

Security Council Open Debate on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security, Security Sector Reform: Challenges and Opportunities, April 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. McLay Permanent Mission of the New Zealand to the United Nations.

New Zealand thanks Nigeria for its continued leadership on the issue of security sector reform (SSR), a commitment that is all the more important because most Council-mandated SSR activities take place on the African continent. Nigeria's perspective—indeed, the experience of all African States—must therefore be prominent in any SSR setting.

New Zealand welcomes today's proposed adoption of the first-ever stand-alone draft resolution on SSR. The draft resolution underlines the considerable progress we have made since the Council's first open debate on the issue in 2007 (see S/PV.5632). It is progress that has required acknowledgment of the nature and significance of the SSR challenge; it is progress that has required development of a more comprehensive, coherent and coordinated normative framework; and it is progress that has required practical operational tools for the United Nations effective work in that area. The engagement of local actors, the importance of close cooperation with regional organizations, the need for the involvement of all stakeholders, including women, and the key, underpinning need for a rule of law environment are all rightly stressed in today's draft resolution.

SSR is a long-term process — hence the progress that the draft resolution records — one that requires both concerted commitment from national authorities and sustained engagement by international partners. The Security Council has a critical role to play in laying the foundations for those efforts; but other bilateral and United Nations partners also play very important roles. It is therefore vital that the Council is able to coordinate more effectively with those actors. SSR extends beyond peacekeeping, and it must be considered across the entire peacebuilding continuum. SSR challenges occur in a wide variety of settings, from fragile and conflict-affected States with ineffective security sectors, through to States emerging from conflict and seeking United Nations support for the next phase of their development. However, considerable scope still remains for the Council to coordinate more effectively with, and to learn from, regional and United Nations country team partners in order to ensure that assistance is tailored to specific national needs and realities, and that gains can be sustained beyond the life of a given mission. The Peacebuilding Commission, with its country-specific configurations, has particular competence in that regard, so the Council needs to find new and better ways of working in close partnership with the Commission.

SSR is often a complex, politically charged process that entails significant risk; however, in some situations, it can represent the single most important investment that international partners can make in a country's future. New Zealand is an active contributor to SSR, particularly in the justice sector, both bilaterally and through United Nations missions. That experience has taught us valuable lessons about managing the difficult transition from providing SSR programmes through peacekeeping missions to longer-term assistance through bilateral support, as was the case with our policing assistance to Timor-Leste after the withdrawal of the United Nations mission in 2012.

For us, that Timor-Leste experience also underscored the importance of national ownership as a prerequisite for successful SSR. Indeed, the United Nations discussions on SSR rightly acknowledge that the success of SSR processes depends on the sustained political will of the country concerned. New Zealand therefore agrees with Egypt that a core objective must be to assist national political leadership of SSR, and bringing international technical assistance to the national, regional and subregional level, where local actors can apply it to their unique local situation. New Zealand therefore joins Turkey and Egypt in urging that the Council avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, it should focus on enabling national authorities to undertake their own, inclusive SSR processes.

Recent history demonstrates that no one has a monopoly of wisdom on managing SSR processes. Particularly, we have learned that what works at one time, in one place, will not always work at a later time.

If SSR fails and there is a return to violence, then the loss of investment by the host country and by the wider international community can be huge. We must all therefore approach the SSR challenge openly and inclusively, while constantly reviewing whether the process is working and adapting our efforts accordingly.

With that commitment, and working with those who have practical, on-the-ground regional experience, we can certainly make the progress on security sector reform that is recorded in today's draft resolution.