

Pandemics and the challenges of sustaining peace

Thank you very much, Mr President, and thank you to Indonesia for convening this debate at this time.

Mr President, COVID-19 presents a crisis of unprecedented scope and complexity. It has triggered health, humanitarian, economic, social, development, political and security challenges with both immediate and long term ramifications. We are seeing how interwoven those challenges are. To quote from a recent Crisis Group article, "it would be a brave Ambassador at the UN who would bet that the health, economic and social fallout from COVID-19 will not lead to more political instability."

That's why we have to get this response right. Because if we don't, we may end up in a scenario which sees decades of progress on peace and development reversed, amidst protracted turmoil and human suffering.

As a member of this council and the only leading economy, which meets the 0.7% ODA target, the United Kingdom is committed to doing everything we can to avoid countries tipping into crisis. With COVID-19, this means playing our part to ensure coordinated, comprehensive and collaborative multilateral action. It means prioritising support to countries most vulnerable to shocks. It means ensuring risk-informed, calibrated responses and mobilising to prevent crises in the spirit of solidarity.

Mr President, the United Kingdom is concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on the world's most vulnerable people, and we are re-prioritising many of our existing programmes accordingly. Despite pressures on the global economy, we must mobilise resources for countries most in need. That's why working with India, the United Kingdom pushed for an ambitious G20 action plan, including a \$200 billion package of support from the World Bank and regional development banks for investment in health programs and emergency fiscal support for the poorest countries.

As we work on a vaccine continues at pace, should also keep striving for a framework which ensures equitable access for the world's most vulnerable people.

Mr. President, as I raised during the recent dialogue between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, cohosted with Germany, Niger and of course your good self as President of the council, the United Kingdom believes that the UN system still needs to do more to integrate peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity into the global humanitarian, economic and development responses to COVID-19. This means the United Nations and its partners supporting countries to generate a shared appreciation of conflict risks to ensure that responses do not inadvertently exacerbate drivers of instability. It means continuing to prioritise issues that we know to be central to social contract, which underpins resilience, good governance,

inclusion, respect for human rights and the rule of law. And it means seizing opportunities for dedicated efforts to diffuse conflict and build on peace initiatives.

We should all be ready in this Council to take whatever action we can to support the United Nations in ensuring that countries do not tip into instability or if we can help them build a pathway for it.

I do want to reiterate the request that the Secretary-General provides further guidance to the UN system on this matter in the form of a policy brief on this approach.

The United Nations cannot prevent the loss of peace and development gains single handedly. We need to work together to prevent destabilisation. And the UK is gravely concerned about the rising risk of famine in 2020, hastened by the impact of COVID-19. We will work closely with partners to do everything we can, not only to prepare for, but also to prevent catastrophic food insecurity and related instability.

But the complexity of the COVID-19 crisis makes collaboration between the UN and the international financial institutions critical for an effective international response. The macroeconomic responses led by the IFIs, and the socio-economic responses spearheaded by the UN should be playing complementary roles. Again this requires, as a starting point, a shared understanding of risks and opportunity based on common analysis and with that common approach mainstreamed throughout not only at the very top, not only at field level, but at all levels in between. Mr President, we have said previously that COVID-19 represents a real test of the UN reforms initiated by the Secretary-General. It is brought into even sharper relief, the importance of a one UN approach and cross-pillar work to build and sustain this.

These concerns have been at the heart of our engagement with the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his 2020 report. I also take this opportunity to recognise the work of Canada as chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. We have been impressed with the agility of the Peacebuilding Commission in its response to COVID-19 at a time when other UN bodies, including, dare I say it, this Council have been rather slower. As this debate highlights Mr President, the peacebuilding approach is not just a nice to have. It is critical, it is fundamental to responding effectively to the most pressing challenges of our time. Thank you, Mr President.