

Seeking a deeper and broader partnership between the United Nations and African Union

Thank you, Your Excellency, and my thanks also to Secretary-General Guterres and Chairperson Faki for their informative briefings as part of this important debate.

As the UK's Minister for Africa, I am keen to work closely with the African Union and this is a personal priority for me. In fact, I made the first overseas trip of any UK Minister after the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak when I visited the AU Commissioners in July.

The UK is investing up to \$27 million in the AU COVID-19 Response Fund to tackle COVID and save lives.

In my remarks, I will focus on three key aspects of how the UN-AU partnership can bolster the UN's fundamental purpose – that is to say, to maintain international peace and security.

Firstly, the early identification of risks to regional peace and security.

Secondly, coordinated efforts to mediate and encourage peaceful resolutions to conflict.

And thirdly, coherent support to implement peace agreements, consolidate democratic governance and build peace.

Mr President, both the UN and the AU would benefit from more integrated analysis to identify the emergence or re-emergence of conflict. We should not shy away from identifying underlying drivers of instability and conflict and having honest conversations about where we must act.

The UK is proud to support the AU's Continental Early Warning System, and I look forward to visiting the Early Warning Centre on my next trip to Addis. But accurate and timely information needs to be coupled with plans for effective and early action, and that needs to happen at state, regional or continental level. AU support to elections in Madagascar, for example, two years ago and mediation in Sudan last year were impressive examples of what the AU can do. However, in other cases, action from the AU or UN has come too late or we have not acted at all. The key to greater shared success is consistency in our approach.

Mr President, this brings me to my second point. When conflicts do emerge, the UN and the AU bring complementary skills to the table.

We are all deeply concerned by the situation in Tigray, and the immediate priorities are to secure greater humanitarian access and ensure the protection of civilians and human rights.

The UK will continue to support AU-led efforts. I urge all parties to accept credible offers of support to establish the conditions for a sustainable political solution.

This brings me to my third point, Mr President. Once conflict is brought to an end, the real work of building and sustaining peace begins.

Continued partnership between the UN and the AU is vital to see through the peace agreement in the Central African Republic, brokered through their joint efforts. The next milestone is credible, inclusive and peaceful elections later this month.

Strong cooperation is particularly important during peacekeeping transitions, as the UN or AU presence reconfigures to meet evolving conditions.

I hope the AU will be able to provide their expertise and political support for the work of UNITAMS, helping Sudan's transition to democracy.

AU forces currently play an invaluable role in Somalia; I pay tribute to the brave men and women of AMISOM, the AU-led peace operation. Looking ahead, Somali Security Forces are now stronger but still need support. I will encourage greater work in that regard from the AU and the UN and others to ensure that the AU-led mission evolves in response to Somalia's increasing capabilities.

Predictable and sustainability in financing is an important element of the AU's ability to deploy operations like AMISOM. The United Kingdom supports, in principle, access to UN assessed contributions for future AU-led peace support operations, on a case-by-case basis and subject to certain key conditions.

Mr President, it is abundantly clear that a deeper and broader partnership between the UN and the AU is indispensable as we strive towards our shared goal of a conflict-free Africa. The UK remains committed to supporting that partnership.

Thank you.