

“Current crises related to the struggle for democracy, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, and conflicts threatening peace and security in that part of the world”

Firstly let me begin by sympathising with the people of the Philippines who were struck by Super Typhoon Haiyan this week and deep our revolutionary banner in honour of the many victims who died whilst trying to survive, and many who will now be facing conditions of destitution and squalor. We wish for an urgent humanitarian intervention in their fate and call for a number of philanthropic individuals, organisations as well as governments to intervene.

The situation in the world is currently reaching its crisis proportions with on-going Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, some of these conflicts are historical and have not being halted or disrupted, and they continue to have a spill over effect to many countries of the world and if they continue unabated they will have serious and dire consequences for a whole generation. Our responsibility is therefore to openly and freely engage to find solutions to these fundamental problems facing the world today, so that we can continue to build a world of peace, friendship and democracy, characterised by Socio-economic and political transformation.

In trying to address all the conflict situations in the world, the Council should pay its attention to the Syrian conflict, which is sure to create suffering of longer duration to those that are involved. This conflict should have been concluded with peaceful dialogue and the efforts of neighbouring countries that lusts for peace. It is however, unfortunate that the conflict has saturated all other neighbouring countries and the possibility for a full scale war now exists. The Geneva Communique sought to communicate methods and steps in which this conflict could come to an end, but the developments which saw the belligerents resorting to the use of chemical weapons have complicated all approaches towards finding lasting peace. We are all waiting upon the US/Russia axis, as a way to bringing some form of stability in Syria in particular

and the region in general. We believe that through these engagements a number of governments in the Middle East will abide by International laws and conventions aimed at arms control and disarmament for the sake of peace.

A number of countries are accordingly entangled in the Syrian conflicts for various reasons and interests. Our message to them is that there is no amount of materialistic interest that is worth pursuing at the expense of human life and human rights in general. Lebanon, Turkey and Iran are key and instrumental in coming together to ensure that conflict ceases in the Arab regions.

In this same breadth we call for the end to a long conflict plaguing the people of Palestine and those of Israel. We believe that a two state solution, with East Jerusalem as a Capital, will provide a long and lasting solution to the conflict between these countries. On this note we congratulate the Palestinian authority for gaining a non-member observer status in the UN, and applaud all countries that ensured the success of this resolution.

Africa is every day confronted with war after war irrespective of our efforts and those of institutions supporting constitutional democracy to intervene. We however, remain solid in the idea that there should be African Solutions to African problems. Our knowledge, both in history and in the present times is that the majority of conflicts that Africa has seen have happened because of Colonialism, Neo- Colonialism and the varying degrees of interferences especially those that are aimed at soliciting Africa's rich natural resources. Our perspective and attitude is that Conflict is derailing our efforts towards building a better Africa and the world. We know it very well and so is the world that Africa will not develop, unless there is peace. We therefore call for end to aggression by factions especially in North Africa, which is the subject that this Council is paying attention to. Efforts at restoring peace and order in Libya need the collective effort of all democrats. Libya cannot afford intimidation of its citizens, human rights abuses, and exploitation of its resources by both internal and external forces. Libya now needs peace democracy and human rights.

We call for the implementation of resolution 1495 of the United Nations to be implemented, with the speed of lightning, which calls for the referendum of the people of Western Sahara in order to determine their destiny. We can no longer wait longer for this to happen and close this chapter that we are always besieged with in our very own Council and other International forums.

Inspired by the Freedom Charter, the South African National Congress has always believed that every citizen of the world is entitled to enjoy their fundamental human rights and freedom, including the right to live in dignity. This is a right, which we wish not only for the peoples of Libya, and Syria, but equally for the peoples of Bahrain, Yemen, and other countries which in the recent past have seen their people rising up. I say this because, for whatever reason, there seems to be concerted efforts to selectively focus on the issue of Libya, as well as Syria, while ignoring other situations right now in the Middle East and North Africa whose challenges may require similar, if not more, attention of the international community.

We am of the view, and perhaps we can debate this further during the question and answer session, that the situation and the case of Libya, has long ceased to be characterized within the broader developments which have come to be popularly known as the Arab Spring, especially the events that unfolded in Tunisia and Egypt. This is the case, because the people of Egypt and Tunisia, who took to the streets demanding their freedom, did so peacefully. In the case of Libya, what we had was an armed insurrection and it was therefore necessary for the AU to intervene to bring all stakeholders together to address the legitimate demands of the people through dialogue and negotiations.

Programme Director,

Our position on Libya is not divorced from our approach to issues of peace and stability, both on the African continent and indeed other parts of the world. And this approach is the settlement of international disputes through dialogue.

As we speak today, Libya remains divided, its civilian population has been severely affected by the resulting aerial bombing by NATO, the march by the rebels to Tripoli, and indeed by the actions of that country's armed forces—all these due to failure to create a conducive environment for dialogue. You would have read that the Libyan NTC Health Minister recently stated that 30 000 people were killed and 50 000 wounded in the six-month conflict, and that he expects the figure to be higher once a final count is completed.

I strongly believe, long after NATO has left Libya, long after the media has shifted its focal lenses and its pens away from Libya, we would still be left with a huge challenge of re- building that country; of making it possible for the Libyans to consider each other as brothers and sisters occupying the same space. This challenge was succinctly captured in the Open Letter from Concerned Africans, which stated:

“At the end of it all, Africa will inherit a much more difficult challenge to successfully address the issue of peace and stability, and therefore the task of sustained development.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current situation in Libya is as a result of the failure to transform the global system of governance. Powerful States remain dominant and imposing over the powerless. This does not augur well for an international system founded on the principles of international peace and security that underpin the UN as an institution. It is precisely for this reason; amongst

In the world we inhabit, what needs to be done, and done better in order to create an axis of peace? That is States that are genuinely committed to tipping the scales of response away from military action to political dialogue; ☐ What kind of a world would we leave for our children, if narrow national interests are allowed to overtake a higher and nobler commitment to principle, and respect for the international rule of law; ☐ Is it feasible to speak of an African leadership collective, that can stand together even against powerful forces (our former colonisers) in order to ensure that we as Africans, indeed become the midwives of our own destiny; ☐ If inter-governmental institutions continue

to serve interests, other than what they were founded for, what alternatives are there; and, ² Is there a progressive voice that is willing to mobilise for a better world, truly founded on the equality of nations?

I thank you

Obed Bapela