

Building the Security Council back better to address 21st century challenges

Thank you, Mr President, and I join others in paying tribute to Professor Luck and Ambassador Oshima for their work.

Mr President, I would first like to thank Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as chair of the Informal Working Group, for their excellent stewardship of discussions on improving Council working methods and for maintaining momentum on this important topic. I also thank our briefers today for stimulating ideas and for their reflections.

Like others, the United Kingdom recognises how far the Council has adapted to challenging circumstances in the last year, and I pay tribute to SCAD for their role in enabling this. I agree that there have been some positive developments from virtual working methods.

Firstly, I have been struck by how easily the technology now allows us to include more diverse voices from the field – from civil society, women peacebuilders, and youth – as we did during our Presidency of the Council in February, and as our E10 colleagues highlighted. We should continue this.

Secondly, by convening leader-level debates virtually, this has brought greater visibility and weight to issues of international concern, such as the impacts of climate on security and fragility.

But Mr President, we need to be honest with ourselves that there have been downsides which have affected this Council's capacity to fulfil its mandate, including to face new challenges.

Agility doesn't just mean being able to convene. It is about responsiveness to emerging issues of concern. And our working methods, as we've heard from others, too, have inhibited this. Due to objections from a single Council member, the Council has not held formal meetings via VTC since last March.

This means that without the procedural mechanisms for resolution of disagreements, we have sometimes not been able to discuss new or existing agenda items more substantively, or bring visibility and attention to issues in the open when needed.

So looking forward, we need to build back better. And I call on all of us to work collectively towards three goals so that the Council can continue to fill its mandate in the face of new challenges.

Firstly, on effectiveness. Our Council best fulfils its mandate by solving problems through interactive debate, critical analysis, challenge, building consensus, and making decisions that move issues forward. Sometimes that means more talking in private rather than public. And sometimes that means

discussing new issues which may be uncomfortable for some. But of overriding importance is that we address risks of conflict before they escalate if the Council is to remain relevant and effective.

Second, efficiency. Here we have all tried to make progress in bearing down on speaking times in the Council. But lengthy meetings, using prepared statements without moving issues forward, rarely, if ever, fulfil the Council's mandate.

Thirdly, transparency. We must, as we've heard many times this morning, remain relevant and connected with the wider UN membership and public. We must explain ourselves where we can. So we support a return to using press elements regularly to help transparency and project the voice of the Council when we agree. Engaging with a diverse set of briefers is an important way of staying connected and we will continue to promote civil society participation in Council activity.

Mr President, in closing, I welcome the chance to hear from Council and non-Council members on how else we can build back better. We have an opportunity to re-set as we return to this Chamber to ensure we can credibly fulfil our mandate in the face of 21st century challenges. Let's not waste it.

Thank you.