

Security Council Open Debate on Preventive Diplomacy Tools: Prospects and Challenges in Africa
Friday, 16th July 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador Mayr-Harting, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations

I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for honouring us by presiding over this important debate today and also to thank you and the Nigerian presidency of the Security Council for having organized this important meeting. We were grateful for the statement by Deputy Secretary-General Asha Rose Migiro and for the interesting presentation by Ms. Cliffe.

Austria associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the European Union delegation later in the course of this meeting.

In today's world, we are confronted by a large number of crises and new global challenges that can potentially develop into fully fledged conflicts and that can pose a threat to international peace and security. The peaceful settlement of conflicts should be the first instrument that we always try to resort to. It is indisputable that, in terms of cost effectiveness, conflict prevention and resolution benefit from a substantial comparative advantage over other forms of engagement, such as large-scale conflict intervention and post-conflict reconstruction.

Preventing the escalation of disputes into armed conflict or relapse into armed conflict needs to go hand in hand with other crisis management activities, such as mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. All those activities must ensure respect for the rule of law and human rights, as well as the need to fight impunity and address the root causes of conflict.

The settlement of conflicts by peaceful means remains one of the biggest challenges the African continent is facing today. Instability in Africa also has global implications which require the continued attention, action and commitment of the Security Council, as well as of all other relevant actors.

Austria fully supports efforts aimed at intensifying cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union (AU) and its regional economic commissions, the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community. African involvement and experience in conflict prevention and resolution, early warning and mediation are vital. It is also an issue of ownership, and existing African capacities should be used and further developed in line with the AU-United Nations Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme. These enhanced capacities will in turn also foster the implementation of Security Council resolutions with regard to the protection of civilians, **women and peace and security** and children in armed conflict.

The development of a strategic partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations is therefore of particular importance to the maintenance of international peace and security. We further believe that all options for funding conflict prevention efforts should be thoroughly considered.

In that context, we believe that there is also a need to further strengthen and efficiently use the capacities of the United Nations Secretariat or other actors, such as the European Union (EU). The European Union cooperates closely with the African Union in the framework of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, including through regular high-level consultations in the framework of the EU Political and Security Committee and the AU Peace and Security Council, and in the field of human rights through the AU-EU human rights dialogue. The AU-EU road map of the peace and security partnership, as agreed in October 2009, further underlines the commitment of both organizations to deepen their cooperation. In doing so, it is important to bear in mind a clear division of labour, as well as the comparative advantages that each organization may have. Austria is convinced that the good offices of the Secretary-General and his special envoys make a significant contribution to the prevention of armed conflict and to mediation in Africa. In particular, we wish, as others have already done today, to commend the valuable contribution of the United Nations Office for West Africa in successfully preventing conflicts, as was seen in the recent cases of Guinea and Niger.

In addition, I wish to highlight the important role of integrated peacebuilding offices in addressing the root causes of conflict and enhancing resilience by supporting security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, as well as activities aimed at strengthening the rule of law and human rights. We believe that the Security Council could examine the merit of expanding the network of such offices.

Moreover, the potential of the various United Nations field presences in Africa in the area of conflict prevention and early warning should be fully utilized to improve and sustain the ability of the United Nations in cooperation with regional partners and national Governments to respond to emerging conflict situations in a timely and decisive manner. In addition, we would also like to stress the crucial role that the Secretary- General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide has in matters relating to the prevention and resolution of conflict.

Effective efforts to prevent armed conflict also represent a tool to address cross-border and transnational threats to stability, such as drug and human trafficking, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and transborder organized crime. Austria believes that prevention measures should also be aimed at addressing those threats. We support numerous projects that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna is undertaking in this regard and wish to commend the Office for its valuable contribution to conflict prevention.

Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) urge Member States and the Secretary- General to ensure the increased representation of women in all aspects of conflict resolution and peace processes. We hope to see an increase in the participation, representation and full involvement of women also in preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts in the future.

In conclusion, Austria would like to express its thanks to Nigeria for promoting the issue of conflict prevention and resolution in the Security Council and congratulates it on the presidential statement that was adopted today. We look forward to continuing our discussions on this very important matter.