



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

20 May 2016

Excellency,

It is my pleasure to enclose herewith the outcome document from the High-Level Thematic Debate entitled “A World of Risks – A New Commitment for Peace”, which I organized on 10 and 11 May 2016. The outcome document, which I am pleased to share with the membership for further consideration, contains my conclusions and observations from this well-attended event, including my intention as a concrete follow-up to the event to invite the Secretary-General to brief Member States on the current state of implementation of the pertinent recommendations outlined in the recent peace and security reviews and relevant resolutions, details of which will be announced in due course.

I take this opportunity to again express my sincere gratitude to all who participated in the High-Level Thematic Debate as well as the preparatory process.

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

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mogens Lykketoft', written in a cursive style.

Mogens Lykketoft

To all Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



HIGH LEVEL THEMATIC DEBATE

IN A WORLD OF RISKS:

A NEW COMMITMENT FOR PEACE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY | NEW YORK | 10 - 11 MAY 2016

19 May 2016

Conclusions and Observations
by the President of the seventieth session of the UN General Assembly

On 10 and 11 May 2016, members of the General Assembly – many at the level of Foreign Minister – gathered together with the chairs of the most recent peace and security reviews, a wide range of active or retired senior officials of the United Nations, representatives from academia, civil society representatives and other stakeholders for a strategic reflection on contemporary threats and challenges to international peace and security. We looked at commonalities and interlinkages between policy areas, including the Sustainable Development Goals and we discussed ways to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the UN in this area at a time when the Organization is considering who – as the next Secretary-General – will lead it in this and other equally vital tasks.

From two days of lively and spontaneous debate, I have drawn up a few chief conclusions and observations that I wish to share with the membership for further consideration.

Conclusions:

- An invitation to member states committed to leading by example, to continue to champion efficient and effective mandate implementation, fostering policy and normative developments where needed, particularly to advance the primacy of conflict prevention, to ensure that UN peace operations are adequately equipped and financed, and to ensure engagement with civil society and the private sector;
- An encouragement to those member states to consider organising an event on the same matter in the margins of the General Debate in September 2016, complementing other relevant initiatives, including those aimed at fostering the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to address large movements of refugees and migrants;
- A recommendation to members to further reflect on tools and means for the Organization and the Secretariat to respond in meaningful ways to the threat of terrorism and violent extremism in various contexts where the UN is confronted with this increasingly complex phenomenon, particularly where peace operations are deployed;
- An invitation to the Secretary-General to brief the membership on the current state of implementation of the pertinent recommendations outlined in the recent peace and

security reviews and relevant resolutions (peace operations, peacebuilding, women, peace and security);

- A recommendation to the next Secretary-General to outline his / her vision of the new realities of the peace and security landscape and proposals to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the UN in this field. This could include benchmarks regarding the implementation of recommendations outlined in the peace and security reviews and relevant resolutions – not least those review recommendations directed to the next Secretary-General, as well as further proposals to adapt the UN peace and security instruments to a changing context.

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Observations:

1. Over two days of general debate and interactive sessions – reflecting also contributions from more than a dozen regional workshops and building on on-going and recently concluded intergovernmental negotiation processes (peacebuilding, C34,– amongst others) – the high-level thematic debate fostered rich and extensive exchanges. These extended from the importance of recognizing significant achievements when key actors and member states cooperate and coordinate to acknowledging shortcomings and standstill among and between member states and/or the UN system.
2. The key importance of continued attention to the matter of Security Council reform, bearing in mind the on-going inter-governmental negotiations, was evident and underlined throughout.
3. Likewise, it was recognized that the next Secretary-General has a window of opportunity early in his or her term to seek and achieve much needed efficiency gains and streamlining while addressing resolutely well-identified institutional and structural shortcomings of the Organization.
4. The deliberations highlighted a number of key issues that – taken together – echo a shortlist of widely shared aspirations and concerns for member states, including that today's threats and growing geopolitical tensions have resulted in multiple challenges for the Organization.
5. The lack of adequate tools and capacity to protect civilians in conflict, to respond effectively to new forms of complex conflicts - especially in the Middle East; to address international terrorism, as well as other challenges with a clear security dimension such as large-scale epidemics, climate change and large displacement of populations, has undermined trust in the Organization's ability to fully deliver on its role in maintaining peace.
6. These are challenges that call for responsible leadership and accountability at multiple levels – a call that numerous participants made during the debate. It is crucial that member states live up to their obligations to refrain from the use of force or the threat of the use of force in international relations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law.
7. The United Nations plays – and should continue to play – a crucial role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It was a consistent message from participants

that on the occasion of its seventieth anniversary, it is essential that we collectively reaffirm our commitment to the Charter, stress our commitment to work through the United Nations to meet common challenges, and enhance the ability of the Organization to confront evolving threats and challenges to peace and security. This involves firm commitments to sustaining peace – also in the longer term – including making available the financial resources to doing so.

8. Concrete action is required to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to confront those threats and challenges. This will require that the United Nations continually emphasize its diplomatic and preventive functions, seek new partnerships at political and operational level, and explore effective mechanisms for mandate implementation. In the light of recent allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by the very UN forces that are deployed to protect civilians, it is of utmost urgency – and numerous contributors made this point – to restore the credibility, reputation as well as performance and accountability of UN missions and operations on the ground. This also requires that member states provide the needed capacities and capabilities to enable effective mandate implementation.

9. The recent reviews of UN peace operations, the peacebuilding architecture, and women's contributions to peace and security, among others, were all timely and widely welcomed by participants. Member states would be expected to lead by example and demonstrate their sustained engagement in support of those reviews. They will need to continue to champion the reviews' recommendations and help ensure that constraints and challenges are turned into opportunities for the United Nations. The membership and the Secretary-General should continue to be seized of the implementation of the recommendations and to improve the Organization in order to be maximally effective and efficient, including at UN Headquarters.

10. The next Secretary-General in particular should continue to emphasize the need to sustain peace across the whole spectrum from prevention to recovery, as well as the primacy of the political framework in the search for peace. S/he will also need to appoint special representatives of the highest integrity and diplomatic skill to lead peace efforts, continue to address gender issues, and promote the role of women in peace and security, both in policy and in leadership positions, and ensure the Security Council and members' support to peace efforts.

11. Throughout the debate, it was repeatedly stressed that renewed attention to upstream prevention as part of sustaining peace requires effective strategic analysis. It will also require tightening the range of tools available – including a feed-back loop from planning and analysis through implementation, monitoring and evaluation to adaption – as well as the evidence of which preventative approaches work. In addition, fragmentation should be addressed including by enhancing the Peacebuilding Commission's role as a bridge between the Assembly and the Council as well as by debating with member states the spectrum of operations and functions that are needed to suit different circumstances on the ground and the complementary roles of the three pillars of the UN system in prevention.

12. Be it through UN managed missions and operations, efforts pursued in cooperation with regional organizations, or multi-national actions authorized by the Security Council, the search for conflict resolution must be grounded in an overall political framework.

13. The emphasis on a political framework is also essential in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. While the UN is not currently structured or equipped to counter terrorist entities when encountered in mission environments, it is likely that more and more conflicts will contain an element of terrorist threat or host a terrorist-affiliated organization. It

will therefore be of utmost importance that the Secretary-General and member states continue to deliberate about how, in concrete ways, the UN could effectively contribute to the international coordination, prevention and response to terrorism and violent extremism and about the capacities and doctrines required for the UN to provide an effective response – in addition to existing frameworks and policies, including sanctions.

14. Ensuring that peace operations are in sync with today's demands and expectations requires placing people at the heart of their engagement. Many interventions during the two days of debate made clear that civilians are the main stakeholders of peace operations, with the most to gain from their successes and the most to lose from their failures. Communities should be front and center in decision-making. Placing people at the center means also that peace operations are accountable to the people they are meant to serve.

15. For such people-centered approaches to become a reality, a fundamental transformation in practice and culture is needed – one that will address the lack of a clear and effective interplay between diplomatic, security and developmental efforts both within the Secretariat and with agencies, funds and programs, and international financial institutions. Due attention must be paid to establishing sound budgetary and management mechanisms for context-specific and local approaches to analysis, planning and monitoring for prevention, protection, resilience and peacebuilding.

16. While numerous participants underlined the need to achieve greater cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, crucial challenges such as mobilizing predictable funding and adopting clearer lines of responsibility needed to be addressed urgently in order to make subsidiarity and partnerships more effective and strategic.

17. Member states and the UN system need to acknowledge the increasing contributions of civil society and the private sector to protection, peace efforts and peacebuilding undertakings and to develop more long-term and effective ways to partner with these stakeholders in ways consistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

18. The full range of the Sustainable Development Goals is an essential corollary to efforts in pursuit of peace and security. Preventing the next wave of conflict will require innovation in supporting member states' efforts to solidify their own work on inclusive political institutions, on strengthening the rule of law and on inclusive justice.

19. Large-scale displacement may be a consequence of instability or feed into new or existing tensions. Properly responding to these flows in the longer term will require focus on addressing the underlying root causes, whether it is conflict, economic hardship, climate change, political exclusion or human rights violations. It will also require a constructive sense of global partnership to both realize the benefits and manage the costs associated with migration and refugee flows.

20. All three recent reviews contain practical recommendations on organizational and structural changes as well as administrative and financial issues that may be implemented either in the short or longer term to help achieve all those objectives. The next Secretary-General will have a special responsibility to follow up with member states, fostering consensus, and seeking both long-term, sustained commitment and support to targeted policies and actions.