

**Mr. Doyle (Ireland):** I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened today's important debate.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU) this morning.

Drawing from the concept note (S/2017/574, annex), I will briefly outline the areas we see as particularly important in enhancing the international community's support for African capabilities in the area of peace and security.

First, I turn to the many calls made for closer United Nations-African Union (AU) partnership for action.

The foundation for an enhanced partnership is well established. The three peace and security reviews of 2015 underscored the need for a deeper strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. Over the past two years, the Security Council has dealt with the issue, both through its reviews of individual peacekeeping missions and through broader thematic initiatives, such as resolution 2320 (2016), on United Nations-AU cooperation, and the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. Moreover, we have two major agreements adopted unanimously by all States Members of the United Nations — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace resolutions — which call on us collectively to see partnerships as the core of our work.

We must take steps to turn this well-established foundation into action. We must ensure that United Nations-AU partnership is something that occurs at an operational level, on a daily basis. That requires ongoing review and cooperation, particularly in the areas of planning and decision-making. We welcome today's debate as an opportunity in that respect.

Secondly, we must learn from the mechanisms we already have. Cooperation between the international community and Africa in the field of peace and security is already ongoing. We have seen it in the evolving engagement between the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission to establish closer links with the AU.

We must look beyond that. For example, the work of the EU's African Peace Facility, to which Ireland is glad to contribute, could help inform United Nations support for the operations and priorities of the AU. The engagement of EU regional offices with the AU and African sub-regional organizations should offer some valuable lessons in that regard. In assessments of joint United Nations-AU peacekeeping missions, we must also focus on recording and adapting best practices.

Thirdly, we must explore financing options from within — but also beyond — the budget of the United Nations. It is clear that the current United Nations funding structure for African-led peace operations is in need of reform. The role of the regular budget of the United Nations warrants discussion. The Secretary-General's recent report (S/2017/574) is a first step towards some financing options. There is also the broader question — how can the international community best support Africa to finance its own initiatives for peace and security?

Neither the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development nor the AU Agenda 2063 is directly linked to peace operations. However, if properly implemented and supported, those frameworks can substantially enhance Africa's capacity to self-fund programmes and operations for peace. The AU has already committed to funding 25 per cent of its peace operations by 2020. Additionally, if African States receive the right support for their development efforts, the resulting economic growth could well allow the AU to far surpass this 25 per cent marker in the longer term. Successful development will also contribute to eradicating the root causes of conflict. If we invest in that development, Africa's capacity to fund peace operations will increase, while the need for such operations will decrease.

Fourthly, we must identify mutual opportunities and challenges. African priorities in the area of peace and security are also the priorities of the international community. Implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, the empowerment of youth as actors of peace, sustainable security sector reform, and more effective conflict prevention are just some of those shared priorities. Stronger partnerships in those areas will therefore be mutually beneficial. The same is true in respect of mutual challenges.

As noted earlier by the EU observer, the Secretary General's report highlights the importance of compliance and oversight, particularly in the areas of human rights and conduct and discipline. Those are critical concerns in all peace operations, and ones we, as a troop-contributing country, take extremely seriously.

Finally, we welcome the AU's efforts to put in place effective mechanisms to ensure the respect for human rights in all of its missions and encourage further progress in their implementation. Joint standards for reporting, accountability and protection are critical to ensuring robust oversight of missions.

I thank you again, Mr. President, for holding today's debate and for giving me the opportunity to participate in the discussion on this important issue by sharing Ireland's perspective.

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First, I turn to the many calls made for closer United Nations-African Union (AU) partnership for action.

The foundation for an enhanced partnership is well established. The three peace and security reviews of 2015 underscored the need for a deeper strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. Over the past two years, the Security Council has dealt with the issue, both through its reviews of individual peacekeeping missions and through broader thematic initiatives, such as resolution 2320 (2016), on United Nations-AU cooperation, and the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. Moreover, we have two major agreements adopted unanimously by all States Members of the United Nations — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace resolutions — which call on us collectively to see partnerships as the core of our work.

We must take steps to turn this well-established foundation into action. We must ensure that United Nations-AU partnership is something that occurs at an operational level, on a daily basis. That requires ongoing review and cooperation, particularly in the areas of planning and decision-making. We welcome today's debate as an opportunity in that respect.

Secondly, we must learn from the mechanisms we already have. Cooperation between the international community and Africa in the field of peace and security is already ongoing. We have seen it in the evolving engagement between the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission to establish closer links with the AU.

We must look beyond that. For example, the work of the EU's African Peace Facility, to which Ireland is glad to contribute, could help inform United Nations support for the operations and priorities of the AU. The engagement of EU regional offices with the AU and African sub-regional organizations should offer some valuable lessons in that regard. In assessments of joint United Nations-AU peacekeeping missions, we must also focus on recording and adapting best practices.

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Fourthly, we must identify mutual opportunities and challenges. African priorities in the area of peace and security are also the priorities of the international community. Implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, the empowerment of youth as actors of peace, sustainable security sector reform, and more effective conflict prevention are just some of those shared priorities. Stronger partnerships in those areas will therefore be mutually beneficial. The same is true in respect of mutual challenges.

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