

**Open Debate on “Conflict prevention and sustaining peace”**

**Statement by H.E. Mr. David Donoghue**

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**Security Council Chamber**

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**[Check against delivery]**

Thank you to the Swedish Presidency for convening today's debate. Thank you also to Secretary-General Guterres for making clear his strong commitment to conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

Mr. President, we need to see the adoption last April of the two resolutions on sustaining peace as a turning point for the UN. Collectively, we are now charged with the responsibility to bring the UN back to the reason of its foundation in the first place: that is, to prevent war, rather than to react to it once it has been waged, and to solve conflict, not merely to manage it.

Last April's resolutions are also important because they represent the UN's most sophisticated understanding yet of what conflict is, why it occurs and what we need to do to resolve it.

I associate myself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union. I offer now four additional points in my national capacity.

**First, conflict rarely comes as a surprise.**

Human rights violations; hate speech; inter-communal violence. These are early warning signs of conflict – conflict, indeed, which is often in clear sight. The challenge is how to respond effectively to these signs with timely action.

We are making progress, however. This Council has increasingly used the various tools at its disposal, including field visits, emergency AOB sessions and statements, to place stronger emphasis on conflict prevention. In addition, the Human Rights Upfront Initiative has allowed quick decisions to be made, including in the case of South Sudan.

The three reviews of 2015 and the subsequent sustaining peace resolutions provided an excellent analysis of what we should do. However, more can be done to advance the recommendations they each made, and we would like to see a stronger voice given to those best equipped to flag early warning signs of conflict and make recommendations for action by the Security Council.

On a programmatic level, it is encouraging that the Department of Political Affairs reached its extra budgetary funding targets for 2016. The UN Peacebuilding Fund has also expanded its donor base to include new and non-traditional partners. Nevertheless, we are still far off achieving the flexibility and predictability of funding needed for interventions, which can prevent conflict. If funding is decided on a year-to-year basis or is rigidly earmarked, our capacity to intervene early and quickly to stop conflict from breaking out is significantly diminished.

**My second point, the root causes of conflict can be many and far-reaching.**

Tackling these root causes is the smart thing to do and is key to sustaining peace. The interlinkages between issues such as poverty eradication, creating sustainable peace, building human security and combatting inequalities are critical underpinnings of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They should not be addressed in isolation.

People are less likely to be motivated to turn to violence if their rights are being respected. Political upheaval is less likely to result in conflict if trusted and transparent institutions can intervene. Migration flows are less likely to destabilise regions if responses to climate change and other shocks are adequate.

While implementation of the 2030 Agenda is not primarily the responsibility of this Council, it is clear that successful achievement of the SDGs will over time remove, or lessen, many of the factors which give rise to conflict and other threats to international peace and stability.

Debates and briefings in this chamber increasingly recognise this reality and factor in issues of institution-building, governance, economic growth, migration – and even climate change.

We applaud the Secretary-General for the emphasis he has placed on the need to address the root causes of conflict. *He has stressed that the work of sustaining peace cannot take place in a vacuum.* We look forward to the leadership of the Secretary-General and this Council as we work together to implement the sustaining peace resolutions in complementarity with the sustainable development and human rights agendas. It will not be easy but we must remain determined. The drawdown of the UN peace operation in Liberia will provide a litmus test of this new approach.

**My third point is that conflict affects more than the warring parties.**

Conflict is less and less about armies in battle array or even about irregular armed elements. It is about everyone – especially civilians. The toll on the civilian population in Syria, for example, has been horrendous.

Civilians need their advocates too. And when states and societies are fractured we need to listen to civil society organisations, and ensure their participation in the achievement of lasting peace.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda will be crucial in moving the international community towards a paradigm of sustaining peace. Women must be involved at all stages along the peace continuum – from prevention to peace negotiations and post-conflict governance. The Youth, Peace and Security agenda, furthermore, should be utilised to support initiatives on conflict prevention.

**Finally**, the role of regional partners cannot be overstated. Our efforts towards sustaining peace will fall short if we fail to draw on the expertise and experience of regional and sub-regional bodies.

Regional partners must harness their expertise by acting quickly and in the overall interest. The UN needs a resilient and capable network of such actors.

Mr. President, the United Nations is operating in a constantly changing world. It is unlikely that the drafters of the UN Charter considered phrases such as “international terrorism”, “non-state actors” or “national reconciliation processes”. Nevertheless even though the times have changed and the terminology is different, the principles of the Charter remain pristine and absolute.

To ensure that we are all part of a UN that is fit for purpose, our deliberations on sustaining peace must be conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner. We must all keep our eyes firmly on the prize of peace and reach an enhanced understanding of how lasting solutions to conflict can be achieved.