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Robert DOSSOU

Before going on, I would like to apologize to both Ms. Guigou and Sheikh Tidiane Gadio, because I'd promised to follow the order on the list given to me, but I was distracted and skipped Mr. Gadio's name. My apologies for that! I'll introduce him quickly. He is president of the Pan-African Institute of Strategies. He did me the honor of introducing me to the board of that institute, which, I must say, took the initiative for the first time in Africa to organize a major forum in Dakar on peace. It has organized it twice. The forum still exists, but he is no longer running it. He has been Minister for Foreign Affairs and is currently a member of Senegal's National Assembly.

Sheikh Tidiane GADIO

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Having been Minister of Foreign Affairs for about 10 years, I always spoke with an agreed language at the time. Since I have been freed from that constraint, I speak a little more freely. This is to prepare you for what I am going to say.

My colleagues at the Pan-African Institute of Strategies believe that the world has decided, for the most part, to leave Africa with its problems. We have two essential proofs of this. The repeated request from Mali, the Sahel and Africa to transform the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA in French) into a much more credible and stronger mandate. Sending 12,000 men today to Mali, a key, 1,200,000-square-kilometer African country that concentrates the history of West Africa and is the source of all our pride and all our cultural, historical and religious heritage, and putting them in barracks with the task of maintaining peace in Mali is a serious problem. What peace is there to keep in Mali when terrorist attacks are taking place every day? What peace is there to keep in Mali when the President of Mali clearly says "my country is at war!"

Last time, 60 soldiers were kidnapped and 40 killed by jihadists. The world didn't even feel it should be in the headlines. It didn't seem that important. We thought there was something going on with Africa and particularly with Mali. I will also mention the refusal to fund the G5 Sahel. How many times have we said to Africa: take responsibility, organize your security, and defend yourselves? Africans are putting a mechanism in place. For two or three years we've been debating it, while the refusal to finance the G5 Sahel is unambiguous. Our soldiers are there, ready and willing to meet the challenge. Our elite troops are there, weapons at their feet because they have neither ammunition nor the logistics necessary for their offensive deployment. The truth is that our soldiers do not have the means to fight. Jihadists are superior in arms, logistics and freedom of movement. The last time in Mali, they attacked a garrison of our elite troops, the G5 Sahel, killing many of them. In a way, the world is forcing Africa to face its responsibilities. The security crisis on the continent has never been as bad as it is today.

The other problem is that everyone is saying there's a security crisis just in the Sahel. That's obviously not the case. In our institute, we dare speak of "de-sahelization" of the security crisis in Africa, as it goes beyond the Sahel. The security crisis is catastrophic on every aspect. It is primarily due to action taken by our Western friends in Libya, with the support of the United Nations Security Council. Everybody knows what happened. They were warned what would happen next. They weren't particularly interested in that, which resulted in the biggest security disaster in Africa today. We are under attack from all sides. The epicenter of global terrorism is shifting to Africa. In Libya, Africans are being sold as slaves in public markets. The whole world knows it. Nobody thought of making it a global affair and say it's unacceptable. I sometimes criticize Africans because African countries should organize themselves, enter Libya and prevent slavery and inhuman, degrading and even racist treatment of Africans in their own African land, because it is simply unacceptable, yesterday and today!



Then the Narco-States and the drug traffickers are marching through Africa selling arms, peddling drugs and trafficking in humans and fake medicine. They do whatever they want on our continent. The criminal economy is booming. Everybody knows that.

More seriously, Africa's most important resource is not its natural resources but its human resources, especially its youth. They are seen as migrants. Isn't it rather an exodus of young people willing to burn to death in the desert or drown in the Mediterranean? Is everyone aware of the seriousness and tragedy of what is happening to these young people?

Africa faces all those challenges. Nevertheless, we're convinced that Africa is the future of the world and has immense potential. I like what the Senegalese economist and philosopher Felwine Sarr said: "Africa has only itself to catch up". Africa has to take responsibility and face its own challenges. There will be 2.4 to 2.5 billion of us in 2050, with more than a billion middle-class Africans, and therefore consumers. A billion Africans will also be Internet users. As Jean-Louis Roy, the former Secretary General of the Francophonie, says, a change is taking place that isn't really well noticed. The world's wealth is shifting towards Asia and Africa. He points out that Africa now has the advantage of the demographic dividend.

Africa is vast. It can contain all of China, India, the United States, Japan and the European Union's Member States within its territory and there would still be room left over. So contrary to what we're being told, Africa is not overpopulated. Africa is overpopulated only because its economies are failing and it cannot take responsibility for its demographic growth. Apart from that, we have space. We have all the natural resources in large quantities (a third of the world's reserves, it is said). Thus, Africa should play a key role in the world's future. Many people have understood this. Africa is said to be dangerous, but they go there because they know that many things are at stake on our continent.

Now, one of the criticisms I have of my continent is that we continue to build structures, systems like the AfCFTA, which is excellent by the way, because Africa wants to have a common market, but we still refuse to give politics a leading role. We refuse to talk about political union. We have followed the European Union model. For 20 years I've argued that the European Union was not our model. We want the model our leaders and great thinkers—Kwamé Nkrumah, Sheikh Anta Diop and Marcus Garvey—laid out before us. We want the United States of Africa. We want a united Africa. We do not want an Africa modeled on the European Union, with 27 States, all independent, all sovereign, where decisions are difficult to make. We know that if the European Union agreed to be politically united, the next day it would be the world's leading power because it would surpass the United States in terms of GDP. A united, federated Africa, says Béchir Ben Yahmed in *Jeune Afrique*, would be the fourth-largest country in the world in terms of GDP, population, potential, etc.

But have you seen what is happening? We always try to avoid debates on the union. We say it is an outdated debate and we are speeding up Africa's fragmentation. From 32 countries we have gone to 54. Sudan was split up into two countries—a mainly Western initiative—thinking this would solve its problems. Today the situation there is worse than it was before. It didn't work. They say, "If the Central African Republic doesn't work, split it up into two countries." They want to remove Azawad from Mali. They even want to split Mali up into three countries, with the center and the north. We're told that DRC isn't viable. That is why it doesn't work. They want to break it up into a dozen States if possible. We are told that Nigeria is working temporarily, but that in the long term it won't and that this excessively large entity should be broken up. If we go on this way, we will have 80 States on a continent that is a sort of island continent. We will have thousands of borders. Nobody will be able to move in Africa. We will no longer be able to do anything together. Africa would be paralyzed.

Thus, we demand that African States reconsider their strategy. The paradigm of a Balkanized Africa, an Africa of individual overlaps, has led to a collective failure. We want Africans to pull together without further delay. If I personally were in a position to do so, we would demand a permanent seat on the Security Council without waiting for the end of the negotiations. We have been running around in circles for 20 years. If we were a permanent member with veto power, Libya wouldn't have been invaded, Gaddafi wouldn't have been killed and Africa wouldn't be in its current state of disarray. We demand this seat. We make up 54 of the United Nations' Member States, a quarter of its total, yet we



are left out of major decisions because we only have non-permanent member status. We demand this position and Africa must develop a strategy to achieve it.

I will conclude by saying that Africa's number one emergency today is security. Islamic State is killing people in the DRC. They have understood that Africa is land. Africa is forests. Africa is water resources. They are entrepreneurs who are projecting themselves into the future and implementing their strategy. Like China, India and everyone else, they think they can come in and grab their "share of Africa". We demand the liberation of Mali. This is a continental emergency. An army of 5,000 or 10,000 men won't be enough. We need an army of 50,000 or 100,000 men. This is an opportunity to create the African army we have been talking about since 1963. We need to rescue Burkina Faso, which is falling. If Burkina Faso falls, they will enter Benin and have an Atlantic coastline. The terrorists will establish themselves permanently and make any development in Africa impossible. Furthermore, we need to talk to Nigeria, the continent's leading economic and demographic power. It must solve the Boko Haram issue. The largest terrorist organization in the world today is Boko Haram. There have already been 29,000 deaths in Nigeria since 2009 and they continue to murder, to prevent girls and children from going to school, to cut the throats of teachers and to attack churches. It is imperative that we put an end to this.

That, dear friends, is what I wanted to express when I said that the schemes that have been proposed to us have not worked. As another speaker said, "They didn't work, they aren't working, and they will never work!" Agriculture is a problem that has not been solved in Africa. There is no food security. Education is a problem. Health is a problem. Infrastructure is a problem. Sometimes, in meetings like this, we are told that Africa is doing well. Six or seven African States are among the 10 countries with the best growth in the world. It is great to be encouraged, but it is better to let ourselves determine the future we want to give our continent by meeting our major challenges: **security, development, integration and pan-Africanism.**

Robert DOSSOU

Thank you for your remarks, which convey plenty of energy and proposals. I am not surprised, knowing you as I have for the last few decades.