

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

Statement by H.E.Mr. Parham, Representative of the United Kingdom

I welcome you to the Security Council, Mr. President, and thank you for convening this timely debate and giving it added significance by presiding over in person.

The United Kingdom welcomes the opportunity to discuss security sector reform (SSR) in Africa. History has taught us that we cannot build stable and prosperous societies without functioning security and justice systems. Effective and accountable security systems and access to justice make people feel safe in their daily lives. When people feel safe, local entrepreneurs will start businesses, children will go to school and socio-economic development can take root.

I would like to focus my intervention on two themes — first, on the need to ensure national ownership and citizen engagement in SSR processes, and secondly, on the importance of linking SSR to the broader peacebuilding and rule of law agenda.

First, with regard to the importance of national ownership, the international community has learned that the most effective approach to SSR is to ensure that national authorities lead, own and drive reform efforts. International partners have a role to play in supporting the process, providing advice and often resources, but political leadership must come from the recipient country. The political leadership must be accompanied by the will to advance the necessary and sometimes difficult reforms in the security sector. That is particularly important when, as is often the case, reforms are inextricably linked to wider political or peace processes.

While Governments have the central role to play, SSR activities must be extended to include the broader population. An effective approach to SSR will ensure that the needs of ordinary citizens, including women and girls, are at the forefront.

In some countries, the army or the police are the main face of the State for many citizens. Their behaviour and responsiveness to citizens' needs can therefore have a disproportionate impact on perceptions of State legitimacy. It is essential that international partners support reform in ways that focus on those aspects of security and justice that matter most to ordinary people, and which promote, rather than undermine, human rights. That is the only way to ensure that legitimate and accountable security systems are developed.

Secondly, SSR cannot be considered in isolation. We must situate this debate on SSR in the context of international efforts to help countries build peace and strengthen the rule of law. Security, justice and economic issues are all linked. SSR efforts must be embedded in broader peacebuilding strategies that include expertise from the military, political and development communities.

Evidence shows that we have not yet gotten the balance right. It is often difficult for countries to obtain assistance to develop their police forces or their judiciaries. When

international support is provided for police training, it is often not sufficiently linked to the improvement of justice systems. We must all strive for a more coherent and better coordinated international response.

United Nations peacekeeping operations are a part, but just one part, of a better coordinated international response. We of course agree with Her Excellency the Indian Minister of State that peacekeeping operations should not be drawn down prematurely in a way that jeopardizes stability, nor should they be given tasks for which they are not qualified or resourced. That principle includes not allocating to peacekeeping operations tasks that are more effectively and sustainably performed by others.

The United Nations has a critical role to play alongside other multilateral partners, such as the European Union and regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

We know that coordinated action can undermine both national ownership and holistic approaches. We must continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to respond in the immediate aftermath of conflict, and in particular to ensure that SSR activities are linked to justice, rule of law and broader peacebuilding activities.

The United Nations has made some progress on delivering a more joined-up approach to peacebuilding, but more needs to be done to bring together the political, humanitarian, development and security systems of the United Nations to enable effective support to national reform efforts.