

Security Council Open Debate on Preventative Diplomacy
22nd of September, 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr. Westerwelle, Representative of Germany

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2011/552) and his instructive briefing today. Let me make three points.

First, it falls squarely within the responsibility of the Security Council to prevent conflicts from occurring wherever possible. In fact, it is one of its central tasks. Conflict prevention is one of the chief obligations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. It is the most efficient and cost-effective way of promoting international peace and security. Effective conflict prevention can avoid loss of life, population displacements and economic chaos. Working on improving prevention is therefore both a humanitarian and a strategic necessity. Over the years, the Security Council has considerably improved its tools to shoulder that responsibility. Agreeing on the right instrument from the broad spectrum available is a crucial task and challenge for the Council.

At this point, allow me to add some remarks on the current situation in Syria. Every day, peaceful demonstrators are brutally repressed and innocent civilians are killed. This has to stop. The Council should send a strong and urgent message to the leadership in Damascus in order to prevent the continued senseless killing of people.

In our view, early warning is of key importance to prevent escalation. We welcome the fact that the Security Council has been increasingly prepared to tackle new threats and situations of incipient conflict. That is the way forward.

Secondly, in addition to operational improvements, we also need a long-term structural perspective. Part of the Security Council's responsibility for conflict prevention is the need to look at long-term threats to global security. To take one example, it is our conviction that understanding the implications of climate change for international peace and security will be essential to prevent escalation in many future crises.

Aside from facing these new threats, the best prevention of conflicts remains respect for human rights and economic development. There can be true peace, sustainable development and shared prosperity only when human rights are respected. A credible fight against impunity can also have a preventive effect.

Thirdly, the Security Council cannot do this alone. As stated in the Charter, the Security Council shall encourage pacific settlement of disputes also through regional arrangements. There has been a notable growth in mediation efforts by regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the African Union, the League of Arab States and the European Union. Regional expertise needs to be heard when dealing with conflicts in a particular region. Germany has therefore always underscored the central importance of the Arab League's stance on the developments in its region over the last half-year.

The European Union has assumed its regional and global responsibilities. The European Union actively participates in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It has developed its own instruments for enhancing stability and consolidating peace, including crisis-management missions and diplomatic initiatives. It also supports the African Union and the United Nations in their efforts to bring peace. Cooperation between the United Nations and

regional organizations will be key to further improving capacities and tools to deal with prevention. The civilian capacities review also aims at making better use of existing mediation capacities in Member States.

None of these efforts can replace direct talks among the actors involved. We cannot make peace in their place, but we can encourage the forces of reason, reconciliation and compromise. Mediation can be a very useful tool in this regard. Establishing a culture of prevention is a question of political will, first and foremost that of parties directly affected. The international community has to lend its support wherever possible. Developing a culture of prevention is also a question of the political participation of those affected, in particular women. Women should be at the core of prevention and sustaining peace.

We fully support the conclusions drawn by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2011/552), notably with a view to building integrated partnerships on all levels and improving early warning mechanisms. We also need to adopt a long-term perspective regarding new challenges to peace and security. I conclude by expressing my delegation's support for the draft presidential statement to be adopted today.