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WELCOME REMARKS

by

H.E. Mr. Maged A. Abdelaziz
Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa

at the
Briefing by African Regional Economic Communities to
the
Member States of the United Nations

Co-organisers:
UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to
the **United Nations**
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Chad to the
United Nations

Monday, 12 October 2015

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM, ECOSOC Chamber
United Nations, New York

Co-Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Representatives of the African Regional Economic

Communities,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the seventh annual high-level briefing by the African Regional Economic Communities to the United Nations as well as to Africa Week 2015.

As a sign of the strong partnership between the UN and the AU, I am delighted to welcome and thank Her Excellency, Ms. Fatoumata Sidibe Kaba, Chair of the African Union Peace and

Security Council for the Month of November, for joining us here today. We appreciate your strong support for Africa Week.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the UN, and in particular Ambassador Tété António, for the continued support and close partnership with OSAA. It is this partnership that has enabled our Offices to organize these important briefings year after year.

Ambassador Mahamat Zene Cherif, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Chad to the UN, I would like to express my appreciation to you for your agreeing to co-chair and co-organize this briefing. We are looking forward to your remarks as you are not only representing Africa on the Security Council, together with Nigeria and Angola, but also because you are intimately familiar

with the subject matter, having previously served as Permanent Representative of Chad to the African Union.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to use these remarks to contextualize our discussions today within wider efforts to bring about peace and prosperity and then highlight issues that I think could help guide our discussions today on how to silence the guns in Africa.

2015 is a landmark year. On the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, we have witnessed the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the launching of three key processes that significantly affect Africa, namely the

reviews of UN peacebuilding, peace operations and the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325.

At the continental level, African Heads of States and Government adopted Agenda 2063 and its first 10-Year Implementation Plan. The synergies between the various reform processes are extraordinary and great care has been exhibited, including by African Member states, to ensure that contributions are congruent and outcomes of various processes foster coherence and coordination.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is within the important context of these reforms that we have come together today to highlight the specific role the RECs

can play in silencing the guns in Africa (by 2020). We need to be clear, silencing the guns in Africa is as momentous a task as it is worthwhile. It needs to be addressed at all levels and extends across the nexus of peace and security, governance, human rights and development. To successfully address this nexus, we need more holistic and integrated approaches, greater policy coherence and more sustainable and reliable financing.

We also need to build even better and stronger partnerships. Over the last decade and a half, the African Union has built a comprehensive continental architecture in the pursuit of peace, governance and development, with regional economic communities as building blocks. The United Nations have supported this infrastructure, not least through the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme which is to be replaced by PAIDA, (UN/AU Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda). The

UN also continues to collaborate closely with the AU and the RECs in many conflict prevention, mediation and peacekeeping efforts in Africa. To this end, I welcome recent efforts and proposals to further strengthen the partnerships between the AU and the UN, the AU and the RECs, and between the UN and the RECs.

We should also be frank with ourselves when discussing how to end conflict in Africa. This is not the first time that a commitment was made to rid Africa of conflict. Any renewed effort to end conflict should therefore be accompanied by a candid examination of why conflicts persist despite our best efforts and despite similar commitments in the past. This will help us focus on the most important challenges and enhance the effectiveness of our responses, thereby increasing the chances of achieving an Africa free of conflict.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

So what will it take to silence the guns? For one, we need to further strengthen and support key mechanisms to prevent and resolve conflicts, such as the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture.

But we cannot wait until tensions rise. The best way to silence the guns sustainably and successfully is to build durable peace. For that, we need to build societies in which all citizens, especially women and the youth, can fully partake; societies that respect diversity and combat all forms of exclusion, which remains a major cause of conflict on the continent. It also requires institutions that are legitimate, transparent and just and which effectively deliver public goods to citizens. We need societies that safeguard and

promote the rights of their citizens and protect them from harm.

We need leaders that end the winner takes all mind-set that pervades too much of Africa's politics and we need a political class that puts the well-being of their country ahead of their partisan or personal interests.

Finally, we need to find a way to harness the natural resources of the continent for the benefit of its people and encourage investments in jobs, education, infrastructure, agriculture, trade and energy among others. This will provide young people with employment and sustainable livelihoods and steer them away from migration, crime and conflict.

Not all of these factors can be successfully tackled in the next five years. Silencing all guns by 2020 will therefore require clear

prioritization, a strong focus on addressing proximate sources of conflicts and time-bound tasks assigning distinct responsibilities.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Given their proximity to realities on the ground, the RECs are the first line of response in crisis situations. They are also the most immediately affected by violent conflicts and its repercussions. We are therefore looking forward to hearing from the RECs today about how they see their role in silencing the guns. While facing many of the same challenges, each region in Africa is different. It will be extremely useful to learn from each REC how they assess the prospect of silencing the guns in their region, which conflict prevention measures they are carrying out to prevent new conflicts and what tools they are using to resolve existing conflicts. As no

single organization can tackle today's security challenges alone, we would like to encourage our distinguished representatives from the RECs to highlight areas in which the UN and the international community can support their efforts.

After hearing from the RECs, we will invite three senior officials and notable experts on regional and sub-regional cooperation to add their voices to the debate and help explore with the RECs how cooperation between the UN, the AU and the RECs can be enhanced towards silencing the guns in Africa.

We hope that today's discussion will lead to actionable recommendations and will generate messages that can contribute to the development of the continental framework on silencing all guns.

Let me conclude by reiterating that OSAA remains deeply committed to working closely with the AU, the RECs and African Member States in support of silencing the guns and realizing Africa's Agenda 2063. As today is only the first day of Africa Week 2015, I would like to use this opportunity to invite you to the rest of the high-level events on Africa's peace and development that will take place this week.

Thanks for your attention.