

Mrs. Bailey:

First and foremost, the African Union (AU) wishes to congratulate the President on his country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, as well as to thank him for convening this open debate on the theme "Women and peace and security: implementing the common agenda" as we celebrate the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his insightful and comprehensive report (S/2016/822) and to commend the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Executive Director of EVE Organization for Women Development, South Sudan, for their valuable contributions to today's open debate.

In the same context as this debate, last Thursday the African Union Commission held its annual open meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council on the status of women and children in conflict, under the theme "the role of the media in enhancing accountability on women, peace and security commitments in Africa".

On the margins of the twenty-seventh African Union Summit, held in Kigali in July, the African Union launched the first report on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa. That was primarily the result of consultative meetings with AU States members and regional economic communities that have developed national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). So far, 19 countries and two regional economic communities in Africa have developed action plans.

Further to that report, the Commission embarked upon a continental results framework that will facilitate monitoring and reporting on the women and peace and security agenda item on a regular basis. Throughout the consultations conducted by the Special Envoy of the African Union Chairperson on women, peace and security, Her Excellency Ms. Bineta Diop, with AU member States, women's groups, partner United Nations agencies and other development partners, there was consensus that instruments do exist but that delivery on commitments is lacking.

Sixteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), in an endeavour to consolidate and accelerate the gains made by the continent in the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the African Union Commission is undertaking a number of activities guided by aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063, which stipulates, *inter alia*, that Africa will be a continent where women are empowered and play their rightful role in all spheres of life. One of the critical spheres is the area of peace and security as a *sine qua non* in Africa's stability and development. The undertakings include the following.

The first entails establishing a network of African women mediators to contribute to the search for a peaceful resolution of conflicts on the continent and to support communities in their peacebuilding efforts.

The second area of focus deals with changing the narratives on women to recognize their role in peacebuilding, through mobilization of a network of journalists, reporters and bloggers who are committed to reporting in a gender-responsive manner on issues of women and peace and security — not just by telling stories of victimization but also those of women's leadership and of women as positive agents for social change and economic transformation.

The third effort involves mobilizing and supporting member States and regional economic communities to develop action plans on the women and peace and security

agenda. The Republic of Namibia and the Southern African Development Community region are presently undergoing the process, with the support of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

The fourth area entails launching a network of centres of excellence in various regions of the continent to work on women and peace and security issues, with a view to sustainable and broad strengthening of women's capacities in peacebuilding, thus ensuring the availability of women's expertise in that area.

The fifth action pertains to training military personnel on the rights of women, in line with the AU zero-tolerance policy on sexual and gender-based violence. Countries like Senegal have already embarked on such training.

It would be remiss of me not to take the opportunity at this juncture to salute and appreciate the support of dependable partners in assisting the African Union Commission in carrying out those activities to sustain the contribution of women in peace and security. Without being exhaustive, I wish to mention the support of UN-Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the United Nations Development Programme Regional Service Centre for Africa and the countries of Norway, Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom for their invaluable contributions.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the African Union Commission's commitment and action towards the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda. An annual report will be submitted to the African Union Peace and Security Council, and subsequently shared with the United Nations Security Council. For the African Union Commission, the Africa we want is an Africa where all daughters and sons of the continent are equal, enjoy the same rights and obligations and participate equally in building a stable and just society. Women must be fully part and parcel of that endeavour and of Africa's transformative agenda.