

***Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, April 22 (Infosplusgabon) - African countries need integrated efforts to tackle their challenges on issues of peace and security, former president of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama has said at a panel discussion organized under the 7th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa.***

According to Mahama, little has been done in safeguarding peace and security of the continent though one of the major objectives for the establishment of the African Union (AU) was to effectively ensure peace and security of the continent.

“Terrorist organizations like Al-Shabab, Boko Haram and ISIS are vivid manifestations of this,” he pointed out, explaining that such insurgent groups were a result of failure on the part of AU member countries to forge unity of purpose at the desired level.

Mahama said that lack of unity of purpose and concrete coordination among the 55 member states of the AU showed that, although the union could have even been a guarantee for peace and security of other regions of the world, the continent has remained under constant threat from terrorist forces.

He urged African countries to utilize their potential and develop their economies and rid themselves of dependency on the western countries.

The former president of Ghana stressed that institutions of higher learning in Africa should focus on research and studies that would support the continent’s development programmes without the need for interference of other foreign institutions.

“Although Africa has not done enough in promoting peace and security in the continent, encouraging steps have been registered in the promotion of democratic order,” said Mahama, citing the recent transitions of power in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia as encouraging developments of a democratic culture in the continent.

Former Nigerian president and president of Tana Forum, Olusegun Obasanjo, said Africa has everything the continent may need, but lack of meaningful unity and prevalence of disagreements has prevented the continent from using its resources.

Obasanjo stressed that African universities should conduct applicable researches on finding viable solutions to the challenges African countries face in terms of lack of peace and security.

The two-day Forum is being held this weekend in Bahir Dar, capital of northwestern Ethiopia’s Amhara Regional State, under the theme ‘Ownership of Africa’s Peace and Security Provision: Financing and Reforming the African Union’ with the aim of enabling participants to get to the heart of the issue at hand.

According to some experts at this year’s Forum, defence and security services have long been at the exclusive service of ensuring the security of regimes in place, but the challenge today is translating into action the officially stated, yet contradictory in practice, ambitions of many African states to promote both state security and that of the populations they are meant to serve.

They argued that the AU should rely on civil society organizations to help promote an approach to security and governance that focuses on the protection requirements of both citizens and state institutions.

In their view, the challenge is ensuring that the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force enjoyed by states is subject to democratic supervision and citizen control, carried out by civil society organizations in particular.

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