

Impact of HIV/ AIDS on International Peace and Security

7 June 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by President Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, to participate in this meeting. It is so decided. I wish to welcome warmly the Secretary-General, the President of Nigeria, the Deputy President of South Africa and the other distinguished guests who are participating in today's meeting. Their presence is an indication of the importance of the issue to be discussed.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/341, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Gabon, Germany, Nigeria, Portugal, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I also draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/340, which contains a letter dated 6 June 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, which affects all persons without discrimination, has deprived several countries of the human resources crucial to their development. The instability and armed conflicts that are rife in Africa in particular have brought to light the impact of HIV/AIDS on international security.

It will be recalled that on 17 July 2000, the Security Council, at the initiative of the United States of America, adopted resolution 1308 (2000). Gabon, which had just ended a term on the Council, had supported its preparation. Resolution 1308 (2000) underscored the threat posed by the disease to the staff of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Conflicts expose the issue of sexual violence that some combatants use as a weapon of war and that is a compounding factor.

The debate that brings us together today is intended to consider the progress made since the adoption of resolution 1308 (2000). We must thus go further by adopting measures to protect civilian populations from such violence. The draft resolution submitted by my delegation and co-sponsored by Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Germany, Nigeria, Portugal, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America is part of that approach, and I thank the Council and those delegations for their support.

I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

As we know, starting tomorrow, the General Assembly will hold a high-level meeting commemorating the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (General Assembly resolution S-26/2). Also 10 years ago, the Security Council took an historic step in adopting resolution 1308 (2000), on the impact of HIV/AIDS on international peace and security.

It seemed to us timely for the Council to reconsider the issue in the light of the developing dynamic of the current crises and conflicts and the peacebuilding process. Here, we should commend the commitment of the United States, which enabled the Council to adopt resolution 1308 (2000).

Since then, thanks to the efforts made individually or jointly by the troop-contributing countries, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, progress has been made in training the civilian and military staff of United Nations missions prior to their deployment to peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions.

That concern is now fully taken into account in those missions. That positive development is reflected in the implementation of prevention programmes; joint actions between mission staff and the security forces and

local communities in the countries involved; a greater awareness among mission personnel of their individual and collective criminal accountability; and the establishment of codes of good conduct for mission staff and personnel on the ground.

Today's meeting offers us the opportunity to take stock of future challenges as the HIV/AIDS pandemic remains an obstacle to the development of our countries and a threat to collective security. New factors continue to influence the dynamics of crises, conflicts and peacebuilding processes. That is particularly true in sub-Saharan Africa.

Our first concern arises from the borderline and regional nature of conflicts. In almost all cases, crises unleash population movements and thereby increase the risk of spreading HIV/AIDS among displaced persons and refugees, who frequently have no access to health services during their migrations. Such risks are particularly apparent in the post-conflict phase.

For some years now, Gabon has hosted numerous refugees from conflict countries and can testify to the effects of such migratory movements on the stability and security of the host country. Indeed, sexual violence is frequently used as a weapon of war, with disastrous consequences. Given the established link between sexual violence and HIV/AIDS in conflict and post-conflict situations, civil populations — particularly women and girls — are the first to be exposed.

I should like here to make certain recommendations. In the light of the compounding factors that I have enumerated, I invite the Council to continue to consider the issue of the impact of HIV/AIDS on international peace and security.

With respect to sexual violence, I stress the importance of continuing to implement resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), given that the need to counter such violence, particularly towards women and children, is an important aspect of the processes involved in resolving conflicts and building peace. Such action allows their full involvement in these processes. To that end, it is desirable to create synergy between policies to combat HIV/AIDS and strategies to prevent sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. I take this opportunity to invite the international financial institutions, in cooperation with States, to mobilize further resources to build the capacities of national health systems in order to ensure that persons who are infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS enjoy adequate care and assistance.

On the ground, we must raise awareness of the parties to conflict regarding conduct towards civilian populations in armed conflicts that may exacerbate the spread of HIV/AIDS. It is also important to ensure the operability of the HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment component in security sector reform activities and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration mechanisms at the post-conflict stage. Finally, we must also strengthen programmes to combat HIV/AIDS in peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, and continue to ensure the effectiveness of zero tolerance measures.

We hope that the draft resolution to be adopted shortly will reflect the Council's commitment to making a complementary and decisive contribution to global efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. The human security of present and future generations will depend on our collective ability permanently to remove the threat inherent in the pandemic.

I shall now resume my functions as President of the Council. It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now. A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1983 (2011). I now invite the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to take the floor.