

Security Council Open Debate on Security Sector Reform
October 12th 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E.Mr. Viinanan, Representative of Finland, (speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries)

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

I would like to begin by thanking the Nigerian presidency for organizing this debate. The last time the Council held a debate on security sector reform was in 2008 (see S/PV.5889). Now it is due time to take stock of the progress made.

In order to save everybody's valuable time, I will deliver an abbreviated version of our statement circulated in the room.

We need a balanced and holistic approach to security sector reform (SSR) for it to serve the broader aim of achieving sustainable peace and development and full respect for human rights and the rule of law. There is a clear link between SSR, conflict prevention and socio-economic development. This needs to be fully understood and taken into account in international support measures and actions.

The linkages between security, justice and development were highlighted in the recent United Nations and World Bank reports. Instability and political and criminal violence reoccur in circumstances where governance is weak and the rule of law and mechanisms to control corruption are neglected. Violence leads to an increased risk of conflict, not to mention its negative effects on development.

All security sector reform efforts should be carried out within the overarching framework of the rule of law and good governance. We would like to commend the efforts of the Security Sector Reform Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and of the inter-agency Security Sector Reform Task Force. We encourage the Task Force to continue its efforts to enhance coherence.

It is clear that more must be done. The United Nations recently conducted a review of international civilian capacities in which the Senior Advisory Group for the Review of International Civilian Capacities identified several capacity gaps. Security sector reform and justice sector reform ranked as the most critical ones.

Security sector support encompasses complex technical challenges, in which specialized external expertise may be required to complement national capacities. Moreover, SSR goes beyond critical yet narrow exercises such as right-sizing the security services or training and equipping uniformed personnel. SSR can also mean the development of national security sector strategies and legislation or enhancing the oversight and governance of security institutions. These are inherently political processes, where the main responsibility and ownership can only lie with national Governments.

National Governments have the sovereign right and primary responsibility to manage and coordinate national reform efforts and international support. A truly demand-driven

approach on both sides would solve many of the coordination problems. The Senior Advisory Group for the Review of International Civilian Capacities gave concrete recommendations here too. National ownership can be fostered also through areas such as procurement, policy framework and mechanisms to manage partnerships. National ownership should not be reduced to Government ownership. Security and justice institutions are there to serve people, including those who are marginalized.

Special attention should be paid to the participation of women in planning, leading and implementing security sector reforms. Women are actors and stakeholders in upholding and promoting security and the rule of law. In this regard, we would like to recall the action plan of the Secretary-General on women's participation in peacebuilding. It offers practical suggestions, which should now be taken forward into concrete implementation in the United Nations system and be supported by Member States, regional organizations and international financial institutions. We also encourage all actors to make full use of the gender and security sector toolkit, which offers practical guidance.

African countries are increasingly important providers of security sector reform assistance. It would therefore be pertinent to consider a regional approach not only to capacity-building, but also to assessments and the design and implementation of reforms. African perspectives on SSR can help in better adapting SSR tools to a particular country context, and thus contribute to the legitimacy, viability and sustainability of SSR support.

The Nordic countries fully support the African Peace and Security Architecture initiative, which is aimed at enhancing the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. We also warmly welcome the ongoing efforts of the African Union to develop a policy framework on SSR in consultation with diverse stakeholders, including regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, African and international SSR experts and African civil society organizations.

In conclusion, we believe that the report requested by the Council today on the United Nations approach to SSR will contribute to a more effective and coherent United Nations response to SSR. For the United Nations to continue to provide comprehensive support in this vital area, we must all ensure it receives adequate support.