

Statement by

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Deputy Permanent Representative

at the

Open Debate of the Security Council

“Maintenance of international peace and security”

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Mr. President,

Ireland commends the UK for its initiative in scheduling today's discussion and the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for their insightful briefings on this topic. Ireland associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President,

Every day, in this chamber we bear witness to the costs of the failure to prevent conflict. Too often the UN finds itself scrambling to respond to crises including some that could have and should have been forestalled. The scale of the crises and their duration mean that we cannot continue with business as usual. A paradigm shift is needed to rebalance this current trend. We have to get ahead of the curve.

As your concept paper points out, the Security Council has a range of preventive tools under Chapter VI of the UN Charter that can prevent the escalation of disputes into full-blown crises. We need to think now, about how to enhance the Council's ability to make better use of these tools. Otherwise, we will continue to measure the results in terms of increased loss of life, growing insecurity and greater human misery. In addition, and by default, we will continue to saddle costly peacekeeping missions with more and more responsibilities.

Mr. President,

Let me touch upon some of the preventive measures at the disposal of this Council:

Firstly, central to an effective system of conflict prevention is awareness of a situation, the ability to analyse that information and the political will to take action when needed. In this day and age, there is generally no shortage of information. Sometimes, quite the opposite. However, we need to analyse it better, draw conclusions sooner and then take the right decisions.

Early warning is only effective, however, when acted upon; and this is the collective challenge before us all here today. There are too many unfolding tragedies where we can no longer say "but we didn't know.."

Secondly, we need vigorous, sustained diplomacy where conflict is brewing. Intensive diplomatic efforts, using the good offices of the Secretary-General, his senior envoys and UN

staff in the field, have been and can continue to be effective in bringing parties back from the brink of conflict. This is most effective when backed by the international community.

Thirdly, there has been a concerted effort by the UN to optimise the use of mediation as a tool to prevent conflict, which we strongly welcome. The recent adoption of resolution A/68/L.55 paves the way for closer partnerships between the UN and regional organisations. We have long seen merit in the active role that regional organisations, with their proximate understanding of conflict in their own geographical area, can play in mediating or facilitating dialogue between parties.

Fourthly, Special Political Missions, while often deployed after a conflict has erupted, play a key role in advancing the political dialogue and other peacebuilding tasks. A Council that can act more quickly might deploy SPMs much earlier.

Fifthly, parties who refuse to comply with their international commitments need to be fully aware of the consequences. Where these are not evident or understood, entrenchment and stalemate can ensue leading to the types of frustration that Council members expressed during your visit to South Sudan last week.

At an institutional level, the successful operation of the International Criminal Court is a vital tool of accountability, which bolsters conflict prevention because of its deterrent effect. And while the Court was set up to ensure accountability, and while this Council has an inescapable responsibility in this regard, too often we find it unable or unwilling to act. A sense of impunity can lead to prolonged conflicts and result in the loss of more innocent lives.

Mr. President,

Let me briefly touch upon the role of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture which is also relevant here. Recent crises in the Central African Republic and South Sudan are painful reminders that efforts to prevent relapse into conflict remain insufficient. For new state institutions to become and remain resilient and act as an effective brake against renewed conflict, sustained support from the UN system is needed. This requires an integrated approach. To this end, the Peacebuilding Support Office should deepen its interaction with other actors within the UN system, in order to exchange experiences and build on best practices.

Women are, as your concept note recalls, critical agents of conflict resolution and recovery. Women are often powerful and capable actors in their communities and the information and insight provided by women's groups can be valuable in detecting and understanding tensions. It is critical that women peacebuilders and mediators are engaged as early as possible in conflict prevention measures.

Mr. President,

Looking more locally, I would like to briefly mention aspects of the Council's working methods. There is a need for more efficiency and effectiveness in how the Council operates. The resolution last week on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Nusra Front shows that measures can be taken more quickly. But it shouldn't take a crisis of that nature to provoke rapid action.

In some ways, when issues reach the Council agenda, it is already too late. So, we need to get out in front of emerging issues. To this end, we encourage more informal exchanges among Council members on emerging threats, more horizon-scanning. Formats, such as the use of Arria formula meetings can also trigger fresh thinking on the dynamics of a conflict and point towards the necessary response. As a member of the ACT group, we welcome these interactive discussions. More fundamentally, the unfettered use of veto rights by Permanent Council members also inhibits the effectiveness of the Council and needs to be reconsidered.

On the positive side, we welcome the increasing recognition of the correlation between severe human rights violations and threats to international peace and security. In that regard, the Secretary-General's "Rights up Front" Action Plan, which puts the focus on human rights is particularly welcome.

Mr. President,

Looking ahead, 2015 will be an important year for the UN system. It marks the tenth anniversary of the 2005 World Summit when the international community renewed its commitment to promote a culture of prevention.

The Secretary-General's review of UN peacekeeping will be completed next year. 2015 will also see the ten-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture; and it will mark the 15 year anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. 2015 will also be a watershed

with the negotiation of a successor framework for the Millennium Development Goals and a stronger linkage between Good Governance, Rule of Law and Sustainable Development.

These milestones present opportunities for the UN system to get its act more together and strengthen its resolve to prevent conflict. Ireland looks forward to actively contributing to these processes.

Mr. President,

There is broad consensus of the merits and utility of a culture of prevention that allows us to identify crises before they transform into armed conflict with the resulting human and material costs.

The challenge before us is to translate this consensus into effective actions.

At a minimum, what the world needs is strong leadership from a united Council behind the preventive instruments at its disposal. This requires a common resolve of those seated around this table and the full support of all UN members.

Thank you.