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STATEMENT

BY

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NEW YORK**

DURING

THE OPEN DEBATE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON:

***'THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM
AND PROMOTING PEACE'***

23rd April, 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND PROMOTING PEACE

Mr. President

On behalf of the Kenyan Delegation, I wish to congratulate you for convening today's open debate on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace. We wish to commend you on the manner you have conducted the Affairs of the Council during the Month of April during which important deliberations and conclusions achieved. We also wish to thank you for the detailed concept note guiding today's debate.

We appreciate the commitment shown by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Jordan in chairing the morning session in person. Indeed my President H.E Uhuru Kenyatta was in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan where he and his colleagues attended a coordination meeting for the Horn of Africa focusing on the fight against terrorism and radicalization.

I also wish to thank the Secretary General for his comprehensive remarks on the subject and the key note speakers for their incisive comments. I wish to align my delegation's statement with the statement made by Amb. Tete on behalf of the Africa Group.

Mr. President

My delegation notes with satisfaction the various concerted actions by the Security Council to address violent extremism through various resolutions and commends it for its current efforts, as the custodian of International peace and security, to eradicate the threats posed by violent extremist groups across the world.

Today's debate has special significance to my delegation. As you are aware, Kenya and other countries in the East Africa/Horn of Africa region have been subject to violent extremism and terrorist attacks perpetuated mainly by the Al Shabaab, a Somali based Al Qaida affiliate. The recent attack targeting Christian students at Garissa University College in which 148 youth were killed is a case in point.

The youth themselves have been fundamentally affected – indeed, both the perpetrators in this case and the victims were youth. This is essentially aimed at emasculating Kenya and its future. Perpetrators of terrorism are just out to kill, irrespective of the targets. Our experience shows us that the psychology of the perpetrators is devoid of any form consciousness and humanity. They are just killing machines at this stage. This is why preventive efforts to stop the youth before they reach this stage, are critical.

Mr. President, today most regions of the world are grappling with unprecedented rise in violent extremism; mainly targeting the most important and most vulnerable segment of society; our youth. They are being lured to abandon their promising future as responsible citizens. The youth hold the key to future stability in families, societies and nations. Radicalizing youth towards the tragic path of violence and destruction based on ideological beliefs to achieve rapid sociopolitical change outside the accepted norms must be addressed, now. Those luring youth into extremism have exploited common grievances, hopelessness, perceived injustices and marginalization to radicalize them to their cause. Most even in the name of religion. We condemn their actions in the strongest possible terms and declare that these causes must be addressed.

Mr. President,

My delegation believes that together we can overcome violent extremism and help our youth to effectively resist the allure of radicalization and violent extremism – we can help the youth to become the champions and key actors in countering violent extremism. By addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of extremism and terrorism as outlined in the 1st pillar of the global counterterrorism strategy in an inclusive manner involving the youth themselves at each stage of the process, we can create societies devoid of violent extremists.

This requires reexamination of the way we deal with and treat the youth in our intergovernmental dialogue, national discourses and local conversations; we must look at the youth more as an opportunity to defeat violent extremism and radicalization. To do this we need to empower youth with various tools to confront the violent extremist agenda, including with a powerful counter narrative which they can embrace, own and associate with.

Youth need to be empowered through holistic education that promotes moderation and empathy; they should be given genuine opportunities for personal and economic advancement and be included in decision making at local, national and international levels.

All stakeholders right from the family, school, society, religious/spiritual leadership, the government and other stakeholders have a role to play to ensure the youth are fully engaged in peacemaking and countering violent extremism.

Mr. President

The world needs to protect the youth and adolescents from being radicalized and this can only be done by addressing their developmental needs. It is imperative that we seek innovative programs that will give youth better options to satisfy their developmental needs.

Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and weak family structures have all contributed to making the youth vulnerable to radicalization. We call on the international community to rally together to assist governments especially those mostly affected with support for youth empowerment programs and job training and, to provide quality education for all to eliminate vulnerability to extremism. Also, Regions must work together to design peace education programs that can be made part of the national education curriculum. The international community also needs to support effective poverty alleviation and human capital development programs to protect targeting the youth.

Mr. President

The government of Kenya has initiated various strategic initiatives to put the youth at the forefront of countering violent extremism and in promoting peace by providing resilience against extremism. The following measures have been adopted and are being implemented.

1. Education policies to ensure maximum education opportunities are available to all the youth at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education have been implemented as a bulwark against extremism. These include specific education and outreach policies targeting youth who are most vulnerable to violent extremism. Innovative programs

that nurture the youth through development of talent for youth development and programs that teach the youth about peaceful co-existence amongst different cultures have also been initiated.

2. A Special Fund (Uwezo) that seeks to expand access to finances and to promote women, youth and persons with disability led enterprises. This fund provides mentorship opportunities to enable the youth to take advantage of the 30% government procurement preference through its capacity building program. It is an avenue for creating employment.
3. The government efforts are now more focused on economic transformation priorities, which have the greatest impact on youth economic empowerment for sustained fiscal attention. These include investments in information and communication technology, agricultural transformation and food security, investments in modern transport and logistics, investments in accessible healthcare and strengthening of social safety nets to reduce household burdens.
4. A National Youth Council and a National Youth Fund are fully operational to oversee the programmatic aspects of the economic transformation agenda that among others calls for enhanced support to devolved governance and resources to counties to enhance service delivery at the grassroots level.
5. In addition, through the National Youth Service, the government has initiated programs that seek to rehabilitate and mentor destitute children and youth who are vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment. The youth service empowers them with values which give them a sense of identity, a sense of belonging and direction; this is in addition to promoting national values of tolerance, patriotism, loyalty and unity.
6. The government is also committed to creating partnerships with local communities, civil society, religious leaders and engaging other actors to keep vulnerable youth engaged positively.

7. Regional cooperation and inter-regional youth exchanges to develop and promote common understanding on addressing youth related issues with a view to enhance resilience against extremism and other social vices. Sharing of experiences and best practices help the youth to empower themselves in order to confront radicalization and violent extremism.

8. Enhancing the capacity of Kenya prison authorities to identify specific cases of possible radicalization in the corrective facilities and to initiate rehabilitation programs specifically targeting those specific cases.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the delegation of Kenya wishes to assure the Security Council that our government will continue to build institutional and community level capacity especially at the grassroots level targeting youth and women groups to counter violent extremism in our communities and will continue to partner with the UN and other development partners to identify new approaches and innovative ways to counter violent extremism and radicalization.

I Thank You