

Third council of home Affairs ministers of the eastern Africa Region

Bwawani hotel, Zanzibar, 22 August 2002

by the president of the united Republic of Tanzania,
his Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa

Speech by the president of the united Republic of Tanzania, his Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa, at the opening Ceremony of the third council of home Affairs ministers of the eastern Africa Region, Bwawani hotel, Zanzibar, 22 August 2002.

Honourable Mohamed Seif Khatib, Minister of Home Affairs of Tanzania;

Honourable Ministers;

Secretary General of INTERPOL, Mr. Ronald K. Noble;

Distinguished Delegates;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I welcome you all to Zanzibar, and I wish you a most fruitful meeting.

Those of you with more than a passing interest in history will recall that for many centuries Zanzibar was one of the most important commercial and cultural centres of Eastern and Central Africa. Zanzibar has been famous as a staging post for explorers - both Christian and Muslim - into the interior of this part of Africa. It was equally famous as a commercial centre and port. Regrettably, it was also infamous for being a major centre for trade in slaves and ivory, and the first port of call for colonisers of the interior. Be that as it may, Zanzibar has a rich, multi-cultural, political and economic history. I hope in your short stay here you will have time to look around, and indulge your sense of history.

In doing so I trust you will be safe and secure and not only because of top-level police presence from the sub-region, but because historically Zanzibar has always had one of the lowest crime rates in our country. The challenge is to keep it at that level in the face of increased global interaction and technological advance.

And that is one of the issues I should like to you about, namely the regionlisation and internationalisation of crime, and hence the imperative to adopt a regional and international approach to fighting crime.

Criminals have little respect for boundaries. Indeed, if we do not co-operate, such boundaries can be a blessing for them. For, then they can commit a crime in one country, and enjoy the proceeds of their criminal conduct in what they see as the relative safety of another country. Crimes like drug trafficking, **motor vehicle theft, cattle rustling, counterfeit currency**, and peddling of small arms have

developed a distinct regional character, requiring regional initiatives to deal with them. It is futile for the Police Force of one country to launch a crackdown on these kinds of crime if the concerned criminals can feel safe once they cross the border into a neighbouring country.

It is, therefore, important for police agencies in our sub-region to embrace regional cooperation in fighting crime, not as an option, but as an absolute imperative. In fact, our police agencies must go beyond nominal institutional relations to co-ordination of efforts, sharing of information, exchanging experiences, laying out joint strategies and, where necessary even conduct joint trans-border operations.

The institutional framework for such co-operation are already in place, or are at various stages of taking shape. This East African Community provides one framework. This council of Ministers is another framework that should provide political commitment, vision and leadership towards a regional approach to the war on crime. And, the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs' Conference Organisation (EAPCCO) provides the technical framework to make higher levels of co-operation a reality.

I hope this meeting will reinforce the political commitment and will be cooperate, and even go beyond that. You also have to consider certain preconditions for successful deeper co-operation. It is good to share experience, it is even more important to share best practices. Joint training programmes can be helpful; so can uniform standards and application of codes of conduct among police agencies. Deeper co-operation to the level of joint operations presupposes mutual trust and confidence. And this hinges upon the quality of training each country's Police Force gets, and uniform professional conduct and ethical behaviour. Any doubts about the professional integrity of another country's police agencies will seriously damage the foundations of co-operation, of sharing information, and of conducting joint operations.

There are also other requirements for successful co-operation beyond the realm of your mandates. The determination and actions of policy makers, politicians, legislators, governments and other decision makers also have an important bearing on successful co-operation within the framework of the EAPCCO. Conditions need to be created and sustained, and operational - put in place to enable law enforcement agencies to discharge their functions effectively both within each country and collectively as a region.

I am gratified to hear that you are already considering the possibility of drawing up protocols to facilitate the co-operation of law enforcement agencies in our region. That is a correct step, in a correct direction. I encourage you to proceed faster towards that goal.

Mr. Chairman,

I also believe that law enforcement agencies can only be effective and efficient if they enjoy the trust, confidence and support of the citizens they are there to serve. All crimes, whether municipal or trans-national, targeted ultimately at human beings. It is the citizens who are the ultimate victims of crime, and hence they are the most important stakeholders in the fight against crime. In addition, they are likely to have useful information about criminals, because such criminals normally live and operate in society, not in a world of their own. Citizens can, therefore, play a crucial role in the fight against crime. It is in your interest, and that of society as a whole, that they do so. For, clearly the war on crime and criminals cannot be fought and won by the Police Officers and constables alone. The eyes and ears of the citizens, and of civil society at large, are key inputs for success, and should be involved through various community based initiatives.

But, as I said, citizen participation is predicated on the integrity and professional conduct of law enforcement agencies. The people must be comfortable in dealing with the Police. For that to happen, the police and other law enforcement agencies must earn the trust, confidence, support and respect of the people. A police Force that is not courteous to the people; that abuses human rights; that is corrupt and prone to reveal names of informers or tip off criminals on whom information is volunteered, will never earn the respect and co-operation of citizens.

A dishonest Police Officer will most likely harm the reputation of the entire police force. For, people tend to generalise, like the fellow who was found guilty of robbery and sent to jail. A visitor to the prison asked him, "And you always did your daring robberies single-handed? Why didn't you have a pal?"

To which the prisoner replied, "Well, Sir, I was afraid he might turn out to be dishonest."

Mob justice may very well be the people's reaction to what they perceive, rightly or wrongly, to be police or judicial dishonesty. So they would rather dispense their own version of justice "single-handedly", than involve the police and the judiciary for fear they might be dishonest. But this is neither right, nor healthy.

Clearly our countries also need citizen friendly Police Forces and law enforcement agencies. We need Police Forces that **know** and **respect fully** the rights of citizens. I have noted, with satisfaction, that the EAPCCO is already taking initiatives in that direction. I encouraged and ask you to make this matter one of your priorities in the years ahead.

Mr. Chairman

I am pleased that the Secretary General of INTERPOL Mr. Ronald Noble, could join you here in Zanzibar. I should like to acknowledge the important contribution made by this international organisation in the global fight against crime. His presence illustrates an abiding commitment to support, and work with, our sub-regional organisation, EAPCCO. We look forward to continue co-operation and support from INTERPOL in all aspects of the national, regional and international war on crime.

For, crime is a universal phenomenon, and law-abiding citizens the world over can only live peace and security when crime is fought, not just at national and regional levels, but also at the global level as well.

For two days, either this week, I chaired a National Dialogue on the Social Dimension of Globalisation. One of the negative aspects of globalisation discussed was the globalisation of crime, fuelled by the use and abuse of technology, including Information and Communications Technologies (ICT).

A case in point is terrorism, which is riding the wave of the ICT revolution and globalisation in general. On 7 August 1998 people with an axe to grind with the United States of America decided to blow up American Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. As a result more Kenyans and Tanzanians died, or were wounded, than Americans. More Kenyan and Tanzania property was destroyed than American. Likewise, on 11 September 2001. Many non-Americans died in the World Trade Centre Twin Towers in New York, and in the planes that were hijacked and crashed that day. Such event could only be staged and synchronised the way they were using modern technology, including ICT.

Secondly, the terrorist acts showed, once again, that no one is safe, and no one is immune. Rich or poor, developed or developing, we are all vulnerable and must work together to contain and eliminate the scourge of terrorism. We must also, within each country, promulgate the policies and legislation that can effectively deal with new aspects of such crimes, as a complement to the various international treaties, conventions and protocols adopted by the United Nations in that regard. Our law enforcement agencies also need regular training and retraining if they are to keep pace with the speed at which criminals use modern technology for criminal purposes.

But it is equally important that richer countries spend more resources to train and equip the police Forces of poor countries. For the work they will do will serve the security interests not only poor countries, but of rich ones as well.

Mr. Chairman,

Another case in point is the problem of drugs and drug trafficking. Whereas the Eastern Africa region was in the past a mere transit zone for drugs destined for Europe and other parts of the world, today things are different. Our young people, the very resource we need in our efforts to eradicate poverty are

becoming consumers of drugs. The eradication of poverty requires sharp brains, healthy bodies and hard work by all able-bodied individuals, especially the youth. If our young people are allowed to sink into the abyss of drug abuse our poverty eradication efforts will be held back. We need, therefore, to think seriously about the problem of drug abuse and enlist the collective efforts of all stakeholders at all levels in dealing with it.

Another problem, which is of concern to our people in this region, is trafficking in illicit firearms. The Great Lakes region, in particular, has suffered a lot from this phenomenon. The presence of small arms has not only fuelled civil strife, but it has also caused some parts of this region to succumb to anarchy and lawlessness for long periods. The case of Somalia easily comes to mind, and we all know the extent of suffering which has been unleashed on the people of that country.

Elsewhere in this region the presence of illicit firearms has likewise fuelled civil strife, causing loss of innumerable lives, not to mention the destruction of property, the fledgling infrastructure and other resources that are necessary for human development. This region can ill afford conflicts and civil strife. Efforts being made to stem the spread of illicit arms, therefore, need all the support we can muster.

It is also true that weapons used in civil strife and other wars often filter into the entire region, ending up in the hands of local bandits and criminals. I speak from experience because it has been established that many of the small arms used in criminal activities in Tanzania originate from refugee camps or conflict areas in the Great Lakes Region. I am sure some of the small arms used in the civil war in Somalia or Sudan find their way into Kenya or Uganda. It is, therefore, important to put more effort in the resolution of conflicts in our region so as to cut off the supply of illicit firearms to our countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me, in conclusion, stress that for poor countries like ours the war on crime is more than an effort to ensure our people live in peace and security, and that their property is safe. Crime poses a threat to our efforts at poverty reduction. Persistent criminality destabilises communities and disrupts production efforts and processes. It portrays a bad image of our communities, societies and nations. And, as you all know stories on committed crime spread faster than stories on success in combating crime. Stories on crime are a god send to many journalists and publishers of newspapers or owners of other forms of media. And for poor countries like ours, countries that need to attract Foreign Direct Investment and tourists, the last thing we need is bad publicity, which crime readily and effectively provides.

So as you go about your work as law enforcement agencies, do not think of yourselves only in the traditional role of law and order, but also as important players in the war on poverty, in attracting investments to our countries, and in the promotion of tourism.

You have an important task, you need to work together to realise it, and you can count on the support of the Heads of State and Government of our sub-region.

It now gives me great pleasure to declare the Third Council of Ministers of Home Affairs in the Eastern Africa Region open.

I thank you for your kind attention.