



## Africa: Dynamics of Conflict, Promises of Renaissance

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### **Session I: Historical Roots of Conflicts in Africa**

Did the conflicts that erupted in Africa in the post-independence come as a result of the colonial legacy that divided Africa in an arbitrary manner? Did colonialism contribute to entrenching nationalism in conflicts, greed and attempts to impose homogeneity on societies based on diversity? Or should we understand the historical context in which these conflicts appeared with all its complexity? Therefore it is very important to look at the roots of new and ongoing conflicts from a historical perspective and how the different issues of identity (ethnic, religious, national, political, tribal, etc.) become part of the conflict. On the basis of these questions, this session can be divided into the following topics:

1. Conflicts in post-colonial Africa during the Cold War: The constant and the variable
2. Conflicts in Africa and questions of identity
3. Social and economic factors in the conflicts in Africa
4. The role of local government in conflict in Africa
5. Conflict in Africa and the competition for resources: Water as a case study

### **Session II: Chronic and Emerging Conflicts**

Although progress has been made in resolving several conflicts, some areas in Africa are still witnessing devastating conflicts. Somalia, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo are still living the most destructive and long-running conflicts, while the struggle in Western Sahara is more than a quarter-of-a-century old. Other countries, such as Rwanda, are still traumatized as a result of the heinous genocide of 1994. Sometimes conflicts erupt without warning, as is the case in the Republic of Mali recently. This session will discuss the causes of these conflicts and why all efforts to overcome them have failed:

1. The Darfur crisis: open possibilities
2. The Republic of Congo: a renewed old conflict
3. The crisis in northern Mali and overlapping wills
4. The Western Sahara: winding paths
5. The Somali conflict: the future potentials

### **Session III: Experiences and Approaches in Conflict Resolution**

In the past two decades, several countries managed to settle conflicts through either a radical change of governments by force or through agreement with other powers



within the system (Ethiopia, Uganda and Chad), or through the signing of peace agreements under the supervision of the regional or international mediators (Mozambique, Angola, Sudan, etc.) or through other forms of agreement. This session discusses the successful experiences in conflict resolution and lessons learned from the methods used and how the settlement of those conflicts paved the way for political and economic growth and social development. Among the high-profile cases in the African scene, the following models can be reviewed:

1. African conflicts and the change from the inside (the Ethiopian case)
2. Regional arrangements in African conflicts (Angolan case)
3. Regional and international solutions (Ivory Coast case)

#### **Session IV: International Competition and Conflicts in Africa**

Interference in the African affairs by outsiders did not stop at the old European colonialism. There are now new powers interested in the African situation. The United States has a significant military and strategic presence in the African continent and China is playing a growing role through its projects and economic partnerships. Other countries are also engaged in the African affairs such as Japan, Israel, Turkey and Iran, etc. This session will discuss the international competition in Africa and its link with the old and renewed conflicts there:

1. Entrenching political and cultural influence in Africa
2. Africa's attractive resources and economic potentials
3. Strategic dominance and security policies in Africa

#### **Session V: Africa and the Challenges of Political Reform and the Role of Civil Society**

Since the early 1990s, Africa has witnessed a shift toward democracy, which was in part influenced by the international transformations that came with the end of the Cold War, and partly as a result of the emergence of social and civil movements that preceded the "Arab Spring" adopting a peaceful approach to change. Despite the resistance and obstacles faced by the democratic tide, it evolved into a general trend in the continent, based on the growth of civil society, social movements, political partisan movement and free media. This trend was reinforced by several continental initiatives and the fact that the principles of democracy were embedded and preserved in the work and foundation documents of the African Union. This session will discuss Africa's trend towards reform and the engagement of civil society in public life:

1. Africa's endeavors towards democratic transformation from Obasanjo Initiative to African Union
2. Democratic reform in Africa: Achievements and obstacles
3. Social movements in Africa and their role in the promotion of democracy and conflict resolution



## **Session VI: Africa, the Arab World and the Necessity of Cooperation and Integration**

1. The Arab Spring in African eyes
2. Political Islam in Africa and its role in establishing peace and war
3. Towards a strategic vision for Arab-African relations

## **Closing Session: Recommendations and Conclusions**

The future of reform in Africa

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