



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

18 November 2015

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a Summary of the High-Level Thematic Debate on “Maintenance of International Peace and Security”, which I convened on 1 October, 2015 in pursuance of the General Assembly resolution 69/316, as part of commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mogens Lykketoft'.

Mogens Lykketoft

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York

High-Level Thematic Debate of the General Assembly

“Maintenance of International Peace and Security”

1 October, 2015

Trusteeship Council Chamber

United Nations Headquarters, New York

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**President’s Summary**

Pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 69/316, as part of commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, the President of the General Assembly convened a High-Level Thematic Debate on “Maintenance of International Peace and Security” during the high-level segment of the seventieth session of the General Assembly on 1 October, 2015.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/316, the main objective of the high-level thematic debate was to provide an opportunity for Member and Observer States to draw lessons from the experiences of the past 70 years, take stock of present challenges in the area of peace and security and renew their commitment to the Charter of the United Nations.

Representatives of regional organizations, civil society, academia, mass media and individuals also participated in the meeting. This report summarizes the discussion at the high-level thematic debate on 1 October 2015.

H.E. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly, and H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, delivered the opening remarks, followed by a statement by H.E. Mr. Kevin Rudd, Chair of the Independent Committee on Multilateralism and former Prime Minister of Australia, also representing civil society. Following the opening, statements were made by representatives of Member States, and heads of regional organizations.

H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly, in his opening remarks stated that over the past 70 years, the UN’s approach, capacity and responsibilities in the area of maintenance of international peace and security had undergone major changes. Yet, the UN had clearly much more to learn and much more to do to fulfil its mandate to address the unsolved conflicts in many parts of the world.

The President of the General Assembly highlighted that investments in armaments and weapons continued to dwarf investments in conflict prevention. He emphasized to do more to rebuild trust and begin to move forward beyond the agreements on non-proliferation, the elimination of nuclear weapons, and the Arms Trade Treaty.

Second, in the context of the UN efforts to continue to adapt and respond to the evolving security challenges, conflicts and threats through peacekeeping, special political and mediation mandates, Mr. Lykketoft commended the Secretary-General for establishing the high-level independent panel on peace operations and his implementation report, as well as the 10-year review of the peacebuilding architecture. He mentioned that the global study on Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security would also help to better address this key aspect of international peace and security. With regard to the challenges relating to ISIL, Boko Haram, Al Shabab and others, Mr. Lykketoft looked forward to the Secretary-General's Plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism as well as the review of the General Assembly's counter-terrorism strategy.

Third, the President underscored that the membership must work more on the synergies and nexus between the Organization's efforts between the three main reviews on peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and women peace and security. In order to provide an opportunity to the Member States to exchange views on the UN system's overall role and performance in peace and security, the President would convene – on 10 and 11 May 2016 – a high-level thematic debate.

President Lykketoft emphasized continued attention to UN reform to enable the UN to respond in a timely and effective manner. That required a concrete, sustainable, and more effective budgetary framework for special political missions, and the long-standing issue of Security Council reform, which will continue to receive attention during this session. The President underscored the need to collectively prevent large-scale human rights abuses and atrocities, and respond to the current refugee crisis.

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations in his remarks highlighted the new threats from climate change to cyber-crime and pandemics to escalation of long-simmering disputes and protracted armed hostilities, terrorism, and humanitarian situations. He stated that the Organization's mechanisms for addressing instability and fragility were being stretched to the limit.

He mentioned in this context that three major reviews were under way encompassing United Nations peace operations, peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. He stated that in the coming months he would present to the General Assembly a plan to strengthen UN efforts to prevent violent extremism. The Secretary-General looked forward to the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016 as a critical

opportunity to reinforce the common endeavour to save lives and ease suffering, and mentioned the encouraging steps taken so far to address the refugee crisis.

The Secretary-General emphasized that the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development had strong links to peace and security, including through Goal 16 on building inclusive societies with accountable institutions and access to justice. He stressed the need, first for a greater emphasis on prevention, mediation, and the peaceful resolution of disputes and grievances. Second, strengthening peacebuilding, third, addressing the roots of conflict, including through heightened attention on violations of human rights, and fourth provision of adequate and predictable resources. The Secretary-General drew attention to the chronically under-resourced prevention efforts as well as the Peacebuilding Fund and called on the international community for contribution and strong commitment.

H.E. Mr. Kevin Rudd, Chair of the Independent Committee on Multilateralism and former Prime Minister of Australia, specifically convened by International Peace Institute to reflect on core question whether the current institutional structure of UN was fit for purpose to deal with the new challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Mr. Rudd stated that maintenance of international peace and security remained the core business of the United Nations and it was therefore appropriate to debate the future of peace and security after the historic adoption of sustainable development goals. He further stated that the debate occurred within the wider debate of global governance in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Mr. Rudd stressed that the modern day challenges such as the rise of vast array of non-state actors, turmoil of global financial market, horrors of global pandemics, destruction caused by extreme weather events, and the consequence of climate change necessitated to suspend our natural cynicism and look afresh at question of reforming our shared institutions to meet these formidable challenges. Mr. Rudd highlighted the centrality of conflict prevention in maintenance of peace and security and stressed the need for an effective performance audit of UN peacekeeping operations. He further stated that the international community was unable to prevent and anticipate the scale of conflict in Syria, while also recognizing that not each stage of conflict was preventable. Mr. Rudd stressed that economic development remained as the most effective antidote of conflict.

Throughout the debate, speakers across the board welcomed the convening of high-level thematic debate as part of the commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, and as an opportunity to take stock, reflect and draw lessons from UN achievements and shortcomings in performance of its core business in the maintenance of international peace and security, and to reaffirm the collective pledge “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” made seven decades ago.

Speakers underlined the need for reaffirmation of the basic principles of the UN Charter, international law, sovereign equality of States, territorial integrity and non-intervention in the internal affairs of any State. Speakers reasserted that respect for the rule of law was essential for maintenance of international peace and security as well as for achieving socio-economic development. They stressed the need to elaborate the concept of Rule of Law through inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process. Speakers emphasized that peace and security was closely entwined with human rights. It was noted that validating faith in fundamental human rights required constant effort and scrutiny of actions, which the UN human rights machinery stood for. Speakers underscored the need for demonstration of faith in equal rights of men and women, empowering women and girls, building just and inclusive societies, and ensuring that law and its enforcement was fair and did not discriminate. The UN Secretary-General's "human rights up front" initiative in that regard was highly commended.

Member States reiterated the basic principle of the UN Charter that all States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against territorial integrity and political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the UN. A group of Member States stressed that resorting to Chapter VII of the Charter as an umbrella for addressing issues that did not pose a threat to international peace and security must be avoided, and the Security Council should fully utilise the relevant Charter provisions, where appropriate, including Chapter VI and VIII of the Charter.

Speakers lauded the Organization's achievements over the past seventy years in the areas of decolonization, protection and promotion of human rights and rule of law, providing food aid, vaccinating children, taking care of refugees, alleviation of poverty, hunger and food insecurity, promotion of sustainable development, prevention of outbreak of new global conflicts, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, as well as by fostering global culture of tolerance and diversity. Adoption of a transformative Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, and the agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue were hailed as more recent achievements that proved that complex issues could be resolved peacefully through dialogue.

On the other hand, the shortcomings the United Nations, which at times had been passive and ineffective, were also pointed out by a number of speakers taking part in the debate. References were made to UN inaction in the face of atrocities committed in Rwanda and in the course of the Balkan Wars, as well as during the current Syrian conflict as just a few examples that highlighted the need for reform and strengthening of the Organization.

Acknowledging that the world had changed since seven decades, it was noted that new challenges such as pandemic diseases, drugs, cyber-crime, violence and mass atrocities in the Middle East and Africa triggering massive displacement, Mediterranean refugee and humanitarian crisis, natural resources, climate change and natural disasters, and terrorism required more creativity, political will,

and flexibility for the United Nations as well as world leaders in order to enable the Organization to adapt to the new realities. For that end, urgent need for reform was broadly stressed.

Numerous speakers called for the need for the Organization to adapt itself to the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and update its peace and security apparatus. Calling for a paradigm shift, speakers saw the debate as an opportunity to discuss the international security architecture and to seek ways to improve the United Nations capacity for the prevention and resolution of conflict. A group of Member States underlined the need for re-defining the concept of security that can no longer be thought in the context of inter-state conflict only. They contended that climate change posed an existential threat; it risked their food security, affected their water security, and even meant loss of territory. Those countries also remained extremely vulnerable to crimes at sea, including piracy and illicit use of natural resources. It was therefore, emphasized that the non-traditional security threats such as implications of economic and social crises, environmental degradation, and climate change must be included in a comprehensive concept of security.

Some participants emphasized that the United Nations needed to embrace structural change in order to update the global institutions of governance in international peace and security. Some Member States castigated the Security Council's performance in the past few years. Participants urged the members of the Council to strive to combine their strengths in the current times of multiple conflicts and to renew their efforts to find ways to act together and to put differences aside. In such instances where the Council was not able to act unanimously and decisively, some Member States proposed that the General Assembly should take appropriate measures in accordance with the Charter to address the issues.

Many speakers called for advancing the democratization and comprehensive reform of the Security Council. It was stressed that time had come to better reflect the current geopolitical landscape in the composition of the Security Council and improvement in its working methods. Participants welcomed the General Assembly recent decision on UN Security Council reform adopted during the 69<sup>th</sup> session as a significant step to revitalize the Organization and to continue intergovernmental negotiations and build on its work. Furthermore, some speakers noted the need for continuation of the Organization's management reform, and reform in activities of peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and special political missions including by establishing separate account.

Speakers widely recognised that notable achievement of the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security over the past 70 years had been peacekeeping as its flagship activity. It was noted that peacekeeping had evolved from traditional approach to multi-dimensional operations that combined a complex model of many elements, military and civilian, working together for peace. Participants encouraged Member States to enhance their contributions of personnel to UN

peacekeeping operations. Many troop and police contributing countries reaffirmed to continue their contribution to UN peace operations.

Speakers acknowledged that the demands for UN peace operations were constantly increasing and the peacekeepers were asked to do more in increasingly complex, dangerous and hostile environments. Speakers emphasized the need for better training of peacekeepers to equip them for new challenges and in order to avoid abuse and reputational risk for the Organization. In this regard, Speakers commended the Secretary-General's leadership and the work of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations in making a comprehensive assessment of UN peace operations and putting forward recommendations to make it more effective, efficient and responsive in the changing world.

Regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution were noted as major actors in maintenance of international peace and security. Participants strongly affirmed that capacity building was absolute key in partnership between UN and regional organizations and called for fostering cooperation with regional organizations such as the European Union and the African Union. Member States supported the full operationalization of a rapidly deployable African Standby Force, which they believed would contribute to strengthening collective ability to respond to crisis in a swift manner.

It was noted that violent transnational extremism and terrorism using asymmetric warfare had emerged as a common challenge, an ever-growing threat and a deadly disease. Speakers maintained that only a concerted effort of the entire international community could lead to effective response to multifaceted threats posed by so-called ISIS, Boko Haram, the Taliban and al-Shabab. Consequently partnerships of various configurations such as those between the UN and regional organizations were stressed.

Speakers further recognized the importance of moderation as an all-encompassing approach to tackle global challenges and threats to international peace and security. Participants noted that sustained economic growth, social development, education, access to health care, employment and decent jobs could play a role in addressing critical challenges of instability and violence and to prevent conflict. It was emphasized that an important way to achieve human advancement and sustainable development was to secure a peaceful environment, social inclusion, stability and protection of human rights.

Many speakers identified youth, media, civil society, migration, and education as key areas of intervention for global efforts to promote tolerance and reconciliation and address violent extremism including through initiatives such as A World against Violent Extremism, Dialogue among Civilizations, Alliance of Civilizations, and the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM).

In the context of addressing existing and new threats and challenges, speakers noted that it was imperative to continue to promote multilateralism, especially by strengthening the central role of the United Nations. It was indispensable for Member States to develop common perceptions and agreed approaches to address existing, new and emerging threats as well as the root causes of conflict within a robust multilateral framework. A number of speakers highlighted the situation in Middle East including the Question of Palestine and called for a resolution to the long-standing conflict.

Some speakers contended that the use of coercive measures, unilateral sanctions, and unauthorized military interventions, even when supposedly aimed at protecting civilians, had created more problems than solutions. A new multipolar world order therefore should usher in a new era of cooperation for peace and development, speakers noted.

Some speakers noted that Security Council imposed sanctions remained an issue of serious concern. They underlined that in accordance with the UN Charter, sanctions should be considered to be imposed only after all means of peaceful settlements of disputes under Chapter VI of the Charter had been exhausted and a thorough consideration undertaken of the short-term and long term effects of such sanctions.

Speakers reaffirmed to uphold their commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and to continue their efforts in contributing to the international peace and security.

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