

## **The President:**

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

I thank the Secretary-General very much for reminding us of the achievements of the United Nations over the past 70 years, and for laying out his vision of a United Nations equipped to respond to the conflicts and instability that today affect the lives of millions. A close and proactive working relationship between the Secretary-General and the Security Council is the cornerstone of the Organization's ability to deliver lasting peace and security. We look forward to forging a strong and trusting relationship with the Secretary-General, not least to improve the United Nations capacity to take early action to prevent violent conflict.

We have discussed conflict prevention many times before in the Chamber — and I am sure many around the table will make that point — but progress has been meagre. I would like to say some words about how that needs to change.

The year 2016 exposed the urgent need for a global recommitment to multilateral solutions to conflict and to collaborative security, specifically to the prevention of conflict. The horror in Syria and Yemen, and situations such as the instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, dominate the Council's work. Can we afford an ever-growing list of crises slipping into violent conflict and needless human misery?

The United Nations humanitarian and peacekeeping instruments have come under immense pressure, with \$22.2 billion in humanitarian appeals and over 100,000 United Nations peacekeepers. Meanwhile, research shows that measures to peacefully prevent conflict cost, on average, just a tenth of post-conflict recovery efforts. Investing in prevention is not only morally right; it is the smart, economically sound and sustainable thing to do.

Prevention requires addressing the root causes of conflict and instability before they reach the front pages or the Council's agenda. It calls for inclusive nationally led processes that build strong institutions and that are supported by a whole-of-organization commitment. The sustaining peace agenda, together with the Sustainable Development Goals, provides the platform and the master plan.

At the same time, Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations — on pacific settlement of disputes — requires the parties to a dispute to seek solutions through peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation or judicial settlement. We have the

tools. What we need now is a new political consensus in support of prevention. Let me highlight some areas for priority actions that can underpin it.

The first, as the Secretary-General has said, is to make prevention a priority for the whole United Nations system: hold each entity accountable for its part in contributing and ensure that the United works closely with other international, regional and subregional actors. A good example is the current joint efforts with regard to the Gambia by the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations Regional Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

The second is to improve the capacity of the United Nations to recognize and address the root causes and drivers of conflict by working together across the

United Nations system's pillars, mandates and agencies. In that regard, we are encouraged by the steps that the Secretary-General has already taken to make the Secretariat work more efficiently.

The third is to improve system-wide analysis and welcome independent advice from the Secretary-General, including on new and emerging threats and risks, such as climate change, to improve our collective strategic planning and response. We would like the Secretary-General to tell us what we need to know, not only what we want to hear.

The fourth is that we need to harness the agency of women to create sustainable peace through inclusive processes. Experiences shared through a network of female peace mediators, which I have also initiated, confirm the importance of inclusiveness.

Finally, we need to recognize that, in the words of the Secretary-General, there can be no humanitarian solution for a political crisis. Humanitarian action can never be a substitute for political dialogue and mediation.

We should heed the Secretary-General's call for a surge in diplomacy for peace. In order to do so, Sweden commits to contributing to a Security Council that empowers the Secretary-General to take timely, decisive and effective action to resolve disputes and prevent conflicts before they begin. I hope that other Council members can join us in adopting that approach. We will do our utmost to create an atmosphere of open, respectful and honest dialogue around the Council table.

We have heard the Secretary-General's call for effective conflict prevention. We know that for him to be effective, he needs the political support of Member States. Let us resolve to put peace first.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

