

Speech: The role of mediation in conflict prevention

Thank you Mr. President. Let me also thank our briefers today.

The UK held an open debate during our own presidency of the Security Council in August on mediation. And we're very glad to see you taking the debate further, Mr President because we believe the mediation can and does work. We believe that properly deployed and executed mediation can help parties to resolve disputes before they are allowed to spiral into darker and more entrenched cycles of violence.

We also believe, as this Council recognized in its January 2018 Presidential Statement, that mediation has to be one element of a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy. Now, Ban Ki-moon talked about the importance of conflict prevention, of dealing with issues before they get out of control. And I know that some Members of the Security Council are concerned by any expansion of the Security Council's agenda. Of course, if we don't find ways of effective conflict prevention in countries not yet on our agenda where we have concerns, then we make it more likely that they will actually come onto the agenda. Then we have to find some way of collectively resolving this dilemma. But, at a time when the concepts of conflict prevention can prompt different responses from Security Council Members, I believe that this question on the importance of mediation is something which unites us all around which we all can find consensus. And actually, I thought that the Chinese Ambassador's intervention underlines that very point.

And let me also salute the hard work of UN Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General who are on the frontlines of complex negotiations in situations such as Libya and Yemen. And again, I find myself agreeing with Ban Ki-moon on the importance of standing behind our mediator when the going gets tough. Our recent press statement on Yemen, amongst other points, the Security Council reiterated its unequivocal support for the SRSF and we need to stand behind the people we send out there, even when things are difficult.

I also want to salute, as my French and Chinese colleagues have done, the role that regional and subregional organizations play. They are well placed to assume mediation roles as the African Union did during the peace talks in the Central African Republic, for example. And let me take this opportunity also to express our strong support for ongoing AU-led mediation efforts to resolve the current crisis in Sudan and their calls for a civilian led transitional authority. And it was good that the Security Council issued a statement last night standing behind African Union efforts condemning violence and calling for talks to resolve the situation.

Mr President, it is critical that the United Nations therefore retains an agile mediation capacity. The DPPA Mediation Standby Team is an important part of this prevention toolkit with a wide range of preventative diplomacy

capacities and expertise including on the design and management of dialogue processes, constitution making, gender and inclusion issues, natural resources, power sharing, and security arrangements. The United Kingdom has been one of the largest donors to the DPPA multi-year appeal to support these activities.

The United Kingdom believes strongly, though, that further progress is essential on the matter of women's participation.

Mr President, women continue to build peace when formal processes fail. They lobby for peace processes to begin when parties refuse to talk and implement peace agreements long after the international donors have walked away. For this and other reasons, the United Kingdom in 2018 committed \$1.6 million to increasing women's participation in peace processes. Now the Secretary-General talked about FemWise and I'd also like to highlight the development of the Commonwealth Women Mediators Network which I believe will play an increasingly important role over coming years. More broadly, of course, peace processes including, and involving, women fully are more likely to be inclusive, therefore, of all groups and of the grassroots and therefore more likely in turn to succeed. So this is about success, Mr President.

Mr President, your concept note for today's meeting states that this Council's "reactive" approach to crises means that action is often taken only once political and security situations have already deteriorated. Now, regrettably, it is difficult to disagree with that assessment, but I'm grateful we have an opportunity today to pause and consider. Let me give an example of a country level issue and a thematic issue where I think we could be thinking about these issues.

At the country level, the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the northwest and southwest regions of Cameroon is an example of a developing crisis which has implications for fragile regional stability and wider international peace and security. But, where there may be scope to prevent further deterioration through quick action by the United Nations and regional and subregional bodies – including in particular of course the African Union and ECCAS – to encourage and support efforts to establish a credible political dialogue, the United Kingdom is open to working together with all parties, all organisations, to try and find solutions.

And on a thematic issue, may I also note Mary Robinson's words on behalf of The Elders on climate change. And I agree very much that this is an increasingly concerning driver of instability. That's why the United Kingdom called the first Security Council debate on the impacts of climate change on peace and security in 2007. It's why we authored the groundbreaking resolution on the Lake Chad Basin and its root causes, which include climate change. And let me take the opportunity to inform colleagues that the United Kingdom has today announced that we will reduce our emissions to net zero by 2050 and will enshrine that in our law.

Mr President, when this Council embraced the concept of sustaining peace and Resolution 2282 of 2016, it recognized the shared responsibility of all three pillars of the United Nations to act – to prevent the outbreak, escalation,

continuation, and recurrence of conflict. As Members of the Security Council, we too have a shared responsibility to act, to come together on the basis of these commitments, to continue to strengthen our approaches and, with the support of others, the rest of the United Nations system in the area of conflict prevention and mediation. Mary Robinson shared some wise quotes from Kofi Annan. Let me end with his words that we need to keep hope alive and strive to do better.

Thank you, Mr President.