



**Statement by**

**The Permanent Representative of South Africa**

**Ambassador Jerry Matjila**

**United Nations Security Council Debate on “Threats to international peace and security: Impact of mercenary groups on regional peace and stability”**

**4 February 2019**

Mr President,

At the outset, South Africa wishes to congratulate you and your country the Republic of Equatorial Guinea on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. Be assured of South Africa’s full support and cooperation during your Presidency of the Council.

We thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr António Guterres and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr Moussa Faki for their insightful briefings. We further thank HE Dr Richard Sezibera, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda for his remarks on behalf of President Paul Kagame, (in his capacity as President of the African Union).

Mr President,

South Africa welcomes the convening of this timely debate and selection of this important theme on the role of mercenary activities as a source of insecurity and destabilisation in Africa.

It is an undisputed fact that over the years, Africa has been at the receiving end of mercenary activities, which have contributed to undermining peace, security and stability on the Continent. Several African countries have been targets of on-going attempts by mercenary groups to overthrow legitimate and democratically-elected governments. Their transnational activities also threaten regional stability, especially in cases where the security of neighbouring countries is intertwined.

South Africa condemns such activities as they pose serious challenges to our collective efforts to promote and ensure peace and stability in our respective countries.

Equally concerning, the activities of mercenaries poses a serious threat on peace and stability of several regions on the Continent, which already remains fragile due to on-going conflicts.

Mr President,

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa has been part of the collective efforts of promoting peace and stability throughout our beloved Continent. We support the objectives of the African Union aimed at achieving greater unity and solidarity between African countries and the people of Africa, while also defending the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its member states. These objectives and principles are clearly articulated in the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

Key amongst these principles, is the condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of government as well as non-interference by any member state in the internal affairs of another.

As a responsible member of the African Union and the United Nations, South Africa condemns all mercenary activities in any African or non-African country. We believe that these activities are in clear contravention of continental and international conventions and legal instruments.

As eloquently captured in the concept note for this meeting, the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries violates the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and those of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

Mr President,

South Africa reaffirms the need for the unequivocal implementation of all international and continental legislation and instruments against mercenaries, in particular the 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries and the 1977 Organisation of African Unity Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa.

On our part, South Africa has an uncompromising and strict policy against its nationals who partake in mercenary activities. The Constitution of our country provides that the resolve to live in peace and harmony precludes any South African citizen from participating in armed conflict, nationally or internationally, except as provided for in the Constitution or national legislation.

In pursuance of this objective, in 1998 the Parliament of South Africa passed legislation entitled “the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act”. The objective of this Act is to regulate the rendering of foreign military assistance by our nationals, persons permanently residing within our borders and foreign citizens rendering such assistance from within our borders. This act has been further update to address this scourge.

Through these actions, South Africa has consistently taken strict measures against its nationals found to be involved in mercenary activities or violating the Foreign Military Assistance Act. We have previously cooperated and collaborated with fellow African countries in instances where our nationals were implicated in mercenary activities.

Mr President,

My delegation stresses that it is the obligation of all states to take all necessary measures to eradicate mercenary activities wherever they may occur. In this regard, this Council should encourage all member states to commit to prevent their nationals and foreigners in their respective territories from engaging in mercenary activities.

Mr President,

You will recall that the General Assembly at its 62nd session, adopted resolution 62/145 on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination. South Africa is concerned by the new forms of mercenary acts in the form of Private Security Companies.

Over the years, there has been a clear nexus between mercenary activities and those of Private Military Companies and the negative consequences of these companies in some of the continent's protracted conflicts.

We call on the international community to put in place a regulatory framework on the work of these companies. My delegation is convinced that we should address the perception around the privatisation and corporatisation of security services as this role should be the sole responsibility of sovereign governments.

Mr President,

In conclusion, I wish to stress that South Africa is firmly committed to working with fellow African states and Security Council members to address the challenge of mercenary activities and its negative impact on peace and stability, both regionally and internationally.

This is in line with aspirations of the African Continent as envisioned in the Agenda 2063, in particular the aspiration for a peaceful and secure Africa and the through the flagship project of Silencing the Guns by the Year 2020.

I thank you.