

Security Council Open Meeting on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security
Thursday, 23 September 2010

Statement by Ambassador H.E. Mr. Heinz Fischer, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations

Emerging from the biggest catastrophe of the twentieth century — a war in which altogether 50 million people lost their lives — the United Nations was founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. The Security Council was entrusted with the responsibility to maintain international peace and security. Over the past 65 years the Council has made an enormous contribution to that noble goal. For those affected by armed conflict, this often is a question of life and death, of security and development and of respect for the rule of law and human rights. No continent has been spared.

While in its early years the Council had to deal primarily with inter-State conflicts, the nature of conflicts has changed significantly in recent times. Intrastate conflicts involving non-State actors, as well as transnational threats such as terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, et cetera, have created new challenges for the United Nations and the Security Council.

Peacekeeping, which as far as I know was not foreseen in the Charter of the United Nations, has developed into a particularly successful crisis management tool. Over the past decades the character of peacekeeping has changed. After monitoring ceasefires and interpositioning, peacekeepers today find themselves in the midst of conflicts and facing complex tasks and challenges.

Recognizing the importance of United Nations peacekeeping, Austria began contributing troops, police and experts to United Nations operations immediately after joining the Organization. Altogether, 90,000 Austrians in the service of peace since 1960 are proof of our unwavering commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Our willingness to assume global responsibility furthermore manifests itself in our third term as a member of the Security Council. Confronted with today's threats, we identified the protection of civilians in armed conflict as one of the key priorities. The effective protection of the civilian population is the precondition for sustainable peace, and as long as United Nations peacekeeping missions are involved, it is also a question of the credibility of the Council.

Resolution 1894 (2009) provides a solid basis for further enhancing the protection of the most vulnerable. Creating a favourable protection environment goes beyond protection from physical violence. It must be complemented by activities in the fields of the rule of law, human rights, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and the empowerment of local society. The swift implementation of resolution 1894 (2009) will therefore make an important contribution to the Council's effectiveness in this core area.

An equally important topic is the role of women in peace and security. We must seize the unique opportunity of the tenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) this October to renew our commitment and work towards the increased participation, representation and full involvement of women in preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In this context, I would like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his strong leadership and encourage him to continue to promote the cause of women.

These efforts must be accompanied by an increased protection of women and girls, especially from sexual violence. The Security Council has several times reaffirmed its role in fighting impunity for such violations. Let me also thank Uganda for its commitment to further advance the implementation of this landmark resolution during its presidency of the Council in the month of October.

The systematic consideration of topics like the protection of civilians in armed conflict, children and armed conflict or woman, peace and security demonstrates the ability of the Council to respond effectively to today's challenges. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding need to go hand in hand.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that prevention is the most effective and efficient way to manage conflicts. We therefore highly welcome the efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations capacity in

early warning and conflict prevention and to continue his good offices and mediation activities. As a member of the European Union, we strongly believe in the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations in this regard.

In conclusion, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on organizing this summit and preparing a presidential statement that enjoys our full support. Let me close by reiterating that the Council will exercise its role in a most effective and credible manner when the guiding principle of its actions is the rule of law — clear and foreseeable rules equally applicable to everybody.