

Africa: a continent of hope

By [António Guterres](#)

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Far too often, the world views Africa through the prism of problems. When I look to Africa, I see a continent of hope, promise and vast potential.



Image source: www.un.org

I am committed to building on those strengths and establishing a higher platform of cooperation between the United Nations and the leaders and people of Africa. This is essential to advancing inclusive and sustainable development and deepening cooperation for peace and security.

That is the message I carried to the recent African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - my first major mission as United Nations secretary-general.

Above all, I came in a spirit of profound solidarity and respect. I am convinced that the world has much to gain from African wisdom, ideas and solutions.

I also brought with me a deep sense of gratitude. Africa provides the majority of United Nations peacekeepers around the world. African nations are among the world's largest and most generous hosts of refugees. Africa includes some of the world's fastest growing economies.

Power of leadership, unity

The recent resolution of the political crisis in the Gambia once again demonstrated the power of African leadership and unity to overcome governance challenges and uphold democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I left the summit more convinced than ever that all of humanity will benefit by listening, learning and working with the people of Africa.

We have the plans in place to build a better future. The international community has entered the second year of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an all-out effort to tackle global poverty, inequality, instability and injustice. Africa has adopted its own complementary and ambitious plan: Agenda 2063.

For the people of Africa to fully benefit from these important efforts, these two agendas need to be strategically aligned.

It starts with prevention. Our world needs to move from managing crises to preventing them in the first place. We need to break the cycle of responding too late and too little.

Most of today's conflicts are internal, triggered by competition for power and resources, inequality, marginalisation and sectarian divides. Often, they are inflamed by violent extremism or provide the fuel for it.

Inclusive, sustainable development

The United Nations is committed to working hand-in-hand with partners wherever conflict or the threat of conflict endangers stability and well-being.

But prevention goes far beyond focusing solely on conflict. The best means of prevention and the surest path to durable peace is inclusive and sustainable development.

We can speed progress by doing more to provide opportunities and hope to young people. More than three out of five Africans are under 35 years of age. Making the most of this tremendous asset means more investment in education, training, decent work, and engaging young people in shaping their future.

We must also do our utmost to empower women so they can play a full role in sustainable development and sustainable peace. I am pleased that the African Union has consistently placed a special focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.

I have seen it again and again: when we empower women, we empower the world.

I travelled to Africa as a partner, friend and committed advocate for changing the narrative about this diverse and vital continent. Crises represent at best a partial view. But from a higher platform of cooperation, we can see the whole picture – one that spotlights the enormous potential and remarkable success stories in every corner of the African continent.

With that perspective, I have no doubt we can win the battle for sustainable and inclusive development which are also the best weapons to prevent conflict and suffering, allowing Africa to shine even more vibrantly and inspire the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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