

**Mrs. Pucarinho** (Portugal): Portugal welcomes your initiative in organizing today's open debate, Mr. President, and giving Member States an opportunity to express their views on such an important topic.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to add a few words in my national capacity.

The declaration adopted by the African Union (AU) at its 2013 Summit set the ambitious goal of a conflict-free continent by the end of 2020. That is now a key pillar of the AU's Agenda 2063 and the road map for the African Peace and Security Architecture. We all agree that it is not an easy task, but it should not be impossible to achieve. The strengthening of the United Nations-AU strategic partnership, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly through strengthened dialogue and well-designed cooperation between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the AU, is crucial to helping to achieve that ambitious goal. We believe that closer and more fruitful cooperation between those two bodies will make a difference in bringing about a more sensible approach to peace and security in Africa and a more efficient response to major security threats, such as transnational organized crime and terrorism, which will be key to preventing conflicts in the future.

The recently concluded reviews of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and peacekeeping operations, and of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, clearly emphasize that. They also explain why the role of partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention and conflict situations, and in post-conflict-affected countries, is so fundamental. Regional and subregional organizations enjoy additional legitimacy that channels regional and national ownership. They can also keep a closer eye on and have a better understanding of situations of common concern and in need of attention on the ground. They are, and must be, on the front line of action and responsibility, and the United Nations must partner with them closely.

With regard to conflict prevention, mediation activities and peacekeeping operations in Africa, cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the AU, and between both those organizations and other international actors, must be shaped in a way that is conducive to early assessments of challenges and to better-tailored responses. As we know, those are more likely to succeed by ensuring sustainable solutions to conflicts and properly addressing their root causes. At this point, I would once again like to stress that establishing mechanisms aimed at ensuring the involvement and active participation of women in preventing conflicts and supporting peace and in post-conflict processes in Africa is very critical. In our view, the women and peace and security agenda should always be at the centre of United Nations-African Union cooperation in the maintenance

of peace and security. We believe that the promotion of regional integration in Africa can also greatly contribute to sustaining peace. Further advances in that regard, with good coordination between regional economic communities and the AU Peace and Security Council, are welcome and should be encouraged. One area of particular importance when it comes to African conflict-afflicted countries is security sector reform. It deserves our consistent attention and requires joint efforts to consolidate and disseminate the lessons learned and the best practices for promoting and sustaining the rule of law and respect for human rights, as well as development, which must play a central role. We recognize that the African Peace and Security Architecture provides the African continent with a valid structure and suitable mechanisms to support peace. However, we are aware of the persistent challenges, notably in ensuring true national ownership of the peacebuilding framework and strengthening the capabilities of African countries.

We are all aware that these processes require strong political will and leadership, alongside the consistent support of the international community. When it comes to international support to sustain peace, there is clearly room for improvement, including by stepping up efforts and providing training and adequate equipment. If we want peace to be sustainable, we must be ready to grant consistent attention and the required means as long as necessary. The sustainability and predictability of resources are deeply interlinked as preconditions for effectiveness. In that regard, deepening the partnerships between the United Nations, the AU, regional economic communities, international financial institutions and regional development banks to ensure the diversification of funding sources for peacebuilding activities is, in our opinion, the way to go.

We also welcome and encourage the further development of the synergies of the African Peace and Security Architecture, closely linking action on peace and security initiatives with democracy, good governance and human rights, in line with the principles expressed in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The United Nations and the AU should therefore combine their respective efforts and further optimize the use of the instruments at their disposal.

I would simply recall the Joint Africa-European Union Strategy, launched in 2007 in Lisbon, based on comprehensive joint interests and values, including respect for human rights, freedoms, equality, solidarity, justice and democracy, which remains a very unique kind of partnership. The dialogue and institutional cooperation in the context of the Joint Africa-European Union Strategy have so far led to concrete, positive results not only in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, but also in sustaining peace and in post-conflict reconstruction. They have also proven to be relevant in the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture. The trilateral cooperation, based on the broad common ground shared by the United Nations, the AU and the European Union has

also proven to be quite valuable and should continue to be promoted and further strengthened.

In conclusion, Portugal, bilaterally and as a member of the European Union and of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, has been a consistent supporter of those efforts and will definitely continue to be.