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# Kenya's Foreign Policy Priorities: Peace, Security and Prosperity

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## Introduction

Kenya's prominence in regional mediation and security provision, and its role in championing East Africa's integration for shared economic and security benefits underpin its significant clout in Africa. The country's importance as a partner to non-African countries is increasing, as exemplified by a proliferation of recent high-profile visits from world leaders, and its selection as the location for global events including the latest session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference, and Japan's Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI).

At this event, HE Dr Amina Mohamed discussed Kenya's foreign policy priorities, and assessed the impact of the mutually reinforcing pursuit of peace, security and prosperity on the country's future domestic development and as a member of the international community.

The meeting was held on the record. The following summary is intended to serve as an aide-memoire for those who took part, and to provide a general summary of discussions for those who did not.

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## HE Dr Amina Mohamed

It used to be said that those wanting peace should prepare for war. Yet how suitable is such rhetoric for anyone not living in the Roman Empire? It seems clear in these times that war begets only more war, leaving little opportunity for peace. However, there is also the fact that to a certain extent, war is necessary for the attainment of peace and security. In 1953, Dwight Eisenhower understood this position, and spoke of a war not against people but against the brute forces of poverty and need. Peace and security beaten not by the bearing of arms, but through progress and development. In this way, he highlighted the idea that peace, security and prosperity are mutually reinforcing imperatives. We have seen the link countless times around the world. A breakdown in one of these three leads to failings in the other two. The brute forces of poverty and need will always threaten the security of a people whose progress and prosperity is not prioritized.

Similarly, peace and security are required for prosperity, because in the absence of collective confidence and rule of law, little can be done to enrich a society. This interactive relationship of peace, security and prosperity has spawned several priorities for Kenya. Nationally, the overriding objective of the government is to accelerate economic growth. This is required to meet the basic needs of the country's population. Kenya has a vision, Vision 2030, which aims to achieve an average gross domestic product growth rate of 10 per cent per annum. Such commitments are indicative of the country's informed plans to reform its economic and institutional dynamics.

Deriving from this overriding commitment, Kenya's key foreign policy priorities are driven by strong economic diplomacy. There are three strategic directives in this regard. First, the wish is to promote the country as a favoured destination for foreign direct investment (FDI). Already, Kenya is hosting investment forums and conferencing while also encouraging strong tourism investment. Second, there are concrete efforts to expand the market and demand for Kenya's exports, creating security through mutually beneficial regional and international trade. Third, there is a focus on strengthening economic

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<sup>1</sup> This meeting summary was composed by Patrick J. Kilmartin

communities nationwide, expanding their markets and accelerating growth across the entire region. The latter will complement the first two priorities. It will also set an example for best practice for the rest of the continent. These strategic directives have already been pursued through robust engagements at bilateral, multilateral, regional and international levels.

Kenya is now one of the most favourable investment destinations on the continent, with a growing profile in conferencing and tourism. Meanwhile, there has also been improved access and demand for Kenyan exports. The 2016 African Economic Outlook indicates that Kenya attracted FDI of 190 billion Kenyan shillings, or roughly \$1.9 billion dollars, in 2015 alone. That is an increase of 65 per cent on the previous year. Kenya has also continued to post one of the fastest growth rates on the continent. In 2015 it was 5.6 per cent. It is projected to improve to 5.9 per cent in 2016 and 6.1 per cent in 2017. This puts the country well on track to realize the aforementioned double-digit growth rates by, or even before, 2030.

Tied to this economic diplomacy is the promotion of reforms to Kenya's international trade regime. This foreign policy priority has wide implications for peace, security and prosperity. The population explosion that is the African youth bulge means that the continent is likely to possess the largest labour force in the world by 2040, with an estimated one billion workers. Economies unable to create jobs to accommodate this demand risk levels of unemployment that will almost certainly threaten sustainable peace, security and prosperity. This is a national and international issue. The IMF has stated that, from 2010 to 2035, 18 million new jobs are needed annually to avoid such an outcome. Labour-intensive manufacturing seems to be the only way to do this. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) spent much time in 2015 reporting on the growing of industry through trade. Similarly, the African Union's Agenda 2063 focuses heavily on the roadmap to fast-track industrialization in African economies.

Economic diplomacy, however, does not completely absorb Kenya's foreign policy. Other foreign policy pillars include dealing with the Kenyan diaspora in order to best harness new expertise, experience and knowledge. Another important pillar is environmental diplomacy. Kenya is a key environmental player and has an enormous stake in policies that better manage local and regional resources. It is also the environmental capital of the world, being home to the UN Environmental Programme and the UN Environmental Assembly. Cultural diplomacy is another vital tool for Kenya's foreign policy; utilizing the country's rich heritage helps build platforms for much mutual recognition.

Kenyan government policy in any field will always focus first and foremost on protecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is no different to any country. However, the broad point considering this is that there is also the desire for a broader political stability that will enhance regional peace and security. As before, such an environment seems to be a prerequisite for sustainable prosperity. This is why Kenya has been happy to facilitate South Sudan's state-building and assist with what is largely seen as ongoing political progress. However, from Kenya's point of view, it is paramount that agreed commitments are implemented and move forward. It is also why Kenya has also been a presence in Somalia. Yet again, from Kenya's point of view, while there is willingness to facilitate and assist and contribute to the African Union Mission in Somalia, the timetables for elections must be kept.

The Kenyan government has been working hard to use internal resources and international partnerships to reduce terrorism and radicalization at its roots. For example, this is why it has been announced that the Dadaab camp is being shut down. The result of a tripartite decision between Kenya, the Somali government and the UN High Commission for Refugees, it has been decided that refugee camps like Dadaab are no longer acceptable. This is from both a humanitarian and a security perspective. Voluntary repatriation and a return to AMISOM-liberated areas are planned. Proper homes, health and education

facilities are needed to deliver hope and support to these refugees, and to avoid the kind of disillusionment and anger that has led to the most recent Mombasa police station attacks.

As such, in terms of foreign considerations, the government of Kenya invests as much as 50 per cent of its time dealing with regional peace processes and support, with the other 50 per cent spent on fulfilling the economic needs of, and keeping political promises to, Kenyan citizens. Without such regional considerations, it is likely that the country could otherwise be on a delicate political and economic trajectory, particularly when the international community has been less than ideally responsive, even in terms of fulfilling the pledges it actually has made.

Ultimately, Kenya's foreign policy needs to be firing at home and abroad, such that though Kenya's overarching aim is to safeguard its national interests, the country will continue to engage foreign governments and the international community in its commitment to achieving sustainable peace, security and prosperity for Kenyans and Africa in general.

### Summary of question and answer session

#### Questions

Is a solution to the likes of the Dadaab camp not a better integration policy at home? How is Kenya handling this?

What would the Kenyan government like to hear from and say to the UN regarding the issue of refugees and migration?

It has been claimed that the Kenyan government has ceased registering new refugees in the Dadaab camp. Why is this?

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A huge number of Somalis have been integrated into Kenyan society. In many ways, who has done more than Kenya in this regard? Moreover, such Somalis are increasingly not put in any sort of camps; they are being fully accepted throughout Kenya and this will continue. As alluded to before, it is the international community that needs to do more to follow through and commit to a long-term solution. Kenya respects its international obligations and this includes the integration of refugees.

In terms of the next UN humanitarian conference, Kenya has requests and expectations, but it is hoped that the meeting can be a turning point of sorts for the way that refugees are dealt with globally. It can no longer be accepted that thousands drown in the Mediterranean. We, as a global community, must be able to gather together internationally to do something about this.

It is true that registration has stopped. This is largely due to efforts to verify information and figures on the ground. This is with a view to better integrate and repatriate the current inhabitants. Establishing how many Somalis are actually present is important; so too is understanding what proportion of the camp's residents are from elsewhere. Only then can the resources and procedures be properly apportioned.

#### Questions

With the current corruption reported in South Sudan, what will happen in 2018 if the country does not deliver on its election promises?

South Sudan's leadership has betrayed its people. It has siphoned off funds and it seems clear that the country should be put into trusteeship. What are the speaker's thoughts on this?

What are Kenya's policies to deal with the continuing discrimination against disabled citizens?

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2018 could represent a crisis for South Sudan but it is best to consider these issues one step at a time. There is a peace agreement that is moving forward; this is Kenya's key concern. As such, the government continues to insist on its implementation.

In terms of potential trusteeship, if all struggling states were to be put under trusteeship the global community would be overwhelmed. The government of Kenya and its international partners are committed to the reconciliation and rebuilding of South Sudan.

On the subject of disability, Kenya's new constitution, which was enacted in 2010, is very clear. It prohibits discrimination of any form and champions equal opportunities. For example, seats are reserved for minorities in both the parliament and the senate. Measures such as these are actively securing political and economic equality for Kenya's minorities, including disabled citizens. Such inclusion and representation policies should be emulated regionally and across the continent. When considering that the mutually reinforcing imperatives of peace, security and prosperity must be pursued for all and not just for some, it is clear that such measures are vital.