

Impact of HIV/ AIDS on International Peace and Security

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Statement by Mr. Barbalı̇c, Permanent Representative of Bosnia & Herzegovina

I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting. We welcome the presence of the President of Nigeria, the Deputy President of South Africa and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France. Our appreciation also goes to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to Mr. Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), for their insightful remarks.

Eleven years after the adoption by the Security Council of its landmark resolution 1308 (2000), and following the adoption by the General Assembly of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, this debate offers us the opportunity to update the conceptual approach to this issue and take stock of the progress achieved.

Security conditions certainly influence the spread of HIV, which has a negative impact on all sectors and levels of society. It destabilizes the economy and contributes to the instability of societies. The HIV epidemic, exacerbated by conditions of violence and instability, increases the risk of exposure to the disease as a result of mass movements of people, widespread uncertainty, reduced access to medical care, and conflict-related sexual violence committed by members of armed groups. Populations fleeing conflict areas, displaced persons or refugees in camp settings are more likely to be vulnerable.

Peacekeeping operations and their personnel, as an indispensable tool of the United Nations, can play an important role in raising HIV/AIDS awareness and providing means of prevention in post-conflict settings, because peacekeepers do not operate in isolation from local communities.

We commend the efforts made by UNAIDS and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with regard to the education and training of peacekeepers. There is a need to further strengthen the process of voluntary counselling and testing in United Nations-mandated missions. Training peacekeepers in gender awareness and child protection and the ability to recognize and respond to sexual violence and exploitation will not only influence their behaviour, but also bring added value to the positive role of peacekeepers as agents of change.

Member States should be encouraged to institutionalize the process of the voluntary and confidential testing of all uniformed personnel and staff sent to peacekeeping missions and to develop means of tracking national policies. Given the sensitivity of this issue, all members of the police and armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina participating in peacekeeping operations are tested for HIV/AIDS and attend pre-deployment training on HIV/AIDS awareness.

It must be emphasized that in some situations HIV can negatively affect and be an obstacle to gender empowerment and the full involvement of women in peacebuilding efforts. Greater protection of women and girls has been emphasized through the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010).

We underline that UNAIDS, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other relevant actors should work closely with local communities, targeting vulnerable groups of persons. They can also be part of broader activities for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform in peacekeeping efforts. Addressing HIV/AIDS initiatives in peacekeeping must be a joint effort involving Member States, troop- and police-contributing countries, United Nations agencies and host countries. Fighting the spread of HIV requires combined commitment, cooperation, creativity and resources.

An effective response to HIV/AIDS by Member States requires clear and attainable national strategies and goals. For that reason, although in the group of countries with a low HIV/AIDS prevalence, Bosnia and Herzegovina has developed a strategy to prevent and combat HIV/AIDS in order to ensure our strategic response to the growing HIV/AIDS problem in the world. Post-conflict planning needs to include HIV programming and to address specific gaps in civilian capacities.

Complementarity and cooperation among all United Nations bodies and agencies are necessary. International actions, such as a response to conflict-related sexual violence or national efforts to address the problem of HIV and AIDS, must be better coordinated and intensified. The responsiveness of various actors within the United Nations system entails optimal solutions in order to achieve meaningful and concrete results. The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies, such as UNFPA, UNICEF or the World Health Organization, need to harmonize their activities in that complex undertaking.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that HIV/AIDS, a disease that knows no boundaries, no gender or race, or even age difference, has become a global concern. On the other hand, world peace depends not only on securing borders, but also on securing people against threats and risks to their security. Through its work, the Council is undoubtedly committed to seeking solutions and to addressing the challenges that may arise. Resolution 1983 (2011) is a clear expression of our collective will and continuous efforts to enhance the responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.