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Fireside Chat with [Monica Juma](#)

[Monica Juma](#), National Security Advisor to the President of the Republic of Kenya

Moderator: [Sarah Smith](#), North America Editor, BBC News

Sarah Smith

It's an honor and a pleasure to be here at Aspen. And I know we're all going to have a great time for the next few days and fascinating 30 minutes ahead of us because it really is fantastic to be able to welcome Dr. Monica Juma as Anya said she's held many posters in the Kenyan government and also had a distinguished career as an international diplomat and would appear to be a great survivor because you were defense minister under the previous President Kenyatta and now you're a national security adviser to the incoming president William Ruto. And they weren't on the same side in this election. So how did you manage to make the transition?

Monica Juma

Well, thank you very much, Sarah. And I just want to thank the organizers for inviting me the first time a Kenyan is sitting in Aspen. At least in this beautiful part of the world. Distinguished for the first time I saw just two as we were students of international relations, so thank you very much. Sarah, I should go to the President. And I don't think it's unusual.

Sarah Smith

Just how much difference will it make to international relations with Kenya to US relations with Kenya, this change of presidency that was widely celebrated last year when there was a peaceful transfer of power after a pretty narrow election, William Ruto took over the presidency, will that involve any significant change for the US and other Kenyans?

Monica Juma

Well, the challenge has been that we are on a road to deepening that relationship and do I think we're lucky to have so we've had a lot of engagement is presented. So we are pleased that it's the continuation in terms of nurturing that relationship within a very structured very strong bilateral strategic dialogue. We define how across several sectors security, the economy, trade and investment and people to people relations. So we are seeing Greta ratio negotiations.

Sarah Smith

And of course, Kenya has long been a US ally. It's the most stable democracy in East Africa with a dynamic and growing economy, all of which is incredibly positive, but at the same time, surrounded by

potentially devastating conflicts and dealing with the terrible effects of a very severe drought throughout the region. Threatening up to 20 million people with hunger over the coming years, which also demonstrates the climate vulnerability that Kenya is facing. So it's so long and rather than depressing lives, but if you had to pick a security challenge today one

Monica Juma

well like most of the world, of course, terrorism is one of the biggest issues we have next to us. And a growing network and in a situation of fragility and threat to set a lapse in the neighborhood, that has the potential to provide environmental recruiting, training for tourist actions, so top of my head.

Sarah Smith

And also about operating in Somalia. Obviously, there are Kenyan troops there at the moment of our international force to try and capture. The troops are being withdrawn and other 3000 on leave by the end of September. They will be completely withdrawn by the end of 2020. There are some insights Molly a warning that they think the country is not ready. Do you think Somali defense forces are ready to take on this challenge?

Monica Juma

It's a big challenge and Somalia has been around for more than three decades. So the threat in terms of capabilities has been a lot of discussions. Neither here with me but this is a live fire on the UN Security Council. Those of us here are arching and encouraging that this withdrawal we condition but we have also been calling for cooperation and restraint. So when you have resting This is really crucial. Because if we don't have an acetate that can provide public safety and security that can provide a social services that can take away and recover the population from the grip of the ashram. Then all the investments you've made in the last couple of years could be lost just by that withdrawal. And that is why we've been making contact to try and think through what has to be isolation program for Somalia. We believe it's not expensive to live in. And part of it is really to boost and provide some good points for state capability.

Sarah Smith

So what would you be asking of anybody you meet here in order to help provide that because of course, Al Shabaab have lots of tanks inside Kenya. These are games of operating internationally, they pose a threat beyond their own borders. What would you be asking the international community to do to try and prepare for this moment at the end of 2024 when the international forces will

Monica Juma

be doing well, the first one is really to provide resources as somebody operations support very good support. On the stabilization can take part in terms of sectors. For example, it is crucial that the state has the capacity to hold territories. There has been a lot of focus towards creating the national with all sorts of challenges that some of us feel existing policing functions, administrative functions, ability to provide a primary health care ability to ensure that schools can function markets, functions, capacity to collect manufacturers because we don't leave them off. immediately that it is possible to have a program

where the neighboring state, for example, can offer and we have to absorb our institutions to improve the capacity of functioning that can actually undertake all these functions. And as I've said it is not too expensive, but it is something it's a conversation that you're not getting a lot of traction.

Sarah Smith

That's becoming more urgent, presumably as you're looking at 18 months hence what could be a very dangerous situation and it's becoming very urgent. It's a big it's very important investment in Securities Investment of our people, and countries. So it is an adjective. We also believe that there is potential as a terrorist organization that can really deliver to a lot of challenges when violence erupts to Somalia. So, within that Roku, we've been for a long time campaigning on things so that we can all deploy in a range of instruments that influence what we return

Sarah Smith

in the UK defense secretary Ben Wallace is about to leave his post which always means people can be a little bit more outspoken when they're when they're leaving a job and he said the other day that one of his biggest fears for International Security is the UK and Anna is being drawn into a shooting war in Africa, as Al Qaeda or affiliates like Al Shabaab are threatening the future. of nation states. And he said he was particularly worried about Somalia. Is that an exaggerated fear that Western allies could be drawn into a shooting war in Africa because of what's

Monica Juma

happening? Well, unfortunately, it's not very far away. Of what is happening. It's also can reach out here very quickly. So

Sarah Smith

do you think the US is paying attention to this,

Monica Juma

the US has been paying very close attention to with the US, but I think we need a global view. For example, we don't feel that look at the region. There is a tendency to focus on country by country by the threats if you look at them. So we are looking at conflict for patients. We are looking at risk portfolios that are related to one another across the US. So we're talking about countries that will be also talking about the integration, so that you can look at the Indian Ocean rate as a part of that theater of interest.

Sarah Smith

You mentioned Sudan, which we shouldn't talk about as well, but you clearly understand what you're saying. So in Somalia, you have Islamic terrorist insurgency in Sudan. What's happened in the last four months is quite different. You have an attempted coup going on there with a paramilitary force taking on the government. What are the what's the commonality there that you're talking about that we should see it more holistically,

Monica Juma

what we have seen with terrorism. Take advantage of crisis. So when you have a threat, especially the one that where the state is actually under the threat of of good nutrition, where in fact we are having fight all the way to maintain a healthy national force that is not necessarily under the rules. We are seeing our appetite to create groups there. We know we have the Central African Republic is fragile. We know there is a connection tell you how to run a big and so I think we have to look at this as negative theaters and all the all the time these actors are throwing each other that is in terms of ideology where they are fighting forces, and where they relaxed last two attack countries.

Sarah Smith

We have a very well connected very well informed audience here so I'm sure they know just how awful if if you can sit down has been UN Secretary General say that they're on the brink of a full scale Civil War. Their report is that the rapid support forces want to achieve instead of those who are taking

Monica Juma

well I don't know what is a serious composition

Monica Juma

to watch out for as it seems to us, when you look at today, you begin to recall the sales in 2003. So I think we need to pay close attention to that and I think this country can not forget that the journey to 911. So I think it's very cool.

Sarah Smith

Tried 20 years since we were talking about genocide in Darfur, and at that time there's been a UN Mission in Sudan and African Union Mission. How has it come to the point where things are almost as bad now as they were 20 years?

Monica Juma

I think it is proof that we didn't do our jobs, right? Something your mission and UN mission team 16 billion US dollars down the line. If you're talking about villages being down more than 270 refugees in chat 10s of 1000s in South Sudan actually threatening another very fragile country. And same with CR Egypt facing the same situation. It seems to me that there was something really new right, and I think the big question is what went wrong and how can we engage in a manner that doesn't take us another decade? And what do you think that Well, first of all, I think there has been a lot of impunity, and we have to pay attention to people.

Monica Juma

And a lot of times when you listen to me, there is not clarity, falling out because we're not just having cities destroyed. We are having more influence we are having killed, industrial we are having villages raised so but we haven't had the have intelligence, in fact, abstracted a process towards exploration. We are focusing on a lot of conversations. I think we need to focus on the exploration of the subtleties.

Sarah Smith

Talking about the generals know and accountability general Hamilton, the leader of the RSF. He was warned by the United States that he would face consequences if he tried to seize power in Sudan. And nothing has happened. There have been no sanction, no attempt to punish him for doing exactly what he was warned not to do. That's why Senator Chris Coons is urging a comprehensive set of sanctions should be completed but the Biden administration doesn't seem ready to

Monica Juma

do that. When we didn't answer for

Sarah Smith

you, but what do you think about the fact that there have been no consequences?

Monica Juma

What I can say from Nairobi is definitely a crisis. Because it's not one of the number of questions and the first thing that we need to do is to come up with most places. So a situation where we cannot resolve the first crisis that is art so compositions.

Monica Juma

We have thought ating material, security assets to make sure that systems are set up over responsibility for a number of animals and much more Chang has been dealing with these emissions difficulties. So there needs to be some serious compensation to demand observation or at least an international event that we cannot get this done. So that the humanitarian action secondly, is that it is absolutely essential that the world comes to an end. If this country is going to do that. That is why we really need it was important.

Monica Juma

So that it can allow recovery organization properly. But the fat very what is the political process in which in fact we know that we will have to clearly define this was supported by us we need to be set to it. There's not a lot of there's a lot of debate because the two sides do not like this idea of Catholic church, but this is

Monica Juma

we take the view from any of these issues should be taken up on how they can reinforce one another. One doesn't

Sarah Smith

extend his candidacy itself as a regional leader when it comes to these kinds of things. We only get the most stable democracy that was a prosperous country in the region. Is it your responsibility to get involved in each one of these complex to try and find some kind of resolution?

Monica Juma

Choice administration feels they have a duty. So we have offered ourselves the President is chairing that. He has been in a good budget. And I think we are not moving but I think there is an agreement around trying to end this conflict resolution process

Sarah Smith

of wider international relations Kenya, like a lot of Africa, is being wooed, I would say quite heavily by the US at the moment. America's making a huge effort in Africa, President Biden himself said he's all in on Africa, all in with Africa. But is this nakedly transparent is that the reason this effort has been made in Africa is to counter Chinese influence in the Global South. Doesn't matter why it is that the US is trying to establish better relations putting in more when they pay more attention to Africans?

Monica Juma

Well, I think the US effort is an honor is joining us has a long history with many countries on the continent. I think any wing of Africa at this time is right. Strategic issues and let me just speak to climate. If we are going to move I think the best way to do this is to look at because you're looking at the diversified set of resources that are critical, whether you're talking about minerals, but they're talking about renewable energy, or whether you're talking about the carbon so it is rational to look at Africa in tax reduction if you're talking about trade and investment you're talking about your return is 1.2 and they'll be both people so it's a big market and it provides the opportunity both for the continued but also for America region that wishes to engage for investment bankers marketing, so I don't think it's about winning. It's about looking at opportunities and trying to do it.

Sarah Smith

Again, it looks as though it's pivoting away from China a bit at the moment billions of dollars were spent building infrastructure projects that were led by China but now you're you're trapped with that debt as global interest rates are rising. The President Ruto said he won't be looking for Chinese investment for any war projects like this deployment, you're welcoming in the Americans. Is that a political pivot or is that just a coincidence that

Monica Juma

that's happening? Well, it's it's been from mounting that you have a huge debt you need to deal with it. And that's not just a Kenyan problem, I think it's a global statistics are everywhere. So I think what we are doing is, we are looking at what are the next steps, we are making very tough decisions. Very, very tough decision because he has pronounced himself around reducing growing in terms of climate action is being referred to arguing for the architecture because there should not be a contradiction between responding to crisis emergencies, undeveloped, mutually exclusive, and it is possible to go on the green growth path. Without necessarily I'm not sure we can do it. On our balance sheet. It is not possible not to be the current infrastructure, financing infrastructure that we are having. So I think it's a matter of looking at the moment in history and asking the questions. Do we have the infrastructure to respond to the current challenges in the context of answering that will take you to a different place in terms of tinting the infrastructure of development.

Sarah Smith

And it does feel as though we're at a major tipping point or inflection point, globally, and we know the Biden administration as nails come as irrelevant to the mess over Ukraine but internationally saying that they're worried about the rise of autocracy and very ready to support and defend democracy. What does that mean for Kenya in your region?

Monica Juma

Well, for Kenya, it's very clear what it means. We see our future and our prosperity. And I have been writing but we also know that we cannot realize that prosperity as an island, and so the region and the fragility in the region is not a good thing. And so there is need to engage that is part of why we are engaged in the region to try and contribute to the pursuit of peace and security, but also to contribute to one democratic practices of governance and so we open collaboration. But I think this has got to be contextualized global democracy isn't that us? We have to ask fundamental questions around how a democracy will be linked to life. How can we how can we engage in development? Planning is a fundamental question around how

Sarah Smith

The democratic proponents would assume that you describe come up with a democracy we are saying that it cannot be taken for granted and people need to be incentivized to understand the value of the democracy.

Monica Juma

I think that is true and let me just connect with in relation to what you asked me what is just risk terrorism. We have seen terrorism terrorist agents, take advantage of democratic racism protected Pratik spaces, schools, churches to recruit, to train to deploy. So how do we protect these spaces so that the freedom of various worship protection of various needs for NCDs for CTS aims to be similar? We are having a young population drive development jobs, you know, because if you don't do that, these young people become ready to be to be guns, sales and sales and things like that. So we have to be conscious. Otherwise, we run the risk of having growth rates that do not translate.

Sarah Smith

You identify terrorists as the greatest problem now that the region is already suffering the drought that we already mentioned as a result of climate change and decades, drive the worst in four decades. With the movements of people with me reach a point where actually climate change

Monica Juma

is a global threat to us in terms of emissions. It really doesn't matter that America's emissions of Europe because the quality of life, the meeting to be really not within the urgency that science tells us we have to be in so climate crisis is a threat. It is impacting security, it is impacting the ability of countries to drive development because when you start transferring your money from your development if it is not buying which means that you don't have security, it means you run into emergency situation it means you cannot service your density also put a lot of pressure on your physical space density translated to it's not

just for the individuals but for country.

Sarah Smith

We know that's a very real coming through and I feel that we've probably thoroughly depressed everybody on this opening night without with a runaround all of all of these very, very worrying and conflicts and problems which feels unfair because Kenya is really a remarkable success story in the region as well.

Monica Juma

This was like Anya said when we started, not meant to depress anyone. Let me turn it around. Let me turn it around in this region, in spite of all of all that we are having There are a lot of possibilities of possibilities. In terms of climate action, I have said we are sitting in a region of diversified assets, ready that can actually be invented upon to reduce both emission in terms of decarbonisation, but also to build resilience in these countries to provide what you're talking about whether it is job opportunities, whether it is in terms of quality of life, food security, and so on. But I'm also sitting in a country where we believe in digital transformation. And here is another area not just for this continent just not just for Kenya in terms of the possibility for transforming societies digital transformation, silicon Savannah, we have anybody that has been in Kenya will know the bubbliness in that country in terms of technological advancement, and the possibilities. So, here again, huge opportunities for not just American companies But for everybody to actually drive the new world which is digital in character. But we are also having the possibility for the democratic deepening of the democratic credentials. It is true we are having fragility, but hey, that is the journey that every country has to walk, and so I don't think it's about these difficulties are not really over, they are overwhelming to us individuals but I think that is why I appeal for global partnerships, solidarity so we can all work together because a stable peaceful Africa is good for the world.

Sarah Smith: Thank you.