

**36th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council**

**Theme: Silencing the guns: creating conditions for Africa's  
development**

**Statement**

**By**

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**His Excellency, Mr. Sameh Hassan Shoukry, Chairperson of the Executive Council, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt,**

**His Excellency and my brother, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,**

**His Excellency, Ambassador Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, my adviser and guide**

**Honorable Ministers,**

**Excellencies, African Union Commissioners,**

**Heads of Regional Economic Communities,**

**Ambassadors and Heads of Mission,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I wish us all a Happy New Year

It gives me great pleasure to join you today at this 36th Session of the Executive Council meeting on the theme ‘Silencing the guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa’s development’.

Let me begin with a quote.

*“There is nothing like it, nothing in the world”*

*If it is negative twenty degrees outside, you're sweating.*

*If it's a hundred and twenty, you're cold as .. Ice cold.*

*It is an adrenaline rush like you can't imagine.*

*The problem is that it's hard to aim a rifle when your heart is pounding,  
which points to an irony of modern combat;*

*it does extraordinarily violent things to the human body but requires  
almost dead calm to execute well.*

*Complex motor skills start to diminish at 154 beats per minute, which  
would not matter much in a sword fight but could definitely ruin your  
aim with a rifle.*

*At 170 beats per minute you start to experience tunnel vision, loss of  
depth and restricted hearing.*

*And at 180 beats per minute you enter a netherworld where rational  
thought decays -- bowel and bladder control are lost and you start to  
exhibit the crudest sorts of survival behaviors*

Sebastian Junger – Author of the book, WAR

**Excellences,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Today we meet again to talk about the quest for peace on the continent.

But we meet at a time when the escalations in armed conflicts is at its highest in the last two decades and the number of countries in conflict also alarmingly high.

Compared to 2005 when there were only 6 countries in active conflict on the continent and 7 armed conflicts, 15 years later and 10 years after this Union declared the need to silence the guns we have outperformed ourselves - for the worse!

The number of countries with armed conflicts has risen to 17. From 6 to 17 that is almost 300 percent increase.

The number of armed conflicts has escalated in same orders of magnitude from 7 to 21 in the same period, 2005 to 2018, according to the Peace Research Institute in Oslo.

Today our task is to raise a clarion call for the voiceless.

For those maimed by the tools of war.

Those scared by the violence it envelops humankind in.

The cruelty it engenders in otherwise peaceful nations, and peoples

But more than anything else, it is the savagery and senselessness of these very acts, rape, murder, burning down of innocent villages and the deprivation of whole communities to engage in active and constructive chores, that we abhor.

Girls are left out of school and boys are turned into killing machines and in some of our societies girls are now being used as wagers of war and or as instruments of war.

## **Excellencies**

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

It is not lost to me that I stand here as a representative of the United Nations. We were born out of ashes of war.

From 1939 -1945 the world lived through World War II.

In 1945 on August 6 and 9 the world watched the horrors of Hiroshima.

These two episodes caused untold human tragedy.

The name "United Nations", coined by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was first used in the Declaration by United Nations of 1 January 1942, during the Second World War, by allied forces.

In 1945, representatives of 50 countries met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to draw up the United Nations Charter.

The United Nations officially came into existence on 24 October 1945. Today called UN day.

President Harry Truman appointed Eleanor Roosevelt to the first American delegation to the UN. She became chairman of the UN Human Rights Commission and guided the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its adoption by the UN General Assembly. She regarded this work as her greatest achievement.

The primary purposes of the United Nations are to keep the peace, encourage respect for human rights, create conditions under which justice and respect for international laws and treaties can be achieved, and promote social progress and better standards of living throughout the world.

This year we celebrate the UN at 75.

And we must also stop like the African Union and ask if we have fulfilled our mandate.

While over 10 UN agencies and affiliates have won Nobel peace prizes over the years and we are very proud, like the data on Africa conflict seems to be our stubborn companion. We as the UN family now talk about the nexus between peace security and development. Bringing the UN family together in common purpose.

**Excellences,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

We cannot therefore talk of failures in the quest for such a noble objective without asking ourselves why?

Governance in all its dimensions holds some of the answers to our challenge.

The Ibrahim Governance Index of 2018 shows that political participation for example on the continent has only slightly improved across the board and has certainly not increased in many parts of Africa.

Democratic elections are under threat in many parts of the continent.

There is an inherent tension therefore in our societies.

While individuals are strengthening their social, cultural, ethnic and often times religious identities, our institutions for participation and inclusion are relentlessly testing the limits of exclusion in all its forms.

These tensions are invariably leading to conflict.

For a strategy on silencing the guns to be successful we must honestly seek to build more inclusive societies and this union has an important yet untapped role to play in this quest.

A strategy to silence the guns must be a strategy

to improve the governance of our societies, a strategy

to build a more transparent decision making process, a strategy

to demand more inclusive and strong institutions underpinned by the rule of law.



We have good examples of where these principles have helped countries, end wars and transition to prosperous societies.

In Ireland from 1969 to 1997 the people of Ireland sought these very demands. Post 1997 they immediately worked to build more inclusive and representative societies. The story of Ireland's growth is well known to all.

Less well known is that of Under Pinochet's Chile from 1973 -1990, Chilean society was rife with conflict. Post the Pinochet era Chile sought to build a more representative and inclusive society. The GDP of Chile at the end of the Pinochet era in 1990 was under US\$50 billion and had stagnated on average during the Pinochet years.

Today Chile's GDP stands at US\$300 billion with a population of about 18 million and a GDP per capita of over US\$15,000. This is more than most African countries. 18 million and they more than multiplied their GDP in 15 years. Africa increased the number of conflicts in the same period and GDP per capita stagnated.

One may ask, then why the recent unrest in Chile?

The recent unrest in Chile is seen once again as a call by those left out of the social and economic progress to be included.

Inclusion is therefore a continuous struggle. A balancing act to continuously create an ecosystem where all participate in decision making.

To silence the guns we need to continuously focus on building an ecosystem that caters for the whole, with institutions whose role is to guard against the abuse of any group.

## **Excellencies**

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

**Finally, Let me now turn to the economics of silencing the guns in Africa.**

Today over 77 percent of all arms imported into the continent are from 4 countries.

The agenda of securing the peace and the agenda of silencing the guns must be dealt with in a comprehensive manner. To effectively silence the guns African countries will have to ensure all gun imports into the

continent are consistent with international practice and the governance systems around the circulation of arms on the continent is transparent.

We must respect global, UN resolutions.

The economics of the arms sector does not favour the continent as more and more of our young perish at the end of the gun while we continue to spend more and more resources on security at the expense of education health care and infrastructure. In Niger for example over 15 percent of the budget is spent on security expenditures. This is true of most in the Sahel.

In history, countries with strong military industrial complexes have been leaders in innovation and have in turn transformed their societies at a rapid pace, creating jobs and delivering prosperity.

While Africa continues to suffer from the scourge of conflicts we have not to date been able to build a military industrial complex of any stature which can help advance the course of Africa's development.

South Africa is the only one which has done so, and the results are obvious in the scientific breakthroughs, for example in airplane engine

technology or medical advancements coming out of South Africa, such as the first

heart transplant ever done in the world or the ability to perform remote control operations on patients.

Today on the continent at least 11 countries produce small arms and ammunition but none of these countries have been able to develop a real research and industrial complex capable of changing society for the better.

In a period where innovation is racing, where societies have never been more affluent, where Africa's aspirations are at our finger tips with places like silicon mountain in Buea, South Africa, Kenya, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Cote d'Ivoire leading on technology front.

Where child soldiers like Emmanuel Jal from South Sudan, given the opportunity, have become renown artists – demonstrating once again the potential of youth.

What society takes this incredible potential, this pool of brilliance and reduces them to killing machines.

What is the measure of a society that condemns its youth to violence in the midst of boundless opportunity.

How can our Union redirect these strengths to build a more prosperous Africa, leveraging on the work of the African Union, United Nations, the African Development Bank and other partners? At ECA, we pledge to do our part.

That is the real task ahead, reverse the alarming record of increasing conflict and build a prosperous society, build the Africa we want over the next decade, by having the courage to build strong institutions.

I thank you for your attention.