

**Mr. Bessho (Japan):** I would like to thank the Secretary-General and His Excellency Mr. Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, for their attendance and excellent briefings.

Africa is a continent of hope. Today we are pleased to witness great strides in economic growth and stability in many African countries, which are grounded in national ownership. Those strides have come from undertaking efforts to diversify economies towards self-sustaining growth and enhance the capacities of individuals and institutions. Africa's bright future, however, is predicated on the development of peaceful societies throughout continent that are free from conflict, poverty and violent extremism. The key to unlocking that future is a combination of African ownership and international partnership. More concretely, it entails responding not only to immediate crises, such as conflict and famine, but also to the root causes of conflict. Resilient national, regional and local institutions are essential to empowering Africa's greatest resource, which is its people.

One year ago, Japan, as the President of the Council, organized an open debate on peacebuilding in Africa (see S/PV.7750). Council members were united on the importance of African ownership and addressing the root causes of conflict, as well as the need to cooperate with regional and subregional organizations, which were included in a presidential statement (S/PRST/2016/12). We commend China for providing an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of those areas for Africa's peace and stability.

The African Union (AU) is a prime example of African ownership being used to achieve political and economic integration, as well as prevent and resolve conflicts, based on its solidarity and shared values. The AU has acquired diverse capacities for regional action on matters pertaining to international peace and security, including mediation, such as regional efforts for the peaceful transition in The Gambia, peace support operations, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia, institution-building, such as security sector reform, as well as peacebuilding in order to address the root causes of conflict. In South Sudan, the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and regional countries are actively engaged, and the United Nations is also working together to change the situation for the better. The United Nations is capable of expanding its dynamic partnership with the AU far beyond peace support operations to include broad efforts to address root causes.

In particular, the Security Council can consider the various areas of cooperation included in the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was signed in April by Secretary-General Guterres and AU Commission Chair Moussa Faki Mahamat. The Framework includes a focus on preventing and mediating conflict, addressing root causes and responding to conflict, including financial cooperation on AU peace support operations. Broad and holistic cooperation will be needed to meet the challenges we collectively face.

Peace and stability in Africa require self-sustaining economic growth. In turn, that requires that the benefits of economic growth reach all people, who must be able to exercise their potential and participate actively in national and social development. Cooperation between the United Nations and the AU on the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 will play a vital role in Africa's peace and stability and in addressing root causes of conflict.

Since October 1993, together with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the African Union Commission and the World Bank, Japan has co-hosted the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in order to achieve Africa's long-term development through African ownership and international partnership. Through the TICAD process, Japan's efforts have always centred on the long-term development of individual and institutional capacities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have partnered with the United Nations since 2004 to conduct training for more than 20,000 police officers in the country, including women and reintegrated former combatants. Similar efforts are under way in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali.

Finally, during his trip to Somalia in March, the Secretary-General noted that the country is at a moment of both tragedy and hope. The same twin possibilities exist for many countries in Africa and are the subject of much international attention, as demonstrated by today's open debate. With this in mind, it is essential that Africa's partners, including States Members of the United Nations, the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and other international organizations sustain the current high level of attention towards Africa. Japan will remain actively engaged with the continent going forward under the twin pillars of African ownership and international partnership.