

Statement by Ambassador J.M. Matjila, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations, on the organisation of work of the Second Resumed Part of the 71st Session of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly

(1 May 2017, New York)

Madame Chair,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as the statement delivered by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the African Group, and wishes to make the following additional remarks in our national capacity.

We wish to congratulate you for the able manner in which you are steering the work of the Fifth Committee. We have full confidence in your leadership to provide the necessary guidance and focus in the Second Resumed Session as you have done in the previous sessions. However, we note with regret the worsening situation regarding the timely submission of documentation. The knock-on effect of delayed documentation impacts on the ability of both the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee to adequately scrutinise and examine the budget proposals before us.

Madame Chair,

The recent High-Level reviews have emphasised the importance of prioritizing conflict prevention, emphasising the high cost of peacekeeping and humanitarian responses and to protect developmental gains. There is thus a need to bring prevention and mediation to the centre of achieving international peace and security. Political solutions should be the ultimate objective of all United Nations peace operations. However, peacekeeping operations remain a critical element and tool of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security and are deployed in support of political and peace processes authorised by the UN Security Council.

In this regard, all mandates authorised by the UN Security Council must be fully resourced; entrusted with the appropriate mandate to respond to the context specific environments in which they are deployed; and adequately equipped to protect themselves and defend their mandate.

South Africa, therefore, stands ready to discuss the proposals presented during this session of the Committee, but will not support arbitrary efficiency gains and forced budget reductions that compromise the effectiveness and efficiency of peacekeeping operations.

These steps undermine the effectiveness and credibility of peacekeepers that are deployed in peace missions.

South Africa welcomes the significant progress made in deepening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, in particular the signing of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security in April 2017. This framework recognises that preventing and resolving peace and security challenges on the African continent exceeds the capacity of any single organization. We look forward to the report later this month on planning, mandating and financing of African Union peace support operations in line with Security Council resolution 2320 (2016). In this regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate that the use of United Nations assessed contributions provides the most reliable, sustainable and predictable avenue of support for Security Council mandated African Union peace operations.

We wish to emphasize the meaningful commitment to cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union with regard to peace and security as reflected in Security Council Resolutions 1809 and 2033, amongst others. Cooperation and coordination should go beyond mere paper commitments, but should instead translate to practical steps to ensure that peacekeeping missions on the African Continent are fully capacitated to carry out their mandates.

Madame Chair,

South Africa commends the men and women who have served and continue to serve in United Nations and African Union peacekeeping operations and commend their dedication and courage. We take this opportunity to pay special tribute to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of achieving international peace and security.

As a Troop Contributing Country, South Africa believes that we have a responsibility to ensure that our troops have the capacity to operate in a secure environment. We, therefore, support the use of all relevant and available resources, including the use of technology, in order to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations peace operations in responding to asymmetrical threats. The deployment of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade is a credible example of success that could be achieved to address potential threats to the peace mission.

Madame Chair,

South Africa remains fully committed gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention, resolution and mediation. South Africa has progressively increased the number of women

peacekeepers and women in senior leadership positions. South Africa encourages all member states to contribute more female personnel to United Nations missions and to strengthen gender mainstreaming in leadership positions in the Secretariat.

Sexual exploitation in conflict is one of the most serious problems facing vulnerable civilian populations. South Africa is fully committed to a zero tolerance policy against sexual exploitation in peacekeeping operations and has taken strong, immediate and decisive action against those found guilty of such abuses.

In conclusion, Madame Chair,

South Africa assures you of its readiness to engage constructively on all agenda items in order to achieve an outcome that fully resources peacekeeping operations to achieve their mandates effectively and efficiently.

I thank you.