



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8629**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 2 October 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Matjila . . . . . (South Africa)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mr. Esono Mbengono
France . . . . .	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Syihab
Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru . . . . .	Mr. Ugarelli
Poland . . . . .	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Craft

## Agenda

### Peace and security in Africa

Mobilizing youth towards silencing the guns by 2020

Letter dated 30 September 2019 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/779)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

### **Expression of thanks to the outgoing President**

**The President:** As this is the first public meeting of the Security Council for the month of October, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, for his service in the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing our deep appreciation to Ambassador Nebenzia and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Peace and security in Africa**

#### **Mobilizing youth towards silencing the guns by 2020**

#### **Letter dated 30 September 2019 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/779)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bience Gawanas, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa; Ms. Aya Chebbi, African Union Special Envoy on Youth; Ms. Hafsa Ahmed, Co-founder and Chairperson of Naweza; and Mr. Victor Ochen, youth activist.

Ms. Ahmed and Mr. Ochen are joining the meeting via video-conference from Nairobi and Kampala, respectively.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite Her Excellency Mrs. Jeanne d'Arc Byaje, Permanent Observer of the Economic Community of Central African States to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/779, which contains a letter dated

30 September 2019 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. Gawanas.

**Ms. Gawanas:** Allow me to congratulate South Africa on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the Council on the important agenda item of peace and security in Africa on the theme of mobilizing youth towards silencing the guns in 2020.

At the outset, I would like to emphasize that the core aspects of that theme, "Mobilizing youth and silencing the guns in 2020", are not a choice but an absolute necessity. As a matter of fact, they constitute a crucial pathway towards the realization of our shared goal of leaving no one behind and achieving the conflict-free Africa that we want.

Africa is one of the world's youngest continents. As is well noted in the concept note for this debate (S/2019/779, annex), nearly 20 per cent of Africa's population of 1.2 billion people — approximately 220 million people — are between the ages of 15 and 24. That number is projected to rise to about 350 million people in the next decade. It is therefore imperative that Africa harness that demographic dividend in silencing the guns; combatting threats to peace and security, including radicalization, violent extremism, terrorism, sexual violence, xenophobia, cyberinsecurity, organized crime, forced migration, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and politically aligned militias; and addressing the root causes of those problems, including exclusion, inequality, high unemployment, poverty and climate change.

As the main findings of the 2018 study *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* highlighted, perspectives on youth are too often distorted by rampant stereotypes that associate young people with violence and conflict. That myth has triggered a policy panic, producing unnuanced policy responses and involving hard-fisted security approaches that are counterproductive and not cost-effective.

However, it must always be recognized that, in reality, the large majority of young people in Africa are peaceful and enterprising. They are agents and partners

of peace. They are the connective tissue of Africa, and they have a critical contribution to make at the national, regional and global levels, bridging the silos of development, human rights, humanitarian issues and peace and security.

If the right investments in young people are made and if their social, political and economic engagements are recognized and nurtured, societies may reap a peace dividend. For that reason, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and resolution 2250 (2015) collectively recognize the important and positive role that young people play in maintaining and promoting international peace and security and in advancing sustainable development.

Similarly, at the continental level, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the African Youth Charter recognize the creativity, energy and innovation of youth as a driving force for the continent's political, social, cultural and economic transformation. The onus rests on Governments and their development partners — including the private sector, civil society and the United Nations — to work together with youth to implement those normative instruments in a manner that is truly meaningful and inclusive of Africa's young women and men at all stages of conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, post-conflict recovery and sustainable development.

For Africa's youth, the time for effective and meaningful implementation of these instruments is now. As we have seen across Africa, young people are demanding urgent action and are making their voices heard. In Algeria, Burkina Faso, the Sudan, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, young people are at the centre of pro-democracy movements, effectively mobilizing, organizing, leading and clamouring for inclusive and accountable governance, youth participation and economic opportunities for all. For instance, in South Sudan, youth representatives at the Intergovernmental Authority on Development High-Level Revitalization Forum secured a place for young people in the country's broader governance structures through affirmative quota systems.

On their part, African countries have taken important steps aimed at removing structural barriers that prevent or limit the inclusion and active engagement of young people in peace and security, political governance and socioeconomic development. Several African countries have implemented the African Youth

Charter and a few African countries have established laws and initiated campaigns to promote youth political participation. Additionally, in several African countries, peace education is being incorporated into school curriculums.

At the regional and subregional levels, the African Union, the regional economic communities and several regional bodies and non-governmental organizations are engaging youth in initiatives to silence the guns. For instance, in the context of the implementation of the African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020, the African Union has taken steps to address the bulging youth unemployment crisis through the launch of its 1 Million By 2021 initiative. This is consistent with the African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment. The African Union is also encouraging the creation of platforms for youth engagement in silencing the guns, including through social media.

The United Nations system is working in strong partnership with African Member States, the African Union, the regional economic communities and other regional and subregional bodies, as well as with the African private sector and civil society, to support meaningful youth inclusion and participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes. At the subregional level, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel supported the Economic Community of West African States in organizing the first annual regional youth forum on peace and security in December 2018, in Ouagadougou.

However, more still needs to be done to bridge the gap between policies and plans and implementation to create impact. At the national level, Member States must invest in protecting and promoting the rights of children and youth. The commemoration of both the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Africa Youth Day in November provides Member States with an opportunity to recommit to upholding the right of youth to meaningful participation in peace and security processes.

Youth ministries and national councils should also be leveraged to promote peace education and culture of peace programmes in schools. This can also be done at the community level by encouraging youth, as well as parents, teachers, non-profit organizations and religious and community leaders, to support the establishment of youth groups that facilitate dialogue and offer young

people a chance to formulate and voice their opinions. Similarly, the private sector — especially information and communication technology companies operating at the country level — could be engaged to provide free SMS-based platforms through which young people can express their views on events in their localities and contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

At the regional and subregional levels, the African Union and regional economic communities should meaningfully promote the inclusion and participation of youth in their peace and security programmes and processes. Building on this, the African Union Special Envoy on Youth, who is currently sitting right across from me, should proactively engage Member States and the regional economic communities to better understand what is being done, especially in conflict-affected areas, to advance the youth and peace and security agenda. I was truly privileged, not long ago, to engage in an international dialogue with youth, and I think that is what we should continue to promote. We need to listen and to hear what the young people are saying.

The United Nations system, through the country teams, should ensure and promote synergies between national plans on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and resolutions 2250 (2015) and 1325 (2000). To consolidate the advancement of the youth, peace and security agenda, the Security Council might consider creating an informal group of experts on youth, peace and security that is comprised of a diverse group of young people and youth organizations. This aligns with a recommendation contained in the report “The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security” (see S/2018/86). On the side of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, every May we organize the Africa Dialogue Series and, next year, we will be organizing the Africa Dialogue Series on the Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 initiative. We hope that many Member States will participate.

Lastly, as we fast approach the next African Union Summit and the launch of the continental campaign on silencing the guns in February 2020, the United Nations and the international community should consistently and systematically engage African youth in all efforts that contribute to the Silencing the Guns initiative. In this respect, the three clusters of the Interdepartmental Task Force on African Affairs on support for the Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 initiative and the

socioeconomic nexus between peace and development and security, humanitarian governance, awareness and communication should devise specific modalities to include and engage African youth. African youth are telling us that it is good that we are fighting for stability, but what they want to see and what we need to give them are hope and prosperity.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Gawanas for her briefing.

I wish to acknowledge that we have some colleagues from the African Union Peace and Security Council here with us today, and to welcome them to the Security Council. I hope that they find our deliberations useful.

I now give the floor to Ms. Chebbi.

**Ms. Chebbi:** I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the important theme of peace and security in Africa, particularly in order to inform the Council on the contribution of African youth and strategies to mobilize the United Nations family towards silencing the guns in Africa.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Republic of South Africa for this invitation and for its leadership on the youth agenda. I would also like to thank the African Union (AU) Silencing the Guns Unit and the Youth for Peace Africa Programme of the Peace and Security Department, with which I work closely in mobilizing for and promoting sustainable peace in Africa, as well as the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa and the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations for their continuous support and advocacy for all youth agendas.

Please allow me to also congratulate all new members of the Council, in particular the AU member States, the Republic of Niger and the Republic of Tunisia, for being elected as non-permanent members. I also congratulate Tunisia on organizing early presidential elections following the death of President Béji Caïd Essebsi. Young Tunisians had their say at the ballot box, using their power of voting. They campaigned with zero budget and chose two candidates outside of the norms. The process, however, remains fragile and very challenging. We need to equip these young people and support innovation in our political processes.

In my presentation, I am going to address four main questions: What are the core issues we need to reflect on? What is the reality on the ground in Africa?

What are we doing about it at the AU? What can we do together?

In 2013, my cousin was recruited by Da'esh at the age of 22. At the time, he had just graduated from university with an engineering degree. It was a tough experience for the family to go through. It made me think about why young people like my cousin choose this path while I have chosen non-violent activism, even though we both come from similar educational and social backgrounds. That led me to do my thesis on youth recruitment in violent extremism in a comparison between Kenya and Tunisia and, together with my eight years of pan-African activism and my work as the AU Youth Envoy since November 2018, I want to offer the Council four main reflections on this topic today.

First and foremost, this is a question of narrative. Unfortunately, when African youth get the worst sort of attention from leaders, they are portrayed as perpetrators of violence, carrying guns, a dangerous class, members of the unemployed, migrants dying in the Mediterranean and as a youth bulge. But they are not spoken about as a generation of peacebuilders who are changing the course of history, revolutionizing technology and inspiring new ways of citizen engagement. African young people do not resign themselves to the hardships of their situation; they are using their agency and creativity to build the Africa we want.

There is a danger of a victimization narrative taking hold. It is disempowering and overlooks youth agency. Many young people have internalized the idea that they are marginalized and now see violent groups as legitimate fighters, not perpetrators of violence. We must therefore value our youth and their contribution to society. If we do not, they will look for recognition elsewhere.

Our definition of demographic dividends should therefore involve peace dividends and youth as the human capital, talent and the driving force of our continent. We must transform the narrative surrounding African youth into one of collective, positive actors — among the most informed and most resilient generations in Africa, and, if you do not disagree, Sir, the coolest generation.

The narrative question is also gendered because gender stereotypes are reinforced and young women's voices and unique experiences often go unrecognized. In this regard, we must also recognize that since 2010

waves of youth-led peaceful change have swept our continent, demanding legitimate rights peacefully and creatively. We must see this movement of uprisings and activism in Tunisia, Senegal, Zimbabwe, The Gambia, Burkina Faso, South Africa, Algeria, Kenya, the Sudan, Nigeria and many other countries as an opportunity to channel that energy into positive social change and peacebuilding.

I am of the generation that started the first revolutions of the twenty-first century. We stood up for our rights and not only demanded but led change. We moved from being perceived as subjects to active citizens and change-makers, and I am here today as testimony to a generation deserving a place at the table.

The second question is about hustling. We have a generation trapped in a state of waiting for adulthood because it is in a constant negotiation to find its political and financial freedom. It is about the livelihoods of our young people, who are barely surviving and do not understand the contradiction of our times — to be the youngest population in the world, 65 per cent aged under 30, and yet the most marginalized and most insecure. Young people are hustling, ticking a young-women empowerment box here and a youth-participation box there, with a lack of resources and support and facing the huge challenges of bureaucracy and limited documentation of their work. They hustle to sustain the impact of paying annual membership dues, training costs and in-kind contributions. They hustle for funding as civil society. They hustle to collaborate with institutions and Governments. They hustle to participate in peace processes, and they hustle for representation. But the real hustle should be to make sure that we silence the guns by 2020.

The third question is about identity and belonging. We want young people to give up the guns, but can we answer the big question in the mind of a 19- or 20-year-old: "Who am I?" What are we offering them? Can we give direction and assurance that we will provide the enabling environment needed for our young people to thrive? The big question of identity, which we do not often talk about, focusing only on temporary responsive measures to fix conflict, is crucial. Our efforts are informed by our multilayered sense of identity: young, female, indigenous, refugee, migrant, with disability, living in post-colonial Africa and so on and so forth. We need to promote pan-African, transnational identity and global citizenship. When young people think pan-African and global, it offers

a place of belonging and frees the imagination of individuals, communities and of the Africa we want, which is a borderless, transnational, multilingual and multicultural community.

Our pan-African policies at the African Union are creating dynamism through the African Continental Free Trade Area, intra-African trade, open borders, the African passport and pan-African universities. The only way to end violence in our continent is to unite our young people around a pan-African vision and space for exchange, knowledge and solidarity. Even our education should instil pride and empower the African child, in its African identity, to combat xenophobia, hate and exclusion. And we must not forget that there is no pan-Africanism without feminism.

The fourth and last reflection is that we must reflect on the nexus with the peace and security agenda. “Intersectionality” is a trendy word in the youth space. For us, everything is intersectional. Our analyses, our challenges, our fluid identities and, therefore, our solution must be intersectional.

There is a nexus with development; it is not only smart to increase investment in youth development; it is strategic.

There is a nexus with governance. We should deliver the health care, education and services that our citizens and young people deserve because where such services are absent, violent groups become economic, political and social actors.

There is a nexus with inequality because jobs alone do not address deep-seated awareness and lived experiences of injustice for young people, who then look upon violent groups as legitimate fighters. The future of work needs to be about dignity, because young people do not just want jobs; they want jobs with dignity.

There is a nexus with climate change. In the words of African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, the effects of climate change in the Sahel have become a threat to peace and security not only in the region but also worldwide.

There is a nexus with health and disease. Africa’s peace and security agenda faces yet another challenge in the Ebola virus. As Council members are aware, a new outbreak of that deadly virus was reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 1 August 2018; since then, over 3,000 people have been infected and more than 2,000 have died. Women and young people

have been hit hardest. African young people may escape the bullets but end up dying anyway if we do not act on Ebola. On this front, we need collective action to fight Ebola and adopt a peace-focused approach to help curtail the disease’s spread by mainstreaming community and political reconciliation with local cooperation and building trust and resilience as the priorities of these processes and our response.

Since my appointment by the African Union Commission Chairperson, with the support of the AU Youth Advisory Council, I have been humbled by what my brothers and sisters are delivering as we speak with little to no resources, but only courage resilience and determination, to make Africa a safe and secure environment for all. Young people did not wait for the declaration of the year for silencing the guns to act, and they did not wait for a resolution of the United Nations or a decision of the African Union Assembly to make peace possible. I would like to share just a few of these initiatives.

I undertook a solidarity mission to South Sudan, where young people like Jok are replacing bullets with books at the Promised Land Secondary School. People like him are on the front line of building the world’s youngest State, disseminating the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of September 2018, which we need to continue supporting. I met with young people in Eritrea and Liberia, who are using innovation to nurture a culture of peace. Youth groups in Kenya work in informal settlements empowering young women using art.

The African Youth Action Network in Uganda trains young refugees in emotional intelligence and advocacy against hate speech, using social media. Local Youth Corner in Cameroon is working in eight prisons to provide repeat offenders with an alternative to reoffending, positively impacting 5,000 young people to become “prisonpreneurs”.

African young people have demonstrated effective and impactful change when given opportunities, tools, knowledge and capacity. African youth also welcomed the decision of AU Member States to declare the theme for 2020 as the year for silencing the guns, creating a conducive environment for development.

The AU Youth for Peace Africa Programme arises from the relevant decision of the Assembly of the African Union, especially article 17 of the African Youth

Charter, which was adopted in 2006 and recognizes the contribution of and role of youth in peacebuilding in Africa. The peace and security, especially on youth, has always been an African agenda, and it has actually inspired many of the resolutions adopted in the AU Peace and Security Council.

On 8 November 2018, we had the first open session on youth, peace and security in Africa, at which the Peace and Security Council called on AU member States to urgently implement Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), with a particular emphasis on the development of national action plans. The Council also requested the Commission to conduct a study on youth, peace and security, which will be presented next month.

The AU also works to end harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and child marriage, which we believe are part of a broader conversation on gender-based violence and, therefore, an integral part of the peace and security agenda. That is why the AU Saleema Initiative and the United Nations-backed Spotlight Initiative could not have come at a better time. Five years ago, 278 girls were abducted in Nigeria and youth-led campaigns like #BringBackOurGirls made concrete action possible. Nevertheless, 112 girls are still missing and it is important that the United Nations continue to prioritize the rescue of these girls, especially because they come from a region where two of three girls are married before their eighteenth birthday.

On 16 August, I joined forces with the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN). With the support of UN-Women and the Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, the AWLN Young Women Leaders Caucus organized the first intergenerational retreat on women's leadership in Africa, hosted by the Government of Kenya. In addition, the African Union Commission offers robust support to young women through the AWLN, in close partnership with the United Nations and civil society organizations. We will also come back to Nairobi to collaborate with the President of Kenya, in another milestone, to convene the first AU youth summit and festival as a pre-African Union Summit meeting for youth voices to be included in decision-making processes at the African Union and to declare their position on the role of youth in the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative.

Many of these engagements will continue to take place, but together we can have a greater impact by moving from policies to their implementation,

because young people want action and progress, not empty promises. We may not need more and more recommendations; we may just need to deliver what we already have. Allow me to offer a few concrete actions we can take.

First, we should promote and convene intergenerational dialogues, collaboration and sustainable partnerships with young people, which will build trust in Government institutions and mechanisms and address youth exclusion. It is time to have young peacebuilders making the headlines.

Secondly, we should enhance the capacities and leadership of youth through platforms of mentorship, internship and leadership to facilitate their professional career development, particularly of those from rural areas. If there is one thing the United Nations can change, it is to create more opportunities for young people in Africa by putting an end to unpaid internships in the United Nations.

Thirdly, we should use sports, arts, music, dance, storytelling and film to mobilize the largest continental campaign on silencing the guns. Those tools have proven to be effective for advocacy as alternative peacebuilding approaches. The 600 million young people on the continent is a huge network of diverse and innovative minds that are interconnected on the web. In an instant, young people can spread information, alert and raise awareness, and their outreach and advocacy potential is unprecedented with new technologies.

Fourthly, we should invest in civil society and civic space, provide direct financial and technical support for youth intervention and provide funds for youth-led peacebuilding efforts through truly effective mechanisms that benefit and sustain their work and social impact, rather than harm them.

Fifthly, we should translate commitments into action. We trust that resolution 2457 (2019), on silencing the guns in Africa, and the subsequent mobilization of the United Nations system by the Secretary-General through the United Nations task force on silencing the guns will generate the required support for Member States, the AU and regional economic communities and young people to successfully implement the silencing the guns agenda.

Lastly, if there is one policy framework that we still need to think through, it would be the intersection between the women and peace and security and the

youth, peace and security agendas, as highlighted by *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*. The inclusion of young women and girls as partners in the Council's work on conflict prevention and sustaining peace is crucial. Young women are consistently subsumed into these different categories, which renders them vulnerable to being left out. Young women and girls face double discrimination due to their sex and age, falling between youth-focused peacebuilding and prevention programmes and women-targeted peacebuilding interventions. Ensuring the inclusion, empowerment and systematic engagement of young women is crucial to the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015) and 1325 (2000).

We should not let fear drive our decisions but, more than ever, we need courageous leadership that is not just responsive but empowering and preventive. My generation craves greater political space to operate and drive the desired change. My generation is ready to make an impact that may not be comprehended but cannot be denied. My generation is ready to set aside unhealthy competition and foster collaborative partnerships within innovative and sustainable resourcing.

Young Africa cannot continue to be ignored as the most youthful population in the world. Young Africa deserves a seat at the table and in decision-making positions to make peace possible. There is no better time to act than now and there is no better time to promote genuine youth engagement on this agenda.

In 2013, my cousin, through our family community and local Government support, started a gym project in our village because he wanted to make a difference and inspire the unemployed young people of our community to believe in themselves and to serve. He realized his power to bring healing and mend the broken spaces of our world instead of destroying it. Despite anger and frustration, the majority of young people are choosing not to fight back, but to create alternative spaces for themselves.

That is what young people are asking the Council to do. We must focus on building — building communities, building partnerships, building trust, building dialogues and building resilience. And to build young people's trust in institutions, we need to reframe the debate so that they can be as part of the solution, not the problem. We need to articulate the story of hope and Africa's leadership for youth. I can find no better

way to end my briefing than citing the words of South Africa's icon, Steve Biko, who wrote:

“The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa — giving the world a more human face.”

That face is young. African young people are already doing their part in peace and development because when young people promise, young people deliver. Now we need the Council to also contribute and do its part, and to let us co-lead.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Chebbi for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ahmed.

**Ms. Ahmed:** I send greetings to all, or *mambo*, as we say in Nairobi.

My name is Hafsa Ahmed. I am a 27-year-old young peacebuilder from the neighbourhood of Eastleigh. Allow me to introduce Eastleigh — the place where I was born and bred; the place that made me who I am today. Often referred to as little Mogadishu, the streets are adorned with skyscrapers and in front of the malls one can find colourful umbrellas with street vendors selling their wares. It is also an area with high levels of poverty and crime.

The community of Eastleigh lived largely in harmony until late 2013, when the peace of this urban centre was disrupted by frequent grenade attacks by alleged extremists. During that period, many residents were injured and others lost their lives. In response to those attacks, the Government of Kenya launched Operation Usalama Watch in the hopes of securing the area. Around 6,000 police officers were tasked to do the job. The officers started a vigorous operation, going door to door to screen individuals. Bribes were demanded, people were arrested indiscriminately and many were rounded up for further screening or deportation to Somalia.

As a community, we lived in fear and I was pushed to the limit. I felt that we were forgotten, so I decided to do something about it. Armed only with a smart phone and a strong urge to tell the world of the abuses in my community, I started to share the stories of victims and pictures of uniformed police officers breaking the law. Some of my friends gathered the courage to do the same, and it became a movement. All of this was done at great risk to our own safety. When the Government



halted the operation some months later, we felt that we had made a contribution.

From then on I started actively engaging in our area. I decided to train fellow youth on life skills and I hosted talent shows to promote youth talents and peace by bringing together the community. I wanted to show that there was an urgent need to unite the community because the operation caused divisions and a lot of suspicion. I got fired up, recognizing the fact that as young people in Eastleigh we had to do much of the work ourselves. I decided to run for member of the county assembly in 2017, but, unfortunately, I was unsuccessful. Still, I was not deterred.

Last year I became a youth moderator for an initiative pioneered by the Life and Peace Institute in Kenya that focuses on sustained dialogue. It is called Tubonge Mtaani, which in our local slang, Sheng, means “Let’s talk in our neighbourhoods”. Sustained dialogue aims to build relationships among divided communities. Through these youth-led efforts, we share our stories and become empowered to actively address issues together in our neighbourhoods. There is little trust between communities and the police in my area, so spaces are also offered to bring community and police together in order to begin to better understand one another and to discuss challenges in our areas and what we need to do to address them. The work is both simple and complex, but very effective in building bridges. Through dialogue we are able to overcome our stereotypes of one another and use non-violent approaches to reduce and prevent urban violence. During my time engaging in that process I have seen a lot of changes in my community. I will share some examples.

First, young men, and especially young women, who previously lacked confidence to speak in public found a safe space to speak up, articulate issues and lead community dialogues.

Secondly, stereotypes and perceptions among youth are changing. Before the dialogues, we did not know each other and had all kinds of negative ideas and perceptions. Now we have become friends and recognize that stereotypes unnecessarily disconnect human beings and put up huge walls between us.

Thirdly, many youth have discovered an alternative to crime and been inspired to see their potential, start businesses, go back to school and initiate community projects. Others, like me and my friend Ken, have

launched a community initiative called Naweza, which means “I can”. The relationship between the police and the community has tremendously improved. For instance, I can now freely call the head of police in my area and share critical information on matters related to community safety. In the past the police were always seen as enemies.

Let me now share two major challenges for us young peacebuilders seeking to advance peace in places like Eastleigh. One major challenge that I see is how the world understands what constitutes a peace and security challenge. Urban violence is often not prioritized as a peacebuilding challenge; where I come from, it is seen more as an issue of crime and gangs that can be tackled only through a hard security approach. If we are to truly silence the guns in Africa by 2020, we need to really catch up with the reality that 82 per cent of lethal violence actually occurs outside of conflict zones, with much of it concentrated in urban settings, including the area where I am from. As more than half of the global population now lives in urban areas and the African continent is regarded as the world’s fastest urbanizing region, we will need to better understand the changing face of conflict and the interlinked forms and expressions of violence. We need to invest in more youth-led urban peacebuilding going forward.

A second challenge we need to address is the fact that engagement in peace processes and peace work have largely been the exclusive domain of older, male generations. When young people are involved and brought to the table, it is often tokenistic, and our needs and interests are often reduced to issues of education and employment, when, actually, we have diverse needs as young people, as well as the capacity to contribute to the biggest challenges facing our community and world, not just to so-called youth issues. While we face these deep-rooted obstacles to our meaningful inclusion, many of us persist and continue to make the most of the resources we possess to make positive contributions.

As I conclude my remarks, let me share three recommendations that I believe would help me and fellow young peacebuilders to better advance the objectives of resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), as well as the vision outlined in the African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020.

First, the United Nations should create further opportunities for additional and more diverse young

people to engage in higher-level United Nations processes involving key decision-makers, including the Security Council. Having youth briefers here today is a testament to how the Council is living up to the intention in resolution 2419 (2018) to have youth representatives brief the Council. Having said that, I would like to urge the Council, and the United Nations system in general, to explore more innovative ways of engaging with young people. I would, for instance, welcome a visit from the Council to Eastleigh for it to see first-hand the work of the many young people who are not a threat or a problem but part of the solutions that the Council is seeking.

Secondly, given that African Union flagship projects are also at the centre of today's debate, I would like to urge the African Union to continue to strengthen its recent efforts on the Youth4Peace programme. We are encouraged by the continental leadership on that agenda, but the outreach must be intensified so that more young people across Africa can be engaged, including youth who are most marginalized from policy conversations yet most need to know about and employ that agenda. I also see a critical role for the African Union in supporting member States to integrate the youth, peace and security agenda in national youth policies and development plans and to create spaces for member States and a range of young people to exchange on best practices on how to best operationalize resolution 2250 (2015) in a way that genuinely has the potential to reach places like Eastleigh.

Thirdly, I would like to urge United Nations States Members to develop proactive, forward-looking youth policies that catalyse young people's positive leadership for peace rather than seek to contain them. We, as young people, can contribute to positive change in our communities, and many of us already are. Recognize that and provide us with the space to define and shape the agenda, and then work with us to implement policies in ways that build trust among Governments, security actors and young people, which the Council is meant to serve and protect.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that we young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, we are already leaders now. We are ready and able to shoulder our responsibilities for a more prosperous, peaceful and just world.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Ahmed for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ochen.

**Mr. Ochen:** Congratulations to you, Mr. President, and South Africa on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for October. I would like to thank everyone in the Chamber, together with my fellow briefers. It is a great honour. I send my warmest regards from Kampala to all present, as I feel delighted to be invited to contribute to the discussion.

On a day like this, we are also observing the International Day of Non-Violence, and a subject of that nature is quite befitting. In myriad ways, my story, like many others of young people around the continent, begins with a story of pain, unfortunately. When I was growing up as a child, like any other child in the world, I wanted to study and become a doctor or a pilot. My dream was to become a teacher. Mostly, I anxiously awaited when my parents would be able to build at least a semi-permanent home. But, when war came, everything, including all those dreams, was turned upside down. My dreams were cut short; my vision for the future was amputated. That is what I witnessed as a child.

Since I was a child, after spending my life in the camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Uganda, with millions of fellow Ugandan children sharing my painful journey, we felt that the world had forgotten us, and we asked ourselves who we could fight against. Should we pick up a gun and fight somebody? Ultimately, we wondered how we could work together to fight against the disgraceful fate that we were living.

Every day, as a child, I had to struggle to survive abductions and being killed. I had to struggle to not get blown up by landmines. Every day, I painfully struggled to find something to eat and somewhere to sleep and worried that if I slept at all that I might not wake up alive, or that I might wake up in the hands of armed men. Worst of all was when my own brother was abducted on 10 December 2003 — apparently, Human Rights Day — which was the day that right for me was violated, at best. Unfortunately, to date, my brother, as well as my cousins and fellow community members have never been seen again.

It has been quite an exhausting journey. I always wondered whether it was enough to cry and criticize war mongers or fighters, or was it too late when I criticized or complained about them. But something in me told me that my situation was an opportunity for me to take responsibility, and instead of criticizing the

war mongers, I should create peacebuilders and achieve what the continent was thirsty for, in that case, peace.

At the peak of the conflict, I was at a crossroads, pondering whether picking up a gun to fight was the way to go. But something in me kept on telling me that war was not an option, that suffering needed to end and that picking up a gun would escalate the suffering. I chose peace. At the age of 13, I started a peace club in the IDP camp where I was living in northern Uganda.

The objective was primarily to discourage and challenge the child soldier recruitment that was happening in my region. We went on to build up our momentum, while we struggled with meeting our own education and health needs and worrying about the future. In 2005, I formed the African Youth Initiative Network, aimed at mobilizing young people — fellow youth suffering like I was — to transform our trauma and pain into an opportunity for leadership and peacebuilding. That has been key in developing our leadership in the direction of peacebuilding.

I can say that it is very difficult for something good to come out of a life of conflict. I admire the momentum and commitment by the African Union to saying that we have to silence the guns in Africa by 2020. The year 2020 is not so far away, and there are gun shops all over the continent. That is a vision that we must embrace and ensure that we commit and deliver on.

I have met with young people in South Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One young man, from a country I will not name, asked me how it was that I could tell him to put down his gun, because his gun was his life, security, livelihood, father, mother and Government — how could he lay down his gun? That was his question to me, and I did not have an answer.

But our background and our work over the years, which has helped us move forward, have been guided by the following four questions, which I humbly ask the members of the Security Council to help me answer. First, how can we make peacebuilding rewarding, and peacebuilders rewarded, so that peace is chosen by the young people in Africa? Secondly, how can we build trust among Africans, and towards the African people? Thirdly, how do we reduce the flow of guns to Africa? The continent is littered with them. Fourthly, how do we deal with the systemic marginalization of Africans by fellow Africans, as well as international norms? Allow me to present the key challenges from

my recent trips across the continent, made with the support of the African Union, in an effort to mobilize youth momentum towards peace in Africa.

One thing that is common is the lack of critical positive momentum across the continent. We found an absence of a transformative leadership agenda aimed at empowering young people as leaders in peacebuilding. The streets throughout the continent are full of young people chanting that someone must fall and that someone must go. Everyone who chants those sentiments is conveying so much pain and anger, and one can feel that, from their hearts, they are ready to strike back. They are feeling the urge to take revenge. That is a challenge.

The next challenge is migration. There is growing uncertainty among youth on the continent, with thousands seeking jobs abroad. We are seeing them die in the Mediterranean Sea on a daily basis, as well as the suffering of Africans around the world. But also, for those who decide to stay home, they are sometimes forced to settle for low quality livelihoods, which tends to increase the range of risks and vulnerabilities.

The third challenge is hierarchies and the state of mind. Over our time together, we have talked about youth inclusion and participation. It is true that the language has changed, but the power has not. Power remains the same. We are stuck in a non-progressive mindset of power, which says that we are including youth, but that is a mere sentiment; it is not really meant. The question we have to answer is how to include in the discussion every young person and key player for the right mind-change.

The fourth challenge is that there are too many war profiteers, both at home and abroad. Think about what would happen if Africa were to close its borders for one day or one year — how many industries would fail around the world? We have so many resources at home, but they are taken at the expense of the African people. How do we address that challenge of there being too many war profiteers? The question is, who really wants the wars to end? Is it African leaders and the African people or the international community? Those are concerns that the Security Council could help us to address.

The fifth challenge, shared among many young people whom I have met in different parts of the continent, is a concern that, while there is increased engagement from influential figures — what we

consider to be the “celebritization” of the peace agenda — and while that is good in terms of raising awareness, it does not do much justice to people who are suffering and going hungry. Young people are carrying guns on their necks every day, looking to secure livelihoods. Young people are saying that most initiatives do not align with their needs. They are not living the lives they studied for, they are not living the lives they researched, but they are living the lives into which they were born, in which they survive and continue to live. Therefore, identity matters, and whom they identify with is important. Allow me to make the following recommendations to the Council.

First, in order for us to tackle the big question of what we can do to achieve our dream of silencing the guns in Africa by 2020, I think the bedrock will be the political will generated by both the weak and the powerful people across the continent. That would mean that their joint decisions to negotiate a collective future supplied by the leadership will be necessary to create a climate in which everybody can thrive. That is key. We need that.

Secondly, I would like to make a recommendation on gun violence. It is my hope that, given the increased gun flows to Africa, the Security Council will understand that youth are genuinely lost. They are wondering: who really wants the wars to end in Africa if nations around the world are competing to militarize the continent? Who really means well? What do they mean when they say they are working for peace and stability in Africa, with all these guns arriving on the continent? If the rest of the world genuinely means well to Africa, it should scale down its military cooperation in Africa and scale up the partnership for peace. Let us plant the seeds of peace.

Thirdly, most international interventions — whether led by the African Union, the United Nations or other platforms — have had a post-mortem approach to peace. That has been viewed in many different ways. We are grateful for the support that comes in the form of humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping missions and peace operations. I think the time has come for a pre-mortem approach whereby we mediate in conflict situations from the outset to prevent suffering and death. That is key.

The fourth recommendation I would make is on mediation as a tool for conflict prevention. We must seek to address the various grievances of ethnic groups

before we allow them to escalate into violent conflict. That can be done only if we domesticate and bring about solutions at the local level. Another recommendation I would make based on my experience of travelling to different countries around the continent — some of which have endured sanctions for years — is that States’ development capacity should be prioritized instead of imposing sanctions or cutting aid, because it is the people who are suffering, and it is not just top politicians being affected but the innocent, the poor, children and women. Sanctions are not punishing the State as intended, but rather they are punishing the people. In as much as we are committed to putting an end to guns in Africa, let us make sure that the commitment to youth and peace and security is matched by meaningful financing. Donors should give money and provide the technical skills that are needed. Youth have increased in numbers across the continent, but we must move away from the numbers and towards generating a positive impact.

My penultimate point is that we must focus on addressing the root causes of violent conflict, such as conflicts over land and mineral resources. Imagine if we had shared African resources with the rest of the world in a way that benefited Africans — where would Africa be by now? And of course, questions have been arising on issues of growing concern among young Africans. The United Nations is key, and we need to promote the United Nations and bring it closer to the people. Let them understand the values and principles as well as the declarations and treaties signed, which will mean they will be able to respect the rules of engagement. The big question that everyone is asking is: when will we have a permanent African member on the Security Council? It is a question that the Council must look at now in order to maintain the legitimacy of such an important institution in the minds of young Africans.

Finally, based on our 15 years of active peacebuilding work across the continent and also from our childhood, we have moved on to build an African peace academy. That is a locally led vision for the region that will have an impact on world peace. Through that facility, we will opt to put in place home-grown efforts for peacebuilders, conflict preventers and conflict mediators. Through the web network of peacebuilders, we hope we will have a continent-wide peace movement. That is a commitment that could help us to make collective achievements together.

Another goal we intend to achieve through the peace academy is to support the principles of adherence to and tolerance of different opinions among young people, without being compromised. We will also support the partnership between youth and donors with the intention of harmonizing strategies to look at the long-term aspects of peacebuilding, which will be key to strong institution-building.

With all of that said, I wish to say that we must be aware that the African youth has grown up, and now they are many in number. They are becoming a force. It will either be a positive or a negative force on the world. But it will be a force. We must do the right thing, right now. It would be in our best interests to step up now to help redirect the pace of change towards a positive change. We want to have a model African-led peacebuilding missions and operations to complement the existing United Nations and African Union peace operations.

By implementing all of the above, we will accelerate innovation for a lasting peace in Africa. I pray that peace may prevail in Africa and the world.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Ochen for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Ms. Wronecka (Poland):** Let me begin by thanking today's briefers for their very informative interventions.

I would also like to commend the South African presidency for having organized this timely debate aimed at addressing the role of youth in peace processes. Since this is the first official meeting under your presidency, Sir, I would like to congratulate South Africa on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for October and wish you success in carrying out your work. I would also like to commend the Russian delegation for its excellent management of the work of the Council during September.

Building a conflict-free Africa is an ambitious yet essential goal to ensure the security, integrity and prosperity of the African continent and to lay a solid foundation for inclusive growth and sustainable development, as outlined in Agenda 2063 of the African Union. We heartily support the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative and welcome today's debate as clear evidence of the African Union's consistent determination to rid Africa of conflicts. Let me now focus on some crucial elements that we find particularly important.

First and foremost, we recognize the importance and vital role of young women and men in efforts to maintain and promote peace and security, as well as to prevent conflicts and resolve them. We believe that durable peace is not possible if inclusiveness and women's and youth participation in peace processes and political life are not ensured.

The ground-breaking resolution on youth and peace and security (resolution 2250 (2015)) was an important step in recognizing the needs and potential of the youth in preventing and resolving conflicts. It affirmed the important role the youth can play as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

Secondly, we should encourage youth leadership in peacebuilding and support young people's quest to become active agents of positive change, peace and reconciliation. We support the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative of the Peacebuilding Fund, as an expression of the Fund's commitment to inclusive peacebuilding by strengthening the participation of young women and young men within existing prevention and peacebuilding initiatives.

Thirdly, the empowerment and participation of young women and men are indispensable for enhancing inclusivity and equality in our societies. Young people are the cornerstone of sustainable development and lasting peace. They do not need merely quality education, vocational training, skills development and access to digital technologies and services, but also decent employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The most constructive way to empower young people and ensure that they do not become radicalized is to offer them credible and constructive ways to contribute to the development of their communities. If young people remain excluded from national and international efforts aimed at building peace, then instability and extremism will continue to pose serious threats to our societies.

Conflicts in Africa are complex, and so too are their root causes, ranging from social, political and economic inequality to unemployment, lack of education, in particular among young women and girls, as well as historical patterns of conflict over the control of natural resources. All of the them must be addressed in order to secure durable peace on the continent. Tackling the root causes of conflict requires ownership by African

Governments and local communities and support from the international community.

In conclusion, let me stress that, if we are serious about ensuring long-lasting peace on the African continent, there is simply no alternative for investing in young people, while giving them a voice in all relevant decision-making processes and building solid partnerships, with the youth as a bridge to a more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous world.

**Mrs. Craft** (United States of America): The turmoil in Africa is, or should be, the distress of the world. It is therefore very right that the Chamber consider and seek to act on the most heartbreaking elements of that turmoil — the conspicuous entrapment, for it is nothing less than that, of its young people into the conflicts and violence of that continent.

Here at the United Nations our countries are separated by geography and distinguished by our various cultures, but we share a fundamental and inescapable commonality — we love our children, with the greatest love. And so it hits home for me. When the Council considers the plight of so many children in Africa and, through the campaign of Silencing the Guns, seeks a much hoped for harvest of a better future for them, I think, on a personal level, of my own grandchildren. My mind right now is filled with thoughts of them. They may be at home, at soccer practice or in their classrooms, both of them dreaming and working towards their futures. Those thoughts brighten me. At the same time, I am saddened by that fact that it is not the same for every child in every country of the world. I am saddened by the fact that conflict and poverty leave so many children open to spectacles of violence and, worse, that they are drawn into violence or conflict and, even, in some cases, forcibly conscripted.

While reflecting on the universal emotions that all parents share, I bring to this particular campaign a real sense of urgency. The discussions about youth and violence are not abstract. They are not some airy policy. They strike at the very root of our humanity. The United States lauds African efforts to reduce conflict through Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Silencing the Guns initiative for the betterment of Africa's youth. Far too often, we discuss peace and security in Africa as a set of challenges, when what we really need to do is to view those issues as an opportunity. Why is that? It is because 60 per cent of Africa's population — 750 million people — are under the age of 25, with a median age

of just 20. Africa is brimming with potential — future leaders, artists, engineers and entrepreneurs. We, all of us, just need to find ways to unlock that potential.

Of course, African Governments and regional bodies play a key role in achieving that goal. Nations can improve security by adhering to sanctions regimes that support peace and stability in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. We urge all States Members of the United Nations and, in particular, the countries of the region, to uphold resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2471 (2019). Preventing the illicit flow of weapons and restricting the travel of sanctioned individuals will promote long-term security. African nations should always look for ways to include the voices of young people as they build their futures. Unfortunately, some leaders have demonstrated little willingness to do so. In recent years, South Sudan's leaders have pursued policies that benefit a political elite rather than create the conditions in which young people can flourish. The United States hopes a fragile peace agreement might improve conditions for South Sudan's youth, while encouraging them to exchange weapons for the tools that will help them build a safer and more prosperous country.

Regional and subregional organizations can act on their responsibility to aid young people by urging Africa's leaders to consider their legacies. In turn, long-serving political leaders must respect constitutional limits on power, especially those that limit their terms in office. In addition, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States should play a larger role in addressing the crisis in the Anglophone region of Cameroon. For years, the crisis has kept thousands of children out of school — and it threatens to spread across a region already beset by conflict. All parties ought to pay greater attention to that matter.

But the actions of Governments and regional bodies are not enough. We must also develop the abilities that elevate the voices of Africa's youth, which starts with moving beyond the flawed narrative that young people are only passive victims or active perpetrators in conflict areas. In reality, young Africans like Aya Chebbi, Hafsa Ahmed and Victor Ochen already play prominent roles, standing up for their political rights and those of their fellow citizens.

I began my remarks with a reminder of our greatest commonality — one as old as time and as deep as the

human heart: the love for our children, which feeds the hope for our children. I will return to that point. It is immoral to offer and a blot on humankind not to intercept an inheritance of violence. What each person in the Chamber feels for his or her own children should be a guide for what we attempt for the children of Africa. To protect and nurture a child is the most noble of all endeavours. It bypasses all our rivalries and differences.

It is my country's belief that, when young people see a path to achieving personal dignity and when they sense or know that they are needed, they find purpose. Purpose aligned with a sense of dignity leads to both the abandonment of violence and a chance for success. Dignity banishes despair. Despair drives, or seduces, them to violence and its instruments — all before their lives have really begun.

I believe that every single child rescued from this hard world is a great achievement. To rescue many, if we work honestly and vigorously towards achieving the goal of silencing the guns, will bring moral honour to the Council. The United States already invests in the infrastructure of Africa and offers aid. However, there is the ultimate and primary infrastructure — the children of Africa. If we reach out and speak to them and point them towards a star of hope and dignity, it will surpass any other contribution we may make. In truth, that is what the Council is really here to do — invest in futures. Not to help a child is a matter of tears and shame.

Africa's youth has a leading role play in achieving the goals of Agenda 2063. Let all of us invest in the coolest generation so that it might one day see a world in which the last gun has been silenced.

**Mr. Ipo** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation joins those who spoke before me in addressing to you, Sir, its heartfelt congratulations and wishing you every success on the occasion of this first debate in October, devoted to the role of young people in the promotion of peace and security in Africa, which marks the beginning of the South African presidency of the Security Council. My delegation also commends the Russian Federation on the excellent work accomplished over the past month, and all the briefers for their excellent briefings and the relevance of their recommendations.

Data relating to the ongoing conflicts on the African continent, as well as the numerous studies on new forms of crime in our States, teach us that, despite

the enormous potential that young people represent, they continue to be unsuccessful in making a significant contribution to peacebuilding, owing to many political and social obstacles. In view of these considerations, the African Union has expressed its determination through the road map of the African Peace and Security Architecture for the period 2016 to 2020 to promote youth-empowerment policies in order to increase their contributions to peace processes, national reconstruction and post-conflict development. In other words, it is all about harnessing the potential of young people and encouraging them to invest their energy and creativity in conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities by ramping up their involvement in efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), as well as in the political processes involving solutions to crises and peacebuilding.

As part of its strategy for resolving crises, Côte d'Ivoire has placed particular emphasis on associative-sector tools to better channel the contribution of young people into social cohesion and peacebuilding activities. The establishment of the Youth Parliament represents one such case, which not only provides a framework for democratic expression and active participation in governmental policy to promote national reconciliation and social cohesion, but also promotes the formation of a civic conscience committed to achieving peace and lasting stability. Represented throughout the country by a network of partner associations, the Parliament is a genuine bridge connecting young people and the different strata of Ivorian society.

Furthermore, my delegation believes that our shared ambition to silence the arms must be based on an unwavering fight against insecurity and unemployment. These two scourges are the primary causes of violent extremism and radicalization of young people, which is the segment of the population most vulnerable to the entreaties of transnational criminal networks and armed groups. It is therefore necessary to invest more in the education and training sectors and to provide the necessary conditions for private entrepreneurship to thrive and the creation of decent jobs.

While it is undeniable that the joint efforts of the international community are crucial to silencing the arms in Africa, it should also be recognized that States have the primary responsibility for implementing national arms control strategies. Accordingly, the Côte d'Ivoire has established a national legal framework

linked to the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Arms Trade Treaty. At the operational level, combating the proliferation and illicit trafficking of SALW has been carried out in parallel with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, which, it should be stressed, has focused on the reintegration of former combatants.

With regard to the implementation of the Convention on SALW and the Arms Trade Treaty, I am pleased to welcome and cite as an example the cooperation among the National Commissions to Combat the Proliferation and Illegal Movement of Small Arms and Light Weapons of the ECOWAS member States. This outstanding cooperation is contributing to strengthening national capacities in combating arms trafficking and promoting the regular exchange of experiences and good practices. In this regard, it has enabled member States to make significant progress in the area of controlling, marking and securing stockpiles of weapons and ammunition.

Côte d'Ivoire takes this opportunity to advocate pursuing the multifaceted support of the African Union and international partners for strengthening the capacities of regional organizations so as to increase their effectiveness in combating arms proliferation, awareness-raising and community disarmament, together with civil society organizations.

In conclusion, my delegation urgently calls on the international community, in particular the Security Council, to support the African Union Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, which is a manifestation of the will of its States members to work to achieve peace, security and development in Africa.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): First of all, we congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, and Germany greatly appreciates the fact that you will leave us free at least a few weekends during the month. In this regard, I appreciate what Mr. Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, did in the presidency last month.

With regard to the topic at hand, it is greatly appreciated that South Africa put it at the top of its agenda. I do not know if it was done intentionally just one week after we witnessed several hundred thousand young people on the streets of New York City, when Greta Thunberg and many other young people were at

the United Nations to express their will, enthusiasm and initiatives for combating the huge problem of climate change.

I therefore very much appreciate the fact, Sir, that you are now once again putting the emphasis on youth, particularly on young people as drivers of change. In the briefings of the four youth briefers, we heard numerous examples in which young people are already engaged. I listened carefully to what Ms. Aya Chebbi, African Union Special Envoy on Youth, had to say with regard to concrete examples in which young people are already drivers of change.

We have to make it a general practice that, whenever we have negotiations, women and youth are included. As we were preparing our statement today, we took on board what the German youth delegates to the United Nations had prepared. We are very happy to have not only African Union youth representatives here in the Chamber, but also German youth delegates. We are including in this statement what these young people have to say.

First, I want to start where my colleague from Côte d'Ivoire left off, namely, with regard to the African Union. Germany fully supports the African Union Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative. It is very positive that the Council endorsed it, but 2020 is just around the corner and a lot of work remains to be done in the fight against the proliferation of weapons and ammunition, which, after all, is the hard fuel of conflicts.

The fight against the proliferation of weapons and disarmament is also a priority for members of the Security Council.

We partner in concrete terms with the African Union to cut the flows of arms and ammunition to fragile States, and we are training a new generation of experts to take the lead in arms control. We have also presented to Member States what we do in the western Balkans on small-arms control so as to transfer our experience in that area to African countries.

Germany also provides protection and basic services to those particularly threatened and who have been victims of conflict in the Lake Chad region, with support projects by Plan International aimed at providing psychosocial support to young survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. We support Special Representative of the Secretary-General Gamba and her efforts to reintegrate child soldiers into society.



This is for us a very important precondition for sustainable peacebuilding.

I would like to go back to Ms. Aya Chebbi. She listed a number of nexuses, and I would like to start with her first one, the nexus with governance. I have mentioned here several times already the 2017 United Nations Development Programme study “Journey to extremism in Africa”, in which it is very clearly spelled out that bad governance, the absence of the rule of law and a lack of education and economic opportunities lead young people into extremism, so good governance is key.

Concerning the nexus with inequality, the German youth delegates put inequality at the top of their list. As to the nexus with climate change, we are very happy that she picked this up, because we, too, believe that this is very important, and we heard a lot about it last week.

The last point I wanted to pick up from her statement was the need to replace bullets with books. That is one of the key points in the demands of the German youth delegates; this is about weapons. We listened to Victor Ochen when in his statement he mentioned a youth who said that his gun was his life. This is a huge problem, and we have to do to change this.

How can this be done? It can be done by trying to stop the production of weapons and the prohibition of firearms. Short of this, forbid the export of arms and in particular stop arms deliveries to crisis and conflict regions. Instead of financing arms, one should finance books, education or other projects. I just want to highlight one project that Germany is supporting in Bamako, in which young people are encouraged and supported to engage in cultural activities such as hip-hop, rap and modern dance; Jerry is invited there. This strengthens their role in society and provides alternatives to what extremists and violent groups offer.

Let me conclude by saying that there were a few operational proposals; one of them was to have more youth briefers, not only today but also on other subjects. When Germany held the presidency in April, we had a few young briefers, and I want to remind the Council about the young Syrian girl with disabilities who had fled in her wheelchair from Syria to Germany (see S/PV.8515). She was a very impressive young woman.

I heard, and I want to stop at this, a proposal put forward by Ms. Gawanas with regard to an expert group or informal working group on youth. Maybe this is not

the right time or place, but perhaps she could explain at some stage how such a group would make a difference. Would this be a group where young people are actually sitting around the table, or would it once again be us old men sitting around the table discussing it? We must bring young people to the table so that they can they discuss the issues.

**The President:** I will discuss with the representative of Germany his recommendation outside the Chamber.

**Mr. Zhang Jun (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): My delegation congratulates South Africa on having assumed the rotating presidency of the Security Council for this month. China affirms our full support to you, Mr. President. We also wish to congratulate Russia on the successful completion of its Council presidency in September.

China thanks South Africa for the initiative to hold today’s open meeting. We listened carefully to the briefings by Special Adviser Gawanas, Special Envoy Chebbi and the civil-society representatives.

As the hope of a nation and the future of the world, young people represent a valuable factor in promoting social and economic development and an important force in safeguarding world peace. Chairman Mao Zedong, founder of the new China, once said to young people:

“You young people, full of vigour and vitality ... are like the sun at 8 or 9 in the morning. Our hope is placed on you”.

The late South African President Nelson Mandela also said that youth was the greatest asset of a nation.

Africa is the continent with the youngest population. Young people are actively involved in nation-building and playing an important role in the revitalization of Africa. They work hard for peace, making their contribution to delivering on the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative and implementing the African Union’s Agenda 2063 through concrete action.

Young people affected by armed conflicts and lack of development also face the predicament of being marginalized. They are confronted with challenges such as poverty and unemployment. To promote peace, security and development in Africa, we need to support and nurture young people as they grow up.

On addressing differences through consultation, Africa has a good tradition of using negotiations and

consultations. Regional and subregional organizations on the continent also have successful experience in the area of good offices. China has always supported African countries in finding African solutions to African problems.

To advance the political settlement of hotspot issues, it is necessary to give adequate consideration to factors relevant to young people, ensure their constructive participation in the process, listen to the views expressed by a wide spectrum of young population, fully leverage the youth advantage and force a strongest synergy for peace.

It is important to promote peace through culture. Peace embodies a common aspiration across the different cultures. It is important to mobilize peoples around the world, youth in particular, to impress upon them the idea of peace being of supreme value and the notion of harmony in diversity. On the basis of mutual respect among different cultures, we advocate strengthening mutual exchanges, fostering mutual trust, expanding cooperation and seeking a win-win outcome so as to gradually blaze a new trail to promoting peace through culture.

Concerning pursuing peace through development, development is the foundation for building peace and maintaining sustainable peace. It is imperative to put economic and social development at the forefront and support countries in choosing independently their development path.

China stands ready to closely coordinate the joint implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the development strategies of African countries to help African countries increase interconnectivity, build their development capacities and eliminate the root causes of conflict.

It is vital to be action-driven. Empty rhetoric is no solution to any problem. We must provide tangible assistance to young people in Africa. At the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, China decided to work with Africa to set up 10 Luban workshops on the continent to provide vocational training for young Africans, the first of which has already been established and opened in Djibouti.

We are in the process of setting up the China-Africa Innovation Cooperation Centre to promote youth innovation and entrepreneurship. A tailor-made programme is being implemented to train 1,000 high-

calibre African professionals. We will provide Africa with 50,000 Government-sponsored scholarships and 50,000 training opportunities for seminars and workshops, and we will invite 2,000 young Africans to visit China in exchanges. We will train young researchers in agriscience and entrepreneurs in agribusiness. Such projects will support youth development in Africa and contribute towards silencing the guns.

China and Africa are good brothers, good friends and good partners. The principle of sincerity will result in amity, good faith efforts and the pursuit of the greater good and shared interests outlined by President Xi Jinping as the fundamental guide to China's Africa policy. China supports the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative. In the context of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, China and Africa stand together to build a community with a shared future that features joint responsibility, win-win cooperation and happiness for all. We will continue to work together with our African brothers to promote comprehensive youth development and to make a significant contribution to the promotion of peace and development in Africa.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buyswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish you every success. I would also like to congratulate the delegation of the Russian Federation on its successful presidency last month.

Belgium supports the Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 initiative. We welcome the African Union's commitment to putting young people at the centre of that initiative.

The African continent is the only one where the youth population continues to grow from year to year. By 2050, the continent is expected to double its population, from 1 billion today to nearly 2.4 billion. At that time, half of its inhabitants will be under 25 years of age. That prospect provides tremendous opportunities for innovation and creativity. But such a demographic shift, if not supported, also carries the risk of new difficulties for the continent.

Political, social and economic exclusion is a risk factor. It can fuel joint mistrust of the national and international political institutions that are meant to serve and protect young people. It is therefore vital to invest in education and in creating a climate conducive to the participation and inclusion of young adults in

peace processes, including mediation processes. Equal access to inclusive and quality education and the opportunity for decent work are crucial elements in achieving that climate.

For those reasons, one of the priorities of Belgium's cooperation with Africa is the socioeconomic integration of young people, as for example in Uganda, where we support the implementation of the Skilling Uganda plan; in Morocco, where we promote youth entrepreneurship; and in Burkina Faso, where Belgium supports the development of young people's digital skills.

Resolution 2419 (2018) calls for greater inclusion of youth in peace processes. That text is particularly relevant in the African context today. We must recognize young people as actors in their own right. To do that, we must change our norms, practices and attitudes.

As Ms. Hafsa Ahmed said, young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, they are often already leaders today. I would like to thank our briefers this morning for their interventions and their testimonies.

In addition, young people are often the majority in armed groups in Africa. The consideration of those young people should be central to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes, as well as community violence reduction programmes and actions to prevent violent extremism.

I would like to conclude by welcoming the initiatives undertaken by the African Union (AU) for the greater involvement of young people and by commending the work of its Special Envoy on Youth, Ms. Aya Chebbi. Partnerships are also a vehicle for new ideas and innovative initiatives. Belgium supports civil society initiatives and cooperation platforms, such as the AU-European Union Youth Cooperation Hub, which implements pilot projects, particularly in the area of peace and security, between young people of the African and the European continents.

**Mrs. Gueguen** (France) (*spoke in French*): As the Permanent Representative of Germany just recalled, the convening of this debate a few days after the remarkable mobilization that we witnessed during the Climate Action Summit highlights very aptly the crucial importance of listening to what young people have to say to us and of including future generations in the discussions and decisions that should enable us

to overcome the current crises and challenges together. Interaction and unity among generations are vital. In that regard, I would like to thank our young briefers today for sharing their experiences and recommendations.

France's commitment to peace and development in Africa is known. In Ouagadougou in November 2017, President Macron outlined the basis of our partnership with Africa, which is founded not only on achieving peace and security and promoting development and innovation, but also above all on the African youth, who are central to our common future and whose fulfilment is a vital component. There can be no stability or lasting peace if the needs and expectations of young people are ignored.

The path to lasting peace in Africa cannot be limited to a military response to crises and threats. A broader approach is needed, as Ms. Aya Chebbi, Ms. Hafsa Ahmed and Mr. Victor Ochen very eloquently described. Moreover, that is the main goal of the Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 initiative, which France supports. That goal cannot be achieved without the full and active participation of young people and without them having the means to meet their needs for social recognition, professional and personal success and, more broadly, political direction and hope.

They are optimistic and mobilized and we should both acknowledge and encourage them through words and, above all, deeds. There are many specific and very enlightening examples of initiatives led by committed young women and men across the continent. I believe that we were all impressed by the determination of Burkina Faso's youth to defend on two occasions, sometimes at the cost of their lives, the benefits of democracy and the rule of law in Burkina Faso. I personally admire young people's ability to act and to unite by using social networking and by developing new and often more creative and participatory techniques.

The commitment to democracy of young people in Tunisia during and following the revolution was striking. I witnessed their drive during my previous post in Tunisia, in particular at the Youth Forum, organized with the support of France.

We also support the work of the United Nations Development Programme in cooperation with the African Union to strengthen the capacities of young women and men through an approach that links the Silencing the Guns initiative and the youth and peace and security agenda.

Unfortunately, contrary to what should happen, young people continue to be victim to stereotyping and discrimination. They remain largely excluded from decision-making processes, political institutions and the labour market. They are sometimes seen only, or primarily, as troublemakers or a breeding ground for violent extremism. Those stereotypes are too often used as pretexts to disregard their demands, to violate their rights or even to use violence against them. Among youth, young women are the hardest hit by injustices, exclusion and discriminatory social norms, particularly during conflicts. In that regard, France supports the women and peace and security agenda, which aims in particular to promote the voice of women and young women in order to build lasting peace.

We must guarantee respect for the most fundamental rights of all young people, including the freedom of expression and the right to peaceful demonstration. Youth must be able to participate in decision-making processes and be fully taken into account in peace settlements. As it has been suggested, it would be very useful to have young people brief the Council on a regular basis, including on country-specific situations.

To enable young people to live up to their full potential, education is the number-one priority for France. It is the best way to prevent opposition to the spread of knowledge and shifts towards violence. France has made education its priority at the international and national levels, with more than €300 million contributed for basic education in Africa through the Global Partnership for Education and through bilateral aid. That commitment was reiterated at the Group of Seven Summit presided over by France, specifically during the meeting of the Development and Education Ministers, to which youth representatives from the Sahel countries were been invited.

France has also decided to revise its development policy in order to adopt a partnership-based approach aimed at better involving civil society, young people, businesses and diasporas. France will also ensure that youth is at the centre of the Generation Equality Forum 2020, which is being jointly organized by UN-Women, France and Mexico, to be held in Paris in July of next year.

France calls on all actors to commit to enabling the active participation of young people in building international peace and security. We therefore welcome the call for initiatives launched by the International

Organization of la Francophonie aimed at civil society youth organizations. We also look forward to the recommendations to be made by the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), which established the youth, peace and security agenda. It is indeed high time to fully seize the immense potential of young people to achieve and maintain international peace and security in order to build just, peaceful and inclusive societies, while also respecting nature, as we have all collectively endorsed within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I would like to conclude on a literary note by paraphrasing Amadou Hampâté Bâ, who once said that human life is like a big tree and that each generation is like a gardener. We therefore have a great deal to do in order to tend to our shared garden.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to sincerely congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish you every success in your work. I would also like to thank the Russian Federation, Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia and the members of his team for their excellent presidency of the Council last month.

A prosperous and integrated Africa without wars is a noble goal that we hope will turn into reality on the ground as soon as possible. The Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative is a road map for achieving that goal, in line with the African Union Agenda 2063. The initiative was endorsed by Security Council in resolution 2457 (2019), adopted in February. In that regard, I would like to express the readiness of the State of Kuwait to assume partnership and cooperation in support of the efforts of all States of the African continent to overcome obstacles and challenges.

What is needed is concerted, multilateral international efforts. We need to cooperate with regional and subregional organizations to develop solutions, approaches and strategies that address economic, security, social and development challenges with a view to achieving sustainable peace and security in Africa. In that context, I would like to highlight the following elements.

First, ignoring the needs and ambitions of young people, who constitute 20 per cent of the population in Africa, and repeatedly shutting the door in their faces while they are continuously marginalized explains

their adoption of radical extremist ideologies; it is what drives them to join terrorist groups and criminal gangs, especially since, according to United Nations statistics, 600 million of those young people live in conflict zones. The way to counter this phenomenon, therefore, is to give young people our attention. We can do that by listening to them directly through dialogue and youth forums, such as the Youth Climate Summit, convened by the Secretary-General this past week.

Secondly, protracted conflicts and wars in Africa, some of which have their roots in ethnic, sectarian or religious tensions, have significantly contributed to the recruitment of children, who have been compelled to arm themselves and participate in the fighting, and whose innocence and dreams have been hijacked. Light should be shed on that phenomenon so it can be effectively addressed. Moreover, we need to move children away from war zones, rehabilitate them, provide them with the help they need and reintegrate them into society.

Thirdly, the African Union's declaration of 2019 as The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa signals that decades-long wars and insecurity have led to great suffering on the African continent, which in turn has triggered the phenomena of increased migration and internal displacement specifically away from conflict zones, but to areas that are also insecure and vulnerable. With more than 24 million displaced people in Africa, economic, security and environmental burdens are felt in many areas, giving rise to waves of illegal migration. We must resolve the root conflicts and establish stability, peace and security in order to eliminate these displacement phenomena, which constitute a regional and international threat.

Fourthly, terrorism is one of the greatest challenges for Africa. Reports and statistics show that substantial numbers of young men and women from Africa are joining terrorist groups, and that those numbers cannot be underestimated. That is why, in order to eliminate terrorism, we must address its root causes by raising awareness, promoting the culture of peace and encouraging tolerance and respect among African peoples.

Moreover, the effects of poverty and unemployment cannot be overlooked. They constitute fertile ground for the spread of terrorism and violent extremism in

Africa. Poverty, marginalization and other factors push individuals to join — and local communities to harbour — terrorist groups, either for ideological reasons or because of the lure of material gains. That is why we need a specific and comprehensive approach to preventing and countering terrorism.

In conclusion, it is essential that we include the youth, peace and security agenda in all conferences and meetings at all levels. Regional organizations should give greater attention to this topic, as the League of Arab States did recently with its Young Model award. The African Union has also launched a number of youth initiatives, including, in 2006, the African Youth Charter, and today we are looking forward to the implementation of the African Union Youth Envoy 2019-2020 Action Plan. We must also stress the importance of giving young people an opportunity to hold leadership positions and participate in decision-making processes, in line with resolution 2250 (2015).

**Mr. Allen** (United Kingdom): I would like to add my own congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency. I also thank the Russian delegation for its habitually professional Security Council presidency last month.

I also thank you, Mr. President, for convening a debate on this important issue. I thank the briefers for their statements. Like others, I found them to be thought-provoking. They serve as a reminder to us that we should strive to incorporate different perspectives when we select briefers for our meetings.

Silencing the guns in Africa is our shared ambition. It will be impossible to achieve without the involvement and empowerment of Africa's youth. I thought Ms. Chebbi made powerful points about the use of narrative and the way in which there can be a problem narrative around youth, and I agree with her on that.

As this is the Security Council, however, let me start, at least, on international peace and security issues, before addressing some wider points. Every young person deserves to grow up free of the fear of violence. Sadly, that is still not the case for many children and young people in parts of Africa. In South Sudan, for example, while it is very positive to note that 955 children were released by armed groups in 2018, it is a matter of some sadness and concern that a further 453 children were reportedly recruited and used by armed actors. The United Kingdom calls on all parties in South Sudan to redouble their efforts to end

grave violations against children and tackle impunity. We should ensure that we discuss that issue during our forthcoming visit and that we are united in our demand for action.

Wherever children and young people are affected by conflict, they deserve support and services to help them enjoy a brighter future. That must include access to education. Last week, we were able to announce a \$630 million package to support education, particularly for women and girls, and the United Kingdom recently committed a further \$110 million in funding to the Education Cannot Wait initiative — the UNICEF fund delivering education in emergencies. Those funds will support 600,000 children in conflict-affected countries in receiving an education.

Our task is huge, however, and I would remind the Council that UNICEF estimates that at least that many children — 600,000 — are out of school because of political violence in Cameroon alone. We hope that the recently announced national dialogue in Cameroon will tackle the underlying causes of the crisis in that country so that children and young people can receive the education they need to thrive.

When children and young people are empowered and involved in the decisions that affect their futures, they can act as powerful agents for change, as the Council recognized in resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018). Africa's young people not only deserve the opportunity to have a say in how societies are run but also have a right to it; they not only deserve a meaningful role in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding efforts but are also fundamental to the success of those efforts. We know from our evidence and research that peace and reconciliation efforts that involve women and young people and are therefore, by definition, inclusive, have a 35 per cent greater likelihood of lasting for 15 years or longer.

We have seen the power of movements for change led by young people in Africa in recent months, as they spearheaded the Sudan's peaceful movement for an accountable, civilian-led Government. I heard Prime Minister Hamdok at the General Assembly last week (see A/74/PV.10) and was inspired by what he had to say, in particular his commitment to put women and young people front and centre in building a better Sudan. Worldwide, young people are still too often marginalized in political and civic life — people under

the age of 30 make up more than half the world's population but less than 2 per cent of elected legislators.

Again, young Africans are in the vanguard of efforts to change that situation. In Nigeria, youth advocates campaigned to tackle a barrier to young people's participation in politics. The "Not too young to run" bill, which was adopted in 2018, lowered the minimum age requirements for elected officials and has since inspired a global campaign, supported by the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. The United Kingdom stands firmly behind the "Not too young to run" initiative.

Young Africans who are too young to vote or run for office are still mobilizing action on global challenges, and I want to pay tribute to the leadership of teenage activists like Leah Namugerwa, who campaigns for action on climate change in Uganda, and Peace Ayo Adegbola, who advocates for girls' education in Nigeria. My apologies to both of them if I have mispronounced their names.

If all of Africa's young people had the opportunity to realize their leadership potential and achieve their aspirations, the effect on the continent and the world would be transformative. But for that to happen, all of Africa's young people need what so many of the world's young people take for granted — peace and security, human rights and good governance, quality education, health care and access to productive employment opportunities. I agree with Ms. Chebbi on the importance of the particular effort to tackle gender-based violence, and I would add that the provision of health care must include sexual and reproductive health.

The United Kingdom will continue working with our African partners on initiatives to meet all those challenges, including through the United Kingdom-Africa Investment Summit to be held in London in 2020, which is an indispensable element of our comprehensive support for Africa's long-term peace and stability. I do not need to say that the United Kingdom's relationship with Africa and its peoples is enduring.

**Mr. Esono Mbengono** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to congratulate the Republic of South Africa on assuming the presidency of the Security Council during the month of October. We wish them every success, while assuring them of Equatorial Guinea's full support. We would also like to congratulate the Russian Federation on its impeccable presidency throughout the month

of September. We also extend our thanks to all our speakers today — the Special Adviser, Youth Envoy Chebbi, Ms. Ahmed and Mr. Ochen — for their excellent briefings.

The issue at hand today — Peace and security in Africa: Mobilizing youth towards silencing the guns by 2020 — is of great concern and a priority for Equatorial Guinea. On behalf of the African Union and under our presidency of the Council in February, we presented resolution 2457 (2019), on silencing the guns in Africa by 2020 (see S/PV.8473) and, in November, we will be hosting a conference in Malabo on the same theme, to which everyone present is invited. Those demonstrate Equatorial Guinea's readiness to contribute to achieving that goal.

We are concerned about the proliferation of armed conflicts in Africa, as well as the instability and the advance of terrorism in our region. Armed conflicts pose a serious obstacle to African development because they condition all aspects of life of our continent — as long as they are active, sustainable development will remain a fantasy. Armed conflicts have a negative impact on the trajectory of sociopolitical and economic development in Africa, weakening the capacities of affected Governments to function effectively and preventing their populations from realizing their potential. Young people and women are the worst-affected victims in those situations.

Africa must therefore address both the symptoms and the root causes of conflict. When focusing on the current peace and security problems, we must also work to eliminate the source of those problems and bolster efforts to accelerate development, reduce poverty and fight youth unemployment, thereby eliminating the breeding grounds for conflict and violent extremism.

The critical points here involve complex national, ethnic, religious and social tensions. Fundamentalist, criminal, terrorist and mercenary organizations take advantage of those problems in order to sow terror throughout our lands. Moreover, they often prey on our young people. The monitoring of small arms and light weapons is an equally important element of the effort to eradicate armed conflicts in Africa. We encourage continued advocacy for the inclusion of African young people in all spheres of society, as established in article 11 of the African Youth Charter.

Africa's biggest resource is its young people. Their participation represents a powerful opportunity

to accelerate the implementation of this project. Resolution 2457 (2019) reaffirms the important and positive contribution of young people to the efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the role young people play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. In the same way, Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims to ensure inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Ensuring the inclusion of young people will help maintain a range of perspectives that may prove useful for understanding the distinctive experience of young as peacebuilders and could significantly improve the effectiveness of peace processes.

As a key factor in the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, as well as in post-conflict situations, young people are encouraged to be involved in the planning of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, which should take into account their particular needs, especially the needs of those affected by armed conflicts, including the problem of youth unemployment, thereby investing in developing the skills and abilities of young people to meet labour needs through relevant educational opportunities that are designed to promote a culture of peace.

It is important to create local incentives and opportunities to ensure that our strongest, smartest and most capable young people, who would normally take the path of no return, remain in their countries and contribute to their societies instead of applying themselves in societies that are already developed. Instead of there, it is better that they do so in their own countries, where they are most needed. To compete in an ever more competitive global market, silencing the guns also means creating the necessary structure to allow our young people to realize professional accomplishments, pursuing lives as dignified and valuable as those of any other young people in the world.

I would like to reiterate in conclusion that silencing the guns means the complete, effective, controlled, verifiable and transparent elimination of weapons through international and regional legal instruments. That goal is of vital importance to Africa, and Africa must be able to count on the support of the international community in that regard.

Silencing the guns in Africa should not be just a wish or a desire but must become a reality because our lives depend on it. The Republic of Equatorial

Guinea therefore calls on the international community, in particular on Africans themselves, to join forces to help Africa implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with the 2063 Agenda of the African Union, as avenues towards sustainable economic development, an important aspect of which is to tackle decisively the problems affecting young people and women. To leave those pending issues unresolved would expose us to the risk of interminable conflict.

**Mr. Ugarelli** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome South Africa's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to wish you every success, Sir, in your duties conducting the important work on our agenda over the month of October. Similarly, we once again commend the Russian Federation's conduct of the Council's work over the preceding month.

Peru welcomes the convening of this important meeting on the consideration of young people as promoters of peace and development in Africa, in particular in the context of the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, endorsed by the Council. We welcome the informative presentations and stirring personal accounts shared by the guest speakers.

First, we highlight the noble and ambitious goal, set by the African Union in 2013, aimed at achieving a conflict-free continent, which is consistent with the efforts of the international community to promote sustainable peace. Its success is closely linked to the active participation of younger generations. That was recognized in resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), which recognize the substantive contribution that young people can make to peace in all its phases, from conflict prevention to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as emphasized in the 2018 *Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*.

That enormous potential is also applicable within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. The proper implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will also help tackle the root causes — such as poverty, lack of employment, access to drinking water, and natural disasters, among others — whose effects may in many cases lead young people to radical responses.

Those objectives commit us to, among other things, creating decent employment for young people, guaranteeing equal opportunities, promoting peaceful societies and promoting human rights while

safeguarding diversity and combating discrimination. There are 1.2 billion young people around the world, half of whom live in violent and conflict zones. In Africa, young people account for a large percentage of the population. The *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* notes that for some young people armed conflicts represent the main source of employment; in many cases, social status and capital are closely linked to possession of a weapon.

We therefore welcome the efforts of the African Union to establish the Youth for Peace initiative, under the African Governance Architecture, aimed at establishing guidelines for the participation of young people between the ages of 15 and 35 at the local, national and continental levels, and at removing barriers limiting their opportunities to take on leadership roles. That approach seeks to redefine the mistaken traditional perception of young people as perpetrators or mere victims of violence, refocusing it instead on their status as agents of peace who represent a valuable resource to be leveraged to achieve and consolidate sustainable peace on the continent.

To that end, we would like to underline the importance of revising regional policies to highlight the visibility and rights of young people and promote their active participation towards the goal of silencing the guns. In particular, we believe that the participation of women must be encouraged more vigorously in that context.

It is also important to reflect on young people who find themselves in situations of vulnerability owing to their status as refugees or internally displaced persons, frequently living below the poverty line and exposed to situations of xenophobia, discrimination and exploitation. There could be no more important contribution to rectifying that situation than to find a lasting solution to the armed conflict that generated that situation and thereby facilitate their return home.

From another point of view, having lived first-hand the consequences of conflict, those people are well placed to contribute to efforts to solve conflicts, which is something we should take advantage of. Another element we wish to highlight is the need to establish synergies between African Union initiatives and those developed at the global level. We believe that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union should reinforce each other's



work towards the ultimate goal of addressing the root causes of conflict, while establishing inclusive and accountable institutions.

We emphasize in conclusion the importance that the Security Council remain firmly seized of this matter, which is central for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, for justice, for reconciliation and for building a lasting peace. We therefore look forward to the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General that is expected by May 2020.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate the Mission of South Africa on its assumption of the presidency for the month of October. You can count on our support, Sir.

We welcome the progress made in putting an end to armed conflict on the continent, including the peace agreements reached in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan, as well as the democratic processes that have been conducted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Madagascar. We also recognize the efforts made by the African Union in working with the United Nations and the international community to achieve those goals. Yet despite that significant progress, we are still a long way from ridding the continent of armed conflict.

The African continent has the youngest population in the world. Properly harnessed, it could represent a key demographic dividend for promoting peace and security in the region. The reality is that the majority of young people in Africa reject violence and seek spaces to contribute to the construction of peace and development in their countries. As is articulated in the Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020, if we want to achieve a sustainable transition from war to peace and prevent relapses into conflict in Africa, it is essential that young people identify with the decisions made and the results achieved. Their meaningful participation in the processes of prevention, conflict resolution and the maintenance of peace and security, as well as in political processes and positions of power, is crucial. We must therefore provide young people, youth organizations and young peacebuilders and human rights defenders with adequate support, both financially and politically, and protect their lives and human rights.

The Dominican Republic worked closely with Equatorial Guinea, as facilitator of resolution 2457 (2019), to ensure that the text recognized young people's

key positive contribution to conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. We therefore hope — in line with resolutions 2457 (2019), 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on youth, peace and security — that young people in the region will actively participate in the implementation of all the Roadmap's objectives, as well as in the conference on silencing the guns in Africa to be held next month.

Regional and international institutions must bolster collective efforts to ensure that the processes aimed at achieving peace are inclusive. In that regard, we propose creating a network of young Africans for conflict prevention and mediation, with a view to enhancing their role in the efforts to advance the African Peace and Security Architecture and African Governance Architecture. We would like to take this opportunity to urge African Union member States to fully comply with their domestic and international legal commitments, including the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument. We note that the effectiveness of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes depends on the ability of State institutions to foster an inclusive environment, among other things.

We hope that the Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council and the mandate renewals for peacekeeping operations and political missions will include specific references to the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018). We also hope that more young people will be able to participate in Council meetings to share their perspectives and visions. Since it became a member of the Security Council, the Dominican Republic has made a point of inviting young people to speak in meetings and debates.

Finally, I would like to highlight a few other recommendations that emerged from regional consultations with young people in Africa in relation to the preparation for publication of *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*. The first is that we must increase the transparency and accountability of Governments. Next, we should develop strategic alliances between Governments, youth organizations, young people and communities, with a view to building peace; thirdly, build trust between security forces and young people; and lastly, implement mechanisms that ensure young people's participation in the preparation,

implementation, evaluation and monitoring of social, economic, environmental and political policies and initiatives, and continue working to consolidate peace in Africa.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to welcome our colleagues and friends from South Africa as they assume the presidency of the Security Council and to wish them every success in their work during the month of October.

We support the choice of topic for today's meeting. When we speak of the need to ensure peace and security in Africa, it is almost impossible to avoid discussing issues related to the participation of African youth in these processes. Today we heard interesting and at times very moving briefings by representatives of African youth themselves. There is a reason Africa is called a young continent. The current generation of Africans aged between 15 and 24 makes up more than 30 per cent of Africa's entire population. According to United Nations data, by 2055 the percentage of young Africans will more than double. We welcome the fact that African States devote significant attention to working with youth. The significance of this category of the continent's population and the importance of ensuring its constructive participation in Africa's governance, peace support and development processes is acknowledged in Agenda 2063, the core plan of the African Union (AU) for social and economic development.

We also welcome the continued efforts of the AU Peace and Security Council to increase the profile of young people in the maintenance of peace and security. The AU Commission has created the Office of the Special Envoy on Youth, who briefed us today, and has also launched a continent-wide programme, Youth for Peace Africa, aimed among other things at implementing the African Youth Charter, adopted in 2006. Young people occupy a significant position in the efforts to implement the initiative that is the subject of today's meeting, that of silencing the guns in Africa by 2020. It is referred to in resolution 2457 (2019), which the Council adopted in support of that initiative. The road map for an African security architecture for the period from 2016 to 2020 also addresses the importance of involving young Africans in the AU's work.

We feel compelled to point out, however, that many obstacles to youth involvement in the peace process in Africa remain. In our view, the most significant one

is the problem of the radicalization of the younger generation. Unformed world views and a lack of life experience and frequently of a basic education make young Africans easy prey to radical ideologies. Extremist groups skilfully exploit this in countries with unfavourable socioeconomic environments in order to attract young people to unlawful activity. In their attempts to get young people on their side, terrorists commonly and increasingly exploit information and communications technology, which demands that we strengthen our collective efforts in the area of international information security.

We should pay particular attention to the phenomenon of the use of radically minded young people to achieve domestic political goals, as this category sometimes works to overthrow legitimate authorities under the cover of slogans about democracy and human rights. We believe firmly that the international community should pay greater attention to these problems. It is important to promote the development of a culture of peace and tolerance among young people. That is the only way to prevent them from taking part in acts of violence, terrorism, xenophobia, racial and gender discrimination, and arms and drug trafficking. We should take steps to ensure the social integration of young people who have been victims of armed conflict by providing them with access to education and skills development. We should expand mentoring initiatives, encourage peaceful youth organizations and foster intercultural and interreligious dialogue among young people. Much of that is already being done through the African Union and regional organizations, but we should scale up those efforts.

Russia is ready to share its experience of working with young people and countering the spread of extremist ideologies among them, including the experience gained by regional organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In support of young people, every year our Government offers scholarships and study grants at Russian higher education institutions to African States. We are open to seeking new opportunities and promising forms of cooperation in this area. We intend to continue substantive discussion of these issues in the framework of the forthcoming Russia-Africa Summit, to be held in Sochi from 22 to 24 October.

**Mr. Syihab** (Indonesia): At the outset, I would like to join others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of October. I also want to thank and commend the delegation of the Russian Federation for its professional and successful presidency in September. And I thank today's briefers for their comprehensive briefings.

Earlier this year, the Security Council adopted resolution 2457 (2019), which welcomed the African Union's initiative of Silencing the Guns by 2020. It is a crucial effort, as peace and security are critical enablers in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Young people are central to the initiative, which aims to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Yet there are many challenges confronting those generations. Today more than 600 million young people in the world live in fragile and conflict-challenged areas, many of them in Africa. They also suffer from a lack of basic services in areas such as health and education, as well as from a lack of economic opportunities.

Against that backdrop, I would like to highlight three points regarding mobilizing young people towards silencing the guns. We must first address their vulnerabilities. We should create an environment that enables them to access opportunities and participate in a functioning society, thereby dissuading them from committing acts of violence. That can be achieved by combating poverty, investing in inclusive education and training, ensuring gainful employment and promoting a culture of peace, among other things. Such efforts should be focused on those who need them the most, including former members of armed groups and young refugees.

Secondly, we should mainstream youth participation in the initiative. There are several areas that can benefit from the involvement of young people. Their participation can increase the legitimacy, vitality and sustainability of a peace process. It is also crucial to engage them in efforts to prevent the spread of terrorism and involvement in organized crime. In addition, young people often make up the largest share of armed groups, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes should therefore take their needs into account. We must also ensure meaningful youth participation in transitional justice initiatives in order to promote reconciliation and social cohesion. We could take advantage of their familiarity with

technology to raise awareness of such initiatives and advocate concrete actions in support of that cause.

Thirdly, we should ensure the coherence of efforts at the international, regional and national levels. Resolution 2457 (2019) recognizes the need for partnerships to help accelerate progress towards realizing the initiative to silence the guns by 2020. It is important that national Governments, regional actors and the whole United Nations system work in harmony, with clearly defined areas of focus. As an example, in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), we are focusing on developing digital skills and institutionalizing young people's engagement in the region's policy discourse by operationalizing the ASEAN Youth Volunteer Programme and ASEAN youth dialogues. Our objective is to foster ASEAN youth who are ready for the future, to the benefit of ASEAN's socioeconomic development, peace and security.

Lastly, mobilizing youth towards silencing the guns requires that we change our mindset. We must view young people not merely as victims or perpetrators of violence, but as powerful agents of change who can contribute positively to the maintenance and promotion of durable peace and stability. In turn, youth empowerment will contribute to creating the just and peaceful societies envisioned in Sustainable Development Goal 16, and to the overall achievement of the SDGs.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of South Africa.

I would like to thank the briefers for their insightful information and recommendations for the Council's consideration. It is always beneficial and valuable for the Council to be briefed by young people who are passionate and determined about the future of their countries, societies and neighbourhoods.

It is an honour for South Africa to preside over the Security Council under the theme "Continuing the legacy: working for a just and peaceful world", which embodies the legacy of Nelson Mandela. The principles he stood and fought for remain relevant to ongoing conflict situations and further the objective of silencing the guns on the African continent by 2020. Conflict affects young people negatively in many ways. It violates their basic human rights — the right to life, liberty and security. They are at increased risk of being killed, injured, internally displaced, abducted or raped in conflict. They are sometimes forced into

activities that make them more vulnerable, such as sexual exploitation, combat as child soldiers, violent extremism, arms smuggling and the illicit trade in mineral resources, to name a few.

Our remarks will focus on the following key points. First, young people have an important role to play as agents of peace. The African continent has the fastest-growing population in the world, and it will be important to ensure that the continent takes advantage of the demographic dividend from its youth bulge. South Africa believes that we should all double our efforts at the global, regional and national levels to harness the potential of youth. As the Security Council has already recognized in resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2457 (2019), Member States have the responsibility to create an enabling environment for young people to participate fully and substantively in the development of their respective countries and in peace processes.

At this juncture, I want to emphasize that issues of inclusion remain critical. As important stakeholders in peace processes, we cannot continue to talk about peace without the full involvement of youth and women. Young people should be represented in political negotiations, peace processes, transitional justice and reconstruction efforts because they have knowledge and ideas and can harness intergenerational interaction on the entire peace continuum. Including youth in peacebuilding processes as stakeholders and decision-makers allows them to gain ownership of the policies that affect them as much as the rest of us. Political will and leadership are therefore needed to enable young people to engage in a meaningful way in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

My second point is on the implementation by the African Union (AU) of the youth, peace and security agenda. The African Youth Charter serves as a strategic framework for youth empowerment and development at the continental, regional and national levels in addressing issues that affect young people. The AU Commission is in the process of appointing African ambassadors for peace, one from each of the five regions in Africa. They will promote the actualization of the five priorities of the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security. A stronger AU-United Nations partnership for peace, security and development remains critical to silencing the guns on the African continent. South Africa is encouraged by the resolve of the United Nations and the AU to mainstream youth participation in peace and security,

which places young people at the core of initiatives for preventing or stopping activities that lead to war.

My third point is about recommendations on how we should advance youth, peace and security. It is important to provide young people with training opportunities so that they can take an active part in peacebuilding. With their youthful energy and capabilities, and their ability to adapt to new technological trends such as the fourth industrial revolution, young people should be seen as equal partners in mediation, conflict prevention and resolution. As we heard from the briefers earlier, youth are mediators, community mobilizers, humanitarian workers and peace brokers. Activating young African peacebuilders cannot be the responsibility of any one organization. African Governments, non-governmental organizations and corporations all have a role to play. In order to achieve sustainable conflict prevention and resolution, the Security Council, regional and subregional organizations and other relevant actors should institute mechanisms to involve young people in the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance and intercultural and interreligious dialogue and to develop, as appropriate, an understanding of respect for human dignity, pluralism and diversity.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the importance of bringing about a pragmatic shift in the concept of the role of youth in conflict, which transforms them from being victims or agents of violence to being agents of change and peacebuilding. They need to be seen as the valuable human capital that they are, because that will help the continent to collectively achieve sustainable peace and silence the guns. As we implement many peace agreements on the African continent, from the Central African Republic, South Sudan, the Sudan and elsewhere, young people should be given the space to participate.

As Ms. Aya Chebbi said, youth should be mobilized to reimagine their environment without violence or displacement, unravaged, without situations where they are forced to flee their homes and driven into desperation in faraway lands. And as all the briefers said, young people should be mobilized to use their abundant energy, talent, creativity and social media to compose songs and write poetry and books about embracing diversity, non-discrimination and religious and ethnic tolerance in order to give birth to the future with hope, peace and prosperity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the observer of the Economic Community of Central African States.

**Mrs. Byaje** (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate your brotherly country, the Republic of South Africa, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I want to commend your choice of topics for the Council's consideration this month, which are of particular interest to our subregion. I also thank all the members of the Security Council and the briefers for their constructive contributions to this debate.

While the world today is facing multiple humanitarian crises arising from various natural and environmental disasters, it is fair to say that those in Central Africa are the result not only of such disasters but also of armed conflicts fuelled by the disproportionate proliferation of weapons throughout the region. That is why the theme of this debate, which is part of the Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 initiative, is timely, because it is one of the top priorities of the Heads of State and Government of our subregion. The commitment to ending all conflict by 2020 is not only emphasized in the African Union's Agenda 2063 but, most importantly, is prioritized in its first Ten-Year Implementation Plan. On behalf of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), I would therefore like to make a modest contribution to this debate under the umbrella topic of peace and security in Africa, specifically by focusing on mobilizing youth towards the specific goal of silencing the guns by 2020.

Despite the efforts that have been made to prevent conflicts, Central Africa is unfortunately seeing the expansion of many armed groups committing unspeakable crimes and continuing to make the ECCAS region a theatre for destabilizing conflicts that result from numerous underlying causes and paralyse socioeconomic development. Their common denominator takes many forms, such as marginalization and exclusion on a basis of ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status or region.

When the African Union adopted the Silencing the Guns initiative in 2013, it was in the wake of the 2010 adoption by the Heads of State of Central Africa of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition

and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, known as the Kinshasa Convention. The Convention, which entered into force on 8 March 2017, is aimed at helping States to effectively combat flows of illicit, devastating and destabilizing weapons, and contains provisions for the tracing and marking, transfer, possession, record-keeping and stockpile management of small arms.

Against that frame of reference, I want to explain my proposal for including youth mobilization in the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention, together with the cooperation of our strategic partners, particularly the United Nations and the African Union, in the fight against arms proliferation. The joint framework within which those two institutions work with regional communities, including ECCAS, to consolidate peace and security by promoting synergistic efforts as part of the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative deserves to be encouraged for many reasons.

In that context, the twelfth annual United Nations-African Union joint consultative meeting on the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts took place on 11 and 12 March, with a special focus on the Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 initiative. I cannot fail to mention the African Union high-level meeting that took place on 11 and 12 October 2018, bringing together regional economic communities under the theme "Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020: actions for an accelerated response", with special emphasis on the gradual march towards peace through democratic transitions in certain countries.

In that context, the General Secretariat of ECCAS has established very close collaboration with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) in implementing a project to support African States as part of the vision of "Silencing the guns in Africa by 2020: capacity-building in Central Africa". However, achieving lasting peace first requires the elimination of the root causes of the conflicts that are plaguing the subregion, affecting first and foremost the lives of members of the community, especially those children and young people caught up in the vicious circle of violence being perpetrated by armed groups. Worse still, these destabilizing agents — driven by the desire to control of natural resources — commit unspeakable crimes, sow terror in their wake and strip and rob innocent citizens of their property, their rights and their dignity. Young people are paying a particularly heavy price as a result of rising unemployment and

school drop-out rates, making them easy targets for the instigators of terrorism.

ECCAS' preferred solutions for promoting peace from a regional perspective include, inter alia, conflict prevention and crisis management by addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, pursuant to the Kinshasa Convention. With regard to today's theme, young people should play a lead role in peacebuilding by contributing more to activities planned under the Kinshasa Convention and strengthening prevention and early warning and response systems.

I would be remiss if I did not mention other possible solutions to optimizing the important potential of our youth in the structural transformation of Africa and the subregion, especially those aimed at counteracting the risks incurred by the marginalization of unemployed young people, who are insufficiently equipped to enter the labour market. That challenge requires ECCAS, above all and especially in view of the increasingly young population and the growing number of young people in the labour market, to do the following.

We must develop the skills and competences of young people by giving them access to quality education and vocational training in order to prepare them for the new demands of the employment sector. We must invest in productive sectors with high growth potential so as to generate decent jobs areas, such as industrialization or agriculture. We should implement the instruments adopted by the African Union for young people as an effective and sustainable means of economic transformation. We must seek financial support for our efforts to implement projects for the empowerment of and job creation for young people. As part of its goal to establish a regional framework for monitoring the implementation of regional plans, ECCAS should, among other things, ensure that young people participate as key partners in decision-making in all matters that may affect them. We should assist ECCAS in its efforts to create a framework for ongoing dialogue among young people in the subregion, particularly with regard to regional integration, aimed at sharing experiences, good practices and lessons learned in creating jobs through entrepreneurship.

We must support the countries of the subregion in developing reliable statistics to ensure that all young people are counted. We must seek support in organizing training workshops and exchange programmes for young champions and leaders in the field of peace and

security, and sending them to train other young people in their own countries. The private sector and civil society must be engaged in the training and recruitment of young people and go further by putting young people first as private sector stakeholders able to create stable jobs in the modernization of agriculture. We should improve access to land for young people and modernize the agricultural sector so that the work is less arduous and more attractive. We should provide microcredit financing to young people and support them in their initial steps in becoming productive agents.

Finally, we must continue to urgently address the scourges that are drawing in young people, such as terrorism, the narcotics trade and the sale of illicit weapons, in order to create a climate of security and stability that is favourable to investment and development. ECCAS will continue to involve all actors, including civil society, women's groups, young people and other regional communities with a view to building interregional security cooperation. Lastly, the building and restoring of lasting peace would also benefit from the solidarity and support of bilateral and multilateral partners in capacity-building initiatives that are aimed at conflict resolution and mediation.

We undoubtedly still face major challenges, but it is important to recognize that with the continued support of strong leadership and sustained political will on the part of the Heads of State of the subregion, as well as community ownership in confronting the challenges and a better sharing and exchange of information and best practices in the field of security, ECCAS is confident that Central Africa will be able to tackle its security challenges and guarantee a lasting peace that favours sustainable development efforts in the subregion. In that regard, ECCAS will continue to encourage exchanges among its members at the highest level and among young people in order to ensure the regular monitoring and assessment of the progress being made in joint projects and important issues on peace and security.

Finally, ECCAS counts on the support of all its partners in the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention so that we may eradicate arms trafficking in the subregion, devoting ourselves fully to development efforts and giving a decent and promising future to our young people.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*