The Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue in co-operation with the Karl Kahane Foundation
kindly invites to the lecture of

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THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN AFRICA

Welcome address:
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Akwasi Aidoo

Akwasi Aidoo is the Executive Director of TrustAfrica, an African foundation (based in Senegal) dedicated to strengthening people-centered solutions to the developmental challenges of Africa, with a focus on peace and security, regional integration, and citizenship and identity. His positions have included IDRC Program Officer for Health and Development in West and Central Africa from 1988 to 1993, and head of the Ford Foundation's offices in Senegal and Nigeria from 1993 to 2001. From 2001 to 2006, Akwasi Aidoo was the director of the Ford Foundation's Special Initiative for Africa. Akwasi Aidoo serves as a director on the boards of several nonprofit organizations, including Oxfam America, the Global Fund for Community Foundations, the Africa Grant-makers' Affinity Group, and the international committee of the Council on Foundations. Akwasi Aidoo has taught at universities in Ghana, Tanzania, and the United States. He was educated in Ghana and the United States and received a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Connecticut in 1985. He writes poetry and short stories in his spare time.

Georg Lennkh

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Patricia Kahane

Welcome to all of you. You might have been raising an eyebrow why the Karl Kahane Lectures or Talking for Peace has a subject that is off the usual track of the Middle East. This is due to the fact that in the Foundation Alexander and I and our colleagues on the board said we are going to shift our Foundation policy a tiny bit to places where there are huge conflicts, not conflicts between a few hundred thousand people with a handful of casualties in comparison to millions of dead people every year on the African continent. Our attention here in Europe and probably also in the United States is always drawn to what we know best or what is closest to us, to our cultural or family traditions. We tend to forget that there is a huge world out there which also needs to be better known and to be more familiar to all of us so that we can maybe in some ways join the effort of the

many organizations who are working in Africa. One of the very important ones is TrustAfrica whose President Akwasi is. Try and stop seeing what we would call developmental aid as dropping bags of rice from an aeroplane. There are huge nutrition and health issues, no question about that, but the important thing is always to start assisting people to help themselves, and to grow themselves, and not to impose either our views or our or our well meant gifts that are not exactly what they need. To open this new window we have invited Akwasi Aidoo who we met last year at a European Foundation Center meeting in Madrid. We were invited to an evening about Africa. He gave the keynote speech there. It really opened our eyes about many things. I hope that it will open yours, too, or help you to get some more in-depth information. Everybody knows Georg Lennkh. Thank you very much for moderating this evening.

Georg Lennkh
Thank you, Patricia. I really would like to thank you for having taken this initiative. It is true that Africa is a little bit out of the way, at least as far as Austria is concerned or perhaps no longer. In fact, I can observe that more and more Austria is moving up our own scale of interest and we are more and more present in Africa. And that is why your lecture, Mr. Aidoo, is of very great interest to us. All of you know the attributes of Akwasi. I know that he is born in Ghana and still has close connections to Ghana. Coming here we talked about politics there that seem to be getting interesting with the elections this fall. Having been a university lecturer earlier on he then moved into activities that are connected to the non-profit sector. He is Executive Director now of TrustAfrica, an African foundation that is based in Senegal and has a focus on peace and security, regional integration, citizenship and identity. Regarding peace and security, and regional integration those who have followed recent events will immediately think about what happened at the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon in December last year. At the Summit, a joint strategy and a plan of action were decided upon, and peace and security were considered the first big pillar of the strategy. In earlier years European-African relations were essentially based and built on development cooperation. Those agreements were and still are very good. But in the recent past it dawned on us that peace and security is very often a precondition for development. And that is also one of the essential points of the joint strategy. One of the important aspects of this joint strategy and of this summit is the existence of the African Union since 2002. It is a very young organization and it has now moved up to be the main partner for Europe in African politics. But that should not distract us from regional organizations even if there are sometimes difficult relationships with the African Union. Regarding peace and security, we also have to pay attention to the non-state side; that is the ordinary people and social movements. The Austrian Development Cooperation has worked also in this sector. This is why I am personally very interested in what you are going to tell us.

Akwasi Aidoo
First of all, I want to say a big thank you to Patricia, Gertraud, and all the new friends that I have made here, for inviting me to give this lecture. It is my first time in Vienna. So thank you for the invitation. I truly appreciate it. And, I bring greetings from my colleagues and trustees of TrustAfrica as well as friends who learned that I was coming here.

Peace is probably one of the most important topics that one can talk about in Africa for the simple reason that Africa has probably had more than its share of violent conflicts. Peace has been elusive in Africa for a very long time, especially in the last fifty years of the post-colonial period. In the last twenty to thirty years, we have experienced some very devastating conflicts. It is mind boggling, so I made a pledge to myself about ten years ago, that I'd visit at least one war-torn country in Africa each year. I said to myself that, if I wanted to live in Africa and if I really wanted to see what is going on beyond the headlines and below the radar, as well as understand conditions on the ground then I should find a way to visit some of these difficult places. So long as there are people there I should be able to get in and out. So, over the last ten years, I have come to make something of a

2

habit of that, with visits to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Uganda, etc. What I have seen (which is basically confirmed by what we read in the newspapers, see on television, hear on radio) is that the conflicts in these countries have truly had devastating impact on the countries concerned and their neighbors. And even after the armed conflicts have ended, the impact has tended to stay on for a very long time. The spirit and soul of the societies that have gone through these conflicts have been torn apart. And it takes a long time to get things back on track. Not so long ago I was in Mozambique. As you know Mozambique has had peace for quite some time now, since the early 1990's. And, yet, if you go beyond Maputo, you see the human signs of the terrible civil war that Mozambique suffered soon after FRELIMO took over.

I am happy, however, to say that over the last ten years, the numbers of conflicts and the number of countries that have experienced armed conflicts or civil wars in Africa have decreased significantly. You can now count on your fingertips how many countries are caught in the vortex of terrible and intractable conflicts. At the same time, the scale of the conflicts and the accompanying atrocities even in the few cases we still have go beyond reason and imagination. Rape, dismemberment, child soldiers, displacement of huge numbers of people, and a myriad of other war crimes characterize the armed conflicts we still have. In DRC alone we have got over 4 million people dead as a result of the war and related factors. The UN estimates that at least 1,000 people, mostly children and women, are dying every day as a result of the war. As you know there has been a measure of peace in the DRC, and yet the impact continues. So it is a very serious situation we have in Africa although we see some progress here and there.

I was very glad today to hear about developments in Kenya. The opposition and the government seem to have finally agreed to share power, and that is good news. About a week and a half ago I called one of the key opposition leaders, whose sister is married to my cousin. I spoke to him as a concerned African. I told him that, as a leader, he has a special responsibility to ensure that he and the government found a way out of the post-electoral mess. I urged him to remember Rwanda which is still fresh in our memory, and told him that he and his antagonists were set on a path to the same outcome that we saw in Rwanda some fourteen years ago.

So, yes, there has been some progress, but there is a lot more to be done; the progress made is not sufficient to end our people's suffering. We still have to deal with Somalia, with Darfur, and now Chad, and many countries that are on the verge of devastating armed conflicts.

The democracy deficit

Why do we have these armed, violent conflicts in Africa? And how do we minimize them? I will highlight a few factors. The first point is that – and you don't have to be a rocket scientist to know this – basically most of these conflicts have to do with what we call the democracy deficit. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the repercussions on Africa were very clear. The Cold War essentially came to an end and we began to see a measure of democratic transformation across the continent. Single parties gave way to multi-party systems. The media became a bit more independent as independent media houses were established. And we saw a clear movement towards democratic governance. About twenty years ago in West Africa, where I come from, twelve of the fifteen countries were all under military rule or single parties, except for Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire and Cape Verde. Today virtually all the countries have some form of multi-party democracy and elections. That is very important for our people. However, there is still a deficit. Most people have no voice. There is still abuse of power; and there is still mismanagement of our natural resources. These are the factors that create the conditions for armed conflict. Kenya is a clear case of democratic deficit, where elections

that were supposed to be free and fair were not freely and fairly conducted, ending in a conflict that has torn apart the economic, social and political fabric of the country.

So there is a democratic deficit. And it is very important for us Africans to put this on the front burner, so to speak. African intellectuals and civil society leaders need to seriously stress this point, because there are powerful counter-movements to our democratic aspirations, symbolized in part by the role of China in Africa. There are many African leaders who say: "First, let's develop, and once we have developed the economy and the infrastructure we can talk about human rights and democracy." Now, that is wrong-headed. That is not going to work. That creates a basis for inequities, injustice and armed conflict.

The avoidable liability of diversity

The second underlying source of Africa's terrible conflicts is our denial of our diversity. Everyone knows that Africa is extremely diverse. Even Somalia is diverse, because you have different clans and different types of affiliations. And yet the "nation building" project after independence pursued the idea that we could overlook our divisions, often pretending that there were no divisions. In the process, we forgot to start where we were and not where we wanted to go. But, as a diverse continent, with many different languages and other cultural attributes, if we are going to succeed in building nations out of our colonial experience then it is important for us to recognize and address the challenge of our diversity, which could actually become an asset. We need to take a good second look at our constitutions for example, to ensure that they are crafted, developed and enforced in accordance with inclusive, and therefore democratic, ways. In many of our countries, unfortunately, the diversity of our people is often not seen as an asset and as something you build for peace and democratic development. In addition, often when we've had dialogue especially around issues that can divide us very quickly or have held peace negotiations in war-torn countries, the process has been very non-transparent, to put it mildly. These dialogues and negotiations have been very exclusive of the women and youth who ultimately are the ones who bear the brunt of armed conflict.

The third factor I'd stress is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Over the last several decades, Africa has become something of a junkyard of small arms and light weapons. There are now an estimated 40 million illicit small arms and light weapons all around the continent. Of course, there is an epicenter. There are several parts of the continent where the concentration is very heavy: the Horn of Africa and the Mano River countries, for example. You can literally close your eyes and pinpoint where the epicenter is. But Africa has more than its share of illicit small arms and light weapons and that always feeds into the violent conflicts we have.

Limited regional capacity

These factors are complicated by the fact that the regional systems and mechanisms for dealing with cross-national challenges in Africa are weak. From the Africa Union down to sub-regional entities like SADCC and the Economic Community of Central African States, there is an unfortunate inability to effectively handle armed conflicts. To be sure, some sub-regional entities, such as ECOWAS, have accomplished a great deal over the years. For example the peace-keeping wing of ECOWAS (ECOMOC) was instrumental in pushing back the civil war in Liberia and to some extent in Sierra Leone. Across the board, however, there is a dire need for capacity strengthening and political will. Why is this important? Because even though our conflicts tend to be national, occurring within nations, they very quickly spill over to neighboring nations. Refugees move out. And, neighboring countries get involved, especially when there are natural resources to be gained. In the DRC, for example, we saw Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia all involved in

varying degrees. So, effective and credible regional system and mechanisms, as well as early warning systems, are critical for ensuring that conflicts don't get out of hand. As I mentioned earlier, democratic governance and inclusive policies to address our diversity are the also pivotal factors for ensuring peace.

The role of a peace movement

Ultimately, however, we all know that the best assurance, the best guarantee, is when ordinary people in masses, in large numbers, come together from civil society and the private sector to build a movement for peace and to take a stand against war. When that is missing, a big piece of what we need to ensure that we can prevent wars and respond effectively to armed conflict, is not in place. Regrettably, that piece of it, what I call the peace movement, is not yet fully in place in Africa.

There are two questions. Why is the peace movement weak in Africa? I just came from the US where I had gone for a meeting. You hear more about Darfur on any American campus or at any American gathering, there than you do in Dakar, Lagos, Maputo, Accra, or Dar es Salaam. Why is that? It is a very important question for us Africans. But I invite you as friends of Africa to also think about it because I think we can all do something about that. The second question then is, what are the prospects for an effective peace movement in Africa, and what can we do to help?

This morning I gave an interview to a radio station in Vienna. The journalist asked if there was a peace movement in Africa, and why I wanted to talk about one if there was none. May answer was that there isn't a peace movement as we know it in say the US (around Iraq, for example), but that there are the elements of a peace movement. There are the pieces that can come together. But what essentially characterizes the difficulties of building a peace movement in Africa are five points. The first is just lack of information and lack of clarity. About three months ago I did a little experiment in Dakar, talking to people, watching television, reading the newspapers, and listening to the radio. I did that for a couple of weeks. There was not a single mention of Darfur in the media. When recently the post-electoral violence in Kenya erupted, there was very little media coverage of that too. So there is a sheer absence of information within Africa. In some ways, you are much better informed about Darfur than most Africans are. I would even assume that within Sudan itself, giving the behavior of the government, you are better informed. We have the same situation regarding Somalia. If you ask most Africans about what is going on in Somalia, the chances are that they would express only a vague level of knowledge. So we have media pluralism now, which is good, but the coverage of critical issues leaves much to be desired.

The second reason has to do with the nature of the conflicts we have in Africa. With the exception of a few cases, such as the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, most conflicts in Africa have been started by rebel movements against incumbent governments. What is happening in Chad is an example although, of course, the rebels in Chad are getting quite substantial support from Sudan. But wherever you look it has been a rebel movement starting wars. And whenever you have that, it is very difficult to mobilize lots of people because it is not a case of mobilizing against a clear and specific target. The rebels are kind of faceless even when we know them. Hence, it has been very difficult to mobilize public opinion and to mobilize a social movement or a peace movement against the rebel movements.

The third reason is that historically in Africa, since the beginning of the last century, the struggle for peace was often subsumed under other social movements. At the turn of the last (and during the Second World War), for example, the call for peace was articulated within the Pan-African Movement, which was essentially a political movement that started in the Caribbean and in the United States around the "back to Africa" campaign. So, it wasn't really a peace movement. But

that is the context within which the call for peace was articulated. During the Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s as well, the "peace movement" in Africa was largely articulated within the context of the broader Nonaligned Movement with the Bandung Conference. I remember very well. I was about six years old, but I remember when the Bandung Conference was held in Indonesia and the banner was: "The World without Bombs." But that call for a world without bombs and for peace was not an independent movement call. It was part of a broader political movement – the Non-aligned Movement, which was quite ideological despite its non-alignment credentials. In recent times, the anti-Apartheid struggle also became another context within which some of us – I was in Tanzania at the time – began to articulate peace issues but in very difficult context, because the anti-Apartheid struggle was basically an armed struggle. The ANC, the PAC, ZANU, FRELIMO, and MPLA were all engaged in armed struggle. The fact that the peace movement in Africa has always been part and parcel of other social movements is also exemplified by the fact that all our Nobel Peace laureates were known more for their roles in broader social movements: Desmond Tutu, Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, and Wangari Maathai.

The fourth reason is that even though we have very many NGOs and civic groups that are actively working for peace in Africa, they are very fragmented. There isn't much concerted action, with a few exceptions. One lovely exception which I recently heard about is called "Women looking into the future to save Kenya" (of course, only African women can look into the future). It is a group of about 150 Kenyan women of different social classes coming together to push both the government and the opposition to come to a power-sharing agreement during the negotiations mediated by Kofi Annan. When they started some of us thought, well, who is going to listen to these women? But apparently they were very influential. Kofi Annan and Benjamin Mkapa, the former President of Tanzania, and Kikwete, the current President of Tanzania, all met these women. It doesn't look like a large number of people. But if you can think of a 150 women from across the ethnic divide all coming together when the men can't seem to even have a cup of tea together, that is phenomenal. It had an impact in terms of keeping the pressure on the antagonists to reach an agreement. So this is a group to watch. The potential is there to connect them with the Mano River women's peace network, for example. Ultimately, there is also a huge potential for taking this work to scale in order to ensure that African women, who have always been the ones to consistently push for peace, can be connected across the continent.

This final point I want to make as why the peace movement is weak in Africa is that many of the organizations working on peace issues have limited organizational capacity. Their skills in communication, advocacy, and networking are limited, and there are various reasons for that. But there is something we can do about that challenge. We can connect the organizations and their leaders. One of my best experiences as a grant maker was meeting a brave woman from Eastern Congo (DRC) and just talking to her. She started a small group of peace advocates in a village, which was one of the epicenters of the war in DRC. Her reasoning was very simple: "Our men are not going to talk peace, they are benefitting from the war" she said. She is now one of the most active people in DRC working for peace. When we first started supporting her with small amounts of money, her organization was attacked, so we had to move her very quickly out of the country. She ended up in Nairobi where we got an organization to host her for a couple of months. When we tried to keep her there longer, she said: "No, my work is back home, where I belong." And within a few months she was back home and started reorganizing. In Liberia we have a similar case involving a women's group in Ganta, Nimba Province, which was one of the epicenters of the civil war. The group, which is called Ganta Concerned Women, has started an inspiring grassroots women's project which holds great promise for up-scaling. These are inspiring examples that can do with some capacity strengthening. Across the continent organizational capacity is weak, especially for networking and for embarking on concerted efforts. Without concerted and united

efforts, it is impossible for those who profit from war and for those who push the button for war to listen to the voices of peace. It is as simple as that.

Where hope lies

I'll tell you a little story. I was with the Ford Foundation where I worked for many years before starting Trust Africa. A group of women activists working on Liberia came to us and said, "Look, we have had so many peace negotiations and agreements that lead no where. During the peace negotiations the various factions (the government and the rebels) used that period to re-arm themselves and to get ready for the next round. So peace negotiations are becoming an excuse. Secondly, they are not transparent; they are very exclusive of us women and young people. So we think our last chance is the peace negotiations in Akosombo, Ghana. We think that with a little support, if we can get there in sufficient numbers and if we can prepare ourselves with a plan, we can make a difference through our presence." We went ahead and gave them a small grant. They went there in their numbers, and the result was an agreement that led to the exit of Charles Taylor and lasting peace. Even CNN covered them. They stayed on the premises of the peace negotiations, and insisted on consultations prior to and after each phase of the negotiation. They insisted on a peace agreement that has all the essential things (such as free and fair elections, reconciliation, ensuring that the child soldiers will be reintegrated back in society, and that the UN or ECOMOG will be allowed a free hand to maintain the peace, the ceasefire, etc)

So, there is hope, and let me conclude by pointing out some of the things that give me hope. We have seen unprecedented freedom of expression. Even in Zimbabwe people can talk. I say "even" because it is probably one of the worst cases we have on the continent. So we have this opportunity, free expression, which people fought for, and many people died for, and many people went to detention for. I was lucky; I was away in the US during the really difficult years in Ghana. But I have many friends, including family members, who went to detention or into exile fighting or pushing for freedom of expression. Now, we have independent media all over. Fifteen years ago there was not a single independent radio station in West Africa. The first stations were in Mali and Burkina Faso. In Burkina Faso, the first one, started by Mustapha Thiombiano, had a joke about it. They used to call it radio "entrez parlez" – meaning "walk in and talk." That was one of the first. Today, there are many all over Africa; so many you can't even count them. That is very important. It is one of the elements we need if we can make sure that the content provision, the programming, focuses on some of the issues that are very vital to us, for example peace and conflict resolution. We need to give this more media coverage within the continent and move them away a bit from the focus on sports and music which are lovely.

Also, in the last several years, I have noticed that even though African civil society organizations (NGOs especially) have many problems (such as being donor dependent, not pursuing their own agenda, etc), they also demonstrate strong interest in cross-border networking and in learning about what their counterparts elsewhere are doing. That is a new thing. We've got these linguistic divides in Africa: Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, the Arab in the north, etc; and yet, we find that many of civil society organizations are earnestly looking to network with organizations outside their location. I think that is the beginnings of a movement.

So, I think that we are poised for a people-centered regional integration. The first time we saw such potential was in early 1960's, when the Organization of African Unity was established. Then in the 1970s, we had ECOWAS, and then SADCC came in the nineties. The East African Community which actually goes way back has also been active. About a year ago there was a great debate on the idea of a United States of Africa, largely moved by President Gaddafi who drove down from Tripoli to Accra across the Sahara, with stops in villages all along the way. There was a great deal of

excitement about the possibility of a United States of Africa, even if we know that it probably won't happen for a very long time. It is important that people are beginning to see the bigger tent which can accommodate our differences and diversity (linguistic, ethnic, tribal, religious) – there is a sense that the bigger the tent maybe the more secure we will feel as we can take our differences to a broader space. So regional integration is a very important thing for peace in Africa and we need to pay attention to that. It's an area worthy of support.

And then finally, very paradoxically, the Chinese presence in Africa brings with it the potential of increased civil society activism. Because of China's message that they are about development and not about democracy, many undemocratic governments firmly embrace China, as we have seen in Sudan and Zimbabwe. But that message does not resonate among civil society organizations working to promote human rights and democracy. So, that paradoxically, can put the question of democracy center stage.

I would like to end here on the note that there are many things that we need in place in Africa to have a safer, freer Africa – systems, institutions, and states that are accountable and transparent to ordinary citizens. But one of the things we absolutely must have is a peace movement. Social movements are very tricky because you cannot fund them and they should not be funded. Social movements are masses of people who belong to their own organizations, but who come together out of outrage about something and a commitment to a social justice idea. They say: "We want to step out of our comfort zone and engage with you. Wherever we are, we are stepping out of our comfort zone to engage you for change." And sometimes it is structural change, sometimes it is systemic change, sometimes it is just a change of policy. But whatever the nature of the change, social movements are very vital, especially for transformation of conflict into peace in Africa. Let us all work very hard in support of a strong peace movement in Africa. The best way to support this effort is to offer protection when needed and to reach out to those who are struggling for peace with goodwill and understanding.

Thank you.

Georg Lennkh
We should take some time and get deeper into some of the points made. In a democratic way I should ask for questions, but in a slightly autocratic digression I will make a few points that can also be formulated as questions that came up in my mind during your talk. They have to do with conflict and democracy, and democracy and elections. We have been saying in Africa that it would be important to see democratic participation and one expression of this is, obviously, elections. We have seen during the 1990's an upsurge in elections. There are many elections today in Africa, and most countries do have regular elections. Only most recently, in the last four or five years, we have started to notice that whereas we had thought earlier on that an election was the solution of a problem it is now clear that it is not that simple, and that elections can become the beginning of problems. Kenya is, of course, the most recent and most glaring example. But we have many others. Some years ago it was Ethiopia, for instance, where the elections provoked conflict. There was also the question of how do you organize elections. And, there is also the question of how do you election observation, who is calling the shots, and what is the political consequence of elections? This is one point we should perhaps reflect on.

You were saying that the nature of conflicts has changed in Africa. Many of these conflicts were not international conflicts or conflicts between two states with armies, but rather conflicts involving rebel groups. The one thing we didn't get into is why there are these conflicts? What is the moving factor in such conflicts? There have been all sorts of theories on that. Paul … was very strong on the underlying economic reasons. When you look at some of the manifestations of conflicts today you

can see that grabbing of resources as part of the conflict. Others have been saying, no, it was really ethnic reasons. Others have said, it was neither, but a lack of economic development or simply poverty. In the case of Burundi it was quite obvious that when the population became so dense that there was not enough food – this was in the 1930's – then there were the first conflicts. They were later turned into ethnic conflicts, but the origin was a different one.

One last point: One subject we are dealing with a lot at the moment is what you can designate with this peace versus justice or impunity. I am very interested to see how you see this. There obviously are different African traditions. There are conflicts and then there is the necessity to resolve this conflict as post-conflict work to be done, in reconciliation, but also in justice. As you know, the South African case emphasized truth and reconciliation. Truth first, but then reconcile. In other cases, such as Rwanda, it is more to do with truth and punishment. There has to be a certain amount of punishment. I remember when we went with Mandela into the prisons in Burundi he was appalled by the conditions and he really exploded. He demanded that immediately conditions should be changed and political prisoners be set free. And the government said no, we can't let the "genocidaires" just go free, they have to be punished. That is a different tradition. What is now happening is that we have brought cases to the international side the International Criminal Court, but there is now this question of to what degree can an International Criminal Court be acting on totally different principles, certainly totally foreign principles to Africa. In Africa you have a tradition of doing justice that is totally foreign to us. We don't understand how you can do justice like this. Also this involves, obviously, popular movements. In fact, there is a big discussion in North Uganda going on whether or not traditional justice is enough.

Akwasi Aidoo
I will treat this largely as comments that complement some of what I said. You are absolutely right on the question of elections. Elections are not unproblematic. As we know even in the advanced democracies, elections tend to accentuate the ambitions of those who seek power, and election time is not the time when the best of friendships are made across political lines. By definition, elections represent contestation and that can be very contentious. In Africa, the problematic nature of elections and using that as a basis to then do some political engineering goes way back to the early years of independence. The main reason why the early post-colonial leaders all across Africa, such as Nyerere and Nkrumah, pushed for single parties is that elections can be very divisive. It didn't quite matter where those leaders stood ideological (whether socialist or pro-capitalist) they all seemed to say: "Multi-party elections are divisive, so let us have a single party). That was the rationale behind the single party system in Africa. It wasn't Soviet influence at all. So I think your point is absolutely right. And it goes way back. I think we just need to make a distinction as to when this point is used as an excuse and when conditions are fragile for conflict-free elections to take place. So, the main point is that, by themselves, elections do not necessarily promote the peaceful ideals that we so often associate with democracy.

Your second point about the forces and factors behind these conflicts is an interesting one. I happen to think that all these factors are relevant. Of course, it's their relative weights and their combination that makes the difference from context to context. In some cases, such as Somalia, resources are very low on the list. In other places, such as DRC and Sierra Leone, resources have been a big factor. In Rwanda, population density and pressure on resources was also a major underlying factor. Population density and resource constraints did not trigger the genocide, but they played a foundational role (as we know, Rwanda is one of the most densely-populated countries in the world).

You are also absolutely right about the tradeoff between peace and justice. We saw this at play in Mozambique, where it worked. The Mozambicans said: "We are going to try and bring the

RENAMO rebels into the political mainstream; we want them transformed into a political party." The result is that Alfonso Dhlakama, who was the leader of RENAMO is not only a free man, he is actually a very happy free man. RENAMO, as we know, committed unspeakable atrocities, such as chopping off people's arms, HAVING children rape family members, etc. What do you do with such cases? What is the punishment? In many instances, the crimes were not ones you could easily hand over to courts. In some instances, the crimes were so heinous that there was no point pursuing a reconciliation path. So, in Mozambique, they decided to mobilize traditional healers and spiritualists. One of them, a woman, spoke to us in 2002 when we organized a meeting in Maputo. She spoke to us about how they pursued spiritual cleansing, healing and forgiveness, especially in relation to war crimes committed by minors, as opposed to pursuing justice. Unfortunately, we have not really documented the cases of how, after these atrocities, societies come to terms with the perpetrators of these atrocities. In the Manor River conflict zone of West Africa, we had similar cases of child soldiers being widely used, often under the influence of drugs. Again, what do you do? Do you set up a truth and reconciliation commission or a truth and justice commission or simply pursue justice through the courts? Do you hand them over to war crimes court (in The Hague, for example)? There are no easy solutions in many instances. Obviously, the leaders, like Charles Taylor, can be handed over to war crimes tribunals, but below them are those who committed incredible and unspeakable crimes who cannot easily be handed over. And even if you did hand them over, the damage has to be addressed at a popular level – at the community level.

One of the things we can do is to begin to document how some of the societies (such as Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda, and DRC) are coping cope with this challenge. At a recent meeting in Oslo, I asked the President of Liberia (the first elected African woman president) was asked: "What keeps you up at night?" As we know, the war destroyed everything in Liberia: roads, bridges, electricity, water supply, schools, hospitals, etc. She responded as follows: "It is the children who suffered the atrocities." But at the community and family levels, there is healing slowly taking place, and we need to understand exactly what is being done to heal, why traditional methods work and which ones fail – because some of our traditional approaches and systems just don't work. Somalia has all the traditional systems you can think about for conflict prevention, but they haven't prevented the Somalis from killing themselves for almost two decades now. So we need to figure out why some of our traditional approaches don't work, and how we can modernize or adapt them to current conditions. I do not think there is a text you can follow because you can't easily transport what happened in one place to another. I think it is the context and the texture of these experiences that need to be studied and analyzed.

I should add that the way we deal with injustices also strongly correlates with how ordinary people relate to governance. I was in Nigeria not so long ago, and found that following the injustices of the elections there, there is a re-emergence of the popular cynicism about government which characterized the many decades of military rule in that country. The current president there seems to be a nice man and he seems to be taking some good steps, but the elections that brought him to power were very deeply flawed. In many places where there was no voting he had thousands of votes. Nobody voted, but he had thousands of votes. The opposition challenged the results and, two days ago, the courts dismissed the challenges. It looks like a case of political pragmatism, where they say: "We have enough trouble, so we are not going to worsen things." The meaning of that message for most people is cynicism, and the perception that elections don't count. And you can't have democracy advance on a cynical vehicle, and where people are saying: "What is the point voting? We know the results won't count."

Question
Jeune Afrique has published a series of articles explaining that America wants to set foot in Africa, even establishing military bases. How do you assess the activists of the Islamist headquarter in

Khartoum where the chief ideologist of Khomeini, Hassan Al Turabi, is directing subversion in the Maghreb countries of Africa?

Question
You mentioned Gaddafi suggesting the United States of Africa. We here in Europe maintain that there is a difference in the structure between the United States and the European Union. We always say that we would like to have a union rather than a United States. How would you see this on the territory of Africa? I come from Poland where we have had this movement, Solidarnosc, which was our offer on how to fight totalitarian regimes. How would you see a structure or a movement like that under African conditions? My third question would be something that we have had here as a big topic over many months and years. What do you think about the situation of refugees coming to European islands as boat people, Teneriffa, Lampedusa, all those tragedies? We in Europe are somehow split between feeling pity and answering with aggression. I would like to hear your point of view on that.

Question
I also have three questions. First, from my point of view the African problem is a problem of ethnicity. Don't you think it may be better for those ethnic groups who are trying to be independent to give them freedom? Don't you think that will lessen our conflicts in terms of genocide? Second, you have stressed the positive role of radio stations in Africa. But, radio stations have played a very bad and negative role in Rwanda and in Kenya, broadcasting very bad, negative, unbelievable, inexcusable news. Third, I deal with African refugees who are coming here, especially black Africans. We have in Africa 53 different countries. All African refugees coming here from black Africa are complaining of human rights abuses. What do you think about those young people who succeeded to come here and were turned down because the European governments say: "No, there is no political problem in Nigeria, no political problem in Ghana", statements which I really quite question. What do you tell us as somebody who has experienced it, who knows the African situation?

Akwasi Aidoo
These are questions I cannot answer easily. On the matter of US bases, it's important to bear in mind that US intentions are not very well hidden. They have the new idea of AFRICOM, which is the Africa command. They have commands for other parts of the world, except Africa, so the idea is to have a command for Africa to help address the security needs of the continent. It is supposed to be a good thing because in the scenario of the new age of terrorism, having a command which is led and staffed by a superpower like the US is supposed to be a good thing. That is one level of it. Liberia has embraced it. They said yes, we want it, and they've made it very clear. But even many of the countries that normally go along with the US, such as Ethiopia, are saying no. When he was recently in Ghana, President Bush was compelled to make a public statement to the effect that his visit had nothing to do with AFRICOM or establishing a military base in that country. It was because Ghanaian civil society organizations and the media put it out and said: "We don't want an American military base here, we are fine the way we are, we don't have any problems with our neighbors, please leave us alone." And Bush was compelled to make a public statement on the matter. That tells me that the idea of military bases and AFRICOM doesn't resonate. We are already so militarized on this continent where poverty, HIV/AIDS, and all the bad things you can think about abound, and where people are struggling very hard to lift themselves up. So, the last thing we need is to be caught in this web of militarism and military bases. Incidentally, the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy was talking today about revisiting France's defense agreements with their former colonies in Africa, which is a good idea, I think.

Last year the former President of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, gave a public lecture at TrustAfrica, and he told a chilling story. When he was the Chairman of the Organization of African Union, he got a call one day from the former president of Benin Republic, Nicéphore Soglo, who complained about the treatment he was receiving from a French envoy. The president of Benin said: "I have a problem. I have just received an envoy of the French president who is telling me that if I don't pay up the 10% levy on exports, I might as well kiss the statehouse goodbye." "What are you talking about?" president Chissano asked? Well, apparently all the Francophone countries of Africa (except maybe Guinea because Guinea voted no against Charles de Gaulle's referendum in 1958 and exited the French sphere of influence) have to pay 10% of their export earnings to France for protection under some defense agreement that goes back to 1960 when most of them were granted independence. Ultimately, I think they even called President Mandela to intervene, but it got them nowhere, apparently. So, the French have military bases all over. And, the US has bases too. Obviously, the issue of military bases is going to become more and more topical, especially with the deep anxiety expressed in the West about China's role in Africa and the war against terrorism, especially in the Horn of Africa and parts of East Africa. Sudan is also a major location for the new militarism. Sudan, of course, has a long history of militarism and fundamentalism, starting from the 1970's with the growth of the Islamist movement. As you know, former president Gaafar Numeiry declared Sudan an Islamic state in 1983, and from 1991 to 1996, Osama bin Laden was there as well, although they kicked him out under pressure from the Americans. So this question has a long history.

Now, about President Gaddafi and the idea of a United States of Africa, I think that no one truly knows what it really means and how it would be brought about, even though, as I mentioned earlier, it has generated a great deal of excitement. It's, of course, not a new idea. It carries the image of the United States of America, so it has a somewhat borrowed quality to it. Gaddafi has in the past said things about African unity that are very controversial and unrealistic, such as adopting Arabic as a common language. The rationale is that the official languages in most of Africa are foreign (English, French, Portuguese) but Arabic is at least partly African. To be sure, Gaddafi is not the only one to put forward one langue for the continent. President Kibaki of Kenya has also proposed Kiswahili for Africa. So, it's not just Gaddafi who has these interesting, dramatic ideas. But, there is no consensus on Gaddafi's idea of unity. President Museveni of Uganda, who is a political ally of Gaddafi in many ways, was for example opposed to the Gaddafi plan for a United States of Africa during the AU summit of July 2007 in Accra, Ghana. He expressed his opposition very clearly when he said something to the effect that: "I want to choose my friends. I want to choose who I integrate with." In the end, I think what most Africans want is unity in diversity, based on democratic principles and popular participation. A union hinged on a set of democratic criteria and standards for accession is what would work, I think. So my hope is that we would look at standards that must be set for membership of the African Union or for continued membership. If we can make membership of the African Union contingent on democratic standards and practice, then African unity would have substance and meaning. It is beginning to happen, but it is not applied consistently because if it was applied consistently then Mugabe should be out. They applied it in relation to Togo when President Gnassingbé Eyadéma suddenly died and his son, Faure Gnassingbé, was imposed on the country without elections. They put pressure on them to conduct elections. The same standard was also applied to Guinea Bissau. So it's selective application. Hopefully that will change.

On the question of refugees in Europe, I am one of those who believe that people would prefer to stay home if they have opportunities. So, if opportunities are non-existent and especially if there is a lot of pressure on them, then they are going to leave. The responsibility lies with the leaders at home, the leaders of African countries, to ensure that our people are productively engaged at home. Or even if they go they come back home. But if that is not happening, then I have difficulty blaming

the receiving country. Two years ago when we opened the office TrustAfrica, we met with the President of Senegal, and this issue came up. There was a feeling that Europeans are becoming more and more racist hosts, so I said: "Look at our streets; they are filled with unemployed youth. What would a normal person do under such circumstances?" So, we have a responsibility to create opportunities at home if we want people to stay home. We can't blame France or Spain. So, my problem is with the African leaders and governments. Of course, no matter how good the conditions are, some people would migrate; that's normal. In my own family in Ghana, I have done the best I can to make sure that every child can go to school. But you still find one person who just wants to go to New York. And each time someone calls me to ask if I can get him/her a visa to go to New York, I just say I don't work in the American embassy. So there are always people who want to leave. But the exodus that we have seen is a result of lack of opportunities for most people back home. I think it's as simple as that.

Regarding the question of ethnicity, I am not sure that I would go as far as you do in saying that all the problems start and end with ethnicity. Ethnicity is part of our diversity, and that diversity should be a good thing, an asset, not a liability. Why should it be a bad thing? It is not a bad thing to have been born an Ashanti or Yoruba or Kikuyu or Zulu, etc. That is not the problem. The problem is when the difference becomes a liability because our laws and policies are discriminatory. For example, in many African countries a woman married to a non-citizen cannot pass her citizenship on to her children. That is how we prepare the ground for future conflict as we saw happening in Cote d'Ivoire. People are born and live for decades in a country which denies them citizenship. They have no stake in the society. What are they going to do? They will pick up arms if we are not lucky. So, ethnicity is a big thing. But I think it is the management of it more than the fact of it; the way we have managed it has not helped us. And we can do a better job of managing it. We should recognize it, and let's have constitutions that recognize and take our ethnic diversity into account. For all its troubles, difficulties and deformities Nigeria has something to teach the rest of us on that score. During the Biafra war, over one million people died, and after that the country went through a series of military dictatorships. Now, they are slowly getting around to the idea that power should not be concentrated in the hands of any one ethnic group. This seems to be part of the problem in Kenya. Once we begin doing that, then slowly we are moving to accommodation and tolerance.

On the question of radio stations, what I can say is that radio is a mere medium; it is a vehicle. It is like a knife. You can use it for good things, and you can use it for bad things. There is nothing intrinsically good or bad about radio. They are used by good people for good things, and they are used by bad people for bad things. I celebrate the media pluralism that we now have in Africa, precisely because the state monopoly of the media that we had before was suffocating everybody. But that is only the first step. The next step is for the media to be professional and responsible. Regulatory mechanisms for these new media are practically non-existent in many countries. We can do something about that.

Georg Lennkh
It is getting late. I would like to thank you again. This was a very complete and wide overview of the question of peace, security, and the role of the civil society and the peace movement. Thank you so much, it was an excellent evening. It was most interesting for me. Thanks to all of you.