

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 Touray, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations

I believe this is an opportune moment to extend our sincere congratulations to His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Nigeria on his appointment and to warmly welcome him to New York. I also want to place on record our appreciation to the delegation of Nigeria for organizing this open debate on this all-important subject of “Optimizing the use of preventive diplomacy tools: Prospects and challenges in Africa”. And we are grateful too for the concept note on the subject matter, circulated on 12 July (S/2010/371, annex), highlighting the need for more use of preventive diplomacy and the Council’s role under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations.

Allow me also to welcome the Deputy Secretary- General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, and the representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the World Bank and to thank them for their participation in this debate. This meeting is more than timely as we approach the stock-taking high-level event on the tenth year of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

It cannot be gainsaid that the present predicament reflecting Africa’s sluggish progress in meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is significantly related to the incessant spate of conflict that the continent has had to grapple with over the last half century. These conflicts have erupted, festered and spread easily beyond national frontiers as a result of sheer complacency, leading to the failure to adopt timely preventive measures and early action.

Preventing violent conflicts involves, for the most part, the institution at the international, regional and local levels of structural mechanisms imbued with effective capability to apply measures designed to monitor early warning indicators and predict potentially violent situations. That would be conducive to the timeous adoption of effective measures and initiatives in order to prevent impending conflicts as well as to address the root causes of previous conflict situations or disputes.

It is evident that many of the conflicts that have erupted in Africa in recent decades were deeply rooted in the failure of States to meet their obligations to their citizens, particularly in providing much-needed protection in order, inter alia, to safeguard human rights, in the improvement of the quality of life of citizens and in the taking of appropriate measures to avoid political and economic exclusion and marginalization. The key indispensable tools of preventive diplomacy include development, education and the wider recognition and promotion of human and political rights. At least the lessons we in Sierra Leone have learned and continue to learn from the results of our Truth and Reconciliation Commission have put us in a vantage position to appreciate this.

Preventing conflicts requires the application of varying normative mechanisms, different sets of tools and skills as well as the involvement of diverse stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels. And key among the players at the heart of the maintenance of international peace and security is, undoubtedly, the Security Council. Given, however, the complexity of the task and the dynamics involved, cooperation between the United Nations and the regional and subregional organizations is imperative if the Council is to carry out its mandate effectively and efficiently.

Although we all seem to believe that the best way to end wars is not to start them, the fact, however, is that the international community has over decades been more inclined to engage in what one could describe as “firefighting diplomacy” than to use preventive diplomacy in maintaining international peace and security. Clearly, and in comparative terms, we all are aware of the colossal nature of the human and material costs involved in the former as opposed to the cost-saving investment of resources in preventive measures.

Experience has shown that the use of preventive measures or early action in addressing looming crisis situations has often received little attention or at best come as an afterthought. The need for a paradigm shift cannot now be more overemphasized.

Developments that have taken place on the African continent in the past decade with the adoption of the Constitutive Act establishing the African Union have significantly changed the conflict transformation landscape on the continent. Thus, there appears to be a fair quantum of normative mechanisms or measures to prevent conflict, ranging from Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 Agenda for Peace (S/24111) to the 1998 recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318), along with the numerous initiatives undertaken thereafter, including the recent establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission.

It is safe to say that what the international community needs to do is to muster the necessary political will to fully implement these mechanisms by providing the much-needed resources and human capital for global peace and security. Until the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, engagement with societies emerging from conflict had often been fraught with constraints ranging from weaknesses in disarmament and demobilization programmes, justice and security sector reform processes and resource mobilization to human and institutional capacitybuilding in order to create a more secure environment for peace to take root and for the promotion of economic growth and sustainable development. Regional and subregional organizations like the African Union, ECOWAS, the Southern Africa Development Community and even the Mano River Union have developed, within their respective architectures, viable mechanisms for the prevention of conflicts, yet are handicapped in their capacity to implement these mandates in terms of matching resources and capacity-building constraints.

In addition to the perennial problems of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons and the lack of surveillance and patrol mechanisms for long and porous borders and territorial waters, the continent is also experiencing new and/or emerging threats involving narcotic drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, piracy and terrorist activities, such as the recent cowardly act of terrorism committed against the innocent citizens of Kampala.

In conclusion, I deem it imperative to stress the need for the Council to intensify cooperation with regional and subregional actors in concrete ways in order to promote preventive diplomacy by way of measures to support and facilitate the coordination of international assistance in resource mobilization, in enhancing national capacities to monitor frontiers and territorial waters, in the positive use of mediation options and in putting in place robust security sector reform.

At the national level, it also important to provide support for and collaborate with civil society and **women's organizations** to develop and implement programmes aimed at preventing conflicts and to help in fostering the requisite political will in doing so.