



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG

‘Climate Change, Resources, Migration: Old and New Sources of Conflict in Africa?’

International Conference, Cape Town, 03-04 August 2009

Conference Summary

Introduction and Objectives

Security and stability continue to be key challenges across Africa. In the last two decades, violent conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa have increasingly become more complex and multi-dimensional involving local, national and international state and non-state actors. Despite their internal origin, many conflicts have spilled over borders, taking on a regional character with equally devastating transboundary consequences. While the establishment of the African security architecture demonstrates a new proactive and interventionist approach to the continent’s security challenges, the African Union has predominantly responded to the consequences of violent conflict without addressing the structural root-causes. In addition, focus has largely been on management and resolution of political conflict. Not sufficiently considered are emerging security threats which include migration, exploitation of natural resources and increasingly climate change. The intersections, and in some cases, cause-effect relationship between the three and their implications for security underlies both the continent’s vulnerability and the complexity of Africa’s present and future security challenges.

It is against this background that the Heinrich Böll Foundation Southern Africa brought together political, academic, and civil society experts and representatives from the continent and beyond to deliberate on the state of Africa’s security architecture, and examine it with regards to these emerging threats. The two-day conference, which was open to the public on the first day, sought to, among others, address the following questions:

- What are the exact links between climate change, resources, migration and violent conflict?
- What roles do other social, economic and political factors such as governance play in the eruption, as well as in prevention, management and resolution of conflict?
- What kind of cooperation is required to address security challenges that go beyond the capacity of any one nation state to manage?
- What are the conclusions for the evolving African security architecture?

Discussions

Keynote speeches were delivered by Ambassador Dieter W. Haller, German Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa, Ralf Fuecks, Co-President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Mr. Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa.

The keynote speeches set the tone for discussions by noting that the global community lives in a transition characterised by a convergence of crises and marked by the continuation of old threats such as nuclear proliferation and the emergence of new threats to security, among them the recent collapse of world financial markets and climate change related conflicts. It was noted that there is an intrinsic and enabling relationship between security, financial stability and global

development and that one is not possible without the other. As such, the development of a broad and encompassing understanding of security that is inclusive and reflects the new and emerging threats such as climate change and inequitable exploitation of diminishing natural resources is an urgent imperative on the continent of Africa. Given the cross border permeation of conflict in Africa the role of climate change in increasing threats in Africa due to resource conflicts, territory and border disputes, water scarcity, migration and food insecurity needs to be interrogated. The speakers called for enhanced resource provision for conflict prevention, management and resolution within the continent's security architecture. The need to reach a comprehensive post-Kyoto agreement at the upcoming Copenhagen Climate Change Conference to enable a global shift to increased investment in energy efficiency, greener energy generation technologies and binding emissions targets was emphasised.

Opening Panel

Discussions were focused on the challenges in the progress towards an African security architecture, security, regional cooperation and South Africa's role in it.

It was noted with concern that there is a weakening of the normative framework to deal with emerging security issues marked by a reactive rather than proactive approach. The last decade has seen the increased allocation of resources for peace and security from the United Nations and effort from the African Union but there remains neglected crises in some parts of Africa such as Somalia and southern Sudan that need to be engaged with. Peace and security issues are largely dialogued in terms of a lack of resources, capacity and technical knowledge while the critical issue of political root causes is neglected. It was also noted that allocation of resources for security on the continent is still disproportionately skewed towards the hard (military) options. Calls were made for increased transparency and accountability at the AU and for the institution of community level dialogue that can be aggregated to inform national and regional dialogue on security.

Challenges in the progress towards an African security architecture include:

- Lack of political commitment
- Limited funding and finance for new structures (fee payment by AU member states is low, and the process is over-funded by donors which creates a problem of ownership and sustainability)
- Operability of African Union Standby Force is hampered by limited military capability and capacity
- Legal and policy alignment (non-harmonised legal frameworks at the UN, AU and Regional Economic Community levels threaten to hamper peace and conflict resolution efforts on the continent)
- There are challenges of how to involve civil society in the security architecture
- Institutional reform and feasibility of the new institutions towards better management

It was however noted that reform has started it is important to note that implementation will be an ongoing process.

On South Africa's role in security and regional cooperation, it was noted that as a young democracy South Africa has typically gone through phases of learning and realignment of its foreign policy. Its role demands that it assumes a leadership position but at the same time avoid isolating itself from the rest of the continent through unilateral action in resolution of conflicts. It was emphasised that South Africa successfully used its presence on the UN

Security Council to trigger a reform discourse given the Security Council's undemocratic and non-representative composition. This development and South Africa's expanded diplomatic presence should be seized upon to continue the dialogue on reforms at the UN and to ensure that South Africa takes on its responsibility as a leader and ensures an enhanced role for civil society in security issues on the continent.

Climate Change Panel

This session was aimed at discussing the link between climate change and security.

It was noted that climate change - by redrawing the maps of water availability, food security, disease prevalence and coastal boundaries - could increase forced migration, raise tensions and trigger new conflicts. In recent times climate change has transformed from being a strictly environmental issue to an economy and energy issue and the focus is now on climate change a security issue. It was noted that the securitisation of climate change will create political space to enable leading polluters to make the required concessions on emissions. However, caution was urged to ensure that the shift towards securitising climate change does not legitimise paternalistic and deterministic thinking on Africa that more conflicts will arise. It was also emphasised that conflict is a function of a lot more other factors and not climate change alone. Also, it was stated that the ascendancy of climate change as a dialoguing issue should not relegate attention on other developmental issues that the continent, and the world at large, has thus far fallen short of addressing comprehensively e.g. HIV and AIDS. Further, it was mentioned that climate change disproportionately increases women's vulnerability as most have skills that are not considered to be mobile skills.

Identified climate change challenges in Africa:

- Water scarcity
- Food (in)security
- Destabilisation and unregulated population movements
- Climate change will threaten the ability of fragile states to provide opportunities and resources for their people tipping them towards failed state status
- Variable farming seasons
- Increasing precipitation in some areas
- Reduced river flow in some areas
- Models predict the ice cap on Mt Kilimanjaro will disappear between 2015-2030
- Fisheries productivity affected
- Health issues associated with heavy precipitation

It was pointed out that although the local community needs to take on more personal responsibility to challenge climate change, by far the greater responsibility falls on national, regional and global levels because, for instance, in South Africa less than 10% of energy is for domestic use with greater than 60% used by industry. In pursuing a shift to green technologies, players were urged to ensure the creation of enough jobs to absorb the workforce in industries with a large carbon footprint.

Resource Panel

The discussion sought to interrogate whether Africa's natural resources are either a driver of the continent's development and stability or a source of protracted conflict.

It was noted that, notwithstanding the world financial crisis and fluctuating world commodity market prices, Africa is resource rich and currently produces 12.5% of world oil production with significant reserves as yet undeveloped.

Causes of development failure in Africa were given as:

- Total lack of a clear ideological approach to utilisation of the continent's resources (What should we produce? For whom should we produce? And how should we produce?) coupled by imposition of economic policies on African countries by the West
- Unbalanced trading power and relationship between Africa and its western trading partners (there is asymmetry in negotiating skill, power and knowledge; a dearth of information among African negotiators; and asymmetrical agents with African negotiators being politicians with no negotiating skills and often negotiating for positions of personal gain)
- Lack of effective tax systems
- Conflict (directs attention solely towards issues of good governance)
- Colonial legacy of vertical exploitative relationship with old metropolises

To address these challenges, tentative solutions were suggested, among them:

- Community ownership of resources (Currently control of resources and revenue thereby derived is centralised; there is need to change governance frameworks to those informed by values of community ownership)
- Review and enhance governance of the minerals sector
- Re-negotiate dubious resource extraction contracts (alternatively countries were urged to change legislation and allow sufficient time for foreign extractive companies to align themselves and their operations with new legislation)
- Come up with beneficiation policies and create upstream and downstream opportunities for diversification
- Address capacity limitations e.g. improving negotiating skills
- Ensure regional economic and infrastructure integration as well as partnerships
- Enhance competitiveness through developed infrastructure, skills and improved administration of resources
- Legislate Corporate Social Responsibility
- Ensure investment policies take into account local conditions, local peculiarities and community priorities
- Build local government capacity to link corporates and local communities
- Ensure coordination of extractive industry policies with those relating to climate change

Migration Panel

The discussion centred on the defining features of migration in southern Africa and the need to harness the opportunities that arise out of migration.

It was noted that countries in southern Africa have state focused migration policies but evidence across the region has shown that the state is least able to manage migration. Fragmented and overlapping legal frameworks, both national and local, means there are few central points for managing positive change. State efforts at managing migration have largely led to the disruption of livelihoods and many human rights violations on migrants. It was also stated that although there is increasing relaxation and enablement/facilitation of free movement within the region, dialogue with communities to prepare them for arrival of more immigrants has been lacking,

thereby resulting in conflict between immigrants and local communities. It was pointed out that as climate change impacts are increasingly felt, conflict over scarce resources will result in forced migration and displacement of communities that are already politically marginalised and vulnerable. Local government and communities increasingly will take on the responsibility to manage migration and social cohesion especially in the context of climate change as most migration will be within borders as populations move towards areas with more reliable sources of water and other natural resources. It was noted that with an increase in migrant populations, increased remittances may become another source of conflict in remittance destination countries and communities. Further, evidence shows that returnees often face social stigma and rejection by those in their communities who stay and take over land and property. In the light of recent xenophobic attacks in South Africa, discussions concluded that there needs to be recognition of the ways in which South Africa has benefited from immigration by foreign nationals.

Although migration policies in South Africa and the region are largely gender neutral, it was stated that women report that they are particularly vulnerable when crossing borders and are subject to harassment. Other aspects of migration relating to women are that:

- More women are now migrating than previously was the case
- Migration can be empowering for women as in cases where they move away from patriarchal societies, gain access to expanded education and employment opportunities, and gain the ability to make autonomous life choices and support their families
- In Southern Africa, most women are migrating due to poverty, political instability, abusive social relationships, and the need to make autonomous life decisions
- Women increasingly say they have benefited from exposure to other cultures, languages and other less mentioned benefits
- Historically, migration policy has favoured retention of traditional family structures for skilled labour but less so for unskilled labour

Concluding Panel

It was concluded that although 'green' issues have historically been perceived as Northern issues on the continent, progress has been made in recognising their importance for Africa as evidenced by, among others, such initiatives as the Climate change and development programme within the AU; the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative; the implementation of the African Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and Biofuels development initiatives in Africa. It was pointed out that the African security architecture as it stands today is not particularly adapted to tackling emerging security threats such as climate change and there needs to be a re-orientation to ensure that it is. The panel called for a transformation to a responsive and responsible leadership and African state to ensure that challenges such as climate change, economic and development planning are met with the aim to improve the lives of the African populace.