

THE NATIONAL STATEMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI

Issued By:

H.E. Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh
Head of State and Government

At

U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit

Washington, DC

August 4-6, 2014

On my behalf and that of my delegation, I wish to thank President Barack Obama for his foresight and very commendable decision to invite all African Leaders to this Summit, in order to engage in a dialogue about our shared interests, opportunities and common challenges.

This is a unique initiative on his part, and we are looking forward toward an open, constructive and fruitful dialogue, that would indeed enhance and further consolidate the relations between the U.S. and the African Continent.

This Summit is coming at a crucial moment. It is a positive step in the right direction, where the African and American perspectives are expected to intersect on a host of issues, including peace and security and the future development of Africa.

On the positive side, Africa is rising and is showing a remarkable rapid growth; making it among the world's fastest growing regions. As has been clearly expressed elsewhere, policies need to be designed in such a way to ensure that a surge in growth can also spur structural transformation, that also address some of the most pressing problems such as the devastating conflicts in South Sudan and Central African Republic; and the ongoing Alshebab and Boko Haram violence. A halt to these massive atrocities and ethnic violence that created a huge humanitarian crisis is a top priority for the African Union.

Investing in Africa's Future

Investing in Africa's future requires that the African countries first invest in their own populations and infrastructures with the unequivocal support of its partners. Our continent will witness in the coming decades an increase of its population with an overwhelming youth proportion. Our countries are already engaged in the race against the clock to prepare the terrain for the successive surges of child births and youth arriving in the labor market. All social infrastructures be it health centers, hospitals, schools, vocational institutions or universities are already under an immense pressure from the growing population and need to be expanded and upgraded. As everybody is aware of, the social infrastructures are not revenue-generating structures and have to be supported by the national budget of each government. It is why the parts allocated to education and health constitute a big chunk of the national budget, representing between 20-30%, and even greater as in the case of the Republic of Djibouti.

Thanks to this high proportion of revenue directed toward these soft infrastructures, a lot of African countries are about to achieve the millennium development goals in the areas of education and maternal and child health but not without colossal efforts. Still a lot needs to be achieved in order to attain an acceptable level at which our population and youth specially can be productive for themselves and for their respective countries. This is why we consider very important the role of our development partners, in particular, the United States to assist us in mobilizing substantial financial and technical support in favor of our national and continental strategies with the aim of having healthy and educated African peoples able to take care of themselves and their continent. Without such an investment, the risk of a poverty and disease stricken continent will be soon a reality that certainly will affect the rest of the world.

Another real impediment to African development and economic growth is the lack of hard infrastructures such as railways, roads, airports, ports, power plants and grids that amounts to billions of US\$. This significant deficit makes production and trade cost of African products uncompetitive in the global

market, and thus having a serious impact on the industrial and trade capacity of the continent. Infrastructures do not only contribute to the expansion of trade and economic growth but also to the socio-economic development and poverty reduction through an improved access to a better transport sector including road and railway corridors .

The African countries have come together and produced the Program for Infrastructures Development in Africa PIDA, an African-owned partnership, which is the African vision for the continent in terms of infrastructures and intends to prioritize the regional and continental infrastructure for a more integrated Africa in energy, transport, water and ICTs . PIDA is also based on a global partnership that surely will be of mutual benefit for the interested stakeholders whether from the private or public sector from within the continent or from the American investors.

As everyone can observe, the future of Africa starts now and this assertion is not more obvious than in the case of energy. Energy is the bottleneck for our growing economies and a real obstacle to the concretization of the abundant potentialities of the continent in geothermal, hydro, wind and solar power. Africa has the political will to develop its renewable energies but lacks the financial and technical muscle to implement. My country has committed itself to using by 2020 a 100% green energy based on electric power generated mainly through geothermal and hydro. Geothermal energy resource is abundant in Djibouti but has yet to be exploited. The country is ready to take on board American investors. We have the necessary legal instruments in place to make their participation in such a project a profitable and secure one.

Peace and Regional Security

Our continent celebrated last year the Jubilee of the establishment of the African Union, a similar period of existence to that of African nations who gained their independence from the colonial rule in the sixties. These joyous celebrations were put to a sudden halt by the emboldened attack of terrorist groups in Mali who wanted to submerge a whole continent into their extremist ideology. The

Africans unanimously refused this fait accompli and acted very quickly through an international effort to put a stop to the progress of the terrorists and forced them to withdraw into remote areas to the confines of the Sahara desert.

Other serious crises also appeared in the Central African Republic and in South-Sudan and are still on-going alongside protracted conflicts in Somalia and DRC as well as other hotspots, with real threats to peace and security. The African continent has proved its capacity in the resolution of the prevailing conflicts as well as the establishment of the Peace and Security African Architecture. It has shown its strong political will to take into its own hands the settlement of these different crises.

Most of the troops present on the African soil to bring back peace in the troubled areas are from Africa itself thus demonstrating that African men and women are paying the ultimate sacrifice for the stability and peace of their continent. We are ready to face even some of the most complex threats across boundaries, such as the ones posed by the different terrorists groups. What we request from our partners and the international community is a concrete and precious support in the training of our military personnel and appropriate equipments to respond to the different conflicts whose implications have a global impact. This partnership in the form of the African initiative of setting up a Rapid Intervention Force can be as that adopted in the last African summit. This force will be also supported by the national forces which are usually compelled to intervene however meager their capacities...

However, the countless efforts of the African soldiers and their sacrifices would have been in vain if such efforts are not supported by post-conflict peace building programs with the aim of restoring the authority of the state and the provision of basic services to the populations. What Somalia needs now more than ever is to receive the financial pledges made at the Brussels Conference, in order to demonstrate to its citizens that the government is here to stay.

Governing for the next generation

Africa's population is estimated to reach 2 billion in the year 2050; and without any doubt, the burden is on the shoulders of the current generation to make this continent a flourishing one where all its inhabitants can peacefully prosper. It is through good governance and democratic process that such a tremendous effort can be achieved. Africa is aware that such principles cannot be implemented in an isolated context but through an open and connected continent. Since its inception the African Union has adopted a number of instruments showing the common strategies and visions toward the fundamental rights and respect for political, economic and social rights of its citizens. The African Peer Review Mechanism to which more than 29 countries have already acceded is a complete set of measures that are expected to evaluate performances in different fields such as democracy, economy, trade as well as each country's corporate and civil society activities. The African countries are putting themselves under scrutiny and show their willingness to be evaluated in the political, economic and social sectors.

Africa has been strongly hit by the deteriorating effects of climate change and has borne the brunt of the successive waves of droughts and famines. Despite its weak contribution to the climate change phenomenon, it is nonetheless the continent which has suffered the most given the changing pattern of rainfall resulting in the short term, population movements that could be of serious threat to the peace and security of the continent. The rest of the world, specially the developed countries, cannot idly watch without supporting Africa's efforts towards building a better resilience against the climate change challenges. The mitigation and adaptation efforts that our continent needs to carry out are huge and must therefore be accompanied, in a sustainable fashion; so that it is able to respond adequately to natural disasters. It is high time that the green fund promised by the Copenhagen Summit be implemented; with the fund earmarked to the African continent duly respected.

In a recent speech, President Barack Obama outlined a plan to establish a 5 billion dollars fund to underwrite counterterrorism training with other nations,

in order to enhance the capacity of partner states to combat regional extremists and insurgents. Indeed, terrorism threats have become more widespread with Al-Qaida affiliates emerging in Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and elsewhere in Africa.

Africa sees terrorism as its most direct threat in the short term; and welcomes this new initiative that assists African countries to combat terrorists and radicals.

The outcome of this Summit is bound to be a great success, given the goodwill invested in by each and all of us!