

Security Council Open Debate on Security Sector Reform
October 12th 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr Messone, Representative of Gabon

Security sector reform (SSR) is crucial in many African countries that are continuing to strengthen a fragile peace. In welcoming its Minister for Foreign Affairs, I would also like to thank the delegation of Nigeria for having organized this debate. We also commend Nigeria's efforts in presiding over our debate. And we would like to thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing.

Given the convergence of views around the table, Gabon would like in advance to welcome the draft presidential statement to be adopted briefly.

Peacebuilding through security sector reform should help countries emerging from conflict avoid a relapse into conflict. In order to better address SSR challenges, we believe there is a need both to adopt a comprehensive approach and to better integrate the role of host countries in such efforts. Such an approach must of course be based on existing links between conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, and the socio-economic development of a country emerging from conflict.

In order to ensure lasting peace and stability, security sector reform must include strengthening the capacities of a country's security institutions. Security sector reform efforts could help to restore confidence among belligerent parties, rectify negative linkages between armies and political actors and avert a security vacuum that could expose people to violence and abuse by remnants of armed groups.

Security sector reform often raises the issue of the role of peacekeeping operations. We are well aware that such operations cannot go on indefinitely in a country in crisis or emerging from one. However, stability cannot be ensured following the end of a peacekeeping operation unless the host country is able to ensure the security of its people. We therefore think that the issue of SSR should be addressed quite soon after the deployment of a mission. Efforts at establishing and strengthening peace could be undermined if this matter is not well taken into account from the beginning, and if SSR implementation is not effectively supported.

The hasty withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad and the ensuing security situation in Central Africa corroborates that view. The Central African Republic is today facing the resurgence of violence on the part of armed groups, such as the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace and the Lord's Resistance Army. Central African security forces have little capacity to protect populations from the violence perpetrated by such groups.

We welcome the establishment of the Security Institutions Unit within the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic. Our hope is that the Unit will focus on reforming the country's security institutions.

A coherent approach to SSR also means that the various stakeholders active on security sector reform in Africa should work in concert cooperatively. In that regard, we commend the existing cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and the subregional organizations on the continent. We of course hope that the support provided to the African Union to develop its approach to SSR will continue.

An effective approach also involves synergy with other stakeholders, such as the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Fund and major international donors. It will be difficult for security sector reform efforts to achieve their goals if programmes are not supported with sufficient financial resources. The role played by the Peacebuilding Support Fund, whether with regard to countries on the Commission's agenda or those not yet under its consideration, deserves to be commended.

The host country has a crucial role in security sector reform, over which it should have ownership. Against that backdrop, reform is above all a political issue. It is through political agreement that a country should set reform priorities and set out a new vision for its security forces. Such a vision should be the outcome of the broadest possible national political dialogue as part of the peacebuilding process. The international community should act solely in support of the efforts of the host Government.

In that regard, we would like to commend the exemplary efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo aimed at strengthening strategic coherence in the security sector reform with the Congolese Government and its international partners.

In order to be sustainable, SSR must also make it possible to transform relations between political stakeholders, security institutions, civil society and the general population in a manner that a new security culture replaces the one that prevailed during the crisis. This is therefore a question of nurturing a new civilian military relationship that can help to restore confidence throughout the entire society. It is also important to ensure the participation of all members of society, including women. They should be better represented in security institutions and their rights should be properly respected.

In that connection, the efforts by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea Bissau to integrate women into that country's police and military institutions should be continued and supported. The same is the case with human rights and gender training provided to military staff.

Lastly, it is important that we pay attention to potential problems, especially the thorny issue of impunity and meting out justice to security forces responsible for violence and abuse against civilians.

In conclusion, Gabon continues to be convinced that strengthening the effectiveness of security sector reform is crucial to ensuring a lasting impact by the international community with regard to peacebuilding in a country emerging from conflict.