

**Mr. Mminele (South Africa):** My delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Arabic Republic of Egypt for your leadership of the Security Council during the past month. The debate on the theme “United Nations peacekeeping operations: their potential contribution to the overarching goal of sustaining peace” is important and timely.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

In April 2016, the Security Council and the General Assembly adopted ground-breaking parallel resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. Those parallel resolutions on sustaining peace are regarded as a comprehensive statement on the role of the United Nations in peacebuilding and prevention, and are directly linked to efforts towards peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. Furthermore, the resolutions stress the fact that there is a conceptual shift from peacebuilding to sustaining peace, which is both transformative and forward thinking. In practical terms, peacebuilding is no longer restricted to post-conflict situations, but applies to all phases — before the conflict, during the conflict and at the cessation of a conflict. In essence, the resolutions are the first to explicitly link peacebuilding and prevention, and they underscore the essential role that sustaining peace plays.

More emphasis on conflict prevention means recognizing the primacy of politics in the pacific settlement of disputes. The relevance of investing in structures such as early-warning systems, instead of reacting to outbreaks of violence, is pertinent. The full implementation of the resolutions will result in less emphasis on militarized responses to conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. Instead, it will promote more political engagement, which we believe will result in effective peacebuilding.

Together with the Slovak Republic, South Africa co-chairs the United Nations Group of Friends on Security Sector Reform. It is within the milieu of sustaining peace that we have experienced how relevant and complementary such reform has become, taking into consideration the Secretary-General’s emphasis on preventative approaches to sustaining peace. The promotion of a culture of prevention to stop conflicts before they occur complements the objective of the African Union (AU) to elevate the critical importance of preventive diplomacy. Given the excessive cost and limited success of conflict management, a shift is required to focus more on pre-emptive action that will allow for sustainable peace and an environment within which reconciliation and institution-building can thrive. In essence, the United Nations must move away from managing conflict towards laying the necessary groundwork for an inclusive dialogue, peaceful transition and long-term sustainable peace.

The African Union’s Peace and Security Architecture focuses on conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding, which are all fundamental to the AU’s aspiration of silencing the guns by 2020. The African Union and the continent’s subregional organizations have deployed a great deal of effort to develop and operationalize the African Standby Force and its

rapid deployment capacity, which will impact directly on the process of peacebuilding and sustainable peace.

The recent implementation of the joint United Nations-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnerships in Peace and Security reflects the AU's commitment to the framework's four key action areas, namely, first, prevention and mediating conflict and sustaining peace; secondly, responding to conflict; thirdly, addressing root causes; and, fourthly, the continuous review and enhancement of the partnership. At the same time, my delegation reiterates its call for the use of United Nations-assessed contributions to secure predictable, sustainable and flexible financing for AU-led peace-support operations authorized by the Security Council.

Adequate gender representation within the United Nations peacekeeping structures should continue to be an important objective in our search for more effective and efficient peacebuilding processes. The need for women peacekeepers is more urgent than ever, as women are often better placed to carry out a number of crucial peacekeeping tasks, especially with regard to allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation and providing safe environments for women to voice their safety and security concerns. In that regard, South Africa welcomes the appointment by Secretary-General António Guterres of the first United Nations Victims' Rights Advocate, which aims at addressing accusations of sexual exploitation by international peacekeepers.

In conclusion, the idea of peacebuilding is strongly based on the understanding that peace cannot exist without development and that development cannot thrive without peace and stability. We believe that notion should underpin the approach of the United Nations to fulfilling its central mandate of the maintenance of international peace and security, which is strongly dependent upon a prosperous and peaceful Africa.