

Security Council Open Debate on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security: War, its lessons, and the search for a permanent peace, 29th January 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Naanda, Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations

Once again, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January 2014, and further wish to thank you for organizing this very important debate, considering that heinous atrocities are committed on a daily basis throughout the world, posing a threat to the very existence of the social democratic order that we as the international community have developed over the years, a debate that seeks to draw lessons from an understanding of war in the quest to achieve lasting and sustainable peace.

I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman for his informative briefing on the role of the United Nations in promoting sustainable peace, and in particular the lessons learned and the challenges that remain in post-conflict situations.

The Namibian nation was founded in 1990, after a bitter liberation struggle during which our people were subjected to numerous massacres. As such, our history is one replete with systematic human rights abuses. We achieved our independence with the active support and engagement of the international community. We are proud to be known as one of the success stories of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives. Article 96 of the Namibian Constitution commits the country and its people to the promotion of international peace and security. For that reason, Namibia participates in various peacekeeping missions throughout the world as mandated by the Council.

As many delegations that have already spoken have said, there is universal recognition that the United Nations has a major role to play not only in the immediate aftermath of the resolution of conflicts but also in conceiving and conducting long-term post-conflict initiatives. Those have included demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, thereby strengthening judicial systems and, as in our own case, the training of civil servants to provide services during the transitional period and the post-conflict era. Therefore, beyond conflict resolution and stabilization, the path must be charted for democracy, development and the strengthening of the rule of law.

We are of the opinion that more attention should be given to the United Nations role in post-conflict reconciliation. We therefore welcome the establishment of institutions such as the Peacebuilding Commission, which can go a long way to addressing the challenges that are associated with national reconciliation due to the diversity of the actors. In that regard, we wish to caution that there is no single model that is applicable to reconciliation at the national level. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach to national reconciliation is counter-productive. What works in one situation may not be applicable to another given the national and, to a certain extent regional, the dynamics of a particular situation. In Namibia, for example, at our independence we adopted a policy of national reconciliation that gave blanket amnesties to both sides. That policy has served us well, and the country enjoys peace, stability and democracy.

Cognizant of the contemporary rhetoric that there can be no real peace without justice, the focus of reconciliation shifts to victims and retributive justice. We may also have to agree that, in the uncompromising pursuit of higher standards of justice, a peace that is delicate may not be sustainable. That is especially our experience in the southern African region, but also in many other parts of the African continent. The challenge for us has been the reintegration of former combatants into mainstream society while at the same time bringing a sense of justice to the victims and defending the principles of the rule of law without provoking a destabilizing backlash, especially in situations where political stability has been fragile. Our experience has therefore been one where

compromises have had to be made and restorative justice balanced with retributive justice as well as the granting of amnesties.

The role of women in conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding is of great importance. Therefore, Namibia fully supports the inclusion of women in security systems such as the armed forces, the police and peacekeeping operations and special political missions in support of various United Nations resolutions that recognize that important role. We remain convinced that, for the achievement of a comprehensive and sustainable peace, all efforts should be made to ensure the participation and contribution of women in peace negotiations and during the execution of post-conflict strategies and programmes.

We furthermore welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of the Arms Trade Treaty, the first international legal instrument that explicitly includes a gender criterion in arms transfers if there is a possibility that such transfers would be used to commit violence against women and children.

In conclusion, I should like to recognize the important institutional partnership between the Council and regional and subregional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security. In Africa, for example, we have adopted a zero tolerance policy for unconstitutional changes of Government. Coup leaders are isolated and their countries are immediately suspended from the African Union.

In the same vein, Africa has provided a clear definition of an unconstitutional change of Government, which includes the manipulation of electoral laws. In that regard, we urge the United Nations to work towards adopting the same principle. At the subregional level the Southern African Development Community has scrupulously observed that principle with respect to Madagascar.

While the policy of opposing the unconstitutional change of Government has been upheld, a new form of the unconstitutional change of Government has emerged where army mutinies become part of the so-called inclusive Government, which have proved not to be sustainable. Namibia believes that if that situation is allowed to continue, the African Union principle of zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes of Government will be undermined. That trend should be discouraged and more sustainable initiatives should be explored.