

The Secretary-General: Let me begin by thanking the Government of China for convening this meeting to focus on enhancing African capacities in the area of peace and security.

In my first days as Secretary-General, I attended the African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa. I wanted to launch a new era of cooperation with the AU, founded on a core conviction. I firmly believe that the international community needs to change the narrative about Africa and to establish a higher platform of cooperation that recognizes Africa's enormous potential and promise.

In the area of peace and security, the African Union and the United Nations have a shared interest in strengthening mechanisms designed to defuse conflicts before they escalate and manage them effectively if they do occur. Enhancing African capacities is essential both in the context of our collective response to international peace and security challenges as well as for the African continent's own self-reliance. That is why, on 19 April, I joined with Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, in signing the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. Our shared objective is to work together closely on the basis of the principles of mutual respect and comparative advantage in all stages of the conflict cycle and to do so systematically, predictably and strategically. We are committed to institutionalizing our partnership through formal annual consultations between the Heads of the secretariats of both organizations. The Framework includes four key action areas. The first is preventing and mediating conflict and sustaining peace; the second is responding to conflict; the third is addressing the root causes of conflict; and the fourth is continually reviewing and enhancing our partnership. I will address each item in turn.

First, with regard to our joint efforts to prevent and mediate conflict and sustain peace, the Framework's effective implementation requires coordinated and complementary action on the part of both the United Nations and the African Union. We must identify the underlying causes of conflicts, work closely on developing joint analyses, share information and strive to reach a common understanding on issues that can lead to prompt action. They include key areas of ongoing collaboration such as good offices and mediation, electoral matters, human rights and humanitarian assistance.

It is also critical to ensure that we build on our work with subregional mechanisms with the aim of tackling political disputes. In the Gambia, for example, the strong leadership of West African nations, with the support of the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the United Nations, made a significant contribution to reaching a peaceful settlement to a political crisis. And in South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the United Nations are actively coordinating efforts to achieve a durable peace, including through a joint call for an immediate end to hostilities and a comprehensive and inclusive political dialogue.

Secondly, where responding to conflict is concerned, the African Union and various subregional organizations have deployed tremendous efforts to develop and operationalize the African Standby Force and its Rapid Deployment Capability. Under our new Framework, we look forward to further supporting the strengthening of the Standby Force and to exploring synergies with the United Nations Peacekeeping

Capability Readiness System. We must also promote coordinated efforts to confront new asymmetric threats to peace and security such as terrorism and violent extremism.

In Somalia, the United Nations continues to provide logistics, technical and training support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and to the Somali National Army. Despite many challenges, our cooperation has helped to facilitate concrete results that have yielded crucial progress, such as the recent successful holding of elections. I firmly believe that with predictable funding and enhanced support to AMISOM, together with a coordinated effort to build the Somali army and police force, Al-Shabaab can be defeated, paving the way for a more peaceful future for the people of Somalia and beyond. That is an opportunity we should not miss.

In Mali, we must intensify our collective commitment to further supporting the peace process, with a focus on restoring and extending State authority. I welcome the initiative taken by the Group of Five for the Sahel to create a Joint Force, and I hope that the Security Council will recognize the importance of ensuring that it has a strong mandate and credible funding. In the Lake Chad basin, we must continue to aid the efforts of the African Union and the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, as well as other regional initiatives aimed at countering terrorism and violent extremism, ideally with more effective support.

The third pillar of the Joint United Nations-AU Framework focuses on addressing the root causes of conflict and emphasizes our commitment to increasing cooperation related to peacebuilding and the rule of law. Sustaining peace and continued development requires strengthening national institutions in order to address the root causes of conflict.

Fourthly, we should underscore the importance of establishing a process for the continuous review and enhancement of the partnership through regular consultations and coordination. It will include staff exchanges; joint fact-finding missions; strengthened cooperation in promoting national peace infrastructures; the mobilization of funding for AU peace operations that are authorized by the Security Council; and the prevention of violent extremism and illicit flows of weapons and ammunition. The Framework also emphasizes how critical it is to further advance the agenda on women and peace and security.

Enhancing African peace and security capacities requires adequate, timely and predictable financing for AU peace support operations. In May, I submitted a report (S/2017/454), pursuant to resolution 2320 (2016), that welcomed the African Union's decision to fund 25 per cent of AU peace support operations, a commitment in line with the AU's goal of achieving self-reliance and African ownership in the area of peace and security. My report included options for financing those operations and highlighted the importance of compliance and oversight in African Union peace support operations through robust and effective human rights mechanisms and a framework for conduct and discipline. The African Union is working to develop those capacities and the United Nations stands ready to provide the necessary support.

Taken together, the Joint United Nations-AU Framework, the adoption of the African Union Peace Fund and resolution 2320 (2016) represent significant steps in our efforts

to reinvigorate cooperation with the African Union. I pledge to continue working with all Council members to further elevate our platform of cooperation for sustainable peace, stability and development throughout the African continent, and I hope their deliberations on this important topic will be fruitful.