

*(Checks against delivery)*

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR GERT ROSENTHAL, PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF GUATEMALA AT THE BRIEFING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL  
ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA  
THE PREVENTION OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA: ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES  
(April 15, 2013)**

Madame President,

We are grateful to the Government of Rwanda for having organized this Briefing on such a relevant topic for the Security Council, and for the concept note it prepared. We value your personal presence among us, Madame Minister. We also express our thanks to the Secretary-General for his statement of this morning, and we welcome Ambassador Tekeda Alemu, who on this occasion represents the African Union.

Madame President,

To speak about Africa in the abstract always involves risks. It encompasses a vast, diverse and heterogeneous Continent. Perceived through the vantage point of the Security Council's agenda, the Continent presents itself as highly problematic. On the other hand, perceived through the broader vantage point of the United Nations, including the initiatives emanating from the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a much more promising image emerges. Africa indeed has achieved notable progress in all areas: democratic governance, economic and social performance, consolidation of peace and interregional cooperation. In other words, it is our limited agenda that gravitates around situations of instability, conflict, crime, human rights violations, and failed States, when actually we face a region that, in spite of its difficulties and obstacles, has achieved considerable progress in the last 10 to 15 years. This is another way of saying that even the most worrisome situations on our agenda are not necessarily condemned to sink into chaos and desperation. Somalia, with the progress achieved, is a specific example of this, but the African Continent in its entirety is a

source of inspiration so that those countries lagging behind are aware that they have better alternatives.

This topic is extensive and susceptible to be addressed from many different angles or national situations. I will limit my remarks to five specific points.

First, I would like to offer some thoughts on one the most abused terms in our lexicon: the root causes of conflict. It is a banality to state that it is not enough to send peacekeeping troops to restore stability and peace to a conflict situation if the root causes of the conflict are not addressed. This, of course, is true, but the root causes of conflicts vary from case to case, and some of those causes – such as conflicts based on tribal, inter-communal, ethnic or religious divisions – respond to profoundly ingrained cultural traits which are very resistant to change in the short run. The social sciences are far from understanding how to persuade populations with ancestral divisions on how to find paths towards reconciliation. But one item that we have observed in situations of conflict in Africa (and also in the Balkans and the Middle East) is that those conflicts tend to be accentuated in two specific instances. The first is related to the competition for the use of natural resources, especially water, land and pastures. The second is related to the demarcation of political boundaries which ignore the spatial distribution of certain ethnic populations and tribes. This observation is not particularly original, but it does offer hints on how to mitigate those root causes, by bringing into the tool box of peacekeeping topics such as facilitating cross-border migrations, especially those of a transitory nature, and paying more attention to land tenure issues.

That takes me to my second point, which is that other root causes of conflict, such as marginalization and exclusion, extreme poverty, and vulnerability to systematic violations of human rights of the population, are susceptible to policies aimed at mitigating or correcting those causes. That is why we favor a broader concept of peacekeeping which has evolved over the past two decades, to address multifaceted, complex conflicts. Such a concept acknowledges, in effect, that reverting conflicts requires a military presence to reestablish stability, but concerted efforts in multiple areas are equally important to achieve a lasting peace. Among these, we stress the following: to count on a system of governance which the population perceives as representative, to dispose of a system of transitional justice, to build a system based on the rule of law, to undertake

security sector reform as well as strengthening State institutions so that they fulfill their role efficiently and effectively. Undertaking peace building activities together with peacekeeping also makes a lot of sense. Among other aspects, this requires a closer partnership between the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, and the multilateral financial institutions.

In this context, and in the third place, we stress the role of justice to achieve peace and security in Africa, especially as part of the preventive actions that are incumbent to this Council. Our delegation organized an open debate on this topic during its Presidency in October past, and I do not wish to repeat the contents of the concept note we prepared for that occasion. But we firmly believe that the simple fact that actions that threaten the peace, including inciting violence, can have consequences in the framework of international jurisprudence, marks progress in the fight against impunity. We believe that the International Criminal Court is an adequate mechanism in this regard. We deeply regret that a reference to the International Criminal Court was not incorporated in the Presidential Statement, like other delegations we supported its inclusion fully. Even more important is to strengthen the universal access to justice in each country as a general proposition, and especially for victims of conflicts which have suffered humiliations of all kinds, especially among the most vulnerable groups: women and children. The application of justice involves sanctions for the perpetrators and reparations for the victims.

Fourth, the African Continent, perhaps more than any other, counts with multiple regional and sub-regional institutions, starting, of course, with the African Union. The manner in which this Council interacts with those institutions, under the umbrella of Chapter VIII, would produce more than enough material for a separate debate. But it is noteworthy that in all agenda items that this Council has under consideration, there is a pro-active participation on the part not only of the African Union, but of other actors, including, subject to different situations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and others. The partnership between the Council with one or various regional institutions varies from case to case, ranging from AMISON, which is basically an African Union operation, to UNAMID, a hybrid operation, and various

intermediate solutions with sub-regional partners. The point is that this multiplicity of partnerships is complex, and sometimes poses difficulties regarding jurisdictional and operational questions, which require improved coordination between the parties, and greater conceptual clarity regarding “who does what”. However, on balance, the strong presence of African institutions complementing the Security Council has been a highly positive aspect for peacekeeping and peace-building in Africa.

That takes me to my fifth and last point, which is most timely at present. I am referring to our recent debate to expand our peacekeeping activities to incorporate elements of peace enforcement. The creation of an “Intervention Brigade” in the framework of MONUSCO, in support to the central mandate of this mission to protect civilians in the DRC, and the present proposal of the Secretary General to create a force in Mali that would “operate under robust rules of engagement with a mandate to use all necessary means to address threats to the implementation of its mandate...” may be justifiable on their own merits; however, as we have stated on previous occasions, we are concerned at what we perceive as a continuous erosion of the basic principles of impartiality and non-use of force in a peacekeeping operation. Although that concern is not Africa-specific, since it is part of what we could call a doctrine of peacekeeping of the United Nations, the only specific cases that have surfaced are located in that region.

To conclude, it is in Africa where we have derived most of the lessons learned about peacekeeping and peace building, and it is there where the most important progress has been achieved, without forgetting that those achievements come together with large challenges, still pending to be resolved.

Thank you.