

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

Statement by Ambassador H.E. Mr. William Hague, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

I begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this summit. Given the new security threats and economic constraints we face, this debate provides an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to improving the ability of the United Nations to prevent conflict, to forge sustainable peace agreements and to keep and build peace.

Instability and conflict have a devastating impact around the world. They affect the lives of millions of people and the prosperity of countries and whole regions. Twenty-two of the 34 countries furthest from achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are in the midst of, or are emerging from, violent conflict. Instability and lawlessness provide fertile ground for extremism, organized crime and terrorism — threats that reach beyond the borders of single States. Delivering national security has become a global effort and a global responsibility. Tackling conflict requires a cohesive, strategic and integrated response. In the United Kingdom, one of our first acts in the new Government was to establish a national security council to coordinate efforts across foreign affairs, defence and international development. In the United Nations we have supported reform to ensure coherence across conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, something that the Security Council, and the whole United Nations system, has collectively sought to deliver in recent years.

But the real test is whether such reforms are making a difference on the ground. We strongly commend the dedication of United Nations peacekeepers around the world. In the year ahead, major challenges will continue to place significant demands on these dedicated men and women. Peacekeepers will play a critical role supporting the referendum in the Sudan; and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo we will require still greater effort and innovation from our peacekeepers as they seek to halt attacks on civilians, and in particular on women and children.

But peacekeeping alone cannot deliver long-term stability in fragile States. Peacebuilding is critical if we are to address the underlying causes of conflict, such as corruption, ethnic hatred and marginalization. It is critical if we are to strengthen national capacity to manage political disputes peacefully. And it is critical if we are to be better at helping countries re-establish the rule of law, reform security services, shore up good governance and begin economic development. Peacebuilding needs to happen as soon as possible, in order for belligerents and the wider population to have the confidence to invest in a peace agreement.

In the year ahead we need to see the conclusion of reform that remains incomplete. The United Nations review of international civilian capacities should set out bold recommendations on how the United Nations can much more quickly deploy the right expertise to post-conflict countries. This includes making much better use of the capacity of regional organizations and Member States, particularly those of the South. We also need to see more effective use of the Peacebuilding Commission. We support the recent review, but we now need to encourage the Commission to take on the really difficult challenges to peacebuilding and provide advice to the Council, and others, on the course of action required to resolve them. In the year ahead Liberia will be a proving ground for the Peacebuilding Commission. It must help build local capacity to maintain the rule of law so that the United Nations can transfer responsibility for security to national authorities.

If we are serious about tackling conflict, then the Security Council, along with the rest of the United Nations system, needs to develop a genuine culture of prevention. This is a question of political will. The Council must be prepared to take up fast-moving situations in countries that are not on its agenda. We must support regular analysis of potential conflict by the Secretary-General and his senior staff. We should encourage experts across the United Nations system to share information on potential precursors to conflict. Our human rights specialists must be able to share their concerns with those looking for early signs of conflict, and we must have a stronger dialogue with regional and subregional organizations on ways to prevent conflict, including on issues that drive conflict, such as illicit extraction of natural resources.

In the year ahead, if we are to tackle these new threats to security, we will need to deliver regular improvement and lasting impact on the ground. We will need to demonstrate that we are tackling potential conflict in this

Council. We will need to show that, by the decisions we take and the actions we mandate, we are reducing the impact of violence on civilian populations, and we will need to be confident that we are building national security sectors so that we can withdraw peacekeeping operations, strong in the knowledge that we have supported sustainable peace.