

**REPUBLIC OF NIGER**  
**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC**  
**CABINET OFFICE**

**ADDRESS BY H.E. THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AT THE  
FORUM ON PEACE, SECURITY, AND DEVELOPMENT**

**July 2012**

Honorables Deputies of Parliament,

Honorable Cabinet Ministers,

Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and Representatives of International Organizations,

The Honorable Governor of the region of Diffa,

The Honorable Chairman of the Diffa Regional Council,

The Honorable Chairman of the Zinder Regional Council,

Honorable Prefects,

Honorable Mayors, Regional and Municipal Counselors,

Honorable Traditional Chiefs and Religious Leaders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure for me to be with you here in Diffa, under such special circumstances for the political and economic future of our country.

The forum on peace, security and development which brings us together today is to my mind an extremely important event. Since I took office, seeking and strengthening peace has been of constant concern for me. I have insisted that everywhere in our country, this subject should be at the center of actions taken by the Government, convinced as I am that nothing sustainable can be constructed without peace and security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The region of Diffa that welcomes us today is rich in history and culture. For centuries, along with the region of Agadez, Diffa has been the passageway for African trade headed towards the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Guinea, open onto an enormous space stretching from the Nile to the Senegal River valley.

It was a stakeholder in the Bornuan culture which Africa is so proud of today. It was the melting pot of a brilliant civilization which we can still see the marks of through the fantasias, these beautiful parades of riders mounted on richly harnessed horses. And we all remember the famous sounds of the *algaita* [reed wind instrument], of the voices of these outstanding singers which give rise to so many emotions.

In a way, these references from the past bring us back to our concern of the moment, building a country founded on peace and national unity.

The region of Diffa was also able to attract a number of communities which live peaceably together today, and who have been able to weave very solid ties throughout history, cemented by a tolerant Islam brought by scholars well known for their knowledge and wisdom throughout the region, such as Ibrahim Muhammad, nicknamed Al Kanemi, born in Bilma in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and who visited Morocco and Muslim Spain. We all recall that Islam has flourished here since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, thus for more than one thousand years. We should also note the international reputation of the Islamic University of Koulam Bardo in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This Islam, so well symbolized by the figure of Muhammad al-amin al-Kanemi, founder of the Kanem Borno in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is characterized by the spirit of tolerance that it promoted. The exchange of correspondence with Sokoto is a good example, revealing a vision of Islam open to the world, and which provides a source of inspiration for us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This region, so charming, is recognized as a region rich in diversity: Diversity of ways of life and production which allow nomads and sedentary populations to live side by side; the crossroads of meetings and economic integration because of the existence of Lake Chad where we are associated with Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon through the Lake Chad Basin Commission, of which I am currently chairman. In this role, I would like to reaffirm our collective commitment to

ensure the peace and security of this region. Thus, our country will fulfill its commitments with respect to the establishment of a joint multinational force to secure the thirty (30) million inhabitants living in the Lake Chad basin. I would express the hope that the Commission will be an asset for development in the Diffa region because of the potential represented by the resources that each of its member states bring to the common task of regional integration.

Your region is the cradle of extensive natural resources: significant agricultural resources because of the potential of the land such as Mamouri, and water resources provided particularly Komadougou Yobé and Lake Chad; animal resources with livestock impressive in its beauty and number; rich biodiversity which must be protected at all costs; natural resources, including oil, which today represent a major asset in the development strategy of our country.

But it is important to constantly bear in mind that all of this wealth and the development prospects that it offers is of significance only if we are able to make this region in particular, and our country in general, a haven of peace, where life is good, where we can invest free of fear and prosper through our work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government has established a policy of redistribution of wealth resulting from the exploitation of petroleum resources so that they may not engender the same curse as elsewhere. In this respect, I confirm that the regions will continue to benefit from measures under the law that retrocedes to them 15% of the revenue resulting from the exploitation of natural resources. The Diffa region will benefit from these measures, which will allow it access to significant financial resources and investments substantial enough to guarantee its own development.

I place much hope in these redistribution policies which should allow us to improve the standard of living of the population. Among the immediate positive effects of oil, and in addition to direct job creation, we can mention the official kickoff, this very day, of work on

the road connecting Diffa to the Chad border. Along with the oil route, this road will be a tool to opening up the region and a factor in the development and modernization of the entire region. The completion of this road includes two sections: Diffa-N'Guigmi, which represents an investment in refurbishing the road; and the section N'Guigmi to the Chad border, which is an investment in development and the pursuit of the project of the unity road initiated several decades ago by President Diori Hamani (peace be upon his soul). On the Chadian side of the border, the entire segment of road between N'Djamena and the Niger border is to be paved. Little by little will come the day when the Nigerien pilgrim will be able to carry out his religious obligations in his car, by road and boat. I have asked the CNPC [China National Petroleum Corporation] to complete 15 km of paved road in the cities of Diffa, Mainé Soroa, N'Guigmi, which will bring the total length of work completed up to 200 Km. Furthermore, I have asked the CNPC to begin without further delay studies for paving the oil route, Dirkou-Bilma-Agadem-N'Gourti-N'Guigmi.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Above and beyond the economic interest, this infrastructure has a prominent political objective, that is, to strengthen the unity of our country and ensure peace herein.

The importance of national unity and peace does not need to be proven, especially in this region of Diffa which was so battered by an armed rebellion with disastrous consequences. Let us thank God that our country today has been able to establish the bases for a renewed unity and peace that we must protect at all costs. This is a concern which should be the focal point of this forum, and you should give it the full attention it deserves.

Our country enjoys an historical dividend of secular relations shared by all segments of Nigerien society. These relations are resources to be capitalized on and to cultivate. They should be jealously protected with the greatest attention, for they make up the founding bases of our country.

I will be vigilant to ensure that national unity be based also on republican values, such as institutionalized in our constitution and on our desire to live together to found a community which cherishes to the highest level the values of liberty, justice, equality and solidarity, values which give the same chance to all Nigerien children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today our country can boast of having established a solid institutional system, which we must put to good use in the possibilities it provides to all in the quest for a sustainable peace. It is for this reason that the Deputies, the Government, local elected officials, traditional chiefs and religious leaders, and all opinion leaders are committed to this work at the national level. The High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace and the Commission for Surveillance and Collection of Illegal Arms are accomplishing an outstanding job of prevention and clean up.

Through the establishments of districts and regions, our decentralization policy is enabling population to manage their affairs at the local level.

Furthermore, the Government is endeavoring to make its presence felt everywhere by establishing a policy which will allow it to provide better support for populations in all regions of the country. It is in this light that the creation of the new administrative divisions should be seen. The Government is also working to establish basic social services, particularly those related to education, health and water. I am convinced that this continuity of public service and its accessibility to all and everywhere in the country are an indispensable condition for national unity and peace. Good governance, advocated by the renaissance program and which is in the process of being promoted in all sectors, will certainly contribute to this end.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I also know that the beginning of the rainy season marks a volatile period during which land issues take on a contentious nature. I invite

administrative and legal officials to show the use of judgment in dealing with and managing issues of pasturage, access to water holes, and access to land, particularly in the Lake Chad bed. These are the main sources of conflict in the Diffa region. To better manage these conflicts, I recommend that we increase inter-community dialogue by further involvement of our religious leaders and traditional authorities who are guardians of the values of secular cohesion which allow us to strengthen the Nigerian social fabric despite the multiple crises of these past decades. I would note that the recommendations of the regional meeting on security organized by the Governate with the support of the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace in March 2012, as well as the study on the threats and vulnerability to conflicts in the region in 2011, also identified the porosity of the border, criminality, and the circulation of illegal fire arms as factors aggravating the conflicts in the Diffa region. Furthermore, religious extremism, which leads to violence, betrays our notion of Islam which is a religion of peace. This phenomenon should be of concern to Niger in its policy aimed at strengthening peace.

In addition to all of these factors are the vestiges of the Libyan crisis with its consequences, particularly on the increased circulation of weapons of war. All of these issues require a greater mobilization of our defense and security forces and the involvement of administrative and traditional authorities in raising the awareness of the population. I would like to reaffirm the firm policy of the government to make the State the sole law enforcement body. As I noted in Arlit, a lawless society with no judicial system leads to the law of the jungle and anarchy. In such a society, there is no security, not even for the strongest. I therefore encourage administrative authorities to support the efforts of the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace and the Commission for Surveillance and Collection of Illegal Arms in carrying out their missions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The principle objective of the Diffa Forum is to strengthen peace and establish conditions for sustainable development in your region. It is bringing together all actors capable of achieving this objective through a concerted and coordinated approach.

With respect to the quality of the participants, I have no doubt whatsoever that your reflections and discussions will lead to relevant and realistic proposals for actions to make your region an example for the rest of the nation.

LONG LIVE NATIONAL UNITY!

LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.