

Security Council Open Debate on Preventive Diplomacy Tools: Prospects and Challenges in Africa
Friday, 16th July 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador McNee, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations

I should like to join others in thanking you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Nigeria for having convened this important debate.

Preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention have been issues of increasing priority for the Council over the past two decades. This makes good sense, because the financial and human costs of trying to quell violent conflicts far outstrip those associated with preventing their escalation.

While the international community has made progress in managing conflict, it continues to struggle to prevent conflict. Africa is increasingly demonstrating clear leadership on peace and security challenges on the continent, including preventing political crises. The African Union (AU) was the first to deploy peacekeeping missions in Burundi, the Sudan, Somalia and the Comoros. It has also consistently intervened, in collaboration with the regional economic communities and with the help of African leaders, in the mediation and resolution of political crises, such as in Madagascar, Guinea and Niger.

The AU's Peace and Security Architecture, along with the complementary mechanisms in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other local and regional approaches to preventive diplomacy, including civil society initiatives, show great promise for stopping violent conflicts before they spiral out of control.

In our view, the Council must continue to support those efforts and fulfil its own responsibility for preventive diplomacy. In a 2009 presidential statement (S/PRST/2009/8), the Council declared its intention to remain engaged in all stages of the conflict cycle, including in support of mediation as an important means for the pacific settlement of disputes wherever possible before they evolve into violence. Canada believes that three areas in particular deserve the Council's attention: preventive action, proactive action and integrated and coherent action.

First, preventive action, in particular preventive diplomacy, requires advanced warning that there is a risk of violence and knowledge about the root causes and nature of a potential conflict. Perhaps most importantly, it requires translation of the available information into concrete analysis and timely action.

What the international community truly lacks is a consistent means of bridging analysis and policy — of synthesizing data into effective analysis and rapidly linking early warning analysis with effective policy direction. The Security Council has sometimes filled this niche, but it could improve its contribution to preventive diplomacy by increasing its attention to the relationship between analysis and policy direction. Secondly, Canada calls on the Security Council to be more proactive. In his report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1625 (2005) (S/2008/18), the Secretary-General outlined a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention. Canada fully endorses the examples of proactive action by the Council cited in the report, including the deployment of United Nations missions with political mandates to conduct mediation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities.

The Council is also increasingly using targeted sanctions as a proactive measure to deter parties from choosing violence to resolve conflicts. The Council must use all of these powerful tools more proactively, consistently and, we would suggest, with greater conviction.

Thirdly, Canada is pleased to note recent marked improvements in the United Nations system with regard to integrated coherent action. Canada welcomes the joint strategy on gender equality and mediation of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), as well as the efforts of the Secretary-General and Member States to realize the full and influential participation of women in peace processes.

Canada also recognizes the importance of the collaboration between the DPA and the United Nations Development Programme to deploy peace and development advisers, as well as the positive role of the Mediation Support Unit in working with United Nations country teams. Once a situation has become explosive, the United Nations system will be able to achieve its full potential in the area of preventive diplomacy only by using all its resources through a concerted action.

Regional and subregional capacities, in particular of the African Union and other African organizations, must be strengthened. Increased capacity to break the links among terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime is particularly critical, as well as capacity to support the rule of law and strengthened mediation capacities.

Canada is committed to supporting global peace and security. Leaders at the recent summit of the Group of Eight (G8) endorsed the Muskoka Declaration. Canada also invited African leaders to the Summit to discuss not only development, but also issues related to peace and security.

The Muskoka Declaration outlines a set of three interrelated initiatives aimed at strengthening civilian security systems, in particular civilian reinforcements for stabilization, peacebuilding and rule of law actions; strengthening maritime security capacity; and international police peace operations. These three G8 initiatives aim to reduce conflict-related instability, protect civilians during armed conflict, counter terrorism, combat piracy and transnational crime and help establish an enabling environment for growth, investment and democratic development. Thus they are intended to promote peace and security, while recognizing that solutions to problems of the African continent are best found in Africa itself.