

High Representative's Welcome Address

AU REVIEW AND ASSISTANCE CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 1540 (2004) IN AFRICA 6-7 APRIL 2016, ADDIS ABABA

It is a pleasure to send my greetings to the participants at this conference and my sincere thanks to the African Union for organising it.

Your conference is timely. Non-state actors, including terrorist groups, are actively seeking chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials. We see this in the allegations of chemical weapons use by non-state actors in Syria and recent incidents in Brussels have again reminded us of the vulnerability of nuclear facilities.

Fortunately, the international community has been active in forging a response, with UN Security Council resolution 1540 as a key plank. As Secretary-General Ban said, in the decade since its adoption, resolution 1540 has become an important component of the global security architecture.

The final Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington last week recognised the important role resolution 1540 plays in addressing nuclear security and terrorism. It endorsed a plan of action for the UN, with the full and universal implementation of resolution 1540 as one of two pillars. A cross-regional group of states pledged support for the implementation of resolution 1540, including facilitating national and regional implementation.

I strongly encourage all AU members to take advantage of any initiatives that emerge from this cross-regional pledge.

The spectre of possible CBRN attacks haunts us all. It will not be confined to one country or to one region. Universal implementation of resolution 1540 is one sure way to build up our global defences.

I welcome the strides Africa has made in implementing the resolution. However, I am concerned that of the 17 States that have not submitted national reports to the 1540 Committee, 13 are African states.

I understand many AU states have limited capacity and numerous priorities, but I hope your conference will find ways to assist Africa-wide implementation of this critical tool to combat the collective threat of CBRN attacks, including through correctly matching donors with needs.

As always, the UN, through the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its regional centre in Togo, is ready to provide whatever assistance we can. The series of workshops we held in 2014 has already helped 4 African countries to submit their national reports.

As you know, the Security Council is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540, as mandated by Security Council resolution 1977. The review provides an invaluable opportunity for AU members to provide views on how UN Member States can help them implement the resolution.

I wish you the best of luck with your conference.