

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

Statement by H.E Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa

We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely debate, which allows us to further explore ways to strengthen and consolidate preventive diplomacy. We also thank the Secretary General for his statement and for the report (S/2011/552) on which it was based.

In our view, the theme of this year's Security Council summit complements the theme of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, which is "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means". It proves that the United Nations in its entirety is focused on the primary objectives and principles of the Charter. Preventive diplomacy is anchored in the Charter of the United Nations. Article S/PV.6621 6 11-50916 33 specifically provides for the pacific settlement of disputes.

In 2005, during the world summit, world leaders reaffirmed this principle in the Millennium Declaration by stating: "We are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter" (General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 5).

Today we gather once again in this Council to recommit ourselves to the noble objective of international peace and its achievement through preventive diplomacy. In fact, the necessity for preventive diplomacy has been reaffirmed by this Council many times before. Last July, under the presidency of Nigeria, the Council acknowledged the importance of a peaceful settlement of disputes. In September last year, under the Turkish presidency, the Council at summit level stressed that "the comprehensive and coherent use of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding tools is important in creating the conditions for sustainable peace" (see S/PRST/2010/18).

It is a fact that preventive diplomacy initiatives are more cost-effective than the deployment of peacekeepers once a conflict has broken out. Thus preventive diplomacy is an effective tool at our disposal. To succeed, it requires a sustained injection of resources. This will enable the United Nations to plan and deploy in a timely manner appropriate human and financial resources in potential conflict situations.

We welcome the progress that has already been made by the United Nations through a plethora of initiatives. These include the Secretary-General's good offices, special envoys, the establishment of an early warning system, the deployment of special political missions and of the Mediation Support Unit, the deployment of country teams and regional offices, as well as other diplomatic initiatives aimed at preventing conflicts. While these fulfil a central role in conflict prevention, it is our opinion that a great deal can still be done, especially through utilizing the unique capacities and experiences that regional organizations provide. The Security Council has often stressed the importance of partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. In that regard, we appreciate the efforts undertaken by such regional organizations as the Organization of American States, the Union of South American Nations and the African Union (AU), to name but a few.

With regard to the African Union specifically, it is important to note that since its inception, in 2002, it has established and consolidated a comprehensive Peace and Security Architecture. The Architecture is based on a paradigm that recognizes preventive diplomacy, post-conflict reconstruction and development as central to eradicating conflicts on our continent. These

mechanisms that the African Union has put in place bear witness to the commitment of our continent in addressing peace and security challenges in a comprehensive manner.

The African Union has also made great strides in developing its early-warning systems that help the organization to determine which countries are likely to lapse or relapse into conflict. These mechanisms afford the organization the opportunity to avert an imminent conflict. However, for these systems to be effective, early warning should be followed by early action.

In our subregion, the Southern African Development Community continues to play a critical role in ensuring subregional peace and stability. In that context, its Organ on Politics, Defence and Security has undertaken numerous preventive efforts in quelling potential conflicts. It has also spent a great deal of energy and resources in resolving conflicts through dialogue and mediation, such as in Madagascar.

Moreover, it is essential that the efforts of both the African Union and the numerous subregional organizations across the continent working on preventive diplomacy be respected and supported by the United Nations and the international community as a whole. In fact, the Security Council has adopted several decisions in which it expresses its intention to build a strong partnership with the African Union in that regard.

However, over the past few months, we have seen that partnership falter as the African Union has been undermined in its preventive diplomatic efforts, in cases such as Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan and Libya. Especially in the case of Libya, the AU initiative to ensure a political rather than military solution to the Libyan crisis was deliberately undermined in spite of the decision set forth in resolution 1973 (2011) to support the African Union road map. Such blatant acts of disregard for regional initiatives have the potential to undermine the confidence that regional organizations have in the United Nations as an impartial and widely respected mediator in conflicts.

Although conflict prevention remains the primary responsibility of Member States, civil society also has a role to play. In addition, it remains imperative that the international community, and the United Nations in particular, provides support to local or national conflict prevention mechanisms. These efforts can be executed without negating the important principles of the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

Most important, we must bear in mind the link between development and security. Prevention will be optimized if the root causes of conflicts are addressed effectively. As the 2011 World Development Report, on conflict, security and development, reminds us, the root causes of conflict in the majority of instances are related to a lack of resources or unequal development or distribution of often scarce resources.

For the international community to address those causes effectively, strengthened and enhanced cooperation and information-sharing between the Security Council and other United Nations bodies, such as the Peacebuilding Commission, are required. Furthermore, there is an essential need for greater coherence, coordination and interaction between the various United Nations organs and other international organizations, such as the international financial institutions. Furthermore, Member States should share their experiences in building the United Nations capacity in preventive diplomacy.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution in conflict prevention diplomacy. We should be open to consider important elements that can contribute to the prevention of conflicts, including cultural orientation, local preferences and local expertise in developing strategies aimed at preventive diplomacy.

In that regard, the full and effective participation of women at all levels and stages of the prevention of conflict, as well as in all aspects of the peaceful settlement and resolution of disputes, is critical. We therefore reiterate our appreciation for the establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, as an institution that acknowledges the need to enhance the role of women in all aspects of life and in society, including preventive diplomacy.

In conclusion, South Africa supports the draft presidential statement before us, as we believe that it makes a significant contribution to our preventive diplomacy efforts and to the execution of the Council's mandate to uphold and preserve international peace and security