



STATEMENT

BY

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HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

10TH DAKAR INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON PEACE

AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

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I. OPENING DECLARATION

1. Sixty-three years ago, in this same West Africa, **Kwame Nkrumah** stood before a newly independent Ghana and issued a warning that the continent has been living with ever since.
2. He said: "***We shall measure our progress by the improvement in the health of our people, by the number of children in school, by the happiness with which our people are able to manage their own affairs.***"

- 3. By that measure — Nkrumah's measure — we have unfinished business.**
4. That unfinished business is why we are here.
5. And it is why **the tenth year of this Forum** is not an occasion for celebration alone.
6. It is an occasion for reckoning — and for advancing practical, sustainable solutions to the challenges of stability, integration, and sovereignty that bring us together in Dakar.

- 7. Son Excellence Monsieur Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Président de la République du Sénégal
— our gracious host;**
- 8. Mesdames et Messieurs les Chefs d'État et de
Gouvernement;**
- 9. Monsieur le Premier Ministre;**
- 10. Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
— Bonjour à tous.**

11. I thank the Government and people of Senegal for ten years of sustained commitment to this platform.

12. One that has brought together leaders, experts, and civil society to shape Africa's collective response to peace and security challenges.

13. That alone is an act of African leadership worthy of honour.

EXCELLENCES, MESDAMES ET MESSIEURS,

14. Africa is at a crossroads. We see democratic progress and democratic regression — sometimes in the same region, sometimes in the same year.

15. We see a generation of young Africans building extraordinary things with their bare hands, and in the same breath, being recruited into cycles of violence because no institution has offered them a credible alternative.

- 16.** Violent extremism. Unconstitutional changes of government. Organised crime that has found a home in our governance gaps.
- 17.** And a growing, dangerous gulf between citizens and the states that are meant to serve them.
- 18.** These are the daily realities of millions of Africans who have not yet felt the peace we speak of in rooms like this.
- 19. Peace is not only the absence of conflict. It is the presence of justice, opportunity, and trust between citizens and the state.**

20. That is the standard. Not the silence of guns — but the sound of people who believe their future is possible.

21. By that standard, we have much further to go — and it is precisely why this Forum must move us beyond diagnosis to sustainable, African-led solutions.

II. THE THREE PILLARS — ONE TRUTH

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

22. The theme before us — stability, integration,

and sovereignty — goes to the heart of

Africa's search for sustainable solutions to its most pressing security challenges.

23. A session on governance here, a panel on

borders there, a debate on external interference somewhere else.

24. These three are not separate debates. They are one truth.

25. Stability cannot be sustained without integration.

26. Integration is meaningless without sovereignty.

27. And sovereignty itself cannot endure without stability.

28. Pull any one thread, and the fabric unravels.

29. Sustainable solutions must hold all three together.

30. And they must be African solutions, built from African understanding, not borrowed frameworks dressed in African clothing.

III. PERSONAL TESTIMONY — SIERRA LEONE

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

31. I want to speak personally for a moment.

Because this is not a theory for me.

32. I was once a military officer who defended my nation during its civil conflict.

33. Sierra Leone emerged from a brutal civil war.

We lost a decade. We lost hundreds of thousands of lives.

34. We lost the trust between citizens and

institutions — a loss that takes a generation to rebuild.

35. I have sat with women who rebuilt

communities with no support from any state structure.

36. I have spoken with young men who were

once child soldiers and are now teachers.

37. I have watched a country choose, slowly and painfully, to believe in itself again.

38. What I learned from that experience is something no security doctrine taught me: YOU CANNOT IMPOSE PEACE ON A PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOST FAITH IN THE STATE.

39. You can only earn it back — one credible institution, one kept promise, one generation at a time.

40. Good governance is not a governance topic. **It is a security strategy.**

- 41.** When elections are credible, when the rule of law is respected, and when corruption is confronted rather than concealed, violent actors find no fertile ground.

- 42.** They recruit from despair. They thrive in the space a failed state leaves behind.

- 43.** Military responses can contain threats. Only legitimate states can defeat them.

IV. EXTREMISM — THE HONEST DIAGNOSIS

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

44. The spread of violent extremism across the Sahel and into coastal West Africa is not a mystery.

45. It is a verdict on years of governance that excluded rather than included, extracted rather than invested, and treated security as a tool of control rather than a service to citizens.

46. Extremist movements did not create our vulnerabilities. They found them — and walked through the doors we left open.

47. We must shift — decisively, not gradually — from reactive security responses to practical, prevention-driven strategies that can be scaled, replicated, and sustained across our regions.

48. This means empowering local authorities, strengthening border communities, and countering disinformation with truth and opportunity.

49. And above all, creating futures for young people who must currently choose between migration, marginalisation, and militancy.

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

50. We cannot secure what we have not invested in.

51. In Sierra Leone, youth empowerment is not a social policy. It is a national security imperative.

52. A young population that is educated, skilled, and genuinely hopeful is our strongest guarantee against instability.

53. This is not unique to Sierra Leone. It is the universal logic of prevention.

54. The **same logic applies to women. African women have been peacebuilders** long before any institution recognised them as such.

55. From post-conflict reconciliation to community mediation, they lead where states are absent, and trust is fragile.

56. Women do not need to be included in peace processes as a gesture. They need to lead them — as a strategy.

V. ECOWAS — SPEAKING AS CHAIRMAN

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

57. I want to speak now not only as the President of Sierra Leone, but as **the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.**

58. ECOWAS was not built to be a spectator. **It was built to be a shield — a collective expression of West Africa’s determination to protect its people, its democratic institutions, and its peace.**

59. But shields require maintenance. And ours has been tested.

60. The unconstitutional changes of government we have witnessed in our region are not isolated incidents.

61. They are symptoms of a deeper crisis of legitimacy — a crisis that ECOWAS must address not only through sanctions and suspension, but through sustained investment in the conditions that make democratic governance worth defending.

62. I am committing ECOWAS, under this Authority, to a renewed focus on prevention: earlier engagement with at-risk governments, deeper investment in electoral integrity, and a standing civilian mediation capacity — working in coordination with regional and international partners — that does not wait for crises to arise before it deploys.

63. We have learned — at great cost — that delayed responses invite deeper crises.

64. The time to act is always before the fire consumes the house.

VI. THE DAKAR DOCTRINE

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

65. Ten years of this Forum have produced insight, analysis, and recommendations.

66. They have shaped policy thinking across the continent. That is a genuine achievement.

67. But this tenth anniversary demands more than analysis. It demands commitment.

68. After ten years of dialogue, Africa must now enter a decade of delivery.

**69. I PROPOSE THE DAKAR DOCTRINE:
PREVENTION BEFORE INTERVENTION.**

70. Let this Forum formally adopt, as its guiding principle going forward, **that African peace and security strategy must be anchored in the DOCTRINE OF PREVENTION BEFORE INTERVENTION.**

71. That governance investment, youth inclusion, women's leadership, and early warning are not supplements to security strategy. **They are the strategy.**

72. And that **no intervention, however necessary, excuses the failure of prevention that made it inevitable.**

73. Let this be the doctrine upon which the next decade of this Forum's dialogue, workshops, and collective action is built.

74. Let it be the standard by which we measure ourselves — not by how well we respond to crises, but by how many crises we prevent.

VII. PARTNERSHIPS — AFRICA'S TERMS

EXCELLENCES, MESDAMES ET MESSIEURS

75. One more thing must be said plainly — with the world watching us.

76. The era of external actors designing African solutions must end.

77. Not because we are ungrateful for partnerships.

78. But because **partnership that bypasses African agency is not partnership — it is management. And AFRICA WILL NOT BE MANAGED.**

79. We are not asking the world for permission to have peace. We are building it.

80. We seek partners for that work — not architects of it.

81. We welcome cooperation — including with longstanding partners such as Europe and others — that respects our sovereignty, aligns with our priorities, and invests as much in prevention as in crisis response.

82. Security assistance must strengthen governance and protect civilians — not substitute for the first or ignore the second.

VIII. CLIMATE CHANGE

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

83. Climate change must also be named here as an active driver of conflict today — in competition over water and land, in the displacement of coastal communities, and in the food insecurity that turns grievance into violence.

84. For Sierra Leone and for dozens of African nations, addressing climate insecurity is not separate from the peace agenda. It is the peace agenda.

IX. THREE COMMITMENTS

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

85. As I conclude, I ask three things of every

leader in this hall — not as

recommendations, but as commitments we

make to the people who are not in this room.

86. FIRST — Govern with integrity. Strengthen

institutions that earn trust and uphold

constitutional order.

87. Democracy is not a destination. It is a daily discipline. And it must be meaningful to the citizen who lives under it.

88. SECOND — Invest in your people —
especially youth and women — as architects of peace, not passive recipients of security policy.

89. They are not the problem. They are the solution. And if we treat them otherwise, we will earn exactly the instability we deserve.

90. THIRD — Stand together as Africans. Regional solidarity that is principled, decisive, and anchored in prevention.

91. Our Unity is our strategy. And in this moment, it is our survival.

X. DIRECT ADDRESS — THE NEXT GENERATION

92. To the young people of this continent — those in this hall and the millions who are not: **You did not create the problems we are here to solve.**

93. But you will live with the consequences of whether we solve them.

94. You are not our future. You are our present.

95. And every decision made in rooms like this one is, in the end, **a decision about whether your life will be different from the lives of those who came before you.**

96. We owe you more than speeches. **We owe you institutions that work, economies that include you, and a continent that refuses to waste you.**

97. That is **the promise this Forum must keep — that its dialogue translates into action, and its conclusions into measurable progress on the ground.**

98. Let the **next decade of this Forum reflect an Africa that has chosen unity over fragmentation, institutions over instability, and peace rooted in justice — over peace imposed by force.**

99. History will not judge this generation by the eloquence of our speeches.

100. It will judge us by the courage of our **commitments** — and by whether the young people we spoke about today are better served by the decisions we make.

101. We are not here to describe Africa's challenges. We are here to end them.

102. Not alone. Not without partners. But on our own terms, in our own time, with our own hands.

103. Africa does not ask the world to believe in us. We will give the world no choice but to.

104. I thank you. Je vous remercie.