

Statement
by
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At

The Security Council Open Debate

On
Prevention of Armed Conflicts
20 June 2001

Open Debate : Prevention of Armed Conflicts

Honourable Minister,

It is a great honour to have you preside over our open debate to-day on Prevention of Armed Conflicts which is a subject of highest concern to us all in the United Nations. We extend a warm welcome to you. We also thank Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, for providing us with a very comprehensive and highly imaginative report on the subject. The report not only addresses the subject in a very analytical way but more importantly makes a number of recommendations which merit serious consideration both by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr President,

The Secretary-General has made the following extremely important assertions at the very outset of his report:

- (i) there is need to move the United Nations from culture of reaction to a culture of prevention;
- (ii) We must move the rhetoric of prevention now to the full implementation stage.

My delegation concurs fully with these assertions. The nature and characteristics of conflicts have changed over the years since the United Nations was founded over half a century ago. Conflicts in our times are largely within States rather than between States and these have to

be dealt differently from the ways conflicts between States are addressed under the United Nations Charter.

Mr President,

We were privileged to form part of the recent Security Council Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region as well as the Mission to Kosovo last week. We had the opportunity to have a closer look at the conflicts which afflict these areas and we have come back convinced more than ever before that these conflicts were avoidable with timely action at the national level with support of the international community. We believe that the same is true in respect of most civil conflicts. We share the view of the Secretary-General that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with the national governments.

Let us see what are the root causes of civil conflicts. In our view, the seeds of civil strife can invariably be found in places where governments lack legitimacy, governance is weak or unrepresentative, irrational values such as fundamentalism, racism, tribalism, ethnic discrimination, violation of human rights and social injustices are practiced officially and unofficially. These are matters which concern the national governments themselves and the international community can reasonably expect responsible governments to address such issues internally in a manner that has the general support of their peoples.

The seeds of conflict also lie in poverty, under-development and conditions of economic and social inequalities. These problems are normally difficult to deal with at the national level alone and international and United Nations support are crucial in terms of resources and know-how needed for development of economic and social infrastructures that help alleviate the problem of unemployment. We must not forget that underdevelopment tends to become the breeding ground for social frustration which culminates into armed struggles and uncontrolled violence.

Mr President,

I shall now make some observations on the recommendations of the Secretary-General on prevention of conflicts.

Early Warning Systems

Mr President,

The Secretary-General has referred on a number of occasions in his report about the various possibilities of obtaining early warning information from UN agencies. While the collection of such information are no doubt helpful, it is equally important that proper strategies be developed within the United Nations system with a view to addressing the issue at its embryonic stage to avoid indiscriminate violence to occur prior to any action being taken by the United Nations.

Preventive Deployment Operation

In this regard we welcome the proposal of the Secretary-General in favour of a United Nations preventive deployment operation, as a symbol of the international community's interest and as a source of leverage to promote peace and stability. Such a deployment, as the Secretary-General suggests, may make a crucial contribution as opposed to the traditional peacekeeping mission which is not present when the conflict erupts and as such cannot save lives in the initial stages of an armed conflict and promote stability. It is only through comprehensive and coherent conflict prevention strategies that the greatest potentials for promoting peace can be achieved and a suitable environment for sustainable development can be created.

Fact-Finding Missions

Mr President,

As part of the Secretary-General's strategy to prevent armed conflicts, my delegation fully subscribes to the idea of fielding fact-finding missions such as the Inter-Agency Mission to West Africa which visited several countries in Africa recently. The report of the Mission provides an integrated approach to the political, economic, social and humanitarian problems existing in the countries visited. It is encouraging to note that the Mission has come up with concrete recommendations to address the problems faced by the countries of the region in a comprehensive manner. Such Missions should be encouraged to visit regions affected by underdevelopment where the potentials for armed conflicts to occur remain high.

Role of ECOSOC in Conflict Prevention

Mr President,

As an integrated approach which is aimed at achieving sustainable peace and preventing armed conflicts, we fully concur with the Secretary-General, that a future high-level segment of ECOSOC's annual meeting should be devoted to the question of addressing root causes of conflict and the role of development in promoting long-term conflict prevention. More involvement of the ECOSOC in areas related to the elimination of the root causes of conflict should be encouraged. The assessment mission of the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti provided first-hand information on the efforts undertaken to address the core issues which could assist in establishing lasting peace in Haiti.

Role of Regional Organizations

Mr President,

The role of regional organizations in conflict prevention has been repeated on several occasions in this Chamber. We commend the positive role played by regional and sub regional organizations such as the OAU, ECOWAS and SADC in Africa in their efforts to prevent armed conflicts. The early warning stations established by ECOWAS in West Africa provides an excellent example of the determination of the sub-regional organization to address the issue of armed conflicts at the earliest stages of their occurrence. More resources, both technical and material, should be made available to regional organizations in their endeavour to prevent armed

conflict. The moratorium on arms imposed by ECOWAS also serves another example of their efforts to curb armed conflicts in Africa.

Curbing The Proliferation of Small Arms

Mr President,

It is undeniable that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been, over the past decade, a major cause of armed conflicts in various conflict prone regions. Measures to prevent the misuse and illicit transfers of small arms will inevitably contribute to the prevention of conflicts. Disarmament should be an on-going process particularly in conflict prone societies. We look forward to the adoption of a comprehensive Programme of Action to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons during the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in July. My delegation also fully supports programmes such as “weapons for development” which are aimed at the retrieval and collection of illegal weapons in exchange of community-based development incentives. These programmes have been successful in some regions and should be encouraged on a wider scale.

Role of The Security Council

Mr President,

As regards the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts, the Secretary-General reminds the Council that according to Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter the Security Council may investigate any dispute or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute. The Secretary-General also draws attention to the fact that the Security Council normally becomes involved only when violence has already occurred on a large scale. It is time that the Security Council pays attention to the comments of the Secretary-General and dedicates itself to playing a more constructive role in the prevention of armed conflicts. In this regard we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to submit periodic regional or sub-regional reports to the Security Council on threats to international peace and security.

Role of the Secretary-General

Mr President,

My delegation commends the Secretary-General for the important role he plays through “*quiet diplomacy*” and the use of his good offices in the prevention of armed conflicts. There is no doubt that he has achieved very positive results so far. My delegation encourages him in his efforts and supports his actions for the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts wherever they occur.

Mr President,

Finally, my delegation fully supports the ten principles laid down in the Secretary-General's report which are aimed in intensifying the efforts of the United Nations to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. My delegation, however, wishes to highlight the following principle and I quote "Conflict prevention and sustainable and equitable development are mutually re-enforcing activities. An investment in national and international efforts for conflict prevention must be seen as a simultaneous investment in sustainable development, since the latter can best take place in an environment of sustainable peace". This principle, Mr President, according to my delegation, remains the core of our efforts in the prevention of conflicts.

I thank you.