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Remarks by

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at

**IPSS Briefing Session on International Women's Day 2019 on
'The Role of Women in Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in Africa'**

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**Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

International Women's Day is a global day of celebration, honoring the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women worldwide. And I am pleased to celebrate this day amongst you: accomplished women in the area of peace and security, dedicated advocates for gender equality, role models and sources of inspiration.

International Women's Day is also a day for reflection, advocacy and action. And while we have every reason to celebrate how far we have come, we also need to ask ourselves *'why are we not there yet'?*

Next year marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council's landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, which provides a strong and tangible framework to guide global efforts to recognize the capabilities of women as leaders and the importance of their participation in decision-making.

This is crucial, particularly in realizing the goals set in 'Agenda 2063' and the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. Clearly, we will not be able to fulfill our continental and global commitments if women do not participate fully and meaningfully, their voices are not heard, their needs and priorities unaddressed, and their contributions overlooked.

The African Union has made considerable progress in advancing the women, peace and security agenda on the continent, and I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work and leadership of Dr. Speciosa Wandira, who serves as Member

of the Panel of the Wise and Co-Chair of FemWise, and is here with us today, as well as her colleague Mme Bineta Diop, the AU's Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security.

The United Nations is strengthening efforts to integrate principles of gender equality, deploy dedicated gender expertise and systematically engage women's civil society organizations in peacemaking efforts. The UN Secretary-General has also prioritized gender parity across the workforce of the UN system; and the peace and security architecture has developed strategies to increase the number of women – both within the uniformed and civilian workforce - across all missions and headquarters.

As the Secretary-General's Special Representative to the African Union and Head of UNOAU, I intend to continue and further advance the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the area of women, peace and security, and look forward to further discussions on specific areas of support.

To highlight one area of engagement, we welcome and support the establishment of 'FemWise-Africa' and believe that the network will make valuable contributions to peace and security on the continent. We are particularly excited that the FemWise Roster of African Women Mediators is growing, and presents a notably diverse group, including women from all walks of life and ranging in age from 25 to 65.

Another area of engagement are joint high-level advocacy and solidarity missions to address key issues related to women's participation in governance, peace and stability in Africa. In 2017 and 2018, such visits, which included high-level representatives from the African Union, the UN Secretariat and UN Women, were

conducted to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Chad, Niger and South Sudan.

We believe that these missions are critical in demonstrating to women in conflict contexts that their voices have an impact and that the international community is listening.

In South Sudan, to share one example, the high-level delegation engaged with women from various backgrounds – including government, civil society and communities from Protection of Civilian (POC) sites. They emphasized the need to hold their leaders accountable so that their country can achieve sustainable peace and reiterated their need to be meaningfully included in designing and sustaining political solutions.

It was made clear to the delegation that the successful implementation of the revitalized peace agreement would also depend on honoring the commitments made with regards to women, peace and security, including the 35% quota at decision-making levels and provisions for the protection of women and girls against targeted attacks and reprisals. We hope that these commitments made will soon translate into action.

This example illustrates a common issue we have when it comes to achieving the goals of the women, peace and security agenda: bridging the gap between policy and implementation.

Ways to tackle this issue include adequate data collection and analysis to better understand and overcome obstacles to implementation; monitoring and evaluation,

particularly with regards to national action plans, to hold leaders accountable; and the commitment of adequate financial resources to match political commitments made.

The development and adoption of the Continental Results Framework (CRF), which provides 41 indicators to measure progress made by the African Union and its Member States in the area of women, peace and security, is a commendable achievement in this regard.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is high time to strengthen and accelerate our efforts. What we need now are frank discussions, strong commitments and bold actions.

On this note, I commend the Institute for Peace and Security Studies for bringing us together today and look forward to our discussions on ‘The role of women in peacebuilding and peacemaking in Africa’.

I thank you for your kind attention.
