MAURITIUS

STATEMENT

BY

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AMBASSADOR OF MAURITIUS TO THE UNITED STATES

&

CO-CHAIR OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE OF

THE AFRICAN AMBASSADORS GROUP

IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

ON

THE BRIEFING ON

SECURITY THREATS FACED BY AFRICA

***

24 JULY 2013

RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

UNITED STATES CONGRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Please check against delivery

The Honorable Chairman Chris Smith,
The Honorable Ranking Member Karen Bass,
The Honorable Members of the Congress,
Excellencies, Colleague Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ultimate goal of human beings around the world wherever they may be living is generally to live in peace and harmony. However, it is also true that there can be no peace if the environment is insecure. Insecurity may relate to pressing humanitarian needs and the provision of basic services, devastated socio-economic infrastructure, lack of opportunity and the absence of social capital at the community level, and law and order among other factors. Consequently, if there is no security, there can be no peace and no peace means no development. Indeed, peace, security and development are closely linked. Our world is replete with examples which indicate that countries and regions which have been able to maintain security and peace have witnessed phenomenal economic development, social, political and cultural successes. While those which have been mired in conflicts have been torn apart with dire consequences, reduced to under development and abject poverty.

The Twenty First Century which we have claimed to be the Century of Africa is unfortunately presently witnessing a couple of ongoing conflicts. Threats to security are real. Political instability and socio-economic underdevelopment are the major factors contributing and fuelling conflicts in Africa in spite of its huge potentials both in terms of human, natural and mineral resources. These conflicts are further exacerbated by poor political and economic governance and human rights violations.

In the broader context of security, Africa today faces the growing threats of terrorism, piracy in the Atlantic and Indian oceans, narcotics and drug trafficking, food security, underdevelopment, inequitable distribution of income, high level of unemployment among youth, abuse of human rights, rise in the military coups, illicit sale of small arms and weapons to mention just a few. All these are serious potential threats in terms of both civil and armed conflicts. I would however, single out three major threats such as terrorism, the narcotics trade, and piracy that Africa faces today and which need to be addressed immediately. Twenty years ago terrorism was all but nonexistent in Africa. Yet today, many terrorist organizations find sanctuary in our borders and are now threatening the security and safety of our people. Africa also struggles with an increasingly extensive and powerful narcotics trade network which threatens to further destabilize state and local governments. And finally, ongoing piracy off the shores of Africa continually threatens the lives and wellbeing of African merchants, as well as hinders effective maritime trade. Today, we are facing serious crises in Somalia, in Mali, in the eastern DRC, in Guinea Bissau and in the Central African Republic, to mention just a few.

Impunity reigns supreme, in despotic situations and environment, entailing lack of democracy and democratic institutions which in turn results in lack of accountability, fairness, impartiality, and the common good. Justice, peace, good governance and

reconciliation, on the other hand, thrive in circumstances of stable democratic values, institutions and practices, where the culture of constitutionalism prevails to constrain arbitrariness and abuse of power.

The African continent continues to suffer from under development, or even abject poverty in certain countries. Africa is going through a period of transition; some countries have difficulty to adapt to new form of democratic and accountable government since the wave of independence has swept the continent starting half a century ago. The reasons for this state of matter are varied. However, some in certain African countries have unfortunately found in independence a boon to enrich themselves and syphon billions of dollars out of their countries much to detriment, anger, animosity and mistrust of the vast majority of the population. We have seen many of the sort in the past few decades. It is not surprising therefore that the former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan recently said that Africa can finance its own investments for development if the billions of dollars are not syphoned out of Africa by crooked means.

The African leaders have all along been seized with the issue of conflicts, conflict prevention and management since the inception of the Organization of the African Unity. Under the constitutive Act of the African Union, the successor of the OAU, the African leaders established a Peace and Security Council (PSC) in 2002, and an African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in 2004. The APSA is based on five main pillars, that are: (i) the peace and security Council (main permanent organ of the AU for conflict prevention, management and resolution; (ii) the Panel of the Wise (comprising distinguished leading figures respected for their integrity and their service to the continent, and representing the five geographical sub-regions of Africa); (iii) the African Standby Force (ASF); (iv) the Peace Fund; and (v) the Continental Early Warning System. Other structures and organs of the AU play a major role in the prevention and management of conflict and of other political crises on the continent. They include the Pan-African Parliament, the African Peer Review Mechanism (PRM) of NEPAD, and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Also linked to the ASF are the Military Staff Committee (MSC) and the African Common Defence and Security Policy.

In spite of all its best efforts, Africa alone cannot handle all the problems of conflicts in the continent on its own as it does not at this time have all the resources and logistics at its end. Africa needs honest and genuine partners in this endeavor to ultimately achieve the African Renaissance which amongst other things aims at arriving at a war free Africa in the next 50 years. The United Nations has proved to be a long term genuine partner in this respect. We also acknowledge the support of the European Union and its individual members. The United States is making a very significant and important contribution to strengthen the security aspects in Africa both economically and militarily.

Mauritius in its own way is partnering with the U.S., the E.U., the U.K. and India in the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean despite its limited resources. In 2011, Mauritius signed an agreement with European Union and in 2012 a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Kingdom which provide for the transfer of suspected

pirates who have been apprehended by the European Union and the United Kingdom naval forces in the high seas of the region, to Mauritius for the purposes of prosecution.

Furthermore, as part of the US-Africa Partnership Station, East African navies and coast guards including Mauritius, Kenya, Tanzania and the Seychelles have been actually training with the US Navy in the Indian Ocean.

Mauritius and India continue to undertake joint anti-piracy in Exclusive Economic Zone Surveillance exercises in the fight against piracy in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are no small problems. It is only when we ignore and fail to recognize problems which we consider small, that we eventually end up in facing problems of unprecedented scale and in unmanageable proportion. Furthermore, it is one thing to have the institutions and tools in place to prevent and manage conflicts, and another to apply them effectively, efficiently and judiciously. Conflicts, whether at communal, local, national or regional level, are better solved when those in power of authority and responsible for the custody of the wealth and resources of the nation are able to provide the right policy mix to share them in a fair and equitable manner to the benefit of their people. Many of the conflicts in some of the African countries are the end result of the plunder and loot of the wealth and resources of the country at the expense of the overwhelming majority of poor and hardworking citizens of these countries.

Reconciliation, peaceful coexistence, fair distribution of income, fundamental freedoms and human rights are the buzz words for solving conflicts in addition to the common prerequisites which are security, truth, justice, reparations, memorials, remembrances, the absence of discriminating practices, acknowledgement, remorse and forgiveness. This in turn requires strong leaderships. The establishment of strong democratic institutions with firm conviction and democratic values, accountable and good governance, total rejection of impurity, encouragement and facilitation of peace-building and reconciliation activities from national to the community levels are of paramount importance in the management of conflicts prevention and the maintenance of peace and security.

In concluding I would like to draw your attention that over 60 per cent of issues of conflicts at the United Nations Security Council concerns the African continent; 10 new peace operations in 8 African countries have been deployed only in the past 18 months. Many of these are African led or hybrid AU-UN operations. 52 peace operations have been deployed in Africa since 2000. Yet in spite of the 67 years of the establishment of the United Nations and the 54 African member states constituting more than one quarter of the total membership of the United Nations, there is not a single African country which is a permanent member of the UN Security Council. In the mutual interest of both the United States and Africa , it is high time that the US Congress gives due consideration to the Ezelwini Consensus where in the African Heads of State and Government have asked for at least two seats in the category of permanent members in the context of the expansion of the reformed security council .

The geopolitical realities of the world since 1945 have changed enormously; we are living in an increasingly globalizing economy making us more and more interdependent. This should go hand in hand to meet with the demands and aspirations of our time if we honestly want to make the world a better and safer place for own generation and the future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The end result of resolving conflicts is our quest for peace. Peace comes with a price and the price should not be in the form of further destruction. In this context it is worthwhile to always remember what the great apostle of non- violence, Mahatma Gandhi once said ***"an eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind"***

Thank you.