



Security Council

Distr.: General
14 January 2008

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1625 (2005) on conflict prevention, particularly in Africa

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with Security Council presidential statement S/PRST/2007/31, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it on options for the further implementation of resolution 1625 (2005) on conflict prevention, particularly in Africa.

2. A culture of prevention is taking hold at the United Nations; awareness of the importance of prevention has spread, and the commitment to building and mainstreaming its tools has taken root. Progress is being made in strengthening the Organization's ability to respond to disputes or situations that might lead to violence and to address the root causes of conflict. Efforts are under way to strengthen the Organization's conflict-prevention mechanisms and instruments, with a view to making them a core component of the collective security architecture of the United Nations.

3. In the present report, I review recent efforts in that direction, particularly in Africa, and emphasize the need for the continued development of a broad strategy of conflict prevention that enhances the role of the major organs of the United Nations and of the Secretary-General and builds national and regional capacities to undertake preventive actions. Since my predecessor's last progress report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891), submitted to the General Assembly in 2006, the United Nations system has played a crucial role in Africa and elsewhere in addressing conflict situations at an early stage by focusing on the fundamental factors that lead to violence and armed conflict.

4. By adopting resolution 1625 (2005), the Security Council reaffirmed its role in activities aimed at the prevention of armed conflict and its determination to take steps to cope with potential threats to international peace and security before they occur. In Africa, Security Council mandates establish the basis for preventive mechanisms in West Africa, the Great Lakes region, Chad, the Central African Republic, Somalia, Western Sahara and other areas, and for action to prevent the recurrence of conflict in Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone, among other countries.

5. I am also making increasing use of my good offices and mediation role as an instrument for conflict prevention. My special representatives, envoys and advisers, as well as the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, play an



indispensable role in that regard. In some cases, such as in Myanmar, Nepal, Somalia and northern Uganda, their work is in the public eye. In other cases, much can be achieved through quiet diplomacy to help promote dialogue and confidence-building by facilitating meetings and agreements. While the General Assembly and the Security Council have continued their parallel and mutually supportive efforts to strengthen the international architecture for prevention, the United Nations system has continued to enhance coherence and the resource base for preventive action. Initiatives are under way to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity to support preventive-diplomacy, good-offices and mediation roles. Where appropriate, the United Nations also continues to focus on conflict prevention in its initiatives and programmes at the field level.

6. However, despite the increased recognition of the utility and effectiveness of preventive measures, a considerable gap remains between rhetoric and reality. Recent studies show that the cost of armed conflict in Africa is equivalent to or exceeds the amount of money the continent receives in international aid. Had that money not been lost as a result of armed conflict, it could have been used to address Africa's growing development and humanitarian needs. Hence the overriding challenge for the international community remains the development of more effective strategies for preventing conflict. In my view, the key priority remains the further enhancement of the conflict-prevention work of the United Nations.

7. The primary responsibility for preventing armed conflict rests with Member States. It is in partnership with Member States and regional organizations that tensions can most effectively be addressed before they escalate into war. The United Nations is thus strengthening its partnerships with Member States and regional organizations to develop their capacities to carry out conflict-prevention activities. Such cooperation is particularly notable in Africa, where the United Nations is working closely with the African Union on several prevention, peacekeeping and peacemaking initiatives while supporting a variety of other projects aimed at increasing national and regional capacities.

8. Women in Africa have time and again demonstrated a strong commitment to working to achieve sustainable peace, but regrettably are still underrepresented at the formal stages of conflict prevention. The Security Council, in its resolution 1325 (2000), reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding and stressed the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It is therefore important for the United Nations, in undertaking efforts aimed at preventing conflict, to make an increased effort to support and encourage the full participation of women on the ground in these processes.

9. While effective preventive action requires substantial human and financial resources, peacekeeping or peace enforcement costs much more. We must therefore move from declarations of intent to concrete actions to ensure that preventive diplomacy becomes more effective.

II. Role of the Security Council in conflict prevention

10. In recent years, the Security Council has become more responsive to the need for preventive action and for a timely response to tensions that threaten to escalate. With regard to conflict prevention in Africa, the Security Council is now more

engaged and has supported the broadening of the United Nations integrated global approach to prevention and the recommendations put forth by my predecessor in his 2006 progress report on the prevention of armed conflict.

11. Conflict prevention is a multidimensional task involving political, humanitarian, development and other measures tailored to each specific context. As a result, the United Nations is developing increasingly multifaceted approaches to the prevention of conflicts, drawing on the cooperation of many different actors, including Member States; international, regional and subregional organizations; the private sector; non-governmental organizations; and other civil society actors.

12. This comprehensive approach includes structural prevention efforts to address the root causes of conflict; operational prevention to ensure the effectiveness of early warning mechanisms, mediation, humanitarian access and response, the protection of civilians, and targeted sanctions in the face of immediate crises; and systemic prevention to prevent existing conflicts from spilling over into other States. Work to address situations of hardship, deprivation, difficulty and inequality, which breed war, is not new to the United Nations. The recognition that these different approaches must be linked so as to create a comprehensive conflict-prevention strategy has allowed for a more holistic and systemized approach to the maintenance of international peace and security and international collective security mechanisms.

A. Preventive initiatives in Africa

13. The endorsement by the Security Council of the comprehensive approach to prevention is reflected in its focused activities in Africa. For example, in response to the spillover of the conflict in Darfur and the emerging humanitarian situation in areas of the Sudan bordering the Central African Republic and Chad, the Security Council, by its resolution 1778 (2007), authorized, on 25 September, the deployment of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad. To protect civilians from the conflict, the Council mandated a multidimensional mission consisting of three pillars: a United Nations presence with civilian, human rights and military liaison components; a United Nations/Chadian police force in eastern Chad; and a 4,000-strong European Union military force to support the mission for up to 12 months.

14. In North Africa, the Security Council intensified its mediation efforts in April 2007 to help end years of deadlock between the Government of Morocco and the Frente Polisario in Western Sahara. It adopted resolutions 1754 (2007) and 1783 (2007), in which it called on the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions so as to achieve a mutually acceptable political solution. In response to the request made by the Council that I oversee those negotiations, the United Nations has so far facilitated two meetings between the parties, in June and August 2007, which were also attended by Algeria and Mauritania as neighbouring countries. In the communiqué issued at the end of the second meeting, both parties acknowledged that the current status quo was unacceptable and committed themselves to continuing the negotiations in good faith.

15. The Security Council also undertook a mission to five African countries from 14 to 21 June 2007 in a proactive initiative to support peace and stability in Africa. During its visit to Ethiopia, the Council held meetings with the leadership of the African Union Commission and the African Union Peace and Security Council,

respectively. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana and the Sudan, the Council met with African leaders and other interlocutors on the ground. These are but a few of the clear indicators that the Security Council is ramping up its efforts to play a more proactive role in addressing conflict in Africa.

B. More effective use of sanctions

16. As the body with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has at its disposal a broad range of instruments, including sanctions. Since the early 1990s, the Council has made increasing use of targeted sanctions. If designed for a clear purpose, firmly backed by all Member States and well monitored, targeted sanctions imposed by the Security Council can be a powerful tool for conflict prevention. Applied judiciously, sanctions — and even the threat thereof — can be a powerful deterrent if backed by the necessary political will. The Security Council has increasingly resorted to the imposition of targeted sanctions since the early 1990s in an effort to curb the flow of arms to parties in conflict, deter acts of international terrorism and, more recently, stem nuclear proliferation.

17. Targeted sanctions on individuals and entities, such as asset freezes and travel bans, have also proved to have a restraining effect on belligerents and violators of human rights and humanitarian law. The Council has imposed targeted individual sanctions in several cases (most recently, for instance, in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sudan) and has expressed its intention to consider the imposition of such measures on individuals violating the arms embargo on Somalia. The Council has also sought to address concerns regarding the listing and de-listing of individuals and entities by devising fair and clear procedures, most notably in its adoption of resolution 1730 (2006).

18. Arms embargoes can be effective in reducing conflict by preventing new outbreaks of fighting, if they are properly monitored and enforced and violators held responsible. Monitoring of compliance by expert groups is an important component in ensuring the effectiveness of sanctions regimes. However, greater attention must be paid to implementing the recommendations of such monitoring groups. Peacekeeping missions such as the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) include sanctions-monitoring in their mandates. But they can be effective only if given the necessary resources to properly carry out their tasks.

19. It is, however, imperative that we also broaden our responses and adopt a more comprehensive approach that includes the development of appropriate norms and frameworks aimed at ensuring that the activities of the business sector do not exacerbate or fuel conflicts. In that regard, the United Nations system has been working with partners in the private sector through the Global Compact to promote corporate social responsibility. The Compact has developed instruments such as a conflict impact assessment and a risk-management tool to enable companies to measure their impact on the environment and make the requisite positive changes.

20. The Security Council has played a role in advancing that agenda, but more needs to be done to strengthen the international regulatory framework and encourage States to forcefully and constructively promote conflict-sensitive practices in their business sectors. The hardware used in conflict, including guns, tanks and landmines,

is produced and sold by private companies, and when such tools of war are cheaply and widely available, they become a hazard to peace. However, the series of recommendations made by the General Assembly aimed at reducing trafficking in small arms and light weapons have thus far been unevenly and inadequately implemented. I call on Member States to renew their commitment in that regard.

III. Role of the Secretary-General in prevention

21. Recognizing the need to improve the on-the-ground results of preventive action by the United Nations, I am increasingly utilizing my good offices and mediation role as well as other political means at my disposal. At the same time, I am working to systematize support for my preventive efforts and to create and strengthen a system of interlinking preventive mechanisms. These include the quick dispatch of my special envoys and mediation experts, the deployment of fact-finding missions to gather information on the ground and an analysis of information and trends, with the provision of options for action, as well as the establishment of short- and long-term special political missions to directly facilitate the on-site efforts of the United Nations and its partners.

A. Good offices

22. My good offices are a primary tool for the prevention of conflict, as provided for under Article 99 of the Charter. Through “quiet diplomacy”, the Secretary-General exercises preventive diplomacy through persuasion, confidence-building and mediation in order to find solutions and alternatives to conflict. The United Nations is actively improving the effectiveness of my good offices, expanding its mediation support capacity and building a pool of skilled, well-respected and experienced individuals who can serve, as needed, to provide technical and political advice to special representatives, envoys or advisers and to United Nations agencies, offices, funds and programmes.

23. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda and southern Sudan, the efforts of my Special Envoy, Joaquim Alvaro Chissano, have helped defuse the deeply unstable situation caused by the continued activities of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), and in 2006 he began a process to facilitate peace in the area. Since then, peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA have gained momentum, notably with the signing of the protocol on the root causes of the conflict and its comprehensive solutions in May 2007 and of the agreement on the principles of accountability and reconciliation in June 2007. As a result, the security situation has improved sufficiently to allow for an increase in humanitarian access to northern Uganda, and internally displaced persons have continued to return to their homes. In future, a peace agreement that addresses the issues of poverty and of the social and political marginalization of the people of northern Uganda will be crucial to fully resolving the conflict.

B. Information-sharing regarding potential conflicts

24. In addition to undertaking active preventive initiatives, the United Nations plays a primary role in monitoring developments in countries and regions at high

risk of conflict, so that information can be transmitted to the Security Council for its attention. However, preventive measures cannot be applied in the absence of knowledge about potential or increasing tensions or if knowledge is not shared.

25. In that regard, I rely on the Department of Political Affairs, as the operational arm of my good offices, to keep me informed of potential conflict situations around the world and to provide strategies to keep tensions from escalating. The staff of the Department and the network of desk officers of its two Africa Divisions keep me up to date on political developments in Africa, provide vital information to support the work of the Council, are often called upon to deploy to support preventive field operations and continually offer options for preventive interventions.

26. However, at a time when the demands for the Department's expertise and support are increasing, Member States have not kept pace by providing adequate resources to ensure that it has the capacity to deliver. I have therefore submitted to the General Assembly proposals to strengthen the Department to ensure its full capacity to support me, the Security Council, Member States and regional organizations.

27. In my proposals, I call for, among other things, the strengthening of the Department's regional coverage, first at Headquarters and with the full collaboration of Member States and regional organizations, through the establishment of regional offices that would take account of the regional nature and impact of many of today's most intractable conflicts — and of the opportunities for regional solutions in a context where the lines between inter-State and intra-State conflicts have become blurred. One of the first offices that I am proposing to establish is a Regional Office for the Great Lakes and Central Africa. The Office would respond to calls by the Security Council for a “comprehensive, integrated, resolute and concerted approach to the issues of peace, security and development in Central Africa” (see S/PRST/2002/31). It would support the efforts of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region to help transform the area into one of sustainable peace and security for States and peoples, political and social stability, shared growth and development, as set out in the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes region, adopted in 2006. The Office would be proposed as a special political mission, with annual reporting requirements.

28. The Office would directly support Member States, regional organizations and other bodies in efforts to manage ongoing conflicts prevent tensions from developing into conflict and bring lasting stability and peace in post-conflict settings. The Office would also conduct a systematic and comprehensive political analysis of cross-cutting issues in the region to help inform and strengthen such efforts. It would support Headquarters in carrying out conflict-prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding functions, including, as appropriate, mediation initiatives or support initiatives of other special envoys; and facilitate processes of national and regional dialogue aimed at easing political and security tensions and promoting reconciliation. It would support national peacemaking and mediation activities by providing expertise and lessons learned and by mobilizing political and financial support. It would also provide a regional political strategy for the work of the United Nations in the region to guide the activities of peace operations in the subregion, including the peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi

(BINUB), and the Liaison Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas (Kampala).

29. Help could also be provided to develop a regional framework aimed at improving relations between civilian and security forces and facilitating dialogue on issues of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as on the proliferation of weapons and small arms. Support could also be provided to foster a culture of consensus-building in the region on current social, political and economic challenges, such as the management of natural resources and the need for increased transparency and land reform. The Office could also provide a forum for the exchange of good practices among countries in the region on democratic governance, electoral management and civic education, and develop regional strategies to prevent electoral violence and foster cooperation among electoral management bodies in the region.

30. In addition to establishing a regional presence in Africa, I also propose to enhance the Department's policy-planning capacity and mediation support function so that it can better work with the rest of the United Nations system to improve the Organization's ability to assist Member States in responding to a wide range of cross-cutting global issues, such as the impact of transnational organized crime networks, corruption and terrorism. These modest yet important proposals for change are accompanied by plans for the more efficient use of existing resources and a more strategic approach to partnerships with regional organizations. They will go a long way towards providing a stronger backbone for the Organization's collective efforts in the area of peace and security.

C. Mediation support

31. In response to the decision taken by Member States in 2005 to support a strengthened good-offices capacity of the Secretary-General, a Mediation Support Unit was established in the Department of Political Affairs. Since its creation, the Unit has been serving as an important tool for helping to end conflict. It provides operational support to current peace processes and other field activities, as well as institutional and capacity-building support. It is a repository of expertise and information on conflict mediation and on developing capacity to rapidly deploy expert mediation advice to situations where it is needed. The work of the Unit is primarily geared to supporting my special representatives, envoys and advisers, but it also assists United Nations departments and agencies in supporting mediation endeavours, regional organizations and parties to disputes in which the United Nations or its partners play a third-party role. The Unit has launched a number of pilot activities, including an online database of peace agreements and peacemaking experiences (www.un.org/peacemaker), and it is in the final stages of establishing a full-time standby team of mediation experts, as well as a roster of experts available for ad hoc assignments drawn from participating agencies and programmes. Working with partners, the Unit is developing a body of guidelines, operational tools and training opportunities for mediators and their support teams. A series of regional consultations on mediation experiences in all parts of the world is also under way.

D. Preventive field presences

32. Demand is increasing for United Nations preventive activities of a proactive and field-oriented nature, including efforts to address complex problems or instability and the provision of peacebuilding support during the long process of recovery from conflict. Special political missions ensure that the United Nations can offer effective conflict prevention that directly engages parties by relying on strong relationships between actors and staff with in-depth knowledge of the political context and the factors at play. Overall, Member States and regional organizations benefit from the political presence of the United Nations and from the more agile and adaptive abilities that in-field activities provide.

33. For example, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic continues to support an inclusive national dialogue, initiated by the country's President, as a way to resolve recurrent political and military crises. Complementing the ongoing work of BONUCA, the Department of Political Affairs dispatched a high-level mission to the Central African Republic and the subregion in December 2006. That mission met with key national and subregional stakeholders and was able to boost the legitimacy of the national dialogue process, allowing it to move beyond a mere declaration of intent.

34. Special political missions play a vital role in ensuring that post-conflict countries do not relapse into war, and they help build the political infrastructure necessary to ensure that fragile States can sustain peace. The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS), for instance, was established in 1999 following a two-year civil war. It has facilitated the nation's post-conflict development and continues to provide stability in the face of new threats and destabilizing forces. Although progress has been made towards restoring the constitutional order, the situation remains fragile owing to political tensions, the debilitated capacity of State institutions to deliver public services, pressure from the military and extreme poverty. In addition, Guinea-Bissau faces new threats in the form of increased drug and human trafficking, which are subverting the country's nascent democratization process. In a country faced with enduring post-conflict challenges that are being complicated by new destabilizing factors, the continued presence of UNOGBIS helps to steady the Government and other institutions endeavouring to advance and stabilize democratic institutions.

35. Under the auspices of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi and the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework for Sierra Leone have been developed with the support of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) and the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, respectively. Inasmuch as the implementation of the strategic frameworks can contribute to preventing those two countries from relapsing into conflict, they will represent an important contribution to the overall operational preventive strategy of the United Nations.

36. Factors that create tension and lead to armed conflict do not recognize national boundaries. As Africa has been particularly affected by cross-border tensions, I propose to put in place additional regional tools for prevention and create more opportunities to support regional solutions, building on the experience of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Office of my former Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, whose mandate expired in March 2007. Member States

and regional organizations benefit not only from such regional mechanisms, which contribute to peace and security, but also from the critical added value that they provide to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations in individual countries. The United Nations regional offices are increasingly providing valuable early warning capacities and on-the-ground platforms for preventive efforts and in addressing regional trends and pressures.

IV. National preventive capacity-building

37. At the national level, efforts to build democratic, inclusive processes are aimed at ensuring that disagreements, when they occur, do not escalate into open conflict. Additional means of supporting the development of stable systems of governance following conflict are vital in order to support the maturation of stable democratic processes and to prevent a slide back into open conflict. It is widely recognized that absence of the rule of law, combined with weak security systems and institutions and lack of good governance, in countries coming out of armed conflict must be addressed urgently in order to maintain and consolidate peace and prevent the recurrence of crisis.

A. Electoral assistance

38. The provision of electoral assistance is another of the most effective tools available to the United Nations in building national capacity to prevent the recurrence of war. The credibility of the United Nations in providing electoral assistance is increasingly recognized by Member States, and the involvement of the Organization in assisting democratic processes remains in high demand.

39. The images of voters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone were vivid reminders of the promise of democracy and of the power of the ballot box over that of bullets in transforming victims of civil unrest or war into citizens able to exercise their political rights. United Nations involvement in those processes was critical to their success. In parallel to peace operations, technical assistance is also being provided in numerous countries, at their request, to improve their electoral processes. While elections are justifiably considered a peaceful way to ensure the legitimacy of Governments, most African environments are extremely complex, and the value of elections in preventing conflict and consolidating peace depends on the progress made in parallel processes such as institution-building, disarmament and the strengthening of the rule of law, including access to justice for all, the promotion and protection of human rights and transitional justice.

40. Instruments such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, which is currently in the process of being implemented in 25 countries, constitute a potentially important prevention tool that should be encouraged and further developed. The Mechanism is a bold, unique and innovative approach designed and implemented by Africans for Africa, and entails periodic reviews of the policies and practices of participating countries so as to assess the progress being made towards achieving the mutually agreed goals and compliance in the four focus areas, namely democracy and

political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance, and socio-economic development.¹

41. There are often unrealistic expectations that strong institutions and inclusive electoral processes can be built on the basis of one election. A sustained commitment and a long-term perspective are important to ensure sustainable peace dividends. Moreover, success in the technical conduct of elections cannot be fully realized unless all participants accept the results peacefully and work constructively, recognizing and supporting the role of Government and of the opposition, to support the democratic process.

B. Building national capacities for conflict management

42. The development process inevitably leads to conflicts as new actors emerge, resources and priorities shift, and existing cleavages in societies are mended or reinforced. Many such conflicts, if managed well, can be harbingers of positive social change and lead to more inclusive and stable societies. Development assistance should therefore also include support for national institutions — parliamentary committees and commissions, key ministries and civic organizations such as labour unions and chambers of commerce — to acquire the capacities needed to manage emerging tensions before they lead to violence and to build consensus around critical social and economic questions.

43. In recognition of that fact, African leaders adopted a resolution at the first standing Conference on Stability, Security, Development and Cooperation in Africa, held in Durban in 2002, requesting each country on the continent to establish a national framework for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. Subsequently, the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, working closely with the Department of Political Affairs through their Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, has assisted several Member States, at their request, in developing such frameworks and in building the relevant capacities of the institutions that underpin the frameworks.

44. A key destabilizing factor in parts of Africa and a precipitator of violent conflict has been the proliferation of illicit small arms and weaponry. The National Commission on Small Arms in Ghana, the National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Office of the President in Kenya, and the Small Arms Programme of the Economic Community of West African States are all examples of national and subregional efforts to build capacity in this critical area that have received significant United Nations assistance.

V. Building the capacity of regional organizations

45. Although the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with Member States, we must be able and equipped to support not only Member States but also

¹ Participation in the Mechanism is open to all States members of the African Union, and to date 25 countries have acceded to it by signing the memorandum of understanding: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

regional partners to build their own preventive capacity. We must support them when they need assistance, be it long-term or during moments of crisis.

46. The United Nations has worked in partnership with regional and subregional organizations, particularly in Africa, since the 1990s. Since the establishment of the United Nations Liaison Office with the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) at its headquarters in Addis Ababa in 1998, coordination has developed around specific initiatives with a view to devising a more efficient framework for peace and security cooperation.

A. Ten-year capacity-building for the African Union

47. United Nations cooperation with the African Union continues to progress and, in November 2006, the heads of the two organizations signed a declaration entitled “Enhancing United Nations-African Union Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union” (A/61/630, annex). The framework is designed to help enhance the capacity of the African Union Commission and African subregional organizations to effectively partner with the United Nations in addressing challenges to human security.

48. During its first three years, the capacity-building programme will focus on peace and security, and the United Nations, led by the Department of Political Affairs, has held consultations with the African Union Commission to operationalize the programme by setting clear benchmarks and timelines. United Nations efforts are focused on developing and implementing specific capacity-building projects in support of the African Union’s early warning system and conflict prevention mechanisms, as well as its Border Programme, and on providing assistance in electoral matters and in other areas such as post-conflict reconstruction. The primary goals will be to strengthen the partnership with the African Union in order to help respond in a timely manner to crises and to enhance the Union’s capacities to address conflicts.

B. Regional peace and security structures

49. The United Nations is committed to supporting the African Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union, which includes a continental early warning system, a Panel of the Wise (inaugurated on 18 December 2007), an African Standby Force and a post-conflict reconstruction and development framework. Particular progress has been made with the establishment of a dedicated capacity within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat to assist the African Union in the development of an African Standby Force and in building its long-term institutional capacity to plan, deploy and manage complex, multidimensional peace support missions.

50. Progress has also been made in working with our partners, the African Union and the regional economic communities, in putting together a plan for the training and implementation of the development of the African Standby Force, although much work remains to be done. It is vital that the momentum be maintained, as this is the foundation on which the Force is being built. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is also providing technical advice to the African Union on information technology and communications infrastructure to support the African Standby Force concept, as well as the continental early warning system. This

includes an integrated information management system using a satellite wide-area network that, among other things, will link the African Union with the subregions.

51. Even in the light of these positive overall developments, operationalizing the mechanisms remains a challenge, as the resources and capacity to make the instruments fully operational remain limited. In addition, the lack of a formal process for establishing working relationships with regional organizations further complicates those challenges. The Security Council has yet to clearly define procedures or specific areas of partnership with regional organizations. In addition, the Secretariat is limited, in terms of human and financial resources, in its ability to provide long-term substantial planning and logistical support to operations led by regional organizations.

52. The question of funding for both short-term mission start-up and long-term operational sustainability remains a central issue, hampering efforts by potential African troop contributors to participate effectively in peacekeeping missions undertaken by regional organizations, despite their will to do so. I therefore call upon Member States that are in a position to do so to assist African countries in closing some of the gaps that are delaying the operationalization of the African Standby Force. The United Nations is committed to working closely with partners such as the Group of Eight and the Africa clearing house mechanism, the European Union and individual donors to support the peacekeeping capacity of the African Union, enhance coordination and reduce the chance of duplication of effort.

VI. Further developing system coherence and coordination on prevention

53. Conflict prevention is a multidimensional task involving a set of comprehensive political, humanitarian, development and other measures tailored to each specific context and aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict. A successful preventive strategy therefore depends on effective coordination within the United Nations system at Headquarters and in the field. In recent years, the United Nations has further strengthened its coordination mechanisms to better address conflict-prevention issues; however, a great deal more is required for the United Nations to operate with greater coherence.

54. The Security Council and the General Assembly continue to take parallel and supportive action as regards prevention. For example, both bodies recognized the vital role of all parts of the United Nations system in conflict prevention and pledged to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in this field by adopting, respectively, the declaration of the Security Council on Ensuring an Elective Role of the Security Council in the Maintenance of International Peace and Security, particularly in Africa, as contained in the annex to resolution 1318 (2000), and the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2). More recently, the Assembly stressed the importance of a coherent and integrated approach to the prevention of armed conflicts and the settlement of disputes and the need for the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General to coordinate their activities within their respective Charter mandates.

55. The potential remains for enhancing mechanisms to ensure regular, systematic briefings of the Council by the Secretariat on disputes or situations likely to

endanger international peace and security. Relevant in that regard is the oversight role of the Economic and Social Council in matters of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. The Charter-mandated responsibilities of the Economic and Social Council to coordinate the activities of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, as well as its custodianship of the United Nations development agenda, are of particular value in promoting better integration between the relevant policy and operational dimensions of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Thus the Security Council should continue to engage the Economic and Social Council, in the context of its coordination role, to facilitate a better flow of information to it from the funds, programmes and agencies.

56. The Human Rights Council provides another potential source of information to the Security Council to inform its efforts on prevention. In its conflict-prevention work, the Security Council has already benefited from human rights briefings provided by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteurs and independent experts of the Commission on Human Rights. Such exchanges should be continued and expanded, as needed, in recognition of the relationship between peace and human rights. To further this process, the Security Council might consider requesting the Human Rights Council to brief it on a periodic basis or to provide briefings on thematic topics. Additionally, the Human Rights Council could be asked to provide country-specific briefings based on the future calendar of Security Council activities.

57. While cooperation between these bodies has progressed, the process has brought to light several challenges: how to define and refine each body's respective procedures in the area of conflict prevention; how to build on each body's comparative advantage; and how these bodies can best collaborate to achieve the shared goal of the prevention of armed conflict. Each United Nations organ has its own strengths and expertise in the area of prevention, set by precedent, procedures and mandates, as does the Peacebuilding Commission, which presented its first report to the Security Council this year. However, direct collaboration between these organs could be strengthened in order to enhance synergies and efficiency and to reduce overlaps in the area of conflict prevention.

58. At a working level, the United Nations Inter-agency Framework for Coordination on preventive action (Framework Team) has become an important coordination mechanism for preventive action by the United Nations system. It comprises 21 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes² that work together

² The Framework Team brings together the following United Nations agencies, departments, offices and programmes: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Group Office, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Democracy Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization. On a case-by-case basis, the Framework Team draws in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

to support the development of inter-agency conflict-prevention initiatives, including in Africa. While other parts of the United Nations system address full-blown crisis situations requiring immediate high-level attention and action, the focus of the Framework Team is on situations at the early “upstream” stage of the conflict cycle. Working closely with the Resident Coordinator/United Nations country team, the Framework Team supports the development of a wide range of initiatives aimed at assisting Governments in areas such as the promotion of national dialogue. With a view to developing a more systematic approach to conflict prevention, the Framework Team has established an Expert Reference Group that is developing a body and community of best practices in conflict prevention, providing country-specific technical support to Framework Team members and engaging in advocacy for conflict prevention.

59. At the level of the principals, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security continues to assess and endorse prevention initiatives, particularly those developed by the Framework Team. It often invites Resident Coordinators and my special envoys and representatives for in-depth discussions on specific situations. The Committee has also highlighted the importance of cross-cutting issues, such as the prevention of genocide and other mass atrocities. In addition, my Policy Committee has, since its establishment in 2005, strengthened coherence on peace and security issues, including in the area of conflict prevention, through strategic guidance and policy decisions. The Committee has taken up a number of issues related to Africa and has contributed to the formulation of preventive strategies that engage the United Nations system as a whole.

60. To mark the 10-year anniversary of the report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318), and in view of the major changes that have taken place since then, I propose to undertake a review of the 1998 recommendations and the array of mandates and resolutions on Africa and on the need for more systematic arrangements for coordinating action, monitoring progress and sharing lessons learned in preventing conflict and promoting peace and development in Africa.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

61. The United Nations is making progress in the area of conflict prevention, particularly in Africa, including through a better-defined role for the Security Council on this issue. The cumulative impact of those efforts has made the United Nations preventive system — from preventive diplomacy to peacemaking and peace building — more attentive to early warning signs of rising tensions that could lead to conflict and more effective at transmitting that information to the Security Council. In turn, the Council is acting to help Member States in crisis, to assist neighbouring States with border disputes and to address transnational factors such as cross-border refugee movements or the illicit arms trade.

62. However, the noticeable gap that remains between the rhetorical embrace of prevention and the effective employment of a broad range of highly effective preventive mechanisms must be closed. We must promote a broader recognition of the fact that it is only through political settlements that conflicts can be resolved. If we do not deal with the root causes of conflict — and offer sustainable solutions — we will be left with humanitarian emergencies and peacekeeping operations without end.

63. The goal must remain to operationalize prevention throughout the United Nations system, to provide an adaptive system able to adequately respond to requests for support from Member States and regional organizations, to support the preventive efforts of both the General Assembly and the Security Council and to fulfil the preventive mandates of Member States.

64. To further accelerate the implementation of resolution 1625 (2005) and improve and sustain the ability of the United Nations to avert negative developments and prevent crises from escalating into armed conflict, I call on:

(a) The Security Council, in order to enhance its capacity for preventive action, to dispatch, on a timely basis, missions to the field to assess situations on the ground. That could further support initiatives being undertaken at the field level and enhance collaboration with regional and national partners in order to build their long-term capacity for conflict management;

(b) The Security Council to increase its use of the Arria formula or similar arrangements for broad informal discussions;

(c) The Security Council to maintain its focus on means of addressing cross-border and transnational threats to international peace and security, notably the illicit trade in small arms and drug and human trafficking, including through continued cooperation with bodies that cover those issues, such as the General Assembly and regional and subregional organizations;

(d) The Security Council to work to ensure the creative and constructive use of sanctions as a tool for conflict prevention and to use reports of groups of experts to carry out lessons-learned endeavours in order to motivate parties to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. The use of sanctions could be broadened to apply not only to belligerent States but also to non-state actors. In that regard, the Security Council should continue the debate it held in June 2007 on natural resources and conflict, examining options such as the use of sanctions, monitoring and reporting to increase transparency in the international private sector;

(e) The Security Council to develop a stronger and more structured relationship with the African Union Peace and Security Council, specifically on the aspects called for in their joint communiqué of 16 June 2007, such as the sharing of information on conflict situations on the agendas of the two bodies, and considering the modalities for supporting and improving in a sustained way the resource base and capacity of the African Union;

(f) Member States to support measures to strengthen the United Nations preventive diplomacy and mediation support capacities, and, in particular, to support initiatives to strengthen the Department of Political Affairs, including through the expansion of regional field presences in Africa;

(g) Member States to continue efforts to combat cross-border and transnational threats to stability, including efforts to control the arms trade, while noting that recommendations by the United Nations group of experts examining the feasibility and scope of legally binding arms trade treaties are expected to be made to the General Assembly in October 2008;

(h) Member States to consider the deployment of integrated offices that are explicitly charged with building national capacities for conflict prevention in the

aftermath of the drawdown of peacekeeping operations, as have been established in Sierra Leone and Burundi;

(i) Member States and the international community to continue to address the issue of gender-based violence, including by implementing the United Nations system-wide action plan for implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000);

(j) Member States to enhance their support for the Peacebuilding Commission in order to ensure that it has the necessary resources to effectively assist all countries eligible to be on its agenda;

(k) All African States and the international community to fully cooperate in developing the capacities of African regional and subregional organizations to deploy both civilian and military assets quickly when needed, including the development of the African Union's African Standby Force;

(l) The United Nations system to deepen and intensify its engagement with civil society representatives, including those of communities displaced outside of their country as a consequence of conflict, and with pertinent bodies.

65. In that regard, I propose to:

(a) Proceed with plans to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat, especially the Department of Political Affairs, to analyse conflict situations and develop recommendations for action, as well as efforts to enhance the United Nations regional field presence in support of prevention, particularly in Africa;

(b) Continue to provide the Council with regular reports and analyses of developments in regions of potential armed conflict, particularly in Africa;

(c) Instruct the United Nations system, in particular the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme, to continue to build on current collaborations, to strengthen existing frameworks and to maintain efforts to deploy expertise on prevention;

(d) Enhance United Nations cooperation and coordination with regional organizations on Chapter VIII arrangements in order to contribute significantly to meeting the common security challenges; in that regard I will soon present specific proposals in a report requested by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 28 March 2007 (S/PRST/2007/7);

(e) Ensure that the United Nations system continues to work closely and support the African Peace and Security Architecture, including the newly established Panel of the Wise, and helps build the long-term capacity of the African Union, as provided for under the declaration on "Enhancing United Nations-African Union Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union";

(f) Support efforts throughout the United Nations system to build national and regional capacity, notably in Africa, to address the root causes of conflict, while strengthening institutions that provide channels for peaceful conflict resolution;

(g) Strengthen the ability of the United Nations to promote preventive diplomacy and mediation capability, especially through the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs and its standby team of experts;

(h) Strengthen the ability of the Secretariat to promote fairness and transparency in electoral processes and other means of supporting the development of post-conflict institutions, including in support of the rule of law.
