

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

First, we would like to thank the Chinese presidency for convening today's open debate. We welcome the efforts of the African Union (AU) to respond effectively to conflicts and crises in Africa. A lot has been achieved but a lot remains to be done. The international community's role and support in that regard are vital.

We welcome the signing of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which took place in April. We also commend the African Union Assembly decision from January 2015 to fund 25 per cent of AU peace-support operations, as well as the subsequent AU Assembly decision to operationalize the AU Peace Fund. Furthermore, the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020 is a welcome step forward. It is now crucial to implement all of those important decisions.

In order to silence the guns in Africa, it is imperative to address the root causes of conflict. The AU Agenda 2063 identifies democratic deficit and weak governance as the root causes of conflict and impediments to sustainable development in Africa. Forging synergies between governance and peace and security is crucial in order to address conflicts in a holistic manner. We welcome the African efforts on concrete structural conflict prevention initiatives, early warning, mediation, and preventive diplomacy. We encourage further efforts to that end.

We believe that one of the most important guarantees for the world's sustainable development and the expansion of the influence of democracy and rule of law is mainstreaming gender equality to all areas of life. Women can play a key role in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations and peacebuilding, as well in post-conflict reconstruction.

Furthermore, the AU theme for 2017 is "Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in the youth", and 2018-27 was just declared the African Decade for Technical, Professional, Entrepreneurial Training and Youth Employment. Africa is the youngest continent on Earth and creating enabling conditions, jobs, education, and the rule of law for young people at home will play a crucial role in silencing the guns in Africa.

Estonia stands ready to work with all partners to enhance capacities and work on solutions, including in the digital sphere for conflict prevention and good governance. That is also something we prioritize in our quest to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2020-2021.

Since we celebrated Nelson Mandela International Day yesterday, let me finish my intervention with a quote from him: "It is easy to break down and destroy. The heroes are those who make peace and build." That is something that we, as the international community, should always keep in mind.