

Mr. Iteboje (Nigeria): Let me begin by commending the delegation of Egypt for convening this open debate on a very important subject. My appreciation also goes to the Deputy Secretary-General and the other briefers for their insightful expositions on the topic of our discussion.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

United Nations peacekeeping operations constitute one of the veritable tools at the disposal of the Organization for performing one of its three critical founding objectives, namely, maintaining peace and security and promoting human rights and development. It has become imperative to note that those three objectives are mutually dependent and reinforcing. In that regard, resolution 2282 (2016) rightly states, *inter alia*, that sustaining peace encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.

The doctrine of sustaining peace is becoming a new paradigm in conflict management, so that even peacekeeping operations are adapting to many of its precepts. The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations identified four strategic shifts required for the United Nations to successfully adapt to the changing nature of conflict. Those consist of the following: a political approach, a continuum of options ranging from the deployment of Special Envoys to the deployment of peacekeeping operations, partnerships with regional organizations in order to fully exploit the comparative advantages of each organization and a field-focused and people-centred approach to peacekeeping.

The doctrine of prevention in peacekeeping operations is not just about stopping conflicts from happening or escalating, it is about continued engagement from the early signs of conflict to the post-recovery phase. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding have therefore become so interwoven that they may be considered simultaneously at each conflict phase. Even where there is yet no need for the deployment of force, the threat of force as a deterrent may dissuade parties from abandoning an existing peace process.

There is need to recognize that no two conflicts are the same, and therefore a one-size-fits-all approach will always be misleading. In that regard, the analytical framework for a peacekeeping mandate needs to be exclusively unique to the conflict and to its environment. Effective collaboration with regional arrangements in the drafting of peacekeeping mandates is invaluable, considering the obvious advantages that such regional bodies have, including deeper insight on the conflict. The environment, the people and their culture and sensitivities; as well as the history of similar situations also play their parts.

A phased mandate process would also be beneficial, as it has the potential of making room for an assessment of the phase of the conflict and what needs to be done in the next phase. It is also useful to understand the dynamics of the conflict in order to determine what new mandate elements would bring improved results, and so on. The complexity of contemporary conflicts also informs the need for improved situational awareness; and for the protection of civilians under imminent threat of violence.

A critical element in sustaining peace is the opportunity for reconciliation. Peace initiatives that allow stakeholders to freely initiate and conclude negotiations based on give-and-take concessions, are most likely to attain enduring levels of compromise and stability. A situation where parties are encouraged to sign peace agreements drafted in foreign capitals, with presumed knowledge of the issues, and of solutions that are presumably suitable and acceptable to the parties, may not achieve the desired results.

A very important component of the sustaining peace agenda is the engagement of civil society. In the past, the restriction of peace negotiations to armed parties has proven to be fatally flawed, as those parties may have limited, short-sighted political objectives that do not lead to a sustained peace. The involvement of young people, women, religious and community leaders has intrinsic value that supports peace on a continued basis. In that regard, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) would be very helpful to sustaining peace.

At this juncture, I need to stress the need to respect the sovereignty of States, which is a fundamental principle under the Charter of the United Nations. Host States must buy into the peace process before they can have a meaningful chance of success. Achieving that buy-in requires great tact on the part of the international community. On the part of host States, statesmanship will be the key to embracing processes that would yield peace, stability, development and justice on a sustainable basis. A successful peacekeeping mandate must therefore consider the following factors: effective collaboration with host States, civil society, conflicting parties and community leaders; the insight and support of regional arrangements; the goal of genuine reconciliation; the conflict dynamics; and respect for State sovereignty reciprocated by State support for the peace process.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that, in view of the significant role of peacekeepers, it is imperative for all concerned to make efforts to ensure the safety of all peacekeepers.