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delivered by

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at

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on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa**

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Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Peace and Security Council,

I would like to thank you for the invitation to participate in the Peace and Security Council's second open session on 'Youth, Peace and Security in Africa'.

This year, 2019, has been an exciting year for youth, peace and security. Across the continent and globally, we have witnessed young people standing up for their rights and speaking up for what they believe is right. The global youth movement demanding urgent climate action is a powerful example, proving the extent to which young people can organize social, political and economic movements, and strive to create a better future, build global networks, raise awareness and develop innovative solutions.

Worldwide, young people act as key agents for social change, sustainable development and peace and security, often outside institutional and organizational frameworks. Their contributions are often a positive force for good, and should therefore be recognized, with their roles institutionalized, and their causes supported.

Both, the United Nations and the African Union, have in the recent past made commendable progress in this regard:

The United Nations Security Council has recognized the important and positive role of youth in maintaining and promoting peace and security, including in resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018). The UN has further developed a system-wide strategy: 'Youth 2030', which provides an ambitious framework to step up our efforts towards

meeting young people's needs, realizing their rights and creating opportunities for them to act as agents of positive change.

This year, several initiatives followed.

In March, to provide one example, the 'First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes' in Helsinki, Finland, brought together core actors on youth inclusion and participation in peace processes. The event resulted in the global policy paper 'We are Here', which provides 17 recommendations on how to take the youth, peace and security agenda forward. The recommendations were presented to the UN Security Council in July 2019.

This month, the First Committee of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on Youth, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, which is the first youth resolution in the First Committee and aims to ensure meaningful engagement of young people in discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Simultaneously, the United Nations Secretary-General is in the process of compiling his first report on Youth, Peace and Security which will outline the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 2250 and 2419 on global, regional and local levels, and will be finalized and presented to the UN Security Council in the spring of 2020.

The African Union has likewise built a strong normative foundation and has taken commendable steps towards realization of its aspirations to protect, engage and empower young people. Within the past 14 months alone, we have witnessed the appointment of Ms. Aya Chebbi as the AU Chairperson's Envoy on Youth, and welcomed her important work in elevating the voice of the youth globally. In

September 2018, the Peace and Security Department launched its ‘Youth for Peace Africa Program,’ and last November this Council held its first open session on youth, peace and security. Additionally, the AU marked the start of the ‘1 Million by 2021 Initiative,’ and held inter-generational dialogue sessions. We have also witnessed initiatives that have trickled down to the sub-regional and national level, among other developments.

Chairperson,

Realization of the youth, peace and security agenda is a joint goal which provides a unique opportunity to enhance the UN-AU partnership in peace and security, within the context of the Joint Framework.

Last June, with the kind financial assistance of Norway, UNOAU supported the AU Commission’s ‘Youth for Peace Africa Program’ in organizing one of five regional youth consultations. The consultation examined the roles and contributions of young people in peace and security processes in Central Africa, and further informed the continental study which, at the Council’s request, was presented for consideration and adoption here today. I commend the African Union Commission, the involved partners, the external consultants and, most importantly, the youth representatives for their tremendous efforts in realizing this milestone study, which without a doubt will be a very helpful tool going forward.

It is now time to take the next steps, and I would like to express my Office’s strong commitment to exploring how we can further support and collaborate with the AU Commission and its partners to drive the youth, peace and security agenda forward. The partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in peace and security is particularly relevant in this regard, and the two organizations have

included the identification of root causes of conflict, good offices and mediation, cooperation on electoral matters and governance as well as the protection of human rights as essential themes of the partnership, among others.

Chairperson,

Despite the positive developments, we need to recognize that we are still at the very beginning of this journey. Today's youth - the largest generation of young people in history – continues to be marginalized, excluded, exploited and drawn into conflict. Many young people, especially young women, lack opportunities and resources to realize their potential and meaningfully participate in political, peace and security processes. Instead, they find themselves among the most vulnerable groups, especially in situations of conflict.

If this unfortunate situation is not urgently and resolutely addressed, we stand little chance to realize our continental and global ambitions, including those set under the AU's Agenda 2063 and the 'Silencing the Guns by 2020' initiative.

We do have the frameworks, policies and tools necessary to make a change. What we need now is collective and decisive action – including allocation of resources - to ensure the protection, foster the participation, recognize the contributions, support the causes of young people and create the conditions necessary for them to reach their full potential.

Chairperson,

Before I conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to highlight the impressive efforts of both, the AU Youth Envoy, Ms. Aya Chebbi, and the UN Youth Envoy, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake – two strong and talented young women at the forefront

of not only the youth, peace and security agenda, but the women, peace and security agenda as well. I would also like to congratulate the five regional African Youth Ambassadors for Peace on their inauguration today and wish them best of luck for their assignment.

It is change-makers like you who truly 'shake things up' and prove to the world what young people can achieve when given the opportunity.

I thank you for your kind attention.
