

PROTOCOL

1. It is my pleasure and I consider it a privilege to join you at this conference. I bring to you a message of goodwill from the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS Parliament). I thank the European Parliamentarians with Africa, AWEPA, and the Senate of the Kingdom of Belgium for inviting the ECOWAS Parliament to be part of this very important conference on "Peace, Security, and Sustainable Development" and for the opportunity given to me to make a few framing remarks. In particular, I wish to thank madam President of AWEPA, Ms. Miet Smet, for being ever so cooperative and mindful.

Honourable Members of Parliament,
distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

2. May I commend the organisers of the conference for their thoughtfulness in coming up with this subject at a time of growing global concern over rising insecurity and its political, economic, and social implications. Yet, I must quickly add that this does not come to us at the ECOWAS Parliament as a surprise because AWEPA has continued to show immense passion and leadership on this subject. The theme, "Peace, Security, and Sustainable Development" has also been the fulcrum and crux of AWEPA's partnership with the ECOWAS Parliament.

I wish to recall that the two parliamentary organisations hosted a parliamentary workshop in Dakar, Senegal, in October 2013 on the subject of "Human Security, Political Stability, and Achievement of the MDGs in West Africa". It was quite enriching and remains helpful to our sub-region in managing sustainable development in the face of rising insecurity posed by terrorism and insurgency.

3. Today, I am happy that AWEPA is not resting on its oars. In Africa, we have a saying that unless the itching stops, the fingernails will not rest. Besides, peace, security, and sustainable development are like three peas in a pod- they are inseparable. Therefore, it is only logical to state that the entrenchment of peace and security are natural precursors to any meaningful development or sustenance of it.

4. The peoples of West Africa are particularly interested in this subject because our sub-region has borne the brunt of extreme violence and terrorism as well as political instability and are in a position to tell how badly it has impacted negatively on every indices of development over the years. In the wake of terrorism and insurgency in parts of West Africa, especially in the North East of Nigeria, Boko Haram has claimed thousands of lives and made life unbearable for the living.

Many development projects have been abandoned, many schools have been shut, commercial activities have been paralysed, and farmlands have since been abandoned. So many families have also been dislocated, while many towns have either been destroyed and abandoned or become a ghost of their old selves. All these pose present and future dangers to sustainable development, not only to West Africa and its neighbours, but the world as a whole.

Fellow Parliamentarians, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

5. Without prejudice to the need for individual country efforts towards taming the menace of insecurity and promotion of peace and development within its borders, the truth is that the world needs a more collaborative approach if we must succeed. I have always held that the insecurity of a part affects the security of the whole. In a highly globalized world especially, a rich or better secure neighbour cannot have a peaceful sleep when her poor and less secure neighbours are kept awake by poverty and violent extremism. I am of the view that the forces of terrorism, insurgence, and other forms of violent extremism are not only transnational in nature, but also trigger chains of repercussions that defy national borders.

Nothing demonstrates this today more than Europe where the war, insurgency, terrorism, and abject poverty in parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, have triggered enormous immigrant crisis in an otherwise more secure, peaceful, and comfortable continent.

6. Therefore, the onus is on us as parliamentarians to rise up to be counted in the global efforts to address the root causes of violent extremism as well as their consequences. To what extent do poverty, radicalization, external meddlesomeness, internal political highhandedness, among others, give rise to or fuel global insurgency, terrorism, and political instability? How can parliamentary diplomacy, legislations, oversight functions, appropriation, and other legislative instruments be deployed in waging the war against global insecurity and foster development? These are the nagging questions, which I believe this conference is in position to find answers to.

7. In conclusion, dear colleagues, permit me to reassure you that we at the ECOWAS Parliament are always eager and ready to continue to collaborate with AWEPA and also join forces with other regional and national parliaments to build a more secure world where development thrives to the benefit of all.

Thank you, once again, for inviting me. I wish us a fruitful conference and God's blessings.