

'Learn from and work with Africa'

To mark Africa Day today, António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, said all of humanity will benefit by listening, learning and working with the people of Africa.



António Guterres.

This is the full text of Guterres message on this auspicious day for the continent:

"Africa Day 2017 comes at an important moment in the continent's endeavours towards peace, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

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.

Just last month, we held the first-ever United Nations-African Union Annual Conference, a unique opportunity to strengthen our partnership and establish a higher platform of cooperation. Our work is based on four driving principles: mutual respect, solidarity, complementarity and interdependence.

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The UN partnership with Africa is also rooted in 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.

All of humanity will benefit by listening, learning and working with the people of Africa.

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, disrespect for human rights and sectarian divides. Often, they are inflamed by violent extremism or provide the fuel for it.

Sustainable development

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. It is critical to continue building more effective and accountable institutions to address governance challenges, advance the rule of law and promote civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

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.

On this Africa Day, I reaffirm my commitment 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 recognises the enormous potential and remarkable success stories throughout the African continent.”

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