**Ms. Wilson** (Australia): I thank you, Sir, for having convened this important meeting today.

The scale, nature and compounding impact of today's global peace and security challenges are immense and seriously straining the resources and capacity of the United Nations to respond. Those issues have been felt most acutely by a number of African countries caught in cycles of violence, crisis and relapse. More than half of the world's armed conflicts are taking place in Africa, causing significant suffering and displacement. The majority of United Nations peacekeeping missions are deployed in Africa, and conflicts there dominate the Council's agenda. While the United Nations is rightly at the centre of global efforts to maintain international peace and security, it cannot and should not do it alone.

Strategic and operational partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, are essential to preventing crises, strengthening international responses, increasing coherence and complementarity of efforts, and achieving sustainable peace. Indeed, the need for closer strategic cooperation and partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations was a consistent finding across the recent reviews on United Nations peace operations, peacebuilding architecture and resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, with the role of the

African Union (AU) particularly emphasized. The outcome of the peacebuilding review built further on those findings, specifically encouraging regular exchanges, joint initiatives and information-sharing between the United Nations and the African Union. Australia strongly supports those efforts.

The United Nations has long understood that addressing the root causes of conflict is fundamental to finding durable solutions. Local and regional actors, including organizations like the African Union and its subregional economic communities, are often well placed to sound the early warning siren to the international community of emerging threats to peace. It is critical to make the most of the comparative advantages between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. Further strengthening the partnership between the AU and the United Nations is one of the most important opportunities to do that.

Great strides have been made over recent years to enhance United Nations-AU cooperation. Australia welcomes growing African leadership in maintaining peace and security in the region. But more can be done. Australia calls for all parties to continue to work together in those efforts, particularly to formalize early engagement to enhance communication and information-sharing; undertake joint analysis, coordinated threat

assessments and joint early warning assessment missions to ensure common understanding; strengthen operational and policy coherence between the organizations; improve links between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council; and better facilitate transitions between regional and United Nations peace support operations, when required.