

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

8234th meeting

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New York

*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of the African Union, Ms. Mohammed:**

First allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to commend you for convening this important open debate. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2018/250). I would like to further commend Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten for their insightful briefings. I wish to further thank Ms. Razia Sultana, of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for sharing her experience and some strategic approaches to preventing sexual violence from being used as a destructive weapon of war, particularly against women and girls.

The African Union (AU) member States have undertaken with determination, together with the AU Commission, to make the women and peace and security agenda a concrete instrument of the AU Peace and Security Council and of the international agenda. The African Union Commission is fully committed to ensuring that women's empowerment, gender equality and access to justice are strong components of its peace and security architecture and are fully implemented at local, national and continental levels.

Today's open debate is all the more relevant as it places a sharp focus on concrete strategies and practical implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Over the years, the African Union has developed strategies to answer the call by operationalizing, monitoring and evaluating reporting systems to better ensure the protection of civilians.

The AU stands firmly with regard to its position of zero tolerance for sexual violence. In that context, I would like to put forward three specific strategies the African Union has developed to accelerate the implementation the resolution 1325 (2000) agenda and to address sexual and gender-based violence.

First, within the African context, protocols, declarations, laws, policies and strategies for addressing sexual and gender-based violence, and, more specifically, conflict-related sexual violence, are in place. For instance, as of December 2017, 22 African countries had adopted national action plans on resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions, including those that specifically address conflict-related sexual violence.

Secondly, while we recognize the weak implementation of those normative frameworks, the African Union's Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security has undertaken initiatives towards

bridging the gap between policy and implementation. Specifically, the Office of the Special Envoy has embarked on the development of a continental results framework for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa. The framework was validated in March 2018 by African Union member States and national action plans were adopted. The framework provides a unique opportunity to address conflict-related sexual violence by ensuring that AU member States are held accountable for their commitments to preventing sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, as well as to enhancing women's participation in peace processes and ensuring that women's needs are met in post-conflict reconstruction processes, in line with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions.

Thirdly, building on earlier actions to move forward the implementation of commitments on the women and peace and security agenda, the AU Commission continues its efforts to enhance the agency of women in peace processes through support to women's networks that strengthen the role and leadership of women in key paths to peace, security and development. Those include two major initiatives that I would like to mention. The first is the creation of the Network of African Women Mediators, Fem-Wise, facilitated by the Panel of the Wise and the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, and the African Women Leaders Network. That was initiated in partnership with the United Nations through the Offices of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security and UN-Women with the support of the Federal Republic of Germany. The African Women Leaders Network has recorded important milestones for women on the ground, including the joint AU-United Nations high-level solidarity mission to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which took place in July 2017 and was led by the Deputy Secretary-General to revitalize women's participation in peace, security and development in Africa. Women leaders, from top leadership to those affiliated with grassroots organizations, monitored and reported to the Security Council and the General Assembly sexual and gender-based violence committed against women and girls in fragile and conflict zones. National chapters of the Network have been launched in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Côte d'Ivoire, demonstrating the action-oriented and national ownership of perspectives of that inclusive platform. It is a Network of and for women and for action.

We wish to commend the Permanent Missions of Germany and Ghana for taking the leadership of the Group of Friends of the African Women's Leaders Network to the United Nations as a concrete way to support and promote that initiative with a guiding vision to support women's participation in peace, security and political processes on the continent through the work of the United Nations. We thank the 51 cross-regional and dynamic Member States that have joined the Group and invite others to join it in order to bolster this agenda on the international scene.

Let me conclude by saying that the United Nations agenda on women and peace and security remains a key priority for the African Union Commission and its Chairperson. The Council can fully count on the AU's support to ensure its concrete implementation, in line with the Joint United Nations-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed, respectively, by the two institutions in April 2017 and January 2018.