

Security Council Open Debate on the Cooperation Between the UN and Regional and Subregional Organizations, August 6th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Quinlan, Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations.

I thank the President for Argentina's initiative in convening today's important debate and for her presence here today. I also thank the Secretary-General and today's briefers and welcome Ambassador Power.

To understand the importance of the partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, we need only look to situations currently on the Council's agenda — Somalia, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — all of which involve essential cooperation between the United Nations and such organizations.

From Australia's experience in our own region — the Asia-Pacific — we understand implicitly the comparative advantage that regional organizations can bring to conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and we fully subscribe to the complementarity of the roles that regional organizations and the United Nations play in addressing threats to peace and security. In 2011, we saw the successful response on the part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to tensions on the Thailand-Cambodia border, a commendable regional approach designed to de-escalate a potentially serious dispute. Last month, we in Pacific celebrated the tenth anniversary of the successful regional assistance mission to Solomon Islands, to which each of the 16 members of the Pacific Islands Forum contributed and which has been decisive in the recovery of Solomon Islands from conflict.

The role of regional organizations was of course set out 68 years ago in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, but they are playing an increasingly instrumental role in a much more complex environment and have enhanced their engagement with the United Nations by necessity. We have seen this most clearly with the African Union (AU) and African subregional organizations. The United Nations retains primacy, but, as Ambassador Tekeda Alemu said this morning, speaking for the AU, the United Nations needs a strong AU and the AU needs a strong United Nations. The trajectory of cooperation will only continue.

I would like to briefly focus on three issues that we believe are central to this partnership.

First is the need for respective roles to be based on comparative advantages that are distinct and understood. The Council will have its most fruitful engagement with organizations that have the mandate and capacity to work on international peace and security issues. For example, as the Pacific responded to the crisis in Solomon Islands, the fact that the Pacific Islands Forum already had in place the Biketawa Declaration of 2000, which set out a clear framework for a collective response to regional crises, was instrumental.

The comparative advantages of regional and subregional organizations are clear, and others have already mentioned them this morning. They include deeper knowledge of context, cultural understanding, an inherent political interest in staying the course, and geographic proximity. These factors all contributed to success in Solomon Islands.

The benefit of playing to comparative advantage is clearly applicable to some current major challenges. In Somalia, the AU has a comparative advantage in peace operations, while the United Nations, through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, brings critical skills to post-conflict stabilization and governance. In the Sudans, the AU plays a central mediation role, seeking to de-escalate tensions and keeping the parties talking, which the United Nations peacekeeping operations support in various ways. The important point is that each organization plays to its relative

strengths.

The second area to focus on is in strengthening dialogue, exchange and capacity-building. This is obviously vital to enhancing coordination and ensuring that organizations at all levels benefit from best practices. The United Nations has extensive experience in peacekeeping best practices; as these evolve, they should be conveyed to relevant regional organizations. Again, the United Nations dialogue, exchange and capacity-building are most structured and advanced with the AU as its own architecture has evolved to meet the peace and security challenges on the continent. This cooperation can point us to practices that may be relevant to other regional organizations — recognizing, of course, that one size does not fit all. This exchange must be a two-way street; there is much the United Nations can learn from regional and subregional organizations.

The third area is partnerships on thematic, human rights and humanitarian issues. The Council has recognized the key role regional and subregional organizations play in affirming the role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and humanitarian response; ensuring the protection of children affected by armed conflict; and ensuring that the protection of civilians is central to peacekeeping efforts. The presidential statement adopted today (S/PRST/2013/12) embraces, as it must, close cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations on these three thematic issues.

We also welcome the Council's recognition in the statement that regional organizations have a crucial role in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. This is an issue on which many regions have pressed for collective action. It is important to see the Council encouraging, in return, regional organizations to strengthen their collective response.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is, as we know, complex and evolving. There will be ongoing challenges. In his Supplement to An Agenda for Peace 20 years ago, Boutros Boutros-Ghali recognized that the political, operational and financial aspects of cooperation “gives rise to questions of some delicacy” (*S/1995/1, para. 86 (d)*). That is usually the case, but it must never, ever deter us.

Resourcing is one such issue. When the Council authorizes regional organizations to undertake peacekeeping operations, we must do all we can to ensure that they are appropriately resourced for the jobs we are asking them to do. The Council must continue to develop the framework to ensure that the United Nations partnerships with regional organisations are effective, and we believe that the presidential statement adopted today is an important contribution in that regard.

In concluding, I would like to thank the regional and subregional organizations, including those represented here, for their growing and valuable work towards international peace and security and our shared goals, as enunciated in the United Nations Charter. As the Secretary-General said this morning, it is the combined value of our efforts that can be decisive.