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Remarks by

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at the

**African Union Peace and Security Council Open Session:
Youth, Peace and Security in Africa**

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**Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Peace and Security Council,**

The United Nations is honored to join you in this year's celebration of African Youth Day and welcomes the timely discussion on 'Harnessing the contribution of African youth to the promotion of sustainable peace and security in Africa'.

Firstly, let me take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Aya Chebbi on her recent appointment as the African Union's Youth Envoy. Looking at her track record in mobilizing and advocating for the youth across the continent, we are hopeful that she, alongside other talented young leaders, will contribute significantly to meaningful and sustainable change.

Ms. Chebbi recently stated on social media: "The Africa I want is where we value our youth as drivers, not subjects, of development". This is an important notion, and one that leads us to ask how we can create the safe spaces needed for youth to act as those drivers; how we can amplify their voices; and how we can ensure that marginalized youth also take part.

Allow me to highlight some of the key steps to consider in this regard:

First, we need to ensure the protection of young people. We need to uphold their rights and protect them from all forms of discrimination, exploitation and violence. This also entails preventing human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and the radicalization and recruitment of youth by political actors, militia or violent

extremist groups, and scaling up rehabilitation, reconciliation and reintegration programmes.

Second, we need to foster the potential of the youth, by ensuring access to education, skills training and technology, tackling youth unemployment and underemployment, ensuring meaningful and broad economic inclusion and providing sustainable livelihoods.

Third, we need to address structural barriers to youth participation in political and peace processes, which includes fostering good and inclusive governance and enabling youth to hold leaders accountable – particularly when it comes to the issue of corruption.

These notions are also reflected in Agenda 2063 as it aspires to the elimination of all forms of systemic inequalities, exploitation, marginalization and discrimination of young people and commits to sustained investments in early childhood development, basic and higher education, including peace education, as well as to the social, economic and political empowerment of Africa's youth.

The United Nations commends the steps taken by the African Union towards realization of these aspirations, including the launch of the Youth for Peace Africa Programme and, as we are approaching the end of the 'Decade of Youth' (2009-2018), the development of an Africa Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment to guide continental efforts in the years to come.

The United Nations has recognized the important role of youth in maintaining and promoting peace and security under Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), and,

more recently, under resolution 2419 (2018). Further, with the leadership of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN has developed a system-wide strategy: 'Youth 2030' which was launched two months ago and provides an ambitious framework to step up our efforts towards the inclusion and empowerment of young people.

Lastly, allow me to highlight the strong partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in this regard as the two organizations have committed to jointly promote inclusive conflict prevention and peacebuilding and address root causes of conflict, including youth unemployment, gender inequality and the violation of human rights. By 2055, Africa's youth population is expected to have doubled. If the youth are marginalized, excluded, exploited, or worse, drawn into conflict, this demographic reality confronts us with immense challenges. But if we protect, support and engage young people and create conditions for them to prosper, we will be provided with an unprecedented opportunity to truly harness this demographic dividend.

I thank you for your kind attention.
