

Security Council Open Debate on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security, Security Sector Reform: Challenges and Opportunities, April 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Kolga Permanent Mission of the Estonia to the United Nations.

At the outset, let me thank Nigeria for convening the Council's open debate on security sector reform and for the very comprehensive concept note (S/2014/238, annex). This is the second open debate, out of three in total, during this presidency and Estonia, as a supporter of the enhanced openness and transparency of the Council, would like to congratulate the Nigerian presidency for this effort. It is important that all of the States that are not members of the Council are given an opportunity to contribute to the discussions on issues related to the world's peace and security.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, and the Council for the draft resolution on security sector reform that is to be adopted later on. Estonia also aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU).

As it is the first time that Estonia takes the floor on this important issue, we would like to commend Slovakia's leadership in adding it to the Council's agenda. The importance of security sector reform (SSR) in the global peace and security agenda cannot be underestimated. "Security is the bedrock upon which States are built" is stated in the concept note, and we cannot agree more. Weak security institutions cannot prevent the outbreak of conflict, and in a post-conflict situation they often cannot avoid a country's relapse into chaos. Therefore, support to such reform is one of the most important tasks of the international community — not only in order to maintain peace and security in a country, but also to restore the rule of law and protect human rights. Let me make some observations in that respect.

First, one of the key factors for success is an inclusive reconstruction and stabilization process. SSR is not a purely technical exercise in reforming defence forces or law enforcement agencies; rather, it is part of a wider political process in which the lead role of national authorities is crucial.

The best guarantee for durable stability and successful reform and change is the involvement of all factions of society — religious, ethnic and social — including the political groups of the country and women and youth. If that can be achieved, a society's ownership of its future — which is another important factor of success — will be much stronger. As inclusiveness and ownership are fundamental in peacebuilding, they must be considered in peace negotiations.

Secondly, very often countries in transition or exiting a conflict need advice and encouragement. The international community has an important role to play in that regard in terms of capacity-building. I would therefore like to commend the United Nations for the steady enhancement of its peacebuilding toolbox and its special attention to SSR as a part of that. The fact that the number of references to SSR in the Council's resolutions has increased considerably and that the majority of mandates for both peacekeeping and special political missions include SSR is very welcome. We also note positively that the membership of the inter-agency Security Sector Reform Task Force has doubled in recent years. SSR has become an integral part of the United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding agenda, achieving greater prominence each year.

Thirdly, see that SSR has been genuinely linked to the rule of law. We are also happy to see that linkage mentioned in the draft resolution to be adopted today. But we do not believe that the rule of law should be considered as an end or goal in itself. SSR should be implemented in an environment where the principles of the rule of law are already applicable, in order to avoid a great risk of compromising any peacebuilding or reconstruction process. Finally, there is a lot of SSR-related knowledge available. Many Member States have taken the path of

State-building and reformed their security sector as part of that process. A number of Member States have already shared such experience and knowledge with others. That applies also to regional organizations. Experience gained in those processes is worth collecting and sharing with those in need. We believe that the United Nations should coordinate such efforts, and we commend the comprehensive approach already taken by the Secretary-General in that regard. That further enhances the expertise of the United Nations and contributes to improving the Organization's capacity to deliver.

Estonia's own record in reforming its security sector could be taken as an example of success. After the end of the Soviet occupation, our nation faced the huge task of building up a society based on principles and values different from those of the totalitarian system — a society based on democracy. That meant vigorous institution-building, adherence to good governance, strengthening the rule of law and placing the human being at the centre of development.

SSR became a genuine part of that process. Estonia was lucky to have had many friends and advisers, but real results started to emerge when we understood that the reforms were for our own good, not for the good of someone else. We can assure the Council that the notion of ownership was of the utmost importance, and that is the message that we want to reinforce today.

For the past 10 years, we have been sharing that experience with others in supporting capacity-building. Estonia has shared its expertise at the regional level in the Balkans, in the Caucasus, in the Republic of Moldova and in Ukraine. Our police and corrections experts and trainers have been a part of the respective European Union missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Step by step, we are trying to enhance the scope of our involvement and become a part of wider peacebuilding initiatives and missions. In order to share in United Nations efforts, this year, for the first time, the Estonian Government has decided to make a contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund.