

Maintaining international peace and security

Thank you, Mr President. Thank you to Germany for convening this important meeting and we wish you well for your Presidency of the Security Council.

And it is important that we convene together to discuss this subject. And in doing so, I join others in paying tribute, particularly at this time of a global pandemic, to the leadership of the Secretary-General, and thank ICRC president Mr Maurer and Mrs Elfadil Mohammad for their very helpful and constructive briefings this morning.

We all now know that with COVID-19 we face a crisis of unprecedented scope and indeed complexity. Across the world it has triggered health, humanitarian, economic, development and security challenges, with ramifications that are both immediate and indeed long-term. These challenges are interwoven. They require a coordinated, collaborative response.

Therefore, may I first welcome the adoption unanimously of UN Security Council Resolution 2532 yesterday and in doing so wish to thank both France and Tunisia for their efforts in this respect.

Mr President, the full extent of this pandemic is still unfolding before our eyes. I know we all fear its impact as it spreads in states that are both vulnerable or affected by conflict.

As we see around the world, in places such as Yemen, Libya and the Central African Republic, contested or fragmented government authority severely restricts local capacity to respond effectively to the spread of this pandemic. Health systems are overstretched and under-resourced and cannot detect and indeed monitor the spread of the disease.

As the impact becomes clearer, so we see evidence of COVID compounding existing problems, such as in the Lake Chad Basin and in the Sahel. Our efforts to prevent or resolve conflict, they are complicated by COVID-19. Peacekeepers themselves are quarantined, humanitarian access is restricted and impeded and peace processes have been paused. So it is important we must both act to tackle the pandemic and to give an effective response to prevent or resolve conflict.

We must ensure a strong international health response led by the World Health Organisation. And in this regard, the United Kingdom has already committed 764 million pounds to support humanitarian and public health needs. We must ensure development and equitable distribution of a vaccine. And in this regard, the United Kingdom has already pledged over 300 million pounds in funding for research into vaccines, tests and treatment. And as many of you know, last month we hosted a very successful Global Vaccine Summit that raised over \$8.8 billion to support immunisation of 300 million children against coronavirus and indeed other vaccine preventable diseases.

At the same time, we must, of course, redouble our efforts on peace and security. This Council, the Security Council, has a key role to play. We welcome the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and we should all stand firm on our peacekeeping troop contributions and, importantly, the resources they need.

The devastating impact of COVID-19 on fragile societies underlines the moral duty of outside parties that influence conflicts in Syria and indeed elsewhere. Importantly, everyone must come together to support peace.

We need to also act smartly to prevent new peace and security crises from emerging. The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of the coordinated and multi-dimensional international responses for which the UK has long argued. The United Nations must work smarter across its pillars and with partners. And we commend the UN system for delivering under immense pressure. I think we all acknowledge that more is needed to deliver a holistic response that limits instability in the face of complex challenges.

We therefore recommend three actions: Firstly, UN responses must be more sensitive to conflict risk and build this into strategic planning, prioritisation and financing.

Secondly, there needs to be a joint risk assessment and planning with the international financial institutions to combine macroeconomic, social and political considerations.

And thirdly, we need to focus on what works to build a country's resilience to shocks. Strong, inclusive and accountable institutions, the rule of law, good governance and human rights are the fundamental basis of that very resilience.

We need to see this in our coordinated response and in our planning to build back better.

Mr President, this pandemic has brought into sharp focus the urgent need for the development objective and sustainable peace and security cannot be solved as separate issues, and they cannot be solved alone. Together, we have this expertise. Together, we have the resources. We must use them and respond to this challenge. And together, we will succeed.

Thank you.