



Welcoming Speech by Lt Gen (Ret) TT Matanzima

SA Military Ombud

Africa Day Symposium

31 October 2018

Minister of Defence Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula

Chief CSANDF General Solly Shoke

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

All representatives from government institutions and academics

Defence Attaches

Distinguished Guests

Distinguished academics and speakers

Members of the Media in our midst

All Protocol Observed

It is a privilege and honour to address you today. Today marks a significant day in the history of African Ombuds institutions, as we seek to initiate the dialogue on what is the best form of institutional protection of fundamental human rights within the military.

This is indeed an opportune time to take stock and chart the way forward to enhancing the narrative in our collective capacity to achieve the shared goals of broadening the discourse of oversight of the armed force in African continent.

In this regard, we have enlisted the educated opinion of prominent speakers, ombudspersons and academics that are well conversant with the topics and global events relevant to this symposium.

The broader objective of this symposium is to discuss the current and future context issues in Africa, the role of our Armed forces and how its oversight can be enhanced. Furthermore, the discussion will attempt to map out the way forward and explore the possibilities of how the creation of regional and multilateral partnerships can aid in enhancing oversight.

In this light, the risks of vulnerability in Africa are most placed within the maladministration of the military. And this translates to the tension between the need for a long term strategic vision and the reality of short term mandating visions and budget cycles.

Ineptness cannot slow down the quest to create institutional innovations that can help build more peace and development for a better world to live in. In my forays in many military bases, locally and regionally, I have witnessed human and administrative abuses. Be they overt or covert, the challenge lies in the lack of legal knowledge by both the perpetrator and the victim within the administrative machinations of the militaries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My recent visit to the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the SADC Secretariat has amplified these concerns. Chief amongst the concerns raised by the AU Peace and Security Ambassador was the need promotion and encouragement of oversight and democratic

practices, good governance and the rule of law. Time does not permit me to delve deeper into the intricacies of the discussions.

However, the overriding concern does exist in the quest to professionalize our armed forces in order to eradicate the incubation of civil unrest and conflict in Africa. The question that must be asked is, *“What role should Ombuds institutions play in the pursuit of peace keeping and protection of human rights in the military in the African continent?”*

One sure vehicle that can be employed to counter such a malady is the establishment of an ombud organisation that is dedicated to address complaints and grievances of serving members of the military. Such an institution already exists in South Africa. I have had the honour of establishing as the first Ombud to serve. One of the key legislative mandate of our office is to promote the observance of fundamental human rights within the military.

Through the education and outreach campaigns, I have had the opportunity to interact directly with members of the Armed forces. The number of complaints about alleged human rights abuses and unfair labour practises points to a need for an effective independent institutional and regulatory framework to address such grievances. I am aware that other SADC countries such as Botswana are in the process of establishing a similar body.

The establishment of independent Ombud institutions for the military is a proposition that I hope, will robustly be discussed here today.

As we lay the basis for the discussions for further improvements in the cooperation, coordination and oversight of the armed forces of Africa, we should be cognisant of the joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, co-signed by the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission in April 2017. This is a shining example of global collaboration for peaceful means.

Ladies and gentlemen

The UN-AU pact will cease to function if the organizational reforms of the armed forces are not driven by the existing ombudsman organisations in Africa. This pact will primarily render human and financial resources but the ombudsman preserves the onus of sound administration and accountability.

In order to attain the African Dream, AU’s Agenda 2063 and “Silencing the Guns” flagship project of Agenda 2063, intensive and robust oversight of the armed forces in Africa must be the reality of the day.

We, indeed, need to work collaboratively to mediate the armed forces problems.

Implementing full scale oversight over the armed forces in Africa will be dependent on the following conditions:

1. Enhancements and clarity of regional mechanisms cooperation and security architecture.
2. National and local ownership. There exists the need to combat maladministration and democratise the armed forces.

3. The existing ombudsman, irrespective of their different mandates, should support a transformative process. This will in essence require the oversight of leadership and management skills without undermining the channels of command.
4. The need to support good governance, democratization, security sector reform and development initiatives by the ombudsman organizations.
5. A comprehensive approach to oversight over the African armed forces. This is inclusive of sub-regional organizations, states and communities in Africa.
6. There should be focus and emphasis on learning lessons and identifying best practices in the past, current and context-specific in line with transition in line with what is universally best for oversight of the African armed forces.
7. The Ombudsman institutions should aspire creating greater coherence and Global partnerships commitments with a focus on Africa's armed forces at local, national and international levels in order to exploit the advantage of synergetic approaches to sustain proper administration and professionalizing of the armed forces.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen

As we are about to embark on the discussions of the day, let us rededicate ourselves to the realization of the African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force, not only militarily.

I am confident that this conference will contribute to the different ombudsman efforts at advancing efforts of oversight over the armed force in Africa.

I thank you.