

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

Statement of H.E. Mr. Ondimba, President of Gabon

In a world that remains prey to conflict, preventive diplomacy is a crucial issue that inspires hope and that my country considers highly important. I therefore wish, Mr. President, to commend the positive initiative taken by your country, Lebanon, in organizing this debate. I welcome the participation of a number of eminent persons in the debate. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report (S/2011/552) and his informative contribution.

In the past two decades, the world has seen a resurgence of armed conflict, which we thought had disappeared at the end of the cold war. Those conflicts, largely intra-ethnic and sometimes both ethnic and religious in origin, caused thousands of deaths and internally displaced persons. They also caused significant material damage to the economic fabric and jeopardized hope for development. Faced with that situation, the United Nations has, since publication in 1992 of the Agenda for Peace by former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, very specifically defined its role and responsibilities in the settlement of conflict situations. That role involves both peacekeeping operations and preventive diplomacy.

At the 2005 world summit, we solemnly renewed our commitment to promote a culture of preventing armed conflict, on order to effectively take on the interdependent challenges of security and development. For that, we deemed it necessary to strengthen United Nations capacities in the prevention of armed conflict. For its part, the Security Council, under the terms of resolution 1625 (2005), emphasized the need to adopt a comprehensive strategy on prevention of armed conflict that would take into account their root causes. From that perspective, we had to strengthen and develop strategic partnerships, to ensure the development of prevention mechanisms and allocation of resources to preventive diplomacy.

However, we must do even more. Our collective security requires a greater mobilization of our common efforts. In that regard it is more necessary than ever to bolster already existing partnerships in the area of conflict prevention. It seems encouraging to us that the United Nations has considered this imperative in recent decades.

Here we welcome the increasingly frequent dispatch of mediators, emissaries and joint United Nations-African Union peace missions, as was the case for the Sudan. That type of partnership, as called for under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, merits further development. In fact, a good understanding of conditions on the ground where regional arrangements operate is an indispensable asset for the success of actions conducted in the framework of preventive diplomacy. We also believe that the United Nations and regional organizations could widely exploit traditional mechanisms for conflict prevention. We would also benefit from greater involvement of civil society and especially women's organizations in the prevention and resolution of disputes.

With respect to support for regional preventative mechanisms, we urge that the United Nations, particularly through its Office to the African Union, contribute to strengthening the African architecture for the maintenance of peace, where preventative mechanisms should have pride of place. In that regard, regional organizations should be assisted in building up their early-warning systems. Such systems are important tools for conflict prevention, if only because early detection means prompt action, as was the case in the crises in Kenya and Madagascar.

To a large extent, the success of conflict prevention will also depend on making use of all the advantages that it offers and taking into consideration the specificities of each conflict situation. We

remain convinced that investing in conflict prevention — such as mediation, analysis and assessment of conflict risk — will make a significant contribution to preventing disputes from becoming armed confrontations.

The work of the Peacebuilding Commission in countries emerging from conflict also plays a role. In Central Africa we have put in place not only channels of cooperation through confidence-building measures, but also a subregional mechanism for the detection of preliminary signs of conflict, which we call the Central African Early Warning Mechanism, the headquarters of which is in my country. We will ensure that that tool establishes a true partnership with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, mostly by supporting capacity-building in conflict prevention for countries of the subregion.

The performance of our systems of preventive diplomacy must be based on enhanced human resources. Preventive diplomacy initiatives must also enjoy predictable financing if we are to maximize our chances for success. Such initiatives represent a possible future solution that is more certain and less costly than peacekeeping operations of the past.

We welcome the fact that economic and financial institutions are now grasping the connection between peace and development. It is important to strengthen partnerships with those institutions, so that they participate in a more significant way in diplomatic efforts in conflict prevention. The publication of a document by the World Bank on this issue is eloquent proof of the interest our development partners take in questions of peace and security.

To produce the desired results, our efforts at preventive diplomacy will require of the parties to a dispute a manifest will and a genuine commitment to a political solution to the dispute. International judicial arbitration is also a possibility, if the parties are willing to submit to it and to abide by its rulings, as was the case with Nigeria and Cameroon in the Bakassi case.

In conclusion, in spite of all the options we could contemplate to detect potential conflicts, any success risks being limited if particular focus is not put on the need to attack the underlying causes of conflict. Governments must, in developing their own national preventive mechanisms, have the courage to maintain an ongoing dialogue with all national stakeholders and to respect the rules of good governance. The peace, cohesion and stability of States also depend on that dialogue and respect.