

**Mr. Mminele** (South Africa):

My delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Kingdom of Sweden on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, and we express our appreciation to you for convening this important and timely debate on conflict prevention and sustaining peace. We once again welcome the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and thank him for his informative briefing and vision on today's topic.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as the joint statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the Group of Friends of Mediation.

South Africa holds the view that, while we must, undoubtedly, seek to strengthen the tools at our disposal for addressing conflicts as they arise, we must also emphasize the preventive approach to addressing conflict and its root causes in order to prevent conflict and prevent countries emerging from conflict from relapsing into conflict. On his first day at the helm of the Organization, the Secretary-General called on all of us to resolve to put peace first. This debate, as the first open thematic debate of the Security Council this year, is therefore symbolic, as it places the emphasis on prevention and sustaining peace before moving to the task of resolving conflict once it occurs.

South Africa is convinced that global peace and stability will remain elusive if we do not address the nexus between security and development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that vital link. The nature of contemporary conflicts reveals that such conflicts are, to a large extent, precipitated by dispute-burdened economic development issues, including access to mineral resources, the disproportionate distribution of wealth and power, bad governance, the lack of people's participation in democratic processes, and corruption.

Sustainable peace consolidation also requires the strengthening of political approaches, such as efforts aimed at preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and management, mediation and peacebuilding. In that context, we must consider the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, which noted that peacebuilding "must be the principle that flows through all the United Nations engagements, informing all the Organization's activities — before, during and after violent conflicts — rather than being marginalized." (*S/2015/490, p. 3*)

We need to be aware that the under-resourcing of conflict prevention interventions remains an obstacle. South Africa believes that a commitment to sustaining peace and conflict prevention requires adequate and predictable resources in support of those

priorities. That will invariably lead to less spending on costly interventions such as peacekeeping, humanitarian responses and the protection of developmental gains.

South Africa further welcomes and reaffirms its commitment to cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. That allows for consistency with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. As the United Nations has already recognized, regional organizations are well positioned to understand the causes of armed conflicts, owing to their knowledge of the region, which can strengthen their efforts to influence the prevention or resolution of those conflicts. Furthermore, they have a comparative advantage, owing to their increasing political resolve to address the situation. It would be beneficial for the United Nations to work closely with regional and subregional organizations in their mediation and peacemaking efforts.

In addition to traditional threats to international peace and security, the nature of conflict is changing, with a multiplicity of armed actors, many employing asymmetric methods. Against that background, the United Nations faces new challenges to its efforts to ensure peace and security, promote sustainable development, protect human rights and deliver humanitarian aid.

In conclusion, South Africa continues to recognize the importance of carrying out the recommendations of the reviews on peacekeeping, peacebuilding and on women and peace and security. In particular, we echo the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which noted that the prevention of conflict must be the priority, not the use of force, thereby stressing the need for both short-term prevention measures and longer-term measures to address the root causes and structural drivers of conflict.

The Security Council should not act as the proverbial man with the hammer. Instead, using all aspects of the Charter at the disposal of the United Nations system, including the good offices role of the Secretary-General, we must commit ourselves to doing everything we can to prevent conflict and sustain peace.