

**Statement by**

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**UN Security Council Open Debate on Peacebuilding in Africa**

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Mr. President,

Thank you for convening today's debate. Ireland aligns itself to the statement delivered by the European Union.

In our national statement, we will respond to your helpful concept paper by outlining four high priority issues that we believe need to be addressed in order to ensure effective peacebuilding in Africa.

**One, we need to tackle the root causes of conflict.**

We cannot talk about promoting peace without exploring the factors that threaten it in the first instance. This was evident during the recent processes leading to the adoption of the peacebuilding resolutions by the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as last year's negotiations of the Sustainable Development Goals – especially SDG 16.

This need to understand the drivers of conflict is nowhere more present than in countries emerging from crisis. In such cases, peace is at a stage of such fragility that it is more easily destroyed than sustained. As we in Ireland have seen through close engagement with partner countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, multi-stakeholder conflict analyses must ensure that peacekeeping mission drawdowns are backstopped by the technical and financial support needed to build the capacity of national institutions to sustain peace.

We're moving in the right direction. Last Tuesday in this chamber, we heard the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic welcome the renewal of MINUSCA's "innovative" mandate, which is tailored to specific national priorities. Moreover, a focus of the Peacebuilding Commission on transition settings, and the provision of catalytic, post-conflict funding through the Peacebuilding Fund, has also yielded very encouraging results.

These are the kind of initiatives we need to see more of if SDG16 and the objectives of the peacebuilding resolutions are to be achieved.

**Another high priority issue, Mr. President, is conflict prevention.**

For many years, conflict prevention has been under-resourced and under-evaluated.

The case of Burundi has reinforced for us the urgent need for investment in conflict prevention. During this year, mediators in the country have dealt with roughly 430 conflicts a month, receiving requests for interventions from community members, local authorities and, in some cases, provincial governors. The financial resources needed to empower a mediator to intervene in one conflict are almost inconsequential compared to the enormous costs arising from dealing with the fallout of conflict after it has escalated. Ireland has been pleased to support such mediation through investment in the Global Acceleration Instrument, which was called for by the Global Study on Resolution 1325.

We also welcome the work already undertaken by the current and past chairs of the PBC in forging a stronger role for the Commission in conflict prevention, particularly through its potential for interaction with the Security Council. We look to advance this progress and explore how it can bolster other UN activities, such as the SG's Human Rights Upfront Initiative.

**Thirdly, we must include youth and women.**

Thus far, we simply have not done enough to include women and young people in peacebuilding.

The Global Study on Resolution 1325 showed us that the inclusion of women in peace processes has led to a 20% increase in peace agreements lasting at least two years, which rises to a 35% increase over 15 years. We also saw first-hand the crucial role for women in building peace on our own island of Ireland. The lessons we learned have informed our efforts to advance the women, peace and security agenda - both nationally and internationally - and have also been shared with partner countries, such as Liberia.

The case for supporting the youth, peace and security agenda is just as clear, particularly in Africa. According to some sources, by 2100 almost one half of the world's youth will be African. Ireland is exploring ways to answer the call of the peacebuilding resolutions to increase participation of youth in building peace in Africa, including through our trade and development links.

**Finally, we must prioritise African ownership of Africa's peacebuilding.**

There will be no peace in Africa that is not led by Africans. Similarly, African economic growth will only be sustainable if it is driven from within.

We firmly believe that efforts to strengthen the UN's peacebuilding engagement in Africa will only succeed if they are designed and implemented in full cooperation with African stakeholders. The strength of such collaboration is being increasingly harnessed. Examples include the ground-breaking partnership between the PBF and the AU Commission in Burundi, as well as the growing focus of the PBC on building stronger ties with the AU and African sub-regional organisations. Region-to-region initiatives, such as the Africa-EU partnership seen through the African Peace Facility, are also encouraging.

Not only must we break down silos to forge a whole-of-UN approach to peacebuilding, we must do this in a way that supports Africa's own policies and objectives.

Mr. President, this is no mean feat. However we welcome initiatives like this open debate. They afford us an opportunity to share experiences on how we have been doing so far but, more importantly, to listen to ideas on how we can do better.