designed to exploit local divisions, not overcome them. Understandably, therefore, the simultaneous tasks of State-building and nation-building preoccupied many of the newly independent States, and were given new momentum by the events that followed

11. For a brief period following the end of the cold war, the international community was eager to exercise its newly acquired capacity for collective decision-making. Beginning in the early 1990s, the Security Council launched a series of ambitious peacekeeping and peacemaking initiatives in Africa and elsewhere. ~~See also S/1998/318, paras. 47-50.~~

C. External factors

13. During the cold war, external efforts to bolster or undermine African Governments were a familiar feature of super-Power competition. With the end of the cold war, external intervention has diminished but has not disappeared. In the competition for oil and other precious resources in Africa, interests external to Africa continue to play a large and sometimes decisive role, both in suppressing

other relevant parts of the United Nations

Council will need to consider each challenge afresh and tailor a response that best fits the particular circumstances.

United Nations peacekeeping operation. All parties within the country and all countries in the region are agreed that

36. *Separating the protagonists and monitoring their conduct.* Operations of this type function on the basis of a limited agreement or understanding between the parties. They monitor ceasefires and by their presence help to ensure that each separating

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to the United Nations peacekeeping operation. All parties within the country and all countries in the region are agreed that

Operation

coalitions of States. This has been the case, for example, in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, Iraq and Somalia. The obligation to obtain Security Council authorization prior to the use of force is clear; but while authorizing forceful action by Member States or coalitions of States can sometimes be an effective response to such situations, it also raises many questions for the future, particularly the need to enhance the Council's ability to monitor activities that have been authorized.

of States. In looking to future strategies for enhancing Africa's capacity for peacekeeping, the proposals developed in consultation with OAU officials and tabled in my predecessor's report (A/50/711-S/1995/911) remain valid. Those proposals relate to practical steps that can be taken in the areas of training assistance, joint peacekeeping exercises, greater African participation in the United Nations standby arrangements, partnerships between countries whose contingents require equipment and donors that are (ae.Tee 242.48 0 70

not the reverse), there was a momentum to help people cope with food deficiencies.

48. Crises today, particularly in Africa, have become much more complex, having many dimensions at once and involving many actors. Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and anti-government forces all have an important impact on humanitarian situations, and humanitarian action can have important political, social, economic and environmental repercussions as well. A principled and coordinated approach to humanitarian assistance will best address humanitarian needs and facilitate the preparation of a coherent and effective strategy for

51. In working to curb war abuses, human rights missions can play an important role. Because voluntary contributions

52. Special attention must be paid to the needs of children in armed conflict. The recent appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General

taken to separate the civilian population from soldiers and militiamen. The latter should be quartered separately and the neutrality and humanitarian character of the camps and settlements scrupulously maintained. Action is also required to address the special needs and vulnerabilities of women and children in such situations. For their own security, and the security of the States from which they fled, I strongly urge that refugees be settled at a reasonable distance from any border, in camps of limited size, in accordance with the OAU Refugee Convention. Where host countries have been generous enough not to require refugees to live in camps, local communities should be provided with additional support.

55. Some of the requirements relating to the protection of refugees and the support of States hosting large refugee

and assist the tremendous effort that many countries are currently making.

Nations humanitarian action is fully consistent with broader United Nations peace and development activities, and be given high priority.

gains or sustain

The transition to post-conflict peace-building

65. A smooth and early transition to post-conflict peace-building is critical, and I urge the Security Council to look favourably on the establishment of post-conflict peace-building support structures similar to the one in Liberia. Even prior to the end of the conflict, there must be a clear assessment of key post-conflict peace-building needs and of ways to meet them. Peace-building elements should be explicitly and clearly identified and integrated into the mandates of the peacekeeping operation. When a peacekeeping operation comes to an end, the concluding mandate should include specific recommendations for the transitional period to the post-conflict phase.

68. Where conflict has recently ended, bilateral and

A. Good governance

71. The difficult relations between State and society in Africa owe much to the authoritarian legacy of colonial governance. Because there was little need to seek political legitimacy, the colonial State did not encourage representation or participation. The result was often sociato

generation of economic reforms, which include fiscal consolidation, privatization and deregulation programmes, trade liberalization, and policies to promote investment in human capital and economic infrastructures. These reforms need to be put in place without delay. They should be accompanied by determined efforts to stamp out corrupt practices and implement other civil service reforms that will

increased financing for anti-poverty efforts and for social development needs.

of opportunity will be pursued. Attention to social justice is vital if development and economic growth are to produce positive results and if society is to develop in a balanced way. If only a small fraction of education resources are spent on primary education while millions remain uneducated and illiterate, and only a small fraction of expenditures on health care go for basic health services and facilities while millions suffer from easily treatable or preventable diseases, development will have little meaning. If social protections are available only to the urban minority, and lack of access overall translates into a practical lack of rights, development can only be a relative term. If economic opportunities are focused exclusively on urban centres while rural life is degraded and destroyed, turmoil and social disintegration will be the price of change. Development and spending priorities need to be broad-based, equitable and inclusive.

89. *Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.* Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is a vital and certain way to advance economic and social development. Equality of rights, opportunities and access to resources between men and women are fundamental requirements. Measures must be taken to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Institutional barriers that prevent the exercise of equal rights need to be identified and removed through comprehensive policy reform. In some countries married women still remain under the permanent guardianship of their husbands and have no right to manage property. The equalization of laws for men and women, particularly those relating to property, inheritance and divorce, is a pressing need in a number of African countries. I strongly urge all countries that have not done so to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to do so without reservation.

Restructuring international aid

90. In Africa, long-term international aid programmes have not achieved the development goals for which they were established. Dramatic cuts in assistance to Africa have been registered in recent years. This trend has hurt rather than helped Africa's efforts to implement the difficult economic and political reforms which are now under way across the continent. Appropriate and effective aid levels need to be established. In conjunction with this, development assistance needs to be restructured, focusing on high impact areas and on reducing dependency. Attention should be directed both to the means for transmitting assistance and to its ends. It is worth noting, for example, that because urban water supply is given preference over rural services, less than 20 per cent of aid for water and sanitation services goes to rural areas or

to low-cost mass-coverage programmes. Because higher education is given preference over primary schooling, less than 20 per cent of aid expenditures for education go to primary education. Because urban hospitals are given preference over primary health care, only about 30 per cent of aid for health care goes for basic health services and facilities.

91. The manner in which technical assistance is provided also needs to be critically re-examined. Technical assistance as it was originally conceived was designed to close the technical capacity gap between industrial and developing countries by accelerating the transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise, thereby building national capacity. In some cases this has been done but, in many others, technical assistance has had precisely the opposite effect, reining in rather than unleashing national capacity. It has been observed that today, after more than 40 years of technical assistance programmes, 90 per cent of the \$12 billion a year spent on technical assistance is still spent on foreign expertise – despite the fact that national experts are now available in many fields.

92. In line with the objectives outlined above, I call for an immediate examination of how best to restructure international aid to reduce dependency, promote primary social development objectives such as clean drinking water, basic literacy and health care, and reinforce efforts to make African economies more stable and competitive. First and foremost, I urge all donors to strive to ensure that at least 50 per cent of their aid to Africa is spent in Africa, and to make information on the expenditure of aid funds more easily accessible to the public. Greater aid for infrastructure development in Africa, including road and rail networks, telecommunications capacities, computer systems and port facilities, would leave a tangible mark while generating employment, expertise and revenues in Africa itself.

Reducing debt burdens

93. *An unsustainable burden of debt.* Many States in Africa lack the financial capital needed to address basic expectations and fundamental needs. This is one of the central crises of Africa today, and one that is due in large measure to the problem of Africa's public sector debt. When tensions rise or conflict threatens, many African countries do not have the basic resources to meet critical needs. In 1995, Africa's external debt totalled \$328.9 billion – of which approximately 45 per cent was owed to official bilateral sources, 30 per cent to official multilateral sources, and 25 per cent to commercial lenders. To service this debt fully, African countries would have had to pay to donors and external commercial lenders more than 60 per cent (\$86.3 billion) of the \$142.3 billion in revenues generated from their exports. In fact, African

standards. Many African economies need not only greater access to the international market but also to remove domestic constraints which limit their capacity to take advantage of existing opportunities offered through the Uruguay Round agreements. The international community should also direct its assistance to the development of productive capacity in Africa and the enhancement of the competitiveness of industries on the continent.

Support for regional cooperation and integration

100. Small markets, high transaction and transportation costs, and lack of sufficient communication links are significant factors impeding the expansion of economic activity for many African countries. Greater regional cooperation and integration could help to limit some of those obstacles while enabling many countries to achieve collectively what each would be unable to achieve on its own. Also, the closer the economic ties among States members of subregional or regional groupings, the greater the effort likely to be devoted to preventing disputes and tensions from turning into conflicts. In the past, a range of political, institutional and physical constraints have hampered efforts to promote greater regional integration in Africa. They have included ideological differences, nationalistic policies, the non-convertibility of national currencies, tariff and non-tariff barriers, differences in legal institutions and frameworks and sometimes the lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, telecommunications facilities and transport.

101. Today, a number of important factors favour efforts at greater regional and subregional cooperation. These include the Abuja Treaty, the efforts by many Governments to encourage pr

102. I also call upon African countries to give priority to establishing uniform standards for equipment and facilities relevant to subregional interactions. Significant progress will also require a more genuinely supportive attitude on the part of donors and trading partners, particularly with regard to the development of common standards and equipment among neighbouring countries. Too often, preferential arrangements with bilateral external partners result in a multiplicity of

103. Coordination among donors, both multilateral and bilateral, is essential and should be continually re-evaluated until the assistance that is offered to Africa proves more successful in reducing poverty and promoting economic growth than in the past. To be meaningful, this effort will need to include not just the assistance provided by international financial institutions but also bilateral assistance, which is by far the largest component of international development assistance. A number of important multilateral initiatives have been launched in recent years, aimed at promoting peace and development in Africa. They include the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and its implementing complement the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the

many places these efforts are beginning to bear fruit. In the why they persist. I have recommended actions and goals that
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