

Parliament as an
Instrument for Peace





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INTRODUCTION

This publication contains a report of the AWEPA EU Presidency Seminar in Stockholm. I want to express our gratitude towards the Swedish Institute for Foreign Policy and its Director Mr. Anders Mellbourne for their assistance to the organisation of this meeting and I thank SIDA for its financial support. The support of SIDA has been very important for AWEPA's work over the years.

We were privileged to welcome parliamentary representatives from so many countries (9 African and 17 European delegations), and this reflects the wish of AWEPA to foster broad dialogue and cooperation links between colleagues from African and European parliaments. Through their presence at this seminar, so many African parliaments from countries emerging from - or still facing - very serious conflicts reaffirm their determination to assume their role and responsibility as promoters of peace. With Archbishop Desmond Tutu, AWEPA agrees on the premise that "those in positions of leadership have a responsibility to encourage more constructive solutions to political problems than turning to intimidation, violence and war". This quote comes from a personal message to the seminar from Archbishop Tutu, who is the chairman of AWEPA's Eminent Advisory Board.

The seminar analysed the nature of African conflicts, to identify components of peace-building strategies, to search for ways and means to promote democratic values and peace as mutually reinforcing developments, and to discuss the role for parliamentarians and parliamentary institutions in managing conflicts and consolidating peace, when and where possible.

One of AWEPA's objectives is to foster cooperation between parliamentary institutions from Europe and Africa. When it comes to peace-building and conflict-prevention, the sharing of experiences has proven to be profitable. Parliamentarians share a common responsibility worldwide in contributing to peace-building and conflict prevention as a regional and international exercise. Parliamentary leverage can have an important impact on peace building efforts, as is discussed in the background paper prepared for this seminar by Julia Ojanen. The paper was revised based on the discussions in Stockholm, and is published in this volume of the AWEPA Occasional Paper Series on Sustainable Democracy and Human Rights.

Through the choice of the theme of "Parliaments as an Instrument for Peace", AWEPA wishes to stimulate a debate towards concrete and applicable measures and recommendations. African countries have to confront a triple challenge: engage on a path towards lasting peace and reconciliation; foster a culture of respect of democratic values within society and institutions; while try-

ing to escape from the rampages of poverty, epidemics and under-development. AWEPA is convinced that these challenges cannot be faced without the contribution and the participation of all actors of society, in particular women. This is why parliaments have such a paramount role to play. They have to include and represent all streams of ideas, all the divergent interests and learn to manage peacefully the conflicts that can emerge in a country. The basic role of a Parliament is to substitute the power of physical violence by the power of words and arguments, and to replace the law of the force by the force of the law.

The *raison d'être* of AWEPA has always been the concern to assist African countries to promote peace, democracy, respect of human rights and of the rule of law, and to give to all citizens living conditions compatible with human dignity. This was the fundamental idea of our struggle against apartheid in South Africa. This is still our goal today. I hope that this report will contribute to this objective.

DR. JAN NICO SCHOLTEN
PRESIDENT OF AWEPA

MESSAGE TO THE SEMINAR

European Union Presidency Seminar on Africa
Parliament as an Instrument for Peace

Dear Friends,

I have been tremendously impressed with the very useful work that AWEPA has been doing in assisting our own Government and many other Governments in Africa in becoming more efficient and effective. The lessons of experience can prevent Governments of young democracies from having to learn the hard way and making mistakes that could be avoided. Democracy is an ideal that is not easy to achieve. To engage the full participation of all citizens in how they wish to be governed and to utilise limited resources to the greatest benefit of all is complex to achieve in developed countries. How much greater are the challenges in underdeveloped nations where infrastructure and communication are poor and the majority of citizens may be illiterate. It is not surprising that devastating conflicts have arisen as emerging leaders have used force to establish and maintain their positions.

Force and violence create a momentum of their own that can become impossible to control. We have seen untold human misery, suffering and economic devastation in many parts of Africa. Those in positions of leadership have a responsibility to encourage more constructive solutions to political problems than turning to intimidation, violence and war. It is imperative that we in Africa speak and listen to each other. We should be cooperating with each other. It is an outrage that there should be any refugees at all in Africa. It is against our African-ness, where we as Africans regard ourselves as members of a family, God's family. How we can treat our brothers and sisters in the way that we do.

We must collaborate to solve problems, such as how to accommodate and repatriate refugees, or manage scarce resources such as water. Arrogance and competition must be replaced by attitudes that serve the best interests of the poorest of the poor. If we can care for and nurture those who have nothing we will find our economies will grow and we will instill in our people that most precious commodity, hope. A nation without hope is lost; it is on the path to destruction. Give your people hope and even though they have nothing, they will prosper.

God bless you

**DESMOND M TUTU, ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS
CHAIRPERSON, AWEPA EMINENT ADVISORY BOARD**

PARLIAMENT AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR PEACE

democratisation and conflict prevention

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Africa has long been, and is still today, traumatised by conflicts of various types with local, national, regional and global dimensions. Their extreme social destructiveness has prevented or stalled development in many African countries, rendering these societies structurally weak and vulnerable to continuing violence. In a political environment where conflict is suppressed rather than managed, politics becomes a zero-sum game. Violence seems to be the only way of effecting political change, be it through a coup d'état by the elite or through a popular uprising. The German 19th century strategist Clausewitz has referred to war between countries as "a continuation of politics by military means". In Africa, this thinking often materialises on the domestic level in the form of violent political power struggles.

Conflicts are inherent in social relations - they can even be constructive and indeed necessary. It is violence that is to be avoided, not conflicts as such. A more constructive approach to conflict management can be best practised through democratic governance. As one African scholar has stated, "the historical construction of our nation-states, their ethnic mixture and their agrarian structures literally condemn us either to democratic rule or to ethnic violence and military rule" (Mkandawire, 1999: 38). It is obvious that democratisation cannot be imposed externally, since it entails not just a set of political access mechanisms but also the full political participation by the people, the idea of citizenship. The major challenge in many conflict-ridden societies is to create a more inclusive political system.

This background paper focuses on the issue of internal conflicts in Africa. It aims to spell out the ways in which peace-building and democratisation are interlinked. Special attention is paid to the proactive role of the parliament in accommodating societal tensions and creating stability. Three broad themes will be discussed. First, African conflicts are shortly described and their causes analysed. After this the ways in which democratisation and peace-building relate to each other is discussed, and lastly, the paper explores the potential role of African parliaments in peace-building.

3.2 AFRICAN CONFLICTS: CAUSES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The post-Cold War years have witnessed a proliferation of civil wars in Africa as well as in other continents. Adedeji Adebayo (1999: xvi) states that Africa has earned the reputation of a continent "at war against itself", and reminds

us that more than 2 million people have been killed in civil wars, strife and political uprisings in the 1990s, while about 10 million have been victims of forced migration and starvation. Today approximately 20% of the population of Africa lives in countries affected by armed conflicts, and the share of African conflicts on a global scale has increased. Africa's refugee population constitutes now nearly one-half of the global total. Moreover, 72 communal groups have been identified as being at risk of involvement in future conflicts and being subject to victimisation. This accounts in aggregate for slightly less than half the population of the region (Vraalsen, 1997: 22).

In November last year, the EU Council and the Commission adopted a statement on the development policy of the European Community. It was decided that institutional capacity building should be a priority area as democratic institutions that work are a pre-condition of sustainable development. It was also decided that the Community had to mainstream a number of crosscutting concerns, including the promotion of human rights, equality between men and women and children's rights. Let me also point out that we would like to see a broad partnership established between the European Union and Africa. It is encouraging to see that AWEPA is trying to meet the new challenges in this era of globalisation. AWEPA has a great potential and an important role to play to contribute to the democratisation of a number of countries in Africa.

The African conflicts are largely civil wars, in other words, essentially internal to states. According to a World Bank study of 101 armed conflicts around the world between 1989 and 1996, no less than 95 of the conflicts were internal to states (Ruohomäki and Kivimäki, 2000: 19). In civil wars, violence takes place either between various groups, or between the government and an armed opposition. Mary Kaldor (1999a: 25) identifies five different types of forces that compete and cooperate in civil wars: regular military forces, paramilitary units (sometimes linked to a political party or criminal network), self-defence units of a certain area, foreign mercenaries and peacekeeping forces. The tactic of the armed groups is to destroy structures of the society through terrorism and intimidation. Today over 90% of the victims of conflicts are civilians.

Civil war touches on every aspect of life in a society. It involves a weakening of social capital - the patterns of social behaviour and social institutions which facilitate interaction and exchange, and the unity which holds a society together (Colletta and Nezam, 1998: 100). Conflict disrupts community structures and family ties and breaks both economic, social and political links between people and between the state and the society. In addition, the economic costs of civil wars are substantial. For example, the World Bank estimates that the income lost due to war in Africa amounted to US \$250 billion over the 1980-93 period, or the equivalent of the continent's total output for one year (Touré, 1998: 53).

A rather recent characteristic of the African conflicts is the growing tendency of neighbouring countries to intervene in civil wars in other states. This obviously prolongs and intensifies conflicts. A well-known example of the in-

creased interdependency of African civil wars is the regional "spill-over" of the Congo conflict¹. By sending troops to the conflict area, or by indirect support to various conflicting factions, some regimes wage their own civil war on a neighbouring country's soil. Also various diaspora communities are often indirectly involved in the conflict of their home country through financial and political support to one or another armed faction. Areas neighbouring a conflict country are heavily affected, not least by the flow of refugees to their countries.

Authoritarian states lack what social scientist Max Weber calls "a monopoly of legitimate organised violence". In most African countries, even if the police and the army may hold a monopoly of violence, their power is not recognised as legitimate by the people. On the other hand, in many parts of Africa, war has eroded the fragile structures of the state, which means that there is no monopoly of violence at all. Violence has become "privatised" or "deregulated", as each citizen, group or political party - often involving primarily young men - has grabbed some of the power the state has lost (Touré, 1998: 50, 52). This has led to the criminalisation of the national and regional economies, with "warlords" and private armies playing a decisive role in the control of certain geographic areas. These warlords take advantage of the economy of war: drug trafficking and smuggling (e.g. precious stones), illegal trade, money laundering and the control of political or economic resources such as trade routes. They have become a new elite class that extracts personal gain from the criminalised war economy.

The erosion of the state and the criminalisation of the economy has led to the occurrence of new security issues, related to migration, cross-border arms flows, drug smuggling and banditry. These are issues which are to varying degrees controlled by the warlords of each region. According to Richard Joseph, the leaders of warring groups have assumed an ever more central position in affecting the duration of a conflict. In fact, it has become their business to prolong civil wars for their personal benefit. Joseph notes that "even when, at great expense and after many painstaking efforts, the faction leaders are brought to the negotiating table, they often treat such exercises as tactical measures to ease the diplomatic pressure on them and obtain a breathing spell to re-group and re-arm" (Joseph, 1997: 10).

3.2.1 Causes of Conflicts

Designing an effective and informed peace-building strategy for a conflict-ridden country requires first of all improving our understanding of the root causes as well as the dynamics of the conflict in question. The reality of African civil wars is complex; while conflict has been a general feature of much of the continent, its nature varies across countries and regions. The ideas considered below can be used as some basic "coordinates" to help us conceptualise the complex reality.

The most general analytical distinction between the various causes of conflicts is that between interest and identity. When identity-based arguments are discussed, the famous thesis on the "clash of civilisations" by Samuel Huntington is often quoted. He goes as far as to claim that cultural clashes are inevitable, offering a type of cultural determinism as an explanation of

conflict between cultural groups or civilisations. This extreme identity-based approach, sometimes termed 'primordialism' or 'cultural essentialism', has been widely criticised for its ethnocentric undertone and for its understanding of identity as something inherently antagonistic. However, it cannot be denied that identity and especially ethnicity does play an important role in African conflicts. Depending on the circumstances, ethnic identity may be broadly defined by a number of different components, such as language, religion or race. For example, in Rwanda and Burundi, Hutus and Tutsis share language, race and religion, but are divided by the different traditional cultures and claimed origin. On the other hand, Somalia is the most ethnically homogenous state in sub-Saharan Africa: language, religion, culture, and even the idea of a national identity are all shared. In Somalia, "clan" has become the most important factor defining ethnicity.

However, labelling an African conflict as primarily ethnic leads to a number of false conclusions. The first misconception is viewing the conflicts as anarchic, uncontrollable and therefore incomprehensible. Secondly, it is a mistake to believe that violence is created by some primordial African conditions which cannot be changed. The third flawed assumption is that ethnic, religious or cultural differences would naturally lead to violent conflict, and that these differences should therefore be suppressed. These counter-productive conclusions would only serve the purpose of oppression of diversity by an African government, and on the other hand it may encourage a policy of non-involvement by the international community. Clearly, a more constructive approach to conflict analysis is necessary.

Instead of seeing violence as a consequence of the natural forces of ethnicity, most analysts² emphasise the tendency of interest-based competition to produce violence under precarious circumstances. The interest-based approach views conflict as a phenomenon which can be managed by channelling the inevitable societal tensions into processes which facilitate a peaceful resolution of contradictions. Generally an interest-based approach does not label ethnic conflict "irrational" and inevitable, but sees it as a product of hostile identity politics. Exploitation of ethnicity by political entrepreneurs through appeals to people's real or perceived grievances has become a central aspect of political power struggle in many African countries. Ethnic identity is a factor that may aggravate a clash of interests, but it is not the identities themselves which are in conflict. In other words, the natural interest-based competition can sometimes be transformed into conflicts over identities.

Contrary to the belief that ethnic identities are non-negotiable modes of identification, they should be seen more as a question of perception. Paul Brass distinguishes between two components of ethnic identity, the subjective and the objective, which together make political mobilisation of an ethnic group possible. Subjective self-consciousness is created when a group differentiates itself from other groups, thus defining the criteria for its membership. To achieve this, a degree of internal cohesion is needed. The objective component of identity is attained by claims to status and recognition (Brass, 1990: 19).

Grandvoinnet and Schneider (1998: 13) present a basic classification of the

main motivations for violence. According to these authors, conventional conflict analysis recognises three categories of violent conflict:

- conflicts of identity, based on racial, religious or ethnic differences;
- conflicts connected with resources, including conflicts generated by the competition for the control of natural resources or the distribution of wealth; and
- conflicts over the management of public affairs, linked to the unequal distribution of power or of access to the decision-making process.

Peace structures within various communities of South Africa have helped to ensure that the message of peace permeates through to the people at grass-roots level. The concept of political parties remaining political opponents without necessarily being political enemies is gradually taking root. This is so because both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) are now able to open branches of their own in areas known to be strongholds of the other; something which was regarded as absolutely impossible a few years ago. The down-side of this arrangement is that each party must be prepared to make compromises even on issues it may have considered to be non-negotiable, just for the sake of peace and prosperity. After all, democracy is about give and take.

Hon. Inkosi B. N. Mdletshe, Speaker of KwaZulu-Natal Legislature, South Africa

Most conflicts possess both identity- and interest-based characteristics, and they may relate to both political power and economic issues (e.g. land and water). In other words, a combination of these three factors is common in practice. For this reason, the three themes - identity, competition for resources and competition for political power - should be seen as components of conflict rather than analytical categories of conflict. The changing circumstances determine which one of the components becomes most decisive. An example of this is the Zimbabwean conflict over land between three ethnic communities: the Shona, the Ndebele and the white minority. The conflict is clearly related to the distributional concerns of some powerful armed groupings in the country, and this also gives it a dimension of (ethnic) identity. Inevitably, rivalry for political power as well is very much present. Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether interest or identity is the main cause of conflict, and indeed, they change constantly: a conflict of interest between two groups may lead to a politicisation of identities, after which the whole conflict may be re-defined in terms of ethnicity.

3.2.2 Dynamics of Conflicts

Conflict analysis differentiates between structural and accelerating causes of conflicts. The structural conditions are discussed here first because of their primary importance in fuelling conflict. According to the OECD (1998: 18), structural factors create a political climate for violent conflict without making its eruption inevitable. They include interrelated political, social and economic factors such as:

- population density;
- the level and distribution of wealth and opportunity;
- the state of the resource base;

- the structure and make-up of society; and
- the history of inter-group relations (especially a legacy of violence).

Competition over access to natural resources is a fundamental dimension of conflict, and the state of the resource base (land, water, minerals) affects the intensity of competition. The risk of violence increases in a situation of shortage and environmental degradation, and an unequal distribution of opportunities and resources. In Somalia and Ethiopia, for instance, droughts have often been exacerbated by political tensions. Amadou Touré (1998: 51) suggests that conflicts connected with natural resource management have taken on increasingly ominous proportions in the last few years especially between the sedentary peoples and the nomads. He states that the former traditional mechanisms of negotiation between the different communities, the virtues of the “parley tree”, are disappearing.

The National Assembly of Burundi has undertaken a number of measures to consolidate the peace process in the country, and it will continue these actions until peace becomes a reality in Burundi. At the concrete level of the peace process, there are two main problems to be solved by the Burundian politicians. They concern the choice of leadership of the Transition, and the creation of viable political institutions before or after the signature of a cease-fire agreement between the armed groups. The Assembly is currently making propositions to solve these problems. With the assistance of AWEPA, Parliamentary Days will be organised to address these issues.

Mr. Gabriel Toyi, Member of Parliament, Burundi

Almost all Africa’s conflict or post-conflict countries are amongst the poorest and most heavily indebted ones, and a majority of them have a negative growth in real per capita GDP (Adedeji, 1997: 13). However, economic growth alone does not prevent or resolve conflicts, in fact, it can sometimes intensify tensions within a society (OECD 1998: 15) - an example of this is the case of Nigeria and the destabilising impact of the “oil boom”. There is extensive evidence of the fact that societies with a weak social cohesion are particularly prone to conflicts. The OECD (ibid.) notes that ranked societies with extreme socio-economic disparities, especially when in line with ethnic divisions, can result in a high degree of vulnerability to conflict. This is the case especially when a politically dominant group controls the state and access to wealth, education and status. Also, countries where particular ethnic groups specialise in particular economic activities are prone to civil unrest during periods of economic instability (Ruohomäki and Kivimäki, 2000: 17).

The source of violence is often a discrepancy between the expected and the actual welfare of a particular group, especially if it is much lower in relation to other groups. Violence can be triggered by sudden economic decline after some growth and optimism. Generally speaking, it can be argued that the weaker the economy is, the lower is also the cost of conflict. Profits derived from a functioning economy create an interest in avoiding conflict. For example, according to some authors, the principal reason for the relative stability in the Kenyan society has been the creation of economic interests among the people. Moreover, the relative prosperity in Kenya was shared more equitably than in the

neighbouring Uganda, where violent conflict has erupted (Grandvoinnet and Schneider, 1998: 17). Economic growth should be combined with income distribution policies, making the cost of a violent conflict higher for all groups in the society. Efficient and equitable mechanisms governing access to resources are crucial to maintaining political stability in times of economic change.

In societies which are socially fragmented and in which the public sphere only represents an arena of elite competition for power, people tend to isolate themselves within their own communities in both social and economic ways. Their primary base of identification is their local (often ethnic) community. The increased economic inequality is closely related to the growth of the informal sector of African economies. The concept ‘informal economy’ refers to the new legal or illegal forms of making a living outside the formal sector (Kaldor, 1999a: 83). It is a sign of marginalisation from the society, being a survival strategy for the large majority of people struggling with high unemployment and socio-economic disintegration. The informalisation of the economy has also meant declining tax revenues for the state, a factor which erodes crucially the inter-linkages between the state and the citizens.

Accelerating or triggering factors, on the other hand, are the events, actions and decisions which result in the escalation of disputes into violent conflict. The triggering factors are strongly context-specific, but some examples of them include (OECD 1998: 18):

- economic decline;
- changes in the degree of internal cohesion;
- shifts in the internal control of the central authority, including the military;
- change in the internal distribution of political power;
- shipments of (small) arms;
- interventions of neighbouring states or other external actors; and
- large movements of people and capital.

Perhaps the most central accelerating factor in a society is rapid change - political, social and economic. Kivimäki and Laakso (2000a: 11-21) note that societal transformations make a society particularly vulnerable to violence. The revival of ethnic identities is partly caused by the difficult reconciliation between the modern structures of political administration and the traditional social and economic organisation. Rapid modernisation creates insecurity because it breaks up traditional forms of authority. Processes of economic change such as market reforms, social change related to the loosening of family ties, and political transformations such as the transition to multi-party democracy (elections being the defining moment), all increase the risk of violence in a relation of close interdependence.

Political modernisation generally leads to an increase of the state assets (in terms of wealth and opportunities), and this easily intensifies the competition for political power. When all this takes place against the backdrop of the hardships caused by the economic policies of structural adjustment, impoverishment and a disintegrated economy, it is not surprising that societal tensions are on the increase. To accentuate this point, Kivimäki and Laakso (2000a: 16) point to the grim fact that “many Africans have experienced economic decline throughout most of their lives”.

The rapid and artificial urbanisation of African societies is one of the most important causes of conflict arising from the social transformations. Urban areas have traditionally had a high conflict potential because a lot of young men live there. Cities and towns are not only the centres of political life, but they also have a large population of young people marginalised from the society and uprooted from their traditional communities. Touré (1998: 51, 52) writes that “young people who are out of school, unemployed and sometimes living at the fringes of their families and of society, form a reserve force of destabilisation”. The loss of traditional values and points of reference causes frustration in these people, and violence as a way of life is one way in which they may seek to assert their social status.

3.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

Today there is a broad agreement that conflicts are not necessarily destructive as such. Conflicts arise inevitably, when there is competition over scarce resources, and because various values, needs and interests of social groups sometimes clash. Even the idea of democracy is based on the rivalry of potentially conflicting interests and identities. In the light of this understanding, the main problem in Africa is not conflict per se, but rather the lack of capacity to peacefully resolve the natural contradictions that occur in all societies. Conflicts cannot and must not be suppressed, rather, their violent escalation should be prevented. In fact, conflict and diversity should be seen as potentially productive, as they stimulate creativity and societal change (Nathan in OECD, 1998: 45). This constructive approach to conflicts leads us to clarify the concept of conflict prevention as the management of societal tensions.

3.3.1 Democratisation as Peace-Building

Peace and democracy support each other. Empirical evidence confirms the thesis of democratic peace, maintaining that democratic societies don't go to war against each other. Democracies are in the long term more peaceful than non-democratic ones. Reyhler (1999: 42) notes that conflict prevention often fails because of an incoherent peace policy, resulting from different aims and definitions of peace. He underlines that the definition of peace is a moral-political issue. There are a number of questions that should be addressed in order to find a clear operational definition that can be applied in policy-making. What kind of peace does the policy-maker want to pursue? Is peace conceived as an endpoint or as a process, and are we satisfied with negative peace (the absence of military violence) or do we strive for positive peace? How do we make peace sustainable? Reyhler (1999: 149) identifies four necessary conditions for sustainable peace:

- a system of regular consultation and negotiation at different levels;
- political and socio-economic structures with a democratic and social free market signature;
- an integrative moral-political climate; and
- confidence and arms control mechanisms.

These factors provide a basic framework on which a coherent peace plan can be devised. In the creation of such an action plan, there are a number of significant questions to be addressed. Most importantly, in order to establish a clear and compelling vision of peace, policy-makers need to identify all competing interests in the society at different levels. It is also crucial to make pro-

vision for power-sharing mechanisms between various groups. (Reyhler 1999: 49).

The risk of violence increases at a point where social inequality is coupled with the lack of possibilities to address the ensuing problems relating to injustice. Undemocratic societies, which are ranked and divided along group identification, are therefore prone to violence. In such circumstances, various groups can be easily mobilised by appeals to their relative grievances, and this leads to a situation where violence is seen as the only way of achieving political change. However, if the political mobilisation is channelled into democratic political processes, such as voting, interest group activity and political organisation, conflicting interests can be managed in a non-violent way. According to Adam Przeworski (1991: 13), democracy embodies “organised uncertainty”, which “operates as a system for managing and processing rather than resolving conflict”. Democratic institutions are unique instruments for bringing about political change and transfer of power without violence. The link between peace and development is indeed clear: democratisation creates pre-conditions for socially equitable development. These processes together are essential for mitigating people's experiences of grievance and deprivation, which are often the motor of frustration leading to violence.

Parliament should be a microcosm of the different and often conflicting interests in society. It should mediate, reconcile, and at the same time articulate these different interests. In this way the Parliament becomes both a manifestation and a producer of a democratic culture that penetrates the rest of the society and helps each section of the society manage conflict through democratic means. Such a Parliament calls for leadership grounded in a culture of tolerance, transparency, consultation and inclusivity, a leadership which is able to reconcile and articulate national interests with local groups' ones and be supportive of both.

Dr. Patrick Molutsi, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Sweden

3.3.2 The Debate on the Various Routes to Democracy

A comprehensive definition of security extends beyond the domain of military security to cover also social, economic, environmental and political spheres. Building a sustainable peace means that there is a “reorientation from the security of the state to that of the people”; in this context respect for human rights takes on its full meaning (Grandvoinnet and Schneider, 1998: 28). Political security entails democratic and accountable governance, the rule of law and protection of human rights, as well as political tolerance and pluralism. Some authors argue that political security is the foundation of all kinds of security, because political institutions are the most effective means of accommodating societal conflicts (Rothchild and Wohlgemuth, 1999: 4). Public institutions, together with the civil society, are essential for creating an inclusive political culture, capable of accommodating contradicting interests peacefully. Obviously, democratisation is not an easy prescription for peace, but in the long-term it is the most effective one.

Democratisation has many routes and strategies, as well as goals, depending

on the domestic circumstances of the country in question. Taking account of the multi-dimensional character of democratisation, it can be defined as “a complex, gradual and participatory process whereby citizens, civil society, and the state create a set of norms, values and institutions to mediate their relationships in a predictable, representative and fair manner” (OECD 1998: 56). More concretely, democracy entails a multi-party system and electoral competition among political parties, freedoms of association and expression, general elections and the rule of law.

The Parliament has been entrusted with the important task of consolidating peace and national unity. The working groups in our Parliament often deviate from the rule of proportionality, and are instead based on parity. This means that these organs come to their decisions by consensus and that there is no voting. Likewise, when issues of fundamental importance to the country are concerned, the Parliament has made an effort to reach decisions by consensus, which has been possible thanks to the comprehension of both parties of the need to put the national interest ahead of the party agendas.

Ms. Veronica Macamo, First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mozambique

Not all theorists agree on the above definition, however. For the Austrian scholar Joseph Schumpeter, democracy is simply a political method, a mechanism for choosing political leadership. Citizens are given the opportunity to choose their leaders in free elections. Between the elections, the decisions are made by the politicians, and if the citizens are unhappy with their leaders, they can always replace them at the next election. According to Schumpeter, there are no specific values inherent in democracy. One major argument critical to Schumpeter’s view maintains true democracy contains social and economic justice. According to this opinion, development precedes true democracy. A country has to reach a certain level of material wealth, before it can be said to be democratic. This argument has been employed by supporters of both multi-party and one-party rule. To take an example of the latter type of argument, the situation in Uganda is worth considering. Uganda is an African state trying to foster democracy within a one-party state. Johan Romare (1995: 217) writes:

Uganda has held multi-party elections twice, both times followed by terror. Museveni takes this as evidence for the fact that the Ugandans are not ready for the combat of parties. First, people have to unite, settle down and agree that they all belong to one nation. Otherwise the different parties will not stand for anything else than that which will bring their own tribe members or fellow religious worshippers to power. In Uganda, there are no social classes on which to build a party. More than 90% of the population are peasants, and there is no bourgeoisie. The only natural interest groups are ethnic and religious. In this description, Uganda resembles many other African states.

The argument favouring a one-party system states that in a situation like the one in Uganda, a multi-party system will only foster tribal or religious antagonism that might escalate into armed conflicts. A counter-argument to this approach claims that people are different, not uniform. The absence of classes is

not equal to absence of different opinions, and the best way to express these different opinions is through party politics. A multi-party system is the best match to human nature. Moreover, Romare notes that one common problem facing one-party systems is that “the Party” tends to replace “the people”; democracy as “governance of the people” is substituted for “governance by the Party”. A multi-party system is favourable to economic and social development. Diversity has to be legal, if democracy is to exist (Romare, 1995: 216-220).

Democratisation is not a technical matter which can be implemented simply by the holding of multi-party elections; it is undoubtedly a more profound long-term project. Democracy should be seen as more than a mechanism of governance (as Schumpeter suggests) - it is a set of values and practises. True democracy involves political security, a commitment to social and economic justice, and above all, the notion of an inclusive citizenship. The concept of citizenship includes not only citizens’ rights but also their responsibilities as members of the society, including respect for human rights, law and order, and the imperative of paying taxes. In other words, democratisation requires establishing a relationship between the people and the state; the formation of a civic identity.

Clearly, democracy cannot be created without democrats. Raising popular awareness of the concept of democracy requires encouraging popular participation in the political process and allowing groups to organise as political opposition forces. A framework of a multi-party democracy effectively legalises diversity and competition in the political life. Democratisation transforms the concept of political power from a partisan or personalised form to a more popular, publicly accountable direction. However, political transition is always a risky phase. Authoritarian rulers have strong incentives to attempt to liberalise their rule slightly, but to avoid real democratisation that would be likely to threaten their hold on power (Przeworski, 1991, quoted by Grosh and Orvis, 1996: 2). Their argument in favour of a strongly centralised rule is that political liberalisation threatens the balance of the society and causes conflicts. However, if people do not have an opportunity to hold the government accountable for its policies and to compete for political power themselves, the political culture of a country will never change from oppression to negotiation and the respect of human rights.

3.3.3 The Role of Civil Society in a Functioning Democracy

Patrick Molutsi (1999: 180) defines civil society as “a network of organised, self-governing and autonomous organisations operating at the national, regional and international levels”. Civil society has an important role to play in making peace-building and democratic governance an all-inclusive process. Molutsi reminds us that “the democratic conditions prevalent in southern Africa today were created largely by the struggles of the organisations of civil society - trade unions, human rights bodies, women’s organisations, the church, community-based organisations and the opposition parties” (Molutsi, 1999: 180 - 188). However, although many African governments have taken significant steps to create more democratic structures of governance, political participation of the populations remains weak. In many non-democratic African countries, the civil society plays the role of political opposition, which

makes its relationship with the state very problematic.

The operation of a meaningful and functional political opposition is essential to the political life of a democratic state. However, this requires that the opposition itself is democratic and respects the “rules of the game”. A major problem in countries with a totalitarian political culture is that as the state is an authoritarian and violent institution, this creates conditions for the rise of an equally violent civil society. When there is a change in power, even if a popularly elected majority party takes over, the culture of violence and a militaristic mind-set may not be changed overnight. Once in power, the newly-elected political leaders often employ the same strategies of oppression towards the opposition as their predecessors did.

The nature of the opposition can also be problematic. In countries such as Mozambique and Angola, the opposition has been first and foremost a military organisation and not a political one. The political structure of organisations such as RENAMO and UNITA, if it existed at all, was minimal, and their strategy was to destroy the infrastructure of the country and to control and instil fear in the rural populations. In countries where the opposition or various insurgency groupings employ strategies of terrorism in seeking to overthrow the government, it becomes extremely difficult to incorporate the organs of civil society into political governance.

Grosh and Orvis (1996: 2-3) note that the introduction of multi-party democracy has often been accompanied by large scale state-sponsored ethnic violence. They contend that this is related to the weaknesses of the civil society:

“The breakdown of an authoritarian regime is prior to and distinct from the much more difficult process of building a democracy. - - If the former occurs and the latter does not, political decay rather than political development can be the result, and many innocent citizens can suffer unnecessarily. Where civil society is weak and political parties little more than vehicles for individual leaders’ ambitions, movement toward more open political contestation can be quite dangerous. In Kenya, thousands died and hundreds of thousands were displaced in ethnic violence observers believe was largely instigated by the state. In Rwanda and Burundi, negotiations toward power sharing unleashed genocides, while attempted democratisation in Zaire has resulted in the nearly complete breakdown of the state apparatus.”

In African political societies there is a striking lack of functioning public mechanisms for the accommodation of competing demands and for mediating status discrepancies. More effective political power-sharing is needed. However, political reform is not sufficient in fostering a democratic political culture. It has to be supported by the diversification of the economy and a more equal distribution of resources.

3.4 THE ROLE OF THE PARLIAMENT IN BUILDING PEACE

Creating a national consensus around commonly-held values and goals through national policy dialogue is vital to the process of peace-building and sustainable development. The parliament has an important role to play in such a task, but this requires that it is both representative of and accountable to

the people. Parliaments should be both the repository of democratic values and practises as well as their guardians. A democratic political process renders violence obsolete as a political method. In acknowledging that development and democratisation depend on each other, the African parliaments have a dual task: encouraging political participation and managing the distribution of resources in a balanced way. In devising a practical peace-building strategy, both the structural as well as accelerating causes and dynamics of conflicts should be considered. In this way, the parliament can strengthen the structural stability of an ethnically heterogeneous society.

Peace has a lot of meanings, but the most common meaning in my country is “absence of war and violence”. When the armed war came to an end, the violent and destructive war became a constructive war of words. In our multi-party Parliament, the enemies among the people have become political opponents and are seen as part of the people, as citizens of the country. In the process of national reconciliation and pacification, the Parliament has had a key role in promoting peace, because it has accommodated the heterogeneity of the Mozambican people through the political parties.

Mr. Leopoldo Ernesto, Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mozambique

Generally the weakness of the parliament in relation to the executive is a central obstacle to democratisation in African countries. In presidential political systems, the power of the opposition in influencing political decisions is often marginal. The parliament is dominated by the executive. Moreover, the weak operational capacity of the parliament presents major difficulties for the efficiency of the legislative work. AWEPA works to address both of these problems by supporting the work of parliaments and providing resources for strengthening good governance on an impartial basis.

The well-functioning parliament has a number of functions in addition to its legislative role. It needs to maintain political order, rule of law, oversight over the executive, and provide meaningful political representation, choice and competition. Reynolds and Reilly (1999: 3) point out that “institutional design takes on an enhanced role in newly democratising and divided societies because, in the absence of other structures, politics becomes the primary mode of communication between divergent social forces.” In this situation, the political institutions become “the most prominent, and often the only, channel for communication between disparate groups” (ibid.). The following elaborates on some of the specific peace-building issues that the parliament should address; a summary of these is provided in Annex I. It is important to note that the measures discussed below are not a straightforward prescription for democratic conflict management, but rather an overview of issues which need to be addressed in peace-building.

Encouraging participation in an inclusive political process. A democratic political system entails meaningful political participation and representation which integrates all groups - ethnic, religious, political, cultural and socio-economic - into the political process. An expectation of mutual benefits and a sense of multiple loyalties has to be established through political cooperation, thus stimulating the emergence of a constructive conflict culture (Reychler 1999:

22, 34). The parliament should reflect the will of the majority of the people, without discriminating against the minorities. Special attention should be paid to the legislation on minority rights, in order to ensure a non-discriminatory legal basis. Also, a broad participation of women in politics is essential for sustainable peace-building, and this can be helped by gender quotas and gender-specific policies as well as by supporting various kinds of women's political networks. Political participation involves also competition: possibilities for constructive opposition politics in the parliament should be strengthened. In order to foster a culture of political tolerance, political parties should formulate together a code of conduct which guides both electoral campaigning as well as the use of political rhetoric. Ultimately, all these measures amount to improving the legitimacy of the political system.

Our Parliament has underlined the importance of a democratic all-inclusive dialogue for transition to peace in our country, by insisting that this dialogue has to be opened to all actors in the society. All Congolese people who denounce the logic of violence in a definite way, should be able to participate in this process. Under the supervision and guidance of the international mediator, President Bongo of the Republic of Gabon, the national all-inclusive dialogue has been undertaken in two phases. Firstly, decentralised debates have taken place in the various regions and communities, and secondly, in Brazzaville the national dialogue has taken place to support the signature of an Agreement on Peace and Reconstruction of Congo.

Hon. Justin Koumba, Speaker of the National Council of Transition, Republic of Congo

National consensus-building and reconciliation. As noted, democratisation means transforming the politics from a people-centred process into an issue-oriented direction. This requires a problem-solving strategy which identifies and explains the needs and interests of all parties objectively, and aims to reconcile such differences. In post-conflict societies, reconciliation measures include the establishment of truth commissions and the holding of public hearings, as well as trials and victim compensation and supporting the work of the judiciary in maintaining law and order. It is important that redressing the past happens in domestic institutions as far as possible, because in this process the rule of law is reinforced.

The parliamentary work should bring former adversaries together to agree on common development goals. This may be difficult when there is a lack of trust between the parties. Particular confidence-building measures between the ruling party/parties and the opposition are necessary. A very useful measure are parliamentary committees in which the opposition can be involved. The committee institution is an effective way of increasing transparency in the legislative process. It gives the members of opposition a chance to be involved in the preparatory stage of decision-making, thus being more informed about the issues on the agenda and being able to express their views in the political debate. Parliamentary committees can be seen as a way of "educating" the opposition about the management of state affairs, providing it with reasonable possibilities to prepare for a government role.

Institutional oversight and power-sharing. Effective monitoring of the government is one of the primary tasks of the parliament. In practice this means continuously checking government performance and in this way balancing the power of the executive. The politics of checks and balances should naturally be based on a special responsiveness to the needs and interests of the people through holding the executive accountable to the electorate. Moreover, as Reyhler (1999: 75) notes, the government should be sufficiently constrained both horizontally (vis-à-vis other branches of the government) as well as vertically (vis-à-vis the voters, regional and local authorities, private businesses and NGOs). Quoting David Beetham, he notes that a distinction should be made between a government's political accountability to the parliament, legal accountability to the courts, and financial accountability to both the legislature and the courts. It should be added that in order to achieve true accountability, the parliament needs to aim at eliminating corruption and work to support the independence of the judiciary from the political institutions.

Decentralisation. In many African countries the economic and political power has been centralised to the political elite since the colonial times. The so-called customary law is often seen as an instrument of such centralisation. However, there are also authors who argue that the indirect colonial rule has most importantly decentralised authoritarian power relations throughout the country. These different views highlight the fact that decentralisation is not an easy administrative solution directly supporting democratisation; it must be carefully managed. This is particularly true in today's conflict-ridden societies, in which the state has lost all or part of its control over the country's territory, or has completely collapsed (Colletta and Nezam, 1998a: 100). Re-asserting state authority in such areas is crucial to political stability.

Administrative decentralisation is a difficult process, yet in some situations it is critical to conflict avoidance. The failure to meet local or regional needs may result in violent conflict; in some cases leading even to secession. The OECD (1998: 58) notes that decentralisation can reduce tensions by "stimulating local and regional participation in decision-making, thus improving the accountability, responsiveness and legitimacy of the government". However, if decentralisation is perceived as affecting the allocation of resources or opportunities (such as employment) at the expense of certain ethnic or religious groups, it may also have the negative effect of mobilising local identities. Therefore, the OECD concludes, "strengthening local government requires an understanding of the structure of incentives facing political leaders at both the central and local levels".

Promoting socio-economic equality. Violent conflicts erupt easily when the opportunities created by socio-economic development are spread unevenly across regions, communities or classes. To prevent a situation of relative deprivation, the structural stability of the society should be strengthened through income distribution policies. Such policies support the functioning of a market economy and improve the position of the poorest people. In addition to the policies of resource allocation, the structures of production and various livelihoods should be harmonised as far as possible. This is important in order to prevent clashes of structures of economic survival (expansion of incompatible types of production in the same areas, environmental degrada-

tion of resources vital to groups of people, etc.) (Ruohomäki and Kivimäki, 2000: 9).

However, economic policies are obviously not the only way in which social inequality may be alleviated, rather, this task pertains to all policy fields through the allocation of resources in the state budget. The budget involves not only distribution of financial resources, but also the distribution of opportunities for education and employment. As the budget is a political document which reflects the relative strengths of the various social groups, the process of drawing up the budget must be rendered transparent as regards both public spending and public receipts (Grandvoininnet and Schneider, 1998: 16).

Constitutional reform. Divided societies need a constitution providing incentives for the accommodation of diversity. Appropriate constitutional forms, such as the choice of the electoral system, structure the rules of the game of political competition, by rewarding particular types of behaviour and constraining others (Reynolds and Reilly, 1999: 6). A constitutional reform may be necessary in some conflict-ridden countries, depending on the structure of the society and the political situation. A multi-party constitution and elections, giving all groups a say in governance at the national and local levels, are necessary to avoid the marginalisation of the minorities. The constitution must entrench the principle of judicial independence, make provision for the respect of human rights by both the state and the citizens, and also ensure that impartial and credible institutions are put in place for the protection of human rights. The same applies for gender equality. Constitutional review may also be necessary in order to end the culture of impunity. In the process of constitutional reform, it is important that the domestic politicians are committed to choosing long-term stability over short-term gain. Reynolds and Reilly (1999: 4) underline that institutional rules “seek to break down the overall salience of ethnicity by forcing the politicians to transcend their status as representatives of only one group or another”.

Dialogue with the civil society. An active civil society, as a network of independent associations with a voluntary and broad membership, is an essential element of democracy. The African civil society is yet little developed, but it has a great potential for supporting an inclusive political culture. The OECD identifies three domains of the civil society which are important in peace-building: traditional institutions of authority; dialogue and cooperation in inter-community relations, and the freedom and access to information of all members of society (OECD, 1998: 65). In addition, democracy requires constant monitoring. The parliament should help the civil society become a confidence-building mechanism between the state and the people, allowing civil society to influence public policy and to provide a check on the power of government. This may be difficult because in many countries the civil society practically performs the role of political opposition, and there is tension between the government and the civil rights organisations. In order to defuse such tension, the parliament should devise programmes of social dialogue with the civil society and also the private sector. It is equally important to strengthen mutually-beneficial cooperation on a lower level, between the various NGOs and the parliamentarians, to increase a mutual flow of information between the civil society and the politicians. This means that for example

women’s NGOs or trade unions should have better opportunities for “lobbying” the parliamentarians to make their opinion heard.

Conflicts commonly begin in urban areas. Many young urban dwellers are unemployed and out of school; their links to their communities have been broken. Therefore, their participation in the civil society would integrate them into democratic structures, creating a sense of a common interest and citizenship. The civil society may work to unify the people as a nation and to improve the cohesion of the society, which is important for the formation of consensus in the society (Grandvoininnet and Schneider, 1998: 27).

Democracy is central to conflict prevention. It has an inbuilt capacity of handling conflicts without resorting to violence. It is about willingness to dialogue, to compromise, to build consensus, to negotiate - in short, to handle conflict within peaceful and institutionalised forms. Dialogue - the key to progress - must be carried out at all levels. The Cotonou Agreement can be seen as a framework for dialogue on the basis of partnership. The European Union is also pursuing a dialogue with Africa through the Cairo Summit that took place a year ago, which is now being followed up. We must not forget the ultimate objective of our common endeavours - alleviating poverty and halving the share of the population living in poverty by the year 2015.

Ms. Yvonne Gustafsson, Deputy Minister for Defence, Sweden

An independent and free media. The media has a key role in securing transparency, accountability and an open debate in the political process. Misinformation and misunderstanding are usually major reasons in the background of tensions and violence. It is important to provide channels of communication between opposing perspectives. Effective, fair and accurate media reporting can be crucial in defusing conflict potentials. The parliament should establish or revise appropriate laws on the freedom and independence of the media (e.g. slander laws) (OECD 1998: 70). Moreover, the dialogue between an independent media and the political institutions should be strengthened, providing a platform for an issue-oriented problem-solving instead of an identity-based debate. This requires strengthening the freedom of expression and the accessibility of different groups to express their view publicly, and ensuring that there is information available from alternative sources. The media - and particularly the radio - is also a central forum for peace education to the broad public.

Civilian controlled armed forces and the police. In many African societies, the army has taken up the task of maintaining internal order. However, as Segun Odunuga (1999: 44) notes, the involvement of the armed forces in the suppression of violent uprisings leads to the inevitable politicisation of the armed forces themselves. The parliament should therefore assert civilian control over the armed forces and the police, including military budgets and expenditures (OECD 1998: 60), to limit the involvement of the military in politics. The military should be instructed on its role in a democracy. Also, it should be made clear that the task of the police is internal security, whereas the military is in charge of international defence. The ethnic composition of

the security apparatus should be balanced. Ideally, the state should have a monopoly of the legitimate use of force, in order to be able to protect the rights of its citizens, extract tax revenues as well as deliver the basic services which the citizens demand (Reychler, 1999: 37, 76). Indeed, when a state loses its control of the use of force within or from its territory, it starts to disintegrate to the point where it ceases to exist. On the other hand, the problem with an oppressive African state is that its claim for the monopoly of violence is not legitimate.

The Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians, which I am a member of, aims at maintaining and reinforcing peace, empowering the female politicians and keeping gender concerns on the political agenda in the country. Many initiatives by the Rwandan women in search of peace are underway. I would like to request assistance for the Rwandese women in facilitating their more active participation in the negotiations for the establishment of peace in the region. I can assure you that women in Rwanda are very preoccupied with the troubles of conflict because they have been and still are the major victims of violence.

Ms. Drocella Mugorewera, Deputy Secretary of the National Assembly of Rwanda

Demobilisation and disarmament of the society. Reintegrating potentially destabilising groups such as ex-combatants, returning refugees and youth within the wider social and economic life is a central peace-building measure. In post-conflict societies, this means offering a civilian way of life to former soldiers through employment and education. Former child soldiers should receive special attention to help them return to a normal life. Also, the parliament should adopt an integrated approach to disarmament and arms control, which also implies reducing spending on defence³. Especially, the proliferation of small arms should be controlled through legislation. There is also the practical problem of identifying and collecting small weapons, to prevent their possession by various militia groups (Wezeman, 1999: 141). In this context it should be noted that weapons often cross borders in areas which cut across natural cultural/ethnic communities (Kivimäki and Laakso 2000: 227). Even if solutions focusing on arms control and disarmament are a practical precondition to peace, they can only complement a political solution aimed at resolving the root causes of a conflict.

Regional parliamentary peace-building. Regional inter-parliamentary institutions such as the SADC Parliamentary Forum are important regional confidence-building measures amongst the parliamentarians. They can also facilitate learning and the sharing of experiences between MPs, as relates to peace-building and mediation in the parliamentary work. Apart from its national parliamentary capacity building programmes, AWEPA played a facilitating role in the formative stages of the development of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, providing opportunities, for example, for exchange of experience and information among SADC parliamentarians, and with colleagues from the Nordic Council, Benelux Assembly and European Parliament.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Democratisation is one of the most central aspects of development in African countries, because democratic government is a means of peaceful conflict management. Well-functioning democratic institutions and a participatory, inclusive political culture lie at the core of conflict transformation, and are essential to the stability of any society. Building a sustainable peace is only possible when the structural causes of violent conflicts are solved and the triggering factors are managed successfully. Ultimately, this dual task rests on achieving a greater social, political and economic equality and participation, as well as the restoration of state legitimacy.

Conflicts are both cause and effect of poverty and inequality. However, development and economic growth alone do not prevent conflict unless their effects on the society are managed in an effective and equitable way. While the parliament itself is a forum of dispute resolution, it also needs to strengthen the capacities of the society to manage societal tensions. This can be done by alleviating the grievance-related motivations for conflict through increasing social equality and by tackling the problems of a criminalised economy. The parliament cannot create structural stability alone: an active civil society is necessary for monitoring and diminishing the risks of conflict, and a free and independent media offers a forum for an issue-oriented debate.

*The grand idea of democracy is that public affairs should no longer be based on the "Right of the Strong", but on the "Rights of Everybody", Human Rights. Therefore the development of systems for democratic government is largely the development of means of peaceful conflict management. That people have different - and often strong - views on how public affairs should be managed, is a fact of life. The task of the democratic engineers has therefore been to construct systems where these unavoidable conflicts can be managed, not by determining, through fighting or display of force, who is most powerful, but by as best as possible reflecting the will of the people.
A major institution to do this is the Parliament.*

Mr Pär Granstedt Vice President of AWEPA

African parliaments need to be empowered in order to be able to perform the tasks discussed above. Capacity building activities as well as material resources are necessary to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of parliamentary work. In addition, certain more abstract preconditions must be fulfilled before the parliament can effectively play its role as an instrument for peace. Among those are the following:

- An electoral system and the conduct of elections which ensure that the parliament is representative of the different views and interests in the population;
- Conditions that facilitate the smooth transfer of power when the elections so determine. This should include reasonable possibilities for the opposition to prepare for a government role and some security for those who leave the government;
- Transparency and accountability of public affairs and the rule of law;
- A constructive relationship between the government and the opposition,

based on mutual understanding and respect for the role that each performs in the political process. The working conditions in the parliament should be conducive to this;

■ Good contacts between parliamentarians and their constituencies, facilitated by an active civil society and social dialogue with the civil society;

■ Respect for minority rights, especially ethnic minorities, in legal, political and economic terms;

■ Freedom of speech materialised in fair and accurate media reporting and an open and accessible political debate.

A well-functioning parliament is of central importance to sustainable peace and human development. The cultural and historical context of a society is and should be reflected in the strategies chosen for parliamentary peace-building. In adopting a proactive role for sustainable peace-building, the parliament must seek to draw on the existing capacities of the society. As the peace process becomes consolidated, the society can move on from preventing violence to promoting peace.

JULIA OJANEN

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¹ Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Zimbabwe (Adedeji, 1999: 3) and Sudan have been involved in the civil war in the DRC.

² see e.g. Laakso and Kivimäki, 2000 and OECD, 1998.

³ Conflicts cause an escalation in military spending, which crowds out other public expenditures such as health care. It is estimated that today about \$11 billion is annually spent on arms in Africa (Touré, 1998: 53).

4

EPILOGUE: PARLIAMENT AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR PEACE

Violence or threat thereof - "show of strength" - seems to be the original way of dealing with conflict among people as well as among animals. It has ruled in all structures of society, starting from the family. Indeed this seems to be a major reason why most societies in the world are patriarchal in their power structure. To leave this stage definitely behind is obviously one of the main challenges for mankind.

Conflicts are often necessary. Before a solution can be found the problems and different interests must be made visible and dealt with. Conflicts becoming violent, that is what must be avoided. And that is best done by resolving the conflict peacefully, than by trying to suppress it. When we talk about "conflict prevention" we rather mean "prevention of violent conflict". What we are aiming at is indeed "peaceful conflict management" and hopefully even "peaceful conflict resolution".

From global to local conflict

During the Cold War, that ended 10 years ago, most conflicts in international politics were subordinated to that dominating controversy. Conflicts were fanned if it served the interest of one or the other of the two superpowers of the time. And they were choked off if they started to go too far, that is to say, bring the superpowers themselves to the brink of a war that could be the end of our civilisation. Practically it meant that violent conflict hardly was allowed to affect Europe or the Americas, while conflicts in Africa and Asia too often where stimulated by shipments of weapons and advisors, often to become "wars by proxy" between the two global adversaries. Therefore conflicts of that period frequently were given ideological motives: they were confrontations between capitalism and communism, "democracy" and "dictatorship", "imperialism" and "social liberation", "the free world" and "the evil empire", "the revolution" and the "contra-revolution".

Still, the reasons for conflict mostly remained those that have triggered violence throughout history:

- Oppressed people revolting against their oppressors, whether they are foreign colonisers/occupants or domestic;
- Tension between ethnic groups; be they defined in racial, linguistic, religious or cultural terms or through some perceived common origin;
- Ambitious leaders who try to rally the support of their people by leading them into a quest for more "lebensraum";
- Escalation of fear between two adversaries or
- Simply conflicting economic interests.

The end of the Cold War made the time around 1990 a turning point in our modern history. That is evident to all. But after a decade we are still uncertain where it is turning. In the beginning we all believed that we knew very well. This marked the final victory of democracy over dictatorship, and of market economy over communism. And after the final victory there is of course no war any more. So this was the end of global conflict, the end of war and indeed, as some philosophers put it, the end of history. Now we know better - which means that we realise that we know much less about the future than we thought some years ago.

And it is indeed true that the remarkable progress of democracy is one of the most important patterns of the post-Cold War era. When the superpowers ceased to support client dictatorships, many of them could not stand any more. Donors to Third World countries, many of whom had been guided by Cold War considerations in their past development cooperation policies, gave new priority to democracy and good governance. And, most importantly, democratic forces all over the world were given new momentum. The victory over apartheid in South Africa was a great triumph, and Nelson Mandela became the hero of the new era.

However the continuation, and in certain areas even escalation of violent conflict, is another extremely important pattern of the post-Cold War era.

Most wars of the present world are internal and labelled "ethnic". "Ethnic" however means a lot of different things. In former Yugoslavia and especially in Bosnia it means religion. If you are Catholic (Croat), orthodox (Serb) or Muslim determines on which side you are. In Kosovo and Macedonia, in spite of religious differences, it is more language and sense of common historic origin that determine if you are Albanian or not. In Rwanda and Burundi Hutus and Tutsis have the same religions and the same language but differ in perceived historic origin and traditional culture. Somalia, that has been torn apart by ethnic conflict for more than a decade, is ethnically one of the most united countries in the world and certainly in Africa. But even if everybody has the same language, the same religion, and the same nationality, clan affiliation means more.

Maybe one could say that "ethnicity" is just a way to express any kind of group identity, to divide between "us" and "them". That seems to be a very basic instinct in all humankind. But it becomes dangerous when it is used in the struggle to control economic resources, especially where such are scarce, or in the power-game between unscrupulous political leaders! In many parts of the world ethnic identity also marks the difference between rulers and ruled, upper class and under class. Then ethnic conflict, social strife and/or struggle for freedom are often the same.

We seem to have moved from global conflict to more local and often internal conflict. It is not obvious that the world has become more peaceful by the end of the Cold War. Something else is needed. Our hope is the really positive trend of democracy.

In the long run, it seems that democracy is the only available and sustainable

system for peaceful conflict management. In a true democracy with full freedom of expression, transparency and respect for human rights, differences in interest and opinion can be resolved in peaceful negotiation, and eventually by voting. Democracy provides not only a structure for conflict management but also for peaceful change of power. For undemocratic regimes, on the other hand, violent force is always the necessary power-base. Sometimes it is not necessary to use it, but without the command of overwhelming force no undemocratic ruler can stay in power. Normally, a change of power in democratic systems is also not possible without violence. So democracy is a method of peaceful conflict management with proven success - presumably the only sustainable one. While autocratic systems, depending on force, ultimately always lead to violent conflict.

Peace communities

If war has followed mankind throughout human history, that history is also a continuous process of building mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution. So, the number and size of "peace communities" has constantly grown, where large-scale violence is more or less inconceivable. Indeed a basic idea of the state is to be such a peace community. There violence to settle conflicts between individuals, families, clans or regions is banned, and all legal use of violence is the prerogative of the state itself, in order to maintain law and order and to defend against outside threat. A state can be seen as functioning only when a ban on internal violence is generally respected and enforced. With many tragic exceptions, this is the case in most states today. But at the same time we see that a sustainable peace community can not be imposed on people, it must be based on their full endorsement, and indeed participation. Democracy again!

We can also see an increasing importance for peace communities including more than one state. The history of Scandinavia includes a long series of wars, especially between Denmark and Sweden. Today everybody would agree that such a war is unthinkable. The EU has together with NATO been instrumental in the creation of a vast security community including such traditional enemies as UK, France and Germany. Maybe we will see such peace communities emerge also in Africa - for instance including South Africa and its neighbors. That would indeed signify a most remarkable development from what used to be one of the most conflict-ridden regions of the world.

The twentieth century saw many initiatives to create institutional support for the developing of peace communities, the most far-reaching of course being the establishment of the UN. Regional organizations like OAU and OSCE are meant to serve the same purpose in African and Europe. These organizations use means such as improving international law, military confidence building measures, mediation and arbitration, monitoring and even peacekeeping. However, also what is being done to promote democracy, respect for human rights and international cooperation in economy, culture, communications, information, etc. is meant to strengthen peace. SADC and the East African Community are good examples of such initiatives. The most successful attempt to create a peace community with an intensive pattern of co-operation and strong common interests, based on parliamentary democracy, is of course the European Union.

However, no international cooperation initiative can become a peace community without popular participation. History, ancient as well as recent, shows that empires can maintain peace based on oppression for a time, but sooner or later they tend to implode in violence. Within the UN system and most inter-governmental organisations, governments are assumed to represent their peoples. That is sometimes an illusion, which weakens the popular mandate and thus the authority of the organisation. The necessity to build international structures on democratic principles is no less than for individual nations. Therefore the importance of parliamentary organs such as SADC Parliamentary Forum and East African Parliamentary Assembly in Africa, and the European Parliament and the parliamentary assemblies of the Council of Europe and OSCE can not be overestimated. But it is also important that ordinary members of National Parliaments have sufficient means to monitor and influence the process of international integration, and to promote public support for it.

Parliament in Conflict Management

Any regime has to be based either on the support of the people or on violence. The purest form of government based on violence is of course military and military-backed dictatorships.

Authoritarian regimes can have other sources of power, such as the charisma of the leader, religious beliefs, tradition etc. But violence is always the backbone and last resort also of their power. When the original authority is losing its grip on people's minds, history shows that most authoritarian regimes use violence to silence criticism and ultimately to remain in power.

As a consequence, it is indeed a characteristic of the authoritarian and dictatorial regimes that fundamental change can hardly be brought about without the use of violence. This is true whether the struggle for power is an affair within the political elite (through a coup d'état, or simply murdering an unwanted ruler or heir to power) or conflict involving broad parts of the population (uprisings, civil wars and revolutions). This is why the use or threat of violence has also been a very common political method.

The grand idea of democracy is that public affairs should no longer be based on "The Right of the Strong" but on the "Rights of Everybody", Human Rights. Therefore the development of systems for democratic government is largely the development of means for peaceful conflict management. That people have different - and often strong - views on how public affairs should be managed, is a fact of life. The task of the democratic engineers has therefore been to construct systems in which these unavoidable conflicts can be managed, not by determining, through fighting or display of force, who is most powerful, but by as best as possible reflecting the will of the people.

A major instrument to do this is the Parliament. Ideally it should have a composition that is a mirror of the views and interests prevailing within the population. Parliament acts as an instrument for Peace through deliberations, finding consensus wherever possible, hammering out compromises where that is necessary or else determining which policy has the strongest popular support. The government can of course have a popular mandate of its own (presidential system).

Or it can be directly dependent on the composition of the Parliament (parliamentary system). But under all circumstances it is important that all major political issues are being processed in the Parliament in a way that gives all viewpoints and interests a chance to be considered. When Parliament functions as it should, it renders violence as a political method obsolete. Force is then only necessary in order to defend the system against those who want to break it by force.

To promote world peace the parliamentary model of peaceful conflict management, as indicated earlier, must also be expanded beyond the nation state. On the international arena, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, the Right of the Strong is still prevailing. Here a great task is still ahead of us.

Of course, parliaments are not always functioning well. Many times Parliaments are not given sufficient resources. The executive branch might restrict the role of the parliament to avoid its monitoring the regime. Parliamentarians and political parties do not always live up to their responsibilities. It is important to bear in mind that historical and cultural differences also are being, and should be, reflected in the way parliament and other political institutions work. It is however possible to conclude that certain pre-requisites must be fulfilled for parliament effectively to play its role as an instrument for peace. We suggest that among those are the following (see also Annex 1):

- An electoral system and the conducting of elections that secures that the parliament has a fair representation of the different views and interests within the population.

- Transparency in public affairs and a free debate.

- A constructive relation between government side and opposition based on mutual respect for each other's role, and working conditions in the parliament conducive to that.

- Conditions that facilitate a smooth transfer of power when demanded by the voters. This should include reasonable possibilities for the opposition to prepare for a governing role. It must also include some kind of security for those who leave government.

- Good contacts between MPs and their constituencies. This must include easy access for the MP to the constituency. An active civic society is a great advantage. The attitude of the MP is of course decisive.

- Respect for the rights of the minority. Majority interests are normally well looked after in a democracy; but, especially in situations where an ethnic or other type of minority seems to be permanently out of political influence, there is a great risk that minority interests are neglected. Secured minority rights in both legal and economic terms are therefore absolutely necessary for the parliament to be an instrument for peace, and indeed for any system to be considered truly democratic.

There is a strong interdependence between the concepts of peace, democracy and respect for human rights. Violent conflict is often disrupting democratic processes and favoring authoritarian leadership. Human rights are regularly being violated. To preserve peace is therefore a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the development of democracy and human rights. And democracy has proven to be the best system for peaceful conflict resolution we know of in our history. Finally, democracy is not possible without respect

for human rights.

So if the end of the 20th millennium, and the beginning of the 21st, are characterised by the spreading of democracy and the spreading of violent conflict, this might really be the drama of our time: the race between democracy and war. Will the move toward democracy be fast and strong enough to put an end to war? Or will war and violence still make vast areas of our world unfit for democracy? Our children will know.

PÄR GRANSTEDT, VICE PRESIDENT OF AWEPA

Annex 1

INSTRUMENTS OF PARLIAMENTARY CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACE-BUILDING

Participation and representation:

- the inclusiveness of the political process
- multi-partyism and pluralism: opportunities for a meaningful opposition politics
- civil society: trade unions, NGOs etc.
- gender-specific policies and gender quotas for a more equal representation and participation of women
- opportunities for ethnic/minority groups to make policy inputs and to be politically organised

Legislation:

- creating a non-discriminatory legal basis
- rights of minorities (ethnic, religious etc.)
- women's rights
- minority quotas of the electoral system
- a constitutional reform may be necessary

Reconciliation:

- confidence-building measures in the society and in the political life
- public hearings
- truth commissions and punishment; ending the culture of impunity
- parliamentary debates
- victim compensation
- bringing former adversaries together in the political process

Oversight and power-sharing:

- effective monitoring of the government and balancing its power
- fighting corruption
- checking government performance
- the independence of the judicial system from the executive and the legislature
- transparency of the political process

Decentralisation:

- improving the accountability, responsiveness and legitimacy of the government
- supporting a regionally balanced development

- re-asserting state authority in some geographic areas
- stimulating local and regional participation in decision-making
- introducing the principle of subsidiarity

Promoting socio-economic equality:

- tackling conflicts based on the relative deprivation of groups
- state budget: social justice in the distribution of resources
- regional equality
- income distribution policies
- status of women, and the poor and marginalised people
- harmonising the structures of production and livelihood

Dialogue with the civil society:

- creating and open, participatory and inclusive political culture
- encouraging a more active participation of women in the civil society
- supporting traditional institutions of authority
- programme of social dialogue between the parliament and civil society
- supporting cooperation in inter-community relations and cooperation between NGOs and parliamentarians
- integrating the young urban dwellers and the unemployed as members of the society

An independent and free media:

- strengthening the freedom of expression
- accessibility of different groups to express their view publicly
- information available from alternative sources
- peace education in the media (especially the radio)

Civilian controlled armed forces and the police:

- reforming the security system
- limit the involvement of the military in politics
- military budgets and expenditures managed by the political institutions
- rendering the ethnic composition of the security apparatus balanced

Demobilisation and disarmament of the society:

- limiting the means and motivations for violence
- reintegrating the ex-combatants into the society through employment and education
- disarmament and arms control, especially regarding small arms
- resettlement of refugees and displaced persons
- reducing spending on defence

Regional parliamentary peace-building:

- facilitating confidence-building and learning
- MPs as mediators in neighbouring countries in a post-conflict situation
- regional inter-parliamentary institutions (e.g. in the SADC and the EAC)

Rule of law:

- resolving tension
- an independent judiciary as a dispute-settlement mechanism
- transparency: public procedure in the adoption of legislation

- legal accountability of the executive: the government is subject to and operates within the law
- effective means of redress available to citizens, also on the local level

Annex 2

EXCERPTS FROM THE DISCUSSION

Parliament as an Instrument for Peace
Stockholm, Sweden, 19-20 April 2001

WORKING GROUPS: RESOURCE PERSONS AND FACILITATORS

Central African Region

Resource persons:

Rwanda: Hon. Drocella Mugorewera

Republic of Congo: Hon. Leon Bemba

Burundi: Hon. Gabriel Toyi, Hon. Oscar Nibogora

Chair/Rapporteur: Lydia Maximus, Vice President of AWEPA

Southern African Region

Resource persons:

Zimbabwe: Hon. Minister Patrick Chinamasa and Hon. Welshman Ncube

Mozambique: Hon. Veronica Macamo and Hon. Leopoldo Alfredo Ernesto

Angola: Hon. Idalina Valente

Chair/Facilitator: Pär Granstedt, Vice President of AWEPA

Rapporteur: Hon. Helen Jackson, United Kingdom

Burundi (Mr. Nibogora):

The coup d'état of Major Buyoya of July 25th 1996 occurred at a moment when the National Assembly of Burundi and the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) were preparing a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions.

The pressure of the international community, of countries from the sub-region and of parties and political movements opposed to the putsch, obliged Major Buyoya to rehabilitate the National Assembly and the political parties in September 1996. The rehabilitation of the National Assembly elected in 1993 allowed to resume the preparation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Assembly and AWEPA. This Memorandum of Understanding was signed on October 17th 1998, but, in fact, co-operation between the National Assembly and AWEPA had already begun in October 1995.

AWEPA, represented by its former Vice-President Dr. Luc Dhoore greatly contributed to the resuming of the dialogue between the two parliamentary groups (FRODEBU and UPRONA) that constituted the National Assembly in 1996. AWEPA organised the Round Table meetings for 10 parliamentarians

representing the other Members of Parliament at the highest level, in Maputo and Cape Town in June 1997. This activity was the first one to be jointly organised by the two parliamentary groups since the coup d'état of July 25th 1996, which had triggered the dislocation of the National Assembly into two incompatible blocks: those supporting the putsch (UPRONA); and those demanding the return to constitutional legality (FRODEBU).

The "Parliamentary Days" of October 1997, Under the theme "Contribution of the National Assembly to the Peace Process, the National Reconciliation and the Respect of Human Rights in Burundi", organised in Bujumbura with assistance of AWEPA, have had the historical merit to restart joint activities of the two parliamentary groups constituting the National Assembly. These Parliamentary Days have also marked the first step in the dialogue and consultation between the Assembly elected in 1993 and the Government created as an outcome of the extra-constitutional change of July 1996. This new political context created by the Parliamentary Days has facilitated the negotiation of the political platform for an internal partnership.

The internal partnership, in turn, created a domestic political environment favourable to the start of the Inter-Burundian Peace Negotiations of Arusha in June 1998.

We have to underline that in the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Assembly and AWEPA, it is mentioned that AWEPA aimed, among other goals, to:

■ Assist the National Assembly of the Republic of Burundi to acquire African experience in fields of conflict resolution and of African, European and other democratic experiences by supporting a political and diplomatic framework in which MPs can work together, whilst providing material and financial support to encourage the process.

■ Give support to the dialogue and negotiation process between the involved parties with a view to re-establishing democracy and peace in Burundi.

Since 1997 and until 2000, AWEPA and the National Assembly have organised in Bujumbura Parliamentary Days at least twice per year on such themes as:

■ The problems of representative democracy and the struggle against political violence.

■ Peace, reconciliation and conflict resolution.

■ The contribution of the National Assembly to the peace process, to the reconciliation process and to human rights.

■ The problems of the implementation of the Peace Agreements.

During the year 2001, the National Assembly of Burundi envisages to organise Parliamentary Days in four regions of Burundi about the state of progress of the peace process and the implementation of the Peace Agreement of Arusha for Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi, signed on August 28th, 2000.

During all these Parliamentary Days, several Burundian personalities and representatives of civil society are invited to discuss with MPs about issues related to peace, security and democracy.

These are Representatives of the armed forces, of the police, and of the Judiciary, representatives of the territorial administration, of civil society and of political parties. The National Assembly and AWEPA invite national participants or foreign experts in the field of human rights, democracy and conflict resolution. Mozambicans, South Africans and Europeans have thus moderated conferences during Parliamentary Days. AWEPA has also often invited the Burundian MPs, men and women, to participate in international peace and human rights conferences.

Since last year, the National Assembly of Burundi started to organise conferences on peace and round tables with Burundian refugees living in Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda) and in Western Europe, in accordance with Art. 2 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Assembly and AWEPA. Some examples:

- In May 2000, mini peace conferences have been organised in Nairobi, in Dar es Salaam and in Kampala by the National Assembly and AWEPA.
- On 16 and 17 September 2000 a parliamentary peace conference was organised in Dar es Salaam for refugees of the Burundian diaspora living in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. This conference was followed by a parliamentary visit to refugee camps of Burundians people in western Tanzania.
- On 9 and 10 December 2000 a parliamentary delegation headed by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Léonce Ngendakumana, and accompanied by Mrs. Lydia Maximus, Vice President of AWEPA, paid a visit to Burundian refugee camps in Tanzania in the provinces of Mutabila, Muyovozi and Rukole, in the districts of Kasulu and Ngara.
- Burundian MPs have discussed with the refugees on the state of progress of the peace process in Burundi and the problem of their repatriation.

Mozambique (Ms. Macamo):

Peace, understood as the absence of violence, has a very special significance for Mozambique. In fact, without mentioning slavery and both inter-state and intra-state wars during pre-colonial times, Mozambique has passed 28 years of uninterrupted war. Of those, 10 years were dedicated to the struggle for liberation from the Portuguese colonial yoke, led by FRELIMO, the Liberation Front of Mozambique. Then followed attacks from the racist minority regime in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and the 16 years of war between the Renamo and the Mozambican government.

The wars were really, as always, very heavy to bear for the Mozambicans. Nevertheless, it should be underlined that the last war seriously destroyed the economic and social infrastructures, without mentioning the mourning and distress that it spread over the country. After various efforts of rapprochement between the Frelimo government and Renamo, it became possible in Rome, Italy, on the 4th of October 1992, to sign the agreement that brought the, by all Mozambicans, much longed-for peace.

As part of this agreement, the Mozambican people realized its first general and multi-party elections, with the following results:

- 129 parliamentarians representing the Frelimo Party
- 112 parliamentarians representing the Renamo Party
- 9 parliamentarians representing the Coalition Democratic Union, UD

Already from the beginning, the functioning of the Parliament was entrusted with the important task of consolidating peace and national unity. AWEPA was heavily involved in a cooperation programme with the new Parliament. To achieve these objectives the following plan was made at institutional level:

- Joint leadership of the organs of the Assembly of the Republic (Parliament)
- The Speaker of the Parliament
- One Speaker elected by the whole Assembly
- Deputy Speakers representing the groups in Parliament
- Specialized Committees, for Inquiries or Ad Hoc Committees
- When the Chairperson of such a Committee is representing one of the groups, the rapporteur is from the other group. The composition of the Committees of Parliament obeys the proportionality of the groups.

Working groups

The working groups of the Parliament often deviate from the rule of proportionality, and are instead based on parity. One example of this model is the Committee for the Modernization of the Assembly of the Republic, which is composed of four members of the Standing Committee of the Parliament, i.e. two members from the majority group and the other two from the minority group. This means that these organs come to their decisions by consensus and that there is no voting.

On the other hand, the coordination in Parliament is made by the chairpersons and rapporteurs of the Specialized Committees, in all 14 persons, and it is co-directed by the first and second deputy speakers. Consequently, this organ does not follow the representation in Parliament.

Likewise, when concerning issues of fundamental importance for the life of the country, Parliament has made an effort to reach decisions by consensus, which has been possible thanks to the comprehension of both parties of the need to put the national interest ahead of the party agendas. And to talk about consensus is not easy, because it is all about making concessions from both parties. This means that the parties sometimes have to sacrifice what each of them defend, for the benefit of the common objective - in this case peace.

Some examples of this are:

- The land law, which defines land as state property;
- The law that creates the National Electoral Commission
- The regulation of the Assembly of the Republic, among others.

In these cases there were divergencies in the beginning, but after discussions the Parliament reached decisions by consensus. When it comes to the functioning of the institution, the agenda to be discussed in the plenary meeting, is always, when possible, accepted by consensus. This is our modest experience, that needs to be ameliorated and consolidated.

We are conscious about the need to invest more, so that peace - the condition for development and welfare - will last forever. It is necessary for us, with the help of all people, to find even more efficient forms so that the destruc-

tive wars can be substituted by constructive action, so that we can gain the reliance of our peoples, who are the justification for our existence.

Finally, let me just say that, as far as we understand, the political forces present in the Mozambican Parliament and in other Parliaments, should as much as possible focus their attention and try to find ways that guarantee peace. The work in Parliament and among the people must be based on the keyword PEACE.

Mozambique (Mr. Ernesto):

Mozambicans lived through centuries under different forms of violence: slavery; violence during the colonial occupation; the colonial war; and the post-independence war. This last war ended with a dialogue and the signature of an agreement on the 4th of October 1992, in Rome, between the parties involved, i.e. the Frelimo government and Renamo.

Among the different steps that lead to the peace process was the transformation of the then one-party People's Assembly into the present multi-party Assembly of the Republic.

In reality, here Parliament started to be an instrument conducive to the preservation of peace, because when the armed war had come to an end, there came another war with words, which means that the violent and destructive war led to a constructive and appeasing "war". In this multi-party Parliament the internal enemies of the people have become political opponents and are seen as a part of the people, as citizens of the country. So, in a big process of national pacification and reconciliation like this, the Parliament has had a role as an instrument for the promotion of peace, because it has accommodated the heterogeneity of the Mozambican people through the political parties.

After the general multi-party elections in 1994, the Assembly of the Republic had 3 groups, representing 5 parties. Already after the elections 1999, the Parliament passed into having 2 groups (Frelimo and the coalition Renamo-Electoral Union/União Eleitoral) representing 13 political parties.

The questions that can be formulated in the present moment are:

■ Is the Mozambican Parliament really still an instrument for peace?

■ Is the Mozambican Parliament only a place for political statements, remarks and proposals and in that case, what is the consequence - in the positive sense - of such political statements, remarks and proposals?

■ With the existence of three powers in Mozambique (the legislative, the administration of justice and the executive) and with the present situation when the executive is the strongest one, but does not assemble actors from different political currents - will it be possible for the executive to obey the legislative?

■ How can the Mozambican Parliament act to prevent the arms that were yesterday used in the destructive war from being used today against the people under the pretext of defending the national interest and sovereignty?

If Parliament shall continue to be an instrument for peace, it is, in my opinion,

necessary that it mobilizes itself so that it does not allow the disintegration of the democratic system. Looking at things closely, if the two groups in our Parliament turn their backs on what is the national interest, the democratic system can fall to pieces and put peace in danger. It is necessary that the Mozambican Parliament mobilizes both the society and itself not to allow any party or coalition to take absolute power, thus guaranteeing the creation of a political system that is more balanced and honest. A system that helps accommodate the differences and unify positions of various feelings in society.

And, finally, to create a lasting peace, it is necessary that Parliament produces laws that will help the Mozambicans to continue to create the points of union that reinforce the National Unity.

Eight years of parliamentary experience in a poor country like ours is very little. But I think that with your moral, material and financial help and even with an exchange of parliamentary experiences, we will be able to overcome the deficiencies in the functioning of our Assembly of the Republic, so that it will become a real instrument for peace, democracy and national harmony, which are the factors needed for the development of the country.

Angola (Ms. Idalina Valente)

After 40 years of war, Angola finds itself in a disastrous situation. This did not totally resist parliament to function. In June 1997 the parliament of Angola signed an agreement with AWEPA for a programme in the area of human rights. Due to new military conflicts in 1998, this programme had to be cancelled. AWEPA re-established contact with the parliament of Angola in November 2000, to investigate if the political climate and the security situation in Angola permitted to proceed with the programme. At that occasion contacts were established with a large delegation of women MPs.

It is clear that the conflict in Angola cannot be solved by violence. What should be avoided is that the conflict reduces to a conflict between different ethnic groups. Parliamentarians have a role to play regarding this problem. It is good that parliamentarians have questioned the government about Angolan soldiers fighting in other African countries like the DRC.

The delegation from Angola hopes that, with the help of AWEPA, Angola will install peace in the near future.

Rwanda (Ms. Mugorewera)

Although several efforts have been undertaken since 1994, the socio-economic situation in Rwanda remains critical. Some 70% of families remain under the poverty line. The country recently adopted a National Programme on poverty eradication in which the priority issues for poverty eradication are: revaluation and recapitalisation of the rural economy, human resource development and development of basic infrastructure.

Among the necessary factors for success of this program are:

■ a stable macro-economic environment

■ laws, a practice and action in support of good governance, order and security for all, unity and reconciliation, decentralisation and social justice

■ a good investment policy and support to the urban and rural private sectors

■ regional integration and competitiveness of services

As said at the beginning, this ambitious programme, that will benefit the entire population, will only be met on one condition: peace and security in the sub-region. Coping with the consequences of the genocide, which is not easy, should be a lesson for each of us to do what is necessary for restoring peace in the sub-region.

What would be the role of the parliament in keeping the peace in the country? I dare to believe that if parliament complies with its two main tasks, to pass laws that favor all layers of population, and to control governmental action through policies, strategies and sectoral programmes, it would play a good role in keeping the peace.

It is through the control of governmental action that it would oversee the respect of the implementation of the ratified International Conventions, treaties and agreements, including those aimed at maintaining peace. As representatives of civil society MPs have to ensure the respect of human rights (life, education, health, equality, freedom of movement, nationality).

The Parliamentary Women's Forum, of which I am the legal representative, and consisting of 19 Members from various parties and women's organisational structures, advocates peace while avoiding conflicts between its members. One common cause is to reinforce our capacity as legislators, and to monitor whether the adopted laws take gender issues into account.

We also struggle for increasing the number of women in decision making bodies, because they are able to influence political decisions, including these concerning peace and socio-economic stability of the country.

Republic of Congo (Mr. Koumba):

Taking into account the particular situation that Congo is currently facing, the National Transitional Council has several tasks, among them, the promotion of human rights and the role of Social Economic Council.

As co-managing institution of the transitional period, our parliament is very involved in all solution-finding actions for the many problems faced by our country, whether political, social or cultural ones. It is needed to assert the determining role played by it [the parliament] in the final resolution of the war of December 1998, led by a number of members of the fallen government, the very same ones that destroyed the Congo in 1997. Confronted with the scale of the damage caused by the last war, that strongly hit the southern neighbourhoods of the capital Brazzaville and some of the regions, the NTC published on April 29th 1999 a declaration on the general situation in the country, and in particular on security issues. In this declaration our parliament called on the government to implement measures aimed at:

- Taking initiatives in order to organise a dialogue with the members of the fallen power who renounced violence, and creating conditions facilitating the return of exiled people, while taking distance from the terrorists;
- Pronouncing an amnesty in favour of the youth who accept to put down their weapons and surrender to the authorities of the Republic, whereby the

government has to welcome them, guarantee their security and ensure their social reinsertion;

- Intensifying (mine) clearing operations in war-torn zones and permitting thousands of displaced people to return to their place of residence;
- Including in the drafting of the new Constitution dispositions on the conditions for creating parties and political associations, on rights and obligations of the opposition in a democracy, on sanctions that apply to those politically responsible and guilty of war crimes, economic crimes and who use ethnocentrism as a political principle and thus affect the impartiality of the State;
- Promoting the reorganisation of public forces, in light of the resolutions by the general Assemblies of the army and the national police, held in March 1992, removing from the ranks of the public forces the non-civic elements, while reintegrating repenting officers and rehabilitating by all means the discipline necessary to a republican army qualifying for that denomination, by acting to decrease the phenomenon of looting.

The National Transitional Council has not only focused on controlling the action of the government. It travelled outside the Congo in order to be exposed to the experience of other parliaments and to participate to international parliamentary conferences and to visit foreign partners. The Agreement passed on June 19th 2000, between the National Transitional Council and the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) is one of the outcomes of this diplomatic offensive, more recently illustrated by the signing of an Agreement between the Congolese Government and the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa, represented by its President Dr. Jan Nico Scholten, about establishing a Representation in Brazzaville. Nevertheless, and despite these efforts, much remains to be done. Our parliament is set on contributing to the Congo getting democratically elected institutions and guaranteeing economic development in the country. For this purpose, we cannot act alone. By asking for more understanding from our European partners we hope to receive from them diversified support in various fields as:

- The organisation of multi-party elections
- Development cooperation and assistance
- The establishment of a well-functioning parliamentary administration
- Training for parliamentary officials
- The acquisition of computer, audio visual and didactic equipment for parliamentary use

Nigeria (Dr. Molutsi International IDEA):

Our starting point is that in a functioning democracy parliament should indeed be an instrument of peace. This is because parliament should be a microcosm of the different and often conflicting interests in society. Parliament should mediate, reconcile, at the same time articulate these different interests but not suppress or close them out. In this way parliament becomes both a manifestation and producer of a democratic culture that penetrates the rest of society and helps each section of society manage conflict through skill, with a foresight grounded in a democratic culture of tolerance, transparency, consultation and inclusivity, among others. Such leadership should be able to reconcile and articulate national interests with local groups ones and be supportive of both.

Yet this ideal parliament and leadership are very difficult to establish and sustain, particularly in post-conflict poverty-stricken societies such as Nigeria. As transitional society coming from many years of conflict and military rule, Nigeria is faced with two related problems:

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict in Nigeria manifests itself at three overarching and interlocking issues of ethnicity, religion and resources (poverty). In order to discuss parliament as an instrument of peace in Nigeria the issue of why there is an absence of peace needs to be identified.

Ethnicity: Here perceptions of privilege and under-privilege are dominant. Across the countries issues are perceived in terms regions and ethnic identity, history and access to resources. These perceptions manifest themselves at various levels of political representation (fairly or not fairly represented), citizenship-treated equally or not. All this resulted in perceptions of dominance by other ethnic groups and related access to resources including jobs, land, education, etc.

Religion: The declaration of Sharia Law in a number of Northern States of the federation has raised issues of the consequences for non-Muslim communities in these states and constitutional issues.

Poverty: Nigeria is a rich and yet a poor society. Although this paradox is not uncommon in many parts of Africa and some developing countries, Nigeria is a classic case. The country has oil, minerals, good agricultural land, and many other natural wealth including water resources. These have been unequally distributed historically. The well-known case of the Niger Delta where oil is taken from the region without much consideration of the development of the local communities is not uncommon across the country. Worse still, in this case the exploitation of the oil has impoverished the local physical environment thereby making agriculture more difficult to live on.

The three inter-locking problems pose a threat to the democratization process in the country.

DEMOCRACY DEFICIT

Nigeria has experienced military rule more than it has democratic governance. For most of its over 40 years of independence, civilian rule comes roughly to ten years. Hence we have a deeply rooted military culture which Nigerians call the "military psychic" of the Nigerian society. The absence of democratic culture is evident in the problem surrounding the constitution, the absence of consensus on the primary law of the land - the constitution is glaring. Lack of confidence and trust on the constitutional and institutional processes and reform processes is widespread. In the areas of the electoral process, political parties and the parliament, state level and federal government institutions, the public express a lot of skepticism.

Due credit must be given to the present government for the good efforts and progress made to date. Some of the main achievements of the current government include: creation of political space for dialogue and consultation with

those outside the elite; the vibrant media environment of Nigeria is a positive force in transparency; pluralism and freedom of speech. Other key ones include reform of institutions and legal process including anti-corruption bill - attempt to end the cycle of corruption and lack of transparency, electoral reforms and general institutional reforms at the state and federal levels to strengthen the political system.

Also important has been the recognition and efforts to attend to the social agenda. Poverty, inequality and underdevelopment are major features of Nigeria's socio-economic situation. Since 1999 the government has started programmes in poverty reduction, educational and health support and gender equality. There is a lot to be done but the approach seems the right one under the circumstances. The importance of guaranteeing the economic and social well being of society is being prioritized.

In Nigeria as in any democratic state there is the need to create a system, which protects both individual and collective rights. People need to feel their lives are better under democracy and need to have improvements to their quality of living.

Nigeria needs a parliament that mirrors a pluralist society of multi-ethnic, multi-religious, ideological, social and gender composition of society. Without this conflicts based on the lack of representation in the national arena can arise. Parliament is an institution of democratic governance which is given its *raison d'être* by the constitution. Those representatives who constitute the parliament are elected on the basis of the electoral law. Without a just and representative parliament the chances for resolving the conflicts in Nigerian society will remain elusive.

Parliament is a key to conflict prevention, management and resolution. But parliament is also a product and producer of a democratic culture. Without the latter, parliament alone cannot create peace. Hence in Nigeria the support and strengthening of parliament must go hand in hand with the creation of a broader democratic culture and society. The main responsibility for this lies with Nigerian people and their leaders. The international community can nevertheless play a constructive, supportive and facilitative role.

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