

Security Council Open Debate on Preventative Diplomacy
22nd of September, 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mrs Susan Rice, Representative of the United States

Thank you, President Sleiman, for Lebanon's leadership in bringing us together today to discuss this very important subject.

The late Dag Hammarskjöld pursued a vision of a United Nations that would move from what he said was a "culture of reaction to a culture of prevention". That unfinished task lies before us today. Some 1.5 billion people now live in countries shaken by conflict, and few of those countries will see even one of the Millennium Development Goals met.

The World Bank's annual World Development Report puts the cost of the average civil war at some \$65 billion, or just over half of the global aid budget. While recent years have seen an unparalleled drop in global poverty, countries devastated by conflict and violence have been left out of that trend. Poverty is a major driver of conflict. Let me highlight just one statistic. In countries where the average person earns only \$250 per year — the poorest of nations — the scientifically proven risk of civil conflict within a five year time frame is 15 per cent. By contrast, in countries with a per capita income of \$5,000 per year — middle income countries — the risk of civil conflict over the same five-year period is less than 1 per cent. Economic growth and development must therefore be viewed as key to our strategies for preventing conflict.

It is especially difficult to prevent violence in societies struggling concurrently with crushing poverty, crumbling institutions, rampant discrimination and deep-seated suspicions among ethnic or religious groups. Any one of those maladies on its own is difficult to address, but the mix is combustible and requires a comprehensive approach.

We say that often, but today the Security Council has given that mantra greater definition. The draft presidential statement we will adopt squarely addresses the links between security and development. Moreover, it provides an outline for a comprehensive approach, including several core elements for long-term conflict prevention, including sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, gender equality, the end of impunity, the rule of law and, I would argue, most notably democracy and respect for human rights. Those are the conditions most often found in peaceful societies. Their absence creates conditions conducive to conflict. We ignore them at our peril.

Yet, as we dedicate ourselves to more comprehensive and long-term conflict prevention, we must be mindful that peace, prosperity and democracy cannot be achieved quickly or endure if imposed from outside. The solutions to the root causes of conflict must be home-grown. The United Nations cannot do what others must do for themselves, but it can play an indispensable supporting role.

The United Nations has vital conflict prevention work to do on five fronts in particular. The first is early warning, information and analysis. The United Nations system has a significant presence in many countries where the conditions conducive to conflict are rife. The United Nations is thus well-placed to provide early warning of potential concerns and to help us better understand and anticipate what makes each situation unique. Too often, we resort to cookie-cutter solutions, as if each case were the same as the last, because we do not know enough and we are reacting too late. The United Nations knowledge should help us to act earlier and smarter.

But the United Nations itself sometimes struggles to find the best experts, and itself has limits to its knowledge and information-gathering capabilities. The United Nations must therefore work more

closely with Governments, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations, academics and other capable actors based on their comparative advantages. To be truly effective, it must be able to draw upon all sources of information.

Secondly, we need vigorous, sustained diplomacy and mediation to prevent violence or its escalation. Intensive diplomatic efforts by the Secretary-General, his senior envoys and key staff in the field can pull adversaries back from the brink, especially when backed by a united international community. The United States continues to strongly support the robust use of the Secretary-General's good offices and special political missions to avert war. We strongly support efforts to build and strengthen the cadre of seasoned envoys. We welcome the United Nations recent efforts to work together with regional envoys and independent mediators when helpful. We urge the United Nations and other international actors to recruit more women as envoys, special representatives and chiefs of field missions.

Thirdly, diplomacy requires leverage, and that means both carrots and sticks. The credible threat of consequences for aggressors and others who refuse to abide by their international commitments should include, when necessary, the imposition of targeted sanctions. Effective mediation does not mean just listening to all sides; it also means acting firmly when needed so as to back diplomatic efforts. Here, the Security Council has a particular responsibility, including helping to mobilize wider political support for diplomatic efforts and moving swiftly in the face of emergencies.

Fourthly, societies emerging from conflict continue to face the greatest risk of more bloodshed, even with the presence of peacekeepers. Peace operations are on the front lines of United Nations prevention efforts, and they must be thought of accordingly. We should cease to make false distinctions between peacekeeping and prevention. In fact, they are inextricably linked. The investments we make to strengthen the ability of peacekeepers to detect breakdowns in a peace process, to sound the alarm bells in times of crisis and to quickly redeploy forces to dangerous hotspots are indeed investments in conflict prevention.

Fifthly, while the United Nations and other actors can do a great deal through diplomacy and peacekeeping operations, our long-term objective must be to enable countries to prevent conflicts by themselves. The United Nations, together with regional organizations and the wider international community, must help countries to walk the long, difficult road from war to peace. We support making greater use of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in more countries rattled by conflict. The high level review of international civilian peacebuilding capacities commissioned by the Secretary-General contains many good ideas and we look forward to their prompt implementation.

All these instruments can save lives. They provide hope and, when employed effectively, can make a meaningful difference in the world. But they require us to overcome our differences and unite behind a common resolve in the Chamber. So let us summon the political will to confront the atrocities unfolding before our eyes, from Syria to Southern Kordofan. Let us revitalize our will and ability to prevent conflicts before embers start to blaze.