

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I thank you, Sir, for bringing much needed focus to an issue which touches on the ethos and character of how we do business here at the United Nations. As new and diverse forms of threats — some clear and present, others only dimly perceived — test our collective resolve and call into question the validity of existing mechanisms, it is time to assess if we can work together on what is in our collective interest. The briefings today have provided insight in that regard.

Africa is unique, as the whole continent is committed to working together on the entire spectrum of issues, including peace and security, through the African Union. Regional and subregional organizations probably enjoy the advantages of language and situational awareness and can respond more quickly as they have a better understanding of the complexities of the situation. Africa's wish to play a leading role in addressing African problems is, therefore, a work in progress and needs to be supported. However, issues of capacity and resource constraints do exist. On the other hand, the maintenance of international peace and security is one of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It also entails the collective responsibility of Member States to extend mutual support for strengthening capacities and capabilities to address threats to international peace and security. I shall focus on three issues.

First of all, it is a well-known fact that despite the deployment of large peacekeeping contingents in Africa, their record of success has been mixed, somewhat reflecting the complexities of geopolitics, political will and the capacities and resources supporting peacekeeping efforts. We should analyse various missions for the important lessons to be drawn from them. India has participated in most peacekeeping operations in Africa and is ready to contribute to any future such operations based on our limited capabilities and capacities.

As part of our efforts to share experiences in strengthening the capacities of African peacekeepers, we have focused on human-resources development and capacity-building. India has worked both bilaterally and in tripartite partnerships to build the defence capabilities of several African States. As we speak, as part of our trilateral cooperation with the United States, a United Nations peacekeeping course for African partners based on the concept of training the trainers is ongoing in New Delhi, with the participation of officials from 18 African nations who are deployed in various African peacekeeping training institutions.

India is also committed to promoting gender equality and sensitivity. Our 125-member all-women police contingent in Liberia was the first such deployment in a United Nations peacekeeping mission. The presence of a female police unit has inspired several women there to come forward to join the police force and participate in maintaining law and order. We should make such role models essential ingredients of every United Nations peacekeeping operation with police deployments.

Secondly, the importance of comprehensive sustainable development, inclusive economic growth and political processes in preventing conflict and implementing effective peacebuilding efforts is broadly recognized. The adoption by the United Nations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063 represent a recognition of the fact that the key factors for sustaining peace are cross-cutting and interlinked. That requires long-term commitment and sustained investment, including vastly expanded funding.

The identical resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture adopted last year by the General Assembly (70/262) and the Security Council (2282 (2016)) defined the concept of sustaining peace and called for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission to be strengthened. There has been no agreement, alas, on increasing the funding for the Commission to even 1 per cent of the annual total for peacekeeping operations. As a member of the Commission since its inception, India has so far contributed more than \$5 million to the Peacebuilding Fund.

More substantively, as part of its tradition of South-South solidarity in development cooperation and working within the limits of its capacities and capabilities, India has extended concessional credit worth \$10 billion and doubled the numbers of scholarships for African students to 50,000 over a five-year period. India's partnership with Africa is based on a cooperation model that is responsive to African countries' needs. It is demand-driven, free of conditions and provided in a non-prescriptive manner. We firmly believe that a commitment to supporting peacebuilding is crucial to sustainable peace in Africa.

Thirdly, the ever-expanding terror networks have endangered peace and security in the African region in unprecedented ways. Time and again, from Boko Haram to Al-Shabaab, they have shown themselves to be ever more connected to other such networks all over the world. They pose a threat to the broader international community in many ways. The United Nations response to such threats continues to be unsatisfactory. The price of such indifference is immeasurable. It is time for a strong, effective and coherent response that reflects the international community's collective commitment to defeating the scourge of terrorism.

The complex nature of modern conflicts makes it necessary to respond to the changing needs of our times. In the African Union, the United Nations has a willing partner. The question that the Council should answer is whether it is ready to do what is required to make a difference where it matters most. I hope that today's discussions lead to specific steps in that direction.