Africa Day
Peace and Security in Africa
May 25, 2010

SPECIAL REPORT

AFRICAN UNION
in partnership with
UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION
In a speech delivered at the New York City celebrations of Africa Day, May 25, 2010, hosted by the African Union in partnership with the Universal Peace Federation, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that peace and sustainable development in Africa was one of the world body’s top priorities, and he outlined a major personal effort that takes him to the continent no less than three times in the coming weeks.

“By consistently reminding the international community of its responsibility to the most vulnerable, and affirming that we are all members of a global family of nations, Africa has helped to reshape the global agenda,” he said. “That partnership continues, and every UN entity is working closely with African partners to tackle internal strife, attempts at unconstitutional changes of power, violence against civilians—especially women and children—the challenges of youth unemployment, and the burdens of disease, climate change and food insecurity.”

In June, the Secretary-General visits a Millennium Village in Malawi to assess first-hand progress being made towards the Millennium Development Goals. “The evidence is encouraging,” he said, “and suggests that when we make real efforts, we can succeed. But if we don’t, we fail. We must do more, and we will.”

Earlier, messages marking the 47th Africa Day and the 50th Anniversary of Independence for 17 African nations were read on behalf of the President of the UN General Assembly by H.E. Mr. Michel Tommo Monthe, Ambassador of Cameroon, Vice-President of the General Assembly and Chair of the Africa Group for the month of May. “Africa is moving to the center stage of efforts for peace,” he said.

Next to speak was H.E. Mr. Téte António, Permanent Representative of the African Union. “As we join with the nations celebrating their 50th Anniversary of Independence,” Ambassador António said, “it is also time to strategically assess the challenges and opportunities facing our continent, especially with regard to the twin issues of peace and security.”

Mr. Taj Hamad, Secretary General of the Universal Peace Federation, spoke about the role of the family in creating a world of peace. “Some look for happiness through wealth and fame, others through fun and parties,” he said. But if we learn in our families to live our lives in service to others, we will see the face of God in each other, and live happily and peacefully.”

After cutting the cake celebrating the 50 years of Independence of 17 African nations, the more than 600
guests in attendance turned their attention to an amazing and festive banquet featuring food from all 53 African nations, prepared with a great deal of care and attention by respective members of the UN African Ambassadors Spouses Group, whose President, Mme. Désirée Juliette Tendeng Badji also addressed the gathering.

The growing role of Africa as a sporting power was another theme of the evening, with several speakers looking forward to the upcoming FIFA World Cup in South Africa. Africa has an unprecedented six teams competing in the world's biggest sporting event.

“By presenting sport as a powerful instrument for peace promotion, we would like to reassert our faith in the values inherent to sports which are consonant with universal values,” said AU Chairperson Jean Ping, in written remarks read by Ambassador Tête António.

Later, the Hestiun Group announced a donation of 53,000 of its OXYPEN portable water-purifying systems, 1,000 units to each nation in Africa in support of its World Water Day commitment to help the UN bring clean water to families all over the world.

As the evening continued, the Manhattan Center resonated with the sounds of a musical journey across Africa with songs from Senegal, rhythmical drum beats of Nigeria and Ghana, and dances from Egypt; Rai music from Algeria, griot singers from Mali and many, many more. It was a worthy celebration of the contribution that Africa has made and is making to the world.
From top: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon with the UN Spouses of the African Ambassadors Group (UNA-AASG), who worked to provide all the food for the event; a packed house at the Manhattan Center enjoy a dramatic variety of foods; some of the performers from the program of sparkling entertainment that lasted long into the night.
This year's celebration has particular significance, marking the 50th anniversary of the independence of several Francophone African states, and of Nigeria. The United Nations was a great beneficiary of the independence movements that swept Africa five decades ago. The newly-independent African countries brought a fresh outlook and a new spirit to international relations.

Ever since, the African Member States have consistently reminded the international community of its responsibility to the most vulnerable. I thank them for their commitment to global solidarity.

In turn, the UN family has promoted the fundamental values of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Africa. From peace and security, to social and economic development and regional integration, the United Nations has proven itself an indispensable partner.

The theme of today's celebration recognizes 2010 as the Year of Peace in Africa, under the slogan “Make Peace Happen.”

UN missions on the ground in Africa are engaged in every aspect of peacekeeping, peace-building and conflict prevention. UN agencies work with African partners to tackle internal strife, attempts at unconstitutional changes of power, and violence against civilians, especially women. This growing cooperation is also seen in the regular dialogue between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council.

Our partnership for peace in Africa has already borne fruit. Armed conflict is waning across the continent, although its persistence in some places remains deeply troubling. From Cote d’Ivoire to Kenya, UN interventions and missions have played a crucial role. But we must do more – and we will.

Looking Ahead

The Millennium Development Goals hold the key to improving security from the ground up in Africa – and around the world. Healthy, productive people make healthy, productive societies, and resolve their problems through peaceful diplomacy. The September Summit on the MDGs will be another venue for upholding our commitments to Africa, and to peace.

Preparations for the summit are shifting into higher gear. In the month ahead, I will be making three trips to Africa to promote the MDGs and talk to African leaders about the way forward. I will also be attending the Africa-France Summit in Nice.

In Malawi next week, I will visit a Millennium Village, a case study in a basic truth about the MDGs: Where we try, we succeed. But when we don’t try, we fail.

In June, I visit South Africa, Burundi, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin and Sierra Leone. Most people will be focusing on the World Cup during that trip, including, I suspect, some of my own advisers! The tournament will be a great coming-of-age ceremony for Africa as a sporting superpower.

Sport has a great role in uniting people and promoting tolerance, perseverance, respect and fair play – all goals of the United Nations and essential for building a better world. But, I hope we can direct at least some attention between matches to the important issues on our agenda!

At the end of June, I will return to the continent to visit Gabon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUC is at a crucial stage of its work, and I want to engage personally with the country’s leaders on the important matters at stake.

So, my thoughts will be very much with Africa in the coming period. I am determined to do my part in pushing for greater progress on the MDGs and enabling the continent to achieve its full economic, political and social potential.

On Africa Day, let us rededicate ourselves to our partnership in the pursuit of peace and progress for all Africa’s people. Thank you.
Like every year, today 25 May 2010, we are celebrating Africa Day. On this occasion, the African Union has chosen the theme “Building and Sustaining Peace through Sports” to mark this year’s commemoration.

A few weeks to the kick off of the 19th edition of the FIFA World Cup, which Africa will be hosting for the first time in history, the choice of this theme gives full meaning to the event, as it highlights our resolve to make all possible efforts in order to fulfill the vision of Africa towards peaceful co-existence, integration, prosperity and proactiveness on the global scene.

It also echoes the decision taken in Tripoli in August 2009, by our Heads of State and Government, to proclaim 2010 as the Year of Peace and Security in Africa. It further marks a strong and symbolic moment in the history of our continent, as it has brought to the limelight the power of sports and its contribution to peace and social cohesion.

Sports has the unparallel potential of mobilization in a globalized world; and its capacity to attract and affect the masses and keep the attention of young generations, make it a formidable tool of training, education, awareness-raising, promotion of values of tolerance, fair play, courage, good conduct, rigor, humility in victory, self-control in defeat and respect for the opponent.

By presenting sport as a powerful instrument for peace promotion, we would like to reassert our faith in the values inherent to sports which are consonant with universal values and our shared African values.

We would like to demonstrate our will to further centre our actions on improving humankind and its values, through activities which are fulfilling like sports, exchanges and competition, in a bid to effectively speed up peace in our societies, amongst our States and with the rest of the world.

In a Continent that continues to be the unfortunate ground for conflict despite the operationalization of most of our instruments and unrelenting efforts; in a region that has the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons and where a number of post-conflict reconstruction processes are on-going, sports is an essential tool which, on the one hand, can foster links and ties between communities that have been divided by conflict, and on the other hand, improve the relationships between peace-keeping missions and civilian populations.

It is against this backdrop, for example, that UNOCI, the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire, organized tournaments such as the African Championship of Nations (CHAN) in collaboration with the Confederation of African Football (CAF), a unique event in the history of peace-keeping missions, the first edition of which took place in Côte d’Ivoire, a country emerging from crisis. Sports, therefore, can contribute to restoring peace, which is vital for elections.

Peace is not just simply the absence of war; peace is also synonymous with development. Our Continent has enormous untapped potential, underscoring the need to promote values of solidarity to guarantee it a better future. Sports, which by nature have unifying characteristics involving participation and developing the phenomena of inclusion and citizenry, can significantly contribute to achieving our Continent’s development.

On my part, in light of the new context of globalization of which Africa is part and parcel and an actor, and in considering that 2010 is the year in which many African States are celebrating their fiftieth anniversary of independence, I am confident that efforts to concretize this dream of an independent, united, prosperous and peaceful Africa nurtured by the Founding Fathers will bear fruit.

As the Olympic motto suggests, we should not set limits to our collective undertaking to firmly establish our Continent’s sustainable development. Let us remain ambitious and highly performing champions so that together we can ensure the future and peace of the continent. *Citius, altius, fortius! Swifter, Higher, Stronger! United we remain for a winning Africa!* I wish you all a happy Africa Day!
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Programme

6:30PM — Arrival of Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon

6:45PM — Brief statements by:

Madam Désirée Juliette Tendeng Badji
President of the United Nations African Ambassadors’ Spouses Group, Spouse to the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Michel Tommo Monthe
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cameroon, Vice-President of the UN General Assembly, Chair of the African Group for the month of May

H.E. Mr. Tête António
Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the Office of the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations

Dr. Taj Hamad
Secretary General, Universal Peace Federation International

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General, United Nations

7:10PM — Cutting the cake celebrating 50 years of independence

7:15PM — Photo opportunity

7:30PM — African cuisine buffet opens

7:45PM — Cultural performances and dance

List of Countries Celebrating 50 Years of Independence

Republic of Benin • Burkina Faso • Republic of Cameroon • Central African Republic
Republic of Chad • Côte d’Ivoire • Democratic Republic of the Congo
Gabonese Republic • Republic of Madagascar • Republic of Mali
Islamic Republic of Mauritania • Republic of Niger • Nigeria • Republic of the Congo
Republic of Senegal • Somali Republic • Togo

Moscow, Russia: A program at the House of the Peoples of Russia with Ambassadors from Uganda, Namibia, Ghana and Nigeria.

London, England: Remarks from 20-year UNICEF veteran Aliu Bello at a symposium that considered the real impact of foreign aid.

Lagos, Nigeria: A panel at a seminar at Lagos University considers the role of multigenerational families in creating peaceful societies.

Nice, France: UPF hosted a side meeting during the Summit of African leaders to discuss the role of interfaith dialogue in peace building.

Tbilisi, Georgia: African university students came together for a day to celebrate and remember their heritage. It was their first time to all meet.