United Nations Security Council’s
Thematic Debate on “Cooperation Between
The United Nations and Regional and
Subregional Organizations in Peace Operations:
The UN-AU Partnership and Its Evolution”

New York, 16 December 2014

Statement by H.E. Mr. Pierre Buyoya, High Representative of the African Union
For Mali and the Sahel/Head of the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel

Your Excellency Minister Moussa Faki Mahamat, President of the Security Council for the month of December 2014,

Your Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,

Distinguished Members of the United Nations Security Council,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who has not been able to join you due to constraints beyond her control, allow me to thank the Chadian Presidency of the Security Council for convening this important meeting on the crucial issue of “the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on peace and security and its evolution”.

I would like to seize this opportunity to reiterate AU’s appreciation to Chad for its priceless contribution to peace efforts throughout the continent, not least in Mali, where so many Chadian soldiers have fallen on the line of duty. I would also like, in particular, to express AU’s gratitude to President Idriss Deby Itno, for his personal commitment and untiring efforts towards ridding our continent of the scourge of conflict and violence. The initiative of convening this debate is yet another illustration of the strong commitment of Chad to the promotion of a strategic partnership between the AU and the UN.

I recognize the presence of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and pay tribute to his unflinching commitment to peace, security and stability on the African continent, as well as to his tireless efforts in promoting the AU-UN partnership in the area of peace and security.

Today’s debate comes at a time of growing awareness of the importance of building a strong partnership between the AU and the UN, in order to enhance our efforts to promote peace, security and stability in Africa. Being the second meeting organized by the Security Council during this year on the issue of partnership between the UN and regional organizations, including the African Union, today’s session is also a clear indication of the sustained attention that the Security Council continues to give to the promotion of peace and security on the continent as well as of its commitment to build an innovative and creative partnership with the AU.
President of the Security Council,
Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

The strategic relationship between the AU and the UN has been growing steadily with the aim of forging a more coherent and effective partnership in the context of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter and Article 17 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU.

This strategic partnership has particularly enabled our two organizations to establish regular consultations on issues of common concern and interest in the area of peace and security, where the collaboration is most visible.

In this regard, the holding of annual joint consultations between the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council, as well as the coordination between the AU Commission and the UN Secretariat through the institutional mechanisms put in place, such as the Joint Task Force (JTF) and the bi-annual Desk-to-Desk meetings, illustrate well the common will to encourage greater synergy between the AU and the UN.

The new Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security that was signed recently between the AU Commission’s Peace and Security Department and the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) is a very good initiative, which could be refined and extended across the rest of the AU Commission and the wider UN family.

The collaborative peacemaking efforts between the AU and the UN have contributed to the deepening of this partnership. Many examples testify to the close complementarity that exists between the African initiatives and those of the United Nations, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes Region, in Mali, Guinea-Bissau, and the Central African Republic (CAR). The same applies to a number of other cross-cutting issues, ranging from mine action, to DDR, Security Sector Reform (SSR), post-conflict reconstruction and development, counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons.

President of the Security Council,
Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Notwithstanding the progress achieved so far, the African Union is convinced about the need to further deepen its strategic relationship with the UN in the area of peace and security. Such an approach is made more compelling by the fact that, in spite of the significant progress made over the past few years, Africa still accounts for the highest number of conflicts among all continents.

In fact, in addition to the traditional threats to peace, security and stability, the continent continues to face a new set of threats, which include: governance-related intra-state conflicts and violence, terrorism and trans-national crime, piracy in both East and West coasts of Africa, border disputes and the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.
In addressing these challenges, and in view of their proximity and familiarity with the issues at hand, the AU and its Regional Mechanisms have demonstrated renewed determination to provide the necessary leadership. The deployment of several peace support operations in different regions of the continent illustrates clearly the commitment of the AU and its regional building blocs to contribute, in complementarity with the United Nations, to collective security as provided for by the United Nations Charter.

It is in this context that, since 2002, the AU has deployed a number of peace support operations in response to conflict situations on the Continent, notably in Burundi, Darfur, Mali, Central African Republic and Somalia. The stabilization efforts carried out by those missions and the sacrifices made by their personnel have greatly paved the way for, and facilitated the task of, the UN Missions that eventually took over. In the case of Somalia, AMISOM continues to operate in a complex and difficult environment with the aim of stabilising the country, while creating appropriate conditions for a more sustained international commitment, possibly through a classic UN peacekeeping operation.

Concurrent with the deployment of peace support operations, the AU is also building its long-term capacities through the operationalization of the African Standby Force. The latter will make it possible to find appropriate answers to some of the shortcomings noted in the recent operations conducted by the African Union, as they relate to planning, force generation, command and control and mission support. On the basis of the recommendations of the Gambari Report on the Assessment of the African Standby Force and its Rapid Deployment Capability, a number of steps are already being taken, with the view of attaining full operational capability by the end of next year. In the interim, the establishment of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) will significantly strengthen both the speed of our response to emergency situations and its robustness.

Clearly, the AU and its Regional Mechanisms have demonstrated their determination to fully play their role and significantly contribute to collective security efforts on the continent. In so doing, they have developed comprehensive architectures covering the whole range of security challenges facing the continent, including those related to governance deficits.

However, the experience in the recent years has amply shown that one of the greatest constraints faced by the African Union and its Regional Mechanisms is the issue of flexible, sustainable and predictable sources of funding for their peace efforts. Therefore, it is crucial that an appropriate solution be urgently found to this question, bearing in mind that the Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Obviously, the AU is striving to have its Member States increase their contributions in this regard, so that outside support, including that from the UN, and our partners is truly complementary.
President of the Security Council,
Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

If the UN and the AU are to successfully address the peace and security challenges confronting the continent, it is also critical that they reach greater political coherence.

More needs to be done to further enhance the partnership both in terms of consultations prior to decision making, shared understanding of the issues at hand, consistency and support to African-led peace efforts.

More specifically, the AU and the UN should agree on a set of principles aimed at clarifying their relationship and anchoring it on a more solid platform. From the AU perspective, these principles should revolve around the support for African ownership and priority setting; consultative decision-making; as well as division of labour and sharing of responsibilities based on our respective comparative advantages.

Furthermore, practical steps should be taken in order to enhance the effectiveness of the annual joint consultative meetings between the UN Security Council and the AU’s Peace and Security Council. There is need to regularize the interactions between their respective chairs and to undertake joint field missions. Equally important is also the need for the Security Council to afford due consideration to our legitimate requests and address, in a more systematic manner, the funding of AU-led peace support operations undertaken with the consent of the UN. On their part, the AU Commission and the UN Secretariat should continue to work towards greater collaboration and coordination.

We look forward to the outcome of the review of the UN peace operations to be undertaken by the High Level Panel recently appointed by the Secretary General, under the very able leadership of former President Jose Ramos Horta. This review provides an opportunity to further our common objective to build and innovative and forward looking partnership within the context of Chapter 8 of the United Nations Charter.

President of the Security Council,
Secretary General of the UN,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude by expressing our hope that this meeting of the Security Council will mark a new step in the enhancement of the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations. The challenging and increasingly complex situations on the ground require concerted responses by our two organisations and a stronger and deeper partnership, based on a creative reading of the provisions of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter in order to allow the AU and its Regional Mechanisms to fully play their roles as integral components of collective security.

I thank you for your kind attention.