

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General and Commissioner Chergui for their positive and constructive briefings this morning. It was also a pleasure to hear the interventions of the Foreign Minister of Senegal and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, who reminded us that yesterday was Nelson Mandela Day. He would have turned 99 yesterday. I therefore wanted to begin with a quote from him from his book *Long Walk to Freedom*. He wrote,

“Man’s goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished”.

Man’s goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished, and that flame does remain hidden for far too many people across the continent of Africa. For the people of the Kasai in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the people of South Sudan, that flame may appear almost extinguished and lost among the shadows of instability and conflict. But although the flame grows dim in parts of the continent, Mandela was right. It cannot be extinguished. We know that from the great strides made by countries like Côte d’Ivoire, which is moving away from years of war and now is looking ahead towards decades of peace. We see it in progress towards democracy like the elections in Somalia in February, where women won nearly a quarter of the parliamentary seats. That was a vital step towards one-person-one-vote elections. And we see that flame burn brightly in the work of organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, which are helping African countries find common cause to overcome common concerns. The Council has a vital role to play in fostering that flame. To do so, I would like to propose three particular things that I think we need to do.

First, we must all work together — the United Nations, the Council and the countries and organizations of Africa — to address the root causes of conflict. We spend too much time and money responding to crises, rather than preventing them. That is why the United Kingdom so strongly supports the Secretary-General and his sustaining peace agenda and his increased focus on conflict prevention. For that agenda to succeed, the United Nations needs to diversify the way that it engages using development cooperation proactively to build peace and supporting more diplomacy, including mediation. As the Economic Community of West African States mediation in The Gambia showed, that means more cooperation with regional actors that have the right to experience and influence to deliver results on the ground. The Council and our colleagues in the African Union must demonstrate unambiguously to those who perpetuate conflict that there are severe political and economic consequences for doing so.

Secondly, we must all be ready to respond when conflict does occur. Effective and efficient United Nations peacekeeping is one of our strongest assets to do so, and it is a shared asset. African nations provide over half of the peacekeepers deployed to African missions. I want to pay tribute to all of them for their service, so often in dangerous circumstances. The United Kingdom is committed to improving the planning of

peacekeeping missions, the quality and quantity of pledges of troops and equipment and the performance of missions and troops on the ground. But that will count for little if we do not have the trust of those we seek to protect. That means, among other things, eradicating the corrosive spectre of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. We must implement fully the framework for action and resolution 2272 (2016) to uphold and enforce the highest standards of conflict — zero tolerance must mean zero tolerance. In parallel, we need more women working in missions, out in the field, reassuring local populations, gathering vital intelligence and contributing to more effective operations.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen and deepen our existing partnerships. The United Nations and African Union relationship is critical for peace and security in Africa. As we have seen in Somalia, Mali and Central African Republic, that relationship makes such a difference to those most in need. We therefore applaud the work to make those joint efforts more systematic, and we are reassured that the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security will lead to better cooperation and coordination. There are many issues we should address to realize fully the corporation envisaged in resolution 2320 (2016) — agreeing on mechanisms and processes sharing standards and procedures, including on human rights, accountability and transparency; and establishing, as the Secretary-General reminded us again today, a source of sustainable and predictable financing for African peace support operations. We welcome the work that the United Nations has done with the African Union so far on that agenda, and we now need to see that work continue. I look forward to our visit as a Security Council to Addis Ababa in September.

There is a lot more to do, but we cannot be deterred in our efforts to support peace and security in Africa. I would like to conclude by returning to the words of the late Nelson Mandela:

“Do not look the other way. Do not hesitate. Recognize that the world is hungry for actions, not words. Act with courage and vision.”

Let us all act in that spirit.