

Statement by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve,  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

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Mrs President,

I would like to begin by welcoming and thanking the Deputy Secretary-General, as well as the Representative of the African Union, for their messages following their joint mission.

Just a few days ago, I welcomed the presence here of Mrs. Alaa Salah, representative of Sudanese civil society. Indeed, the role played by women in recent developments in Sudan is crucial, and was acknowledged as such with the announcement of their inclusion within the transitional government. Developments in Sudan are, moreover, a prime example of the role of the African Union in finding an African solution to an African crisis.

For all these reasons, Belgium warmly welcomes the initiative of these joint missions with the African Union, and particularly appreciates their broad focus, which includes peace and security, development and humanitarian issues. We are ardent supporters of stepped-up cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, and of an integrated approach to crisis and transition countries.

In the space of a year, the Horn region has seen positive developments, even if the fruits of this are tenuous. The meaningful participation of women in political processes is vital to shore up these outcomes. Initial steps have been taken - for example, I would refer to the appointment of women ministers

and the adoption of legislation on gender equality. President Sahle-Work Zewde is not only Ethiopia's first female president, she is also the only acting female head of state in Africa. She is also a strong advocate for the cause of women in her country and on the African continent.

It is a question of continuing along the same path and implementing the decisions. Elections are opportunities to seize upon to ensure the meaningful participation of women; we are closely following this aspect, specifically for the first elections with universal suffrage in decades to be organised next year in Somalia.

The United Nations can and must lead the way, by working towards real parity in missions and other bodies; we also call upon troop-contributing countries to redouble their efforts to this end. I state this with humility, all of us at this table would be well-advised to self-assess.

It is by keeping this issue on the agenda that the Security Council can make a difference.

Madam Deputy Secretary-General, I would like to know what follow-up will be given to this mission, and what support the UNSC could provide, in order to encourage our partners in the region to continue their commitments.