



**PRESS RELEASE  
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All Media Houses

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Sam Nujoma, Founding Father and First President of the Republic of Namibia calling on all Ethiopians to come together and cease all hostilities to find an amicable solution to sustainable peace in Ethiopia**

International diplomatic efforts are under way to try to end the fighting in Ethiopia. Envoys from African countries and the United States have held meetings with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Tigrayan leaders.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has been locked in a year-long battle with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) who have threatened to seize the capital, Addis Ababa. A humanitarian crisis is also spiralling in the northern Tigray region, with only a fraction of aid getting in.

This simmering political and ideological conflict between Ethiopia's federal government and the northern region of Tigray has the potential to escalate into a deadly civil war that is threatening to destabilise an already fragile and volatile region.

The thirty-third African Union Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 9 to 10 February 2020, adopted the theme of the Year 2020 as 'Silencing the Guns — Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development'.

However, the year 2020 and the year 2021, so far, have been years of unprecedented challenges for Africa in the continent's onward march towards sustainable peace and development, as envisioned in the 2017 Master Road Map of Practical Steps to Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020.

The coronavirus pandemic has compounded efforts of African Union member States for greater economic and social progress. It has also compromised and slowed efforts for revamped peace initiatives on the continent where violent extremism and terrorism have continued unabated. Badly needed access to conflict and crisis areas by humanitarian actors has severely been affected. The peacebuilding efforts and reach of support and relief efforts to the affected member States has been limited.

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Hence, the dual impact of the conflict and the damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic on the most vulnerable, namely refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and migrants, as well as youth, women, children and the elderly, has been exacerbated.

In March 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General and the African Union Commission Chairperson called for all belligerents to observe ceasefires throughout the coronavirus period in order to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to conflict areas and to free up resources for addressing the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Building on the momentum and commitment boldly expressed by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union through the 'Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020' initiative, the international community, through United Nations Security Council resolution 2457 (2019), has underscored the importance of the two joint United Nations-African Union partnership frameworks in galvanizing concrete and practical system and commission wide support towards helping Africa make tangible progress towards achieving its goal of creating a conflict free continent.

It is in that spirit, mindful of the provision of Security Council resolution 2457 (2019), that I call on all belligerents in Ethiopia to immediately cease hostilities, ensure humanitarian access and create the conditions for the start of an Ethiopian-led political dialogue as the only pathway to a just and comprehensive peace.

The lack of meaningful dialogue between the protagonists is particularly disturbing to me and therefore call on all Ethiopians to come together and cease hostilities and find an amicable solution to sustainable peace in the mother-country, a founding member of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the seat of the African Union (AU).

As H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, High Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Horn of Africa, rightly put it, war represents a failure of politics. Thus dialogue remains the only reliable and sustainable avenue to peace. There is no military solution to the conflict and battlefield victory cannot guarantee political stability in Ethiopia. I therefore appeal to the leadership of all sides to halt their military offensives in order to allow an opportunity for dialogue.

Indeed, the African Union Panel of the Wise (AU PW) is one of the critical pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The African Union Panel of the Wise (AU PW) is provided for by Article 11 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC).

The Panel of the Wise (PoW), as a consultative body of the African Union, composed of five appointed members who each serve three year terms, its mandate is to provide opinions to the Peace and Security Council on issues relevant to conflict prevention, management, and resolution with representatives chosen for the North, East, South, West, and Central regions of the continent. The former Panel of the Wise (2018-2021) was chaired by H.E. Hifikepunye Pohamba, Former President of the Republic of Namibia, who also represented the Southern region of Africa.

In this regard, I call on the current Panel of the Wise to support the mediation efforts by H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, High Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Horn of Africa.

Similarly, I call on the Forum For Former African Heads of State And Government (the African Forum) chaired by His Excellency Joaquim Alberto Chissano, Former President of Mozambique, to support the mediation efforts by H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, High Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Horn of Africa.

I further call on the Peace and Security Council (PSC) for their urgent intervention to resolve and manage the prevailing conflict in Ethiopia. I appeal to them to facilitate timely and efficient responses to resolve the crisis situations in Ethiopia. Africa cannot afford a nation at war with itself. History has proven that civil wars have large and significant aggregate impacts on macroeconomic indicators such as GDP and trade.

In addition to affecting trade, violence can drive large scale human displacement, which in turn can have destabilising regional and global impacts. In fact, the number of people running away from civil war violence is far larger than the number of fatalities globally.

Finally, I call on all people of goodwill and leaders in Africa and the international community to continue to support the mediation efforts by H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, High Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Horn of Africa.

This conflict is likely to be a protracted and destructive war with significant ramifications for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. The only solution to the continuing conflict and the broader un-ending political upheaval in Ethiopia is a genuine commitment to an all-inclusive national dialogue that would chart an agreed pathway to a just and comprehensive peace.



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