

Statement of Ms. Mieke Ikegame of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, to the meeting of the Regional Consultative Mechanism on the comprehensive review process

Addis Ababa, 4 November 2009

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to brief you on a very important exercise that my office has recently launched and that has the potential to effectively contribute to shaping the kind of relation that Africa wants to have with the United Nations in the near future.

In 1998, against a backdrop of widespread conflict and prevalent poverty, the Secretary-General issued a groundbreaking report in which he analyzed the causes of prevalent conflict in Africa and proposed measures for joint action to attain durable peace and sustainable development. Ten years ago, a set of measures in the political, economic, humanitarian, trade and governance areas were proposed to the UN system and to the international community to assist Africa to better serve its own people and reclaim its rightful position among the nations.

After a decade, much has changed in Africa, but despite the advances and the efforts of both African countries and the international community, the challenges to human security and development in Africa remain deep and structural in nature. We need to find new and innovative formulas to effectively address the causes of prevalent conflict in the continent and assist the already courageous and successful efforts of our African partners in promoting the social, economic and political development in the continent.

In a statement to the Security Council on 28 August 2007 in its Open Debate on Conflict Prevention and Resolution, particularly in Africa, the Secretary-General committed to undertaking a comprehensive review of the recommendations contained in his 1998 Report on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa covering the commitments made, the actions taken, the progress achieved and the lessons learned.

Member states welcomed the proposal and requested the Secretary-General to expand the scope of the review to include not only an assessment of the degree to which the recommendations contained in the 1998 report are still valid and relevant, but also to identify the challenges that both the continent and the international community will be facing in the near future.

In its resolution A/RES/63/304, the General Assembly “Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the outcome of the review of the recommendations of his 1998 report, focusing on new and emerging challenges and persistent obstacles, as well as innovative solutions, gains and accomplishments, in the attainment of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, with due regard to the complexities of the transition from fragile peace to long-term sustainable development that many African countries are undergoing”.

The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is in charge of leading and coordinating the process. We have distributed an outline paper on the comprehensive review. I would invite you to look at it and provide your comments and suggestions.

This is a very exciting and significant process. While we still need to confront old foes, both the UN and the international community need to be prepared for new and emerging challenges. Whether it is climate change, food insecurity, terrorism, lack of governance or the effects of a global financial crisis, this exercise provides an opportunity to lay down a forward looking and innovative blueprint of the future challenges and the possible responses from the UN and the international community.

After a decade of mixed results, perhaps is time to revisit the current security and development situations. We will consult with a wide variety of stakeholders, in Africa and elsewhere, to identify the ways in which the United Nations can better sustain, support promote and cooperate with African efforts to address the underlying causes of violent conflict and promote durable peace and sustainable development.

The uniqueness of this exercise is that we are bringing together experts and policies from the peace and security sector as well as from the economic, social development and human rights community. In recent years, the United Nations has come to recognize the inter-relatedness of peace, security, development and human rights and all major stakeholders have repeatedly highlighted the need to address the link between peace and development. We, as United Nations system, need to provide solid, comprehensive, holistic and coordinated responses to the demands that the world put on us.

Now, for the review to be meaningful, we need to bring in the voice of Africa and engage not only all parts of the United Nations system, but also

representatives of regional organizations, civil society organizations, donors, the private sector, grass roots organizations and regular citizens. As we embark together in this exercise, we count on the cooperation of all member states, organizations and agencies. We need to build on the excellent work already done by many of you in identifying the challenges and reviewing the lessons that your past practice has taught.

The review process will only add value if we can successfully and accurately reflect the aspirations and the expectations of Africa, if we can honestly assess the needs and shortcoming of the existing cooperation mechanisms and if we are courageous and forward-looking enough to solely and chiefly think in terms of the continent and the needs of its people.

I call on all of you to share your views, experiences and analysis on the issues at stake, to provide OSAA with your valuable inputs and to engage with my office in a debate on how better we can achieve the objectives of the comprehensive review.

We will shortly call on your organizations to deepen the debate on the review and to seek your assistance.

We have also distributed a questionnaire to make it easier for you to provide your inputs. We would indeed very much appreciate it if you could answer it based on your knowledge and experience.

Thank you very much.