
Briefing by H.E Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020

***UN Security Council Open Debate on Silencing the Guns in Africa
Wednesday, 27 February, 2019.***

Excellency Mr. Simeon Oyono Esono Angue, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea, President of the UN Security Council,

Distinguished Members of the UN Security Council,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express to you, Mr President, and, through you, to all Members of the Security Council, my sincere thanks for your welcome and the kind words of congratulations you have graciously addressed to me on the occasion of my appointment as Senior Minister, Diplomatic Advisor to the President of the Republic. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who has called me to these functions, has particularly asked me to convey to you his greetings as well as his high appreciation of your efforts to promote the purposes and principles of the United Nations' Charter in contemporary international relations. He assures you of Algeria's support for the emblematic and ambitious project of "silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020".

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, who has entrusted me with the Mission of High Representative for "Silencing the Guns in Africa", regrets not being able to participate personally in this meeting. He asked me to share with you our vision for intensified joint efforts of our two Organizations in the implementation of their strategic partnership in peace and security. Together with the Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat intends to contribute to raising this great partnership to a higher level.

Mr. President,

I wish to congratulate you on your successful presidency of the Security Council during a very busy month with many achievements. I would like in particular to express our deep appreciation to you for convening today's important debate as well as for your delegation's exemplary efforts in drafting and conducting the negotiations on the resolution that the Council has just unanimously adopted.

May I also thank all Council Members for their support to this resolution, which testifies to their continued commitment to the Africanist agenda for freeing the Continent from violent conflicts.

**Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,**

Since its adoption, the African Union's flagship project to achieve a conflict-free Africa and to make peace a reality for all our people, did not remain a mere slogan, but was rather pursued as one of the top priorities towards the realization of agenda 2063 "the Africa we want".

In line with the 2013 Solemn Declaration, in which the African Leaders pledged, among other aspects, not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans and undertook to end all wars in Africa by 2020, the AU Assembly adopted in January 2017 the AU Master Roadmap (AUMR) for Silencing the Guns in Africa.

To fulfil this objective, the African Union, in close partnership with the UN and the international community as a whole, has invested tremendous efforts to make peace a viable and lasting reality across the continent. As a result, notable progress has been made in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa. Many of the longstanding conflicts that have ravaged the continent over the past are subject to intensified collective efforts that will hopefully lead to their complete resolution. The recently concluded peace agreements in South Sudan and in Central African Republic, the successful democratic elections in Madagascar and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the historic positive developments in the Horn of Africa, are all generating optimism about a Continent emerging from the shadows and moving steadily to restore peace and stability and make a decisive move towards integration.

The AU and its regional mechanisms have also enhanced their capacity in dealing with conflict and crisis situations on the continent. In so doing, the AU continues to strengthen its Architectures on Peace and Security (APSA) as well as on Governance (AGA), which include a powerful set of instruments and practices. This has indeed helped the African Union and the international community to enhance their collaboration and partnership to the extent that today, consultation and coordination between the AU, the RECs/RMs, the UN and other partners to harmonize strategies and interventions, have become the rule rather than the exception.

In this context, it would be remiss of me not to recognize the impressive progress made in consolidating the strategic partnership between the AU and the UN which was given a new impetus by the signing in April 2017, of the Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.

**Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,**

As the December 2020 deadline to end wars in Africa approaches, it is essential to bear in mind that there are still major challenges and constraints which need to be overcome in order to place the Continent in a better posture to be able to secure real gains and to enjoy the peace dividends.

Even though the number of violent conflicts has been significantly reduced in the past few years, a number of African countries still remain trapped in a vicious cycle of violent conflict and its deadly consequences as a result of, among others, transnational crime, terrorism, and the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). The effect of these challenges has been further exacerbated by the existence of ungoverned spaces which leave room for illegal activities; the persistence of corruption and illicit financial flows which facilitate funding for illicit weapons and conflicts; and the illegal exploitation of natural resources which contribute to funding insurgencies and rebellions, to mention a few.

Issues of Governance and leadership remain also a major source of instability and conflict in Africa. Many experiences have shown the critical role of national governance institutions and democratic practices in conflict prevention, especially election-related violence and disputes.

Mr. President,

These challenges underline the urgent need to build a robust culture of conflict prevention, and in particular structural conflict prevention that goes beyond the current trend of militarization of conflict resolution – as necessary as it may seem in certain cases. They also emphasize the importance for all of us to redouble efforts to accelerate the search for peaceful and political solutions and to maintain strong engagement in support of implementation of peace agreements in Member States emerging from conflict.

To that effect, our efforts will amount to too little if we don't endeavor to reduce the gap between strategic political and military efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, on one hand, and investment in economic and social development, on the other hand. At the AU, we remain convinced that peace cannot be achieved without development, and vice-versa, and that both peace and development cannot thrive without human rights and good governance.

Equally important is the need for the UNSC to respond positively to the AU's longstanding and legitimate calls concerning access to UN Assessed Contributions to fund African Peace Support Operations. By providing responses to multiple threats to peace and security, these Operations are doing so on behalf of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. This issue deserves a renewed attention from the Security Council, in view of the ongoing efforts by the African Union, including the recent operationalization of the Peace Fund.

Last but not least, we need also to build and promote a culture of peace and tolerance. In this vein, my Office has recently launched a media campaign in order to reach out to African citizens in Member States, especially the youth, but also to the African diaspora. Furthermore, the decision taken by the AU to declare the month of September of each year until 2020, the Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illicit arms and light weapons (SALW), is one of many steps in the right direction that will contribute to peace and security on the Continent.

In this context, my role has been geared towards coordinating the various stakeholders and galvanizing the support necessary for deploying the relevant conflict resolution interventions. A Plan of Action, supporting silencing the Guns in Africa, is being developed with a view to translating it into concrete deliverables.

**Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,**

In conclusion, let me thank you, once again, for giving us the opportunity to share the views of the African Union on such an important issue. I sincerely believe that today's meeting will significantly contribute to maintaining and further enhancing the positive momentum generated around the issue of Silencing The Guns in Africa by 2020. I look forward to hearing your views on how this can be done within the strategic partnership between the African Union and the United Nations.

Despite the huge challenges ahead, I remain confident that our joint and genuine engagement will eventually pave the way towards a conflict-free and prosperous Africa. Our beloved African and indeed world Icon Nelson Mandela has once said "It always seems impossible until it's done." So, let's do it together.

I thank you for your kind attention.

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