

Speech: Security Council is uniquely placed to support mediation efforts.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr Secretary-General, in January 2017, you gave this Council a challenge. You asked the question: How can we use our powers under Chapter 6 of the UN charter more effectively to prevent conflict? Although Chapter 6 is about more than mediation, it is an important part of the answer. The Council is far from the only actor. The complex nature of modern conflict, which the Secretary-General and others have already referred to, means that averting or ending violence requires a concerted approach from a range of actors, both within the family of the United Nations and outside of it. That includes regional and subregional organizations, civil society, Religious leaders and as we've just heard, women's mediation networks. I'm therefore delighted and pleased that we've heard from representatives of these groups today. I would particularly like to thank the Most Reverend Archbishop of Canterbury and Ms Mossarat Qadeem for your very insightful, expert, thoughtful briefings to the Council today. As Mossarat said, in peace making, in conflict resolution, we must speak to the core humanity of people. And to coin a phrase, as the Most Reverend and Right Honourable Archbishop of Canterbury has put it, it is only then we will achieve the people's peace.

In the United Kingdom, we have seen the importance of mediation first-hand. The division and violence in Northern Ireland took years of sustained negotiations to resolve and finally ended with the signing of the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement in 1998. It shows the value of patience and persistent mediation and the 20 years of peace that have followed illustrate clearly why we must give mediation efforts our utmost and full support.

Today, as we look around the world, in Yemen and Libya, Martin Griffiths and Ghassan Salamé are leading efforts to facilitate peaceful resolutions to some of the most complex and long-running conflicts with great human cost. But we should not make the mistake of thinking that mediation only works at a national level. In countries like the Central African Republic and indeed Mali, we have seen the importance of community-level mediation, conducted or facilitated by peacekeeping missions.

In the Central African Republic, MONUSCO has successfully facilitated mediation between armed groups in several areas of the country. For example, the agreement signed in the town of Bouar in December 2017. MONUSCO is also involved in strengthening local capacity to resolve conflicts, building trust between communities and advocating the participation of women and young people.

In Mali, MINUSMA's mandate recognises the importance of community engagement and indeed of local mediation. It is essential in protecting civilians and

stabilizing communities and the country. It has facilitated the training of 703 mediators, including 225 women who have served on community-based mediation panels.

More broadly, the United Nations has made good progress in the last decade to professionalize and strengthen its mediation role with the established establishment of the Mediation Support Unit in 2006, a standby team of senior mediation advisors in 2008, and a high level advisory board in 2017.

The UN Special Political Missions play a quite unique role in fostering and supporting dialogue and indeed in preventing conflict. If we cast our minds back to last December, Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president of Nigeria, as we heard from the Secretary-General, and a member of the High Level advisory Board travelled to Liberia on the Secretary-General's behalf to support the first peaceful transfer of power in Liberia's history. So there is much we can already be proud of in terms of what has been achieved. But equally, on reflecting on what has been achieved, it is equally important to recognize there is so much more to do.

We now need to look forward and towards the next decade and address the changing nature of conflict, the complexity of conflict and the increasing number of mediation actors. The United Kingdom believes the Security Council has a pivotal and important role to play in this respect. We must include mediation in the toolkit that the Council uses to prevent or resolve conflicts. That includes working effectively with mediators from regional and sub-regional organisations and we therefore welcome the United Nations work to strengthen capacity in this particular area. It also means considering conflict resolution and mediation when we mandate peacekeeping and special political missions. We should learn and build on the examples of Mali and the Central African Republic and ensure that mediation support is properly resourced.

Finally but most importantly as we've heard already and as set out in the UN Security Council resolution 1325, we must ensure without question the full equal, meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution as leaders, as decision makers and at both national and local level. Women's participation should not be an option. It is a central and pivotal part of conflict resolution. It is key to ensuring conflict resolution and lasting peace. It is a matter of ensuring respect for human rights, for ensuring gender equality, and as we all know, and we should reflect on this, the evidence points to that.

When you look at the research it also confirms that where women are involved in peacekeeping, it increases the probability of that peace lasting much longer.

We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to promote gender parity in the United Nations, but also recognize it is upon all of us – the UN system, Member States, civil society, religious leaders – for us all to do more to promote women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution at all levels, including the appointment of women mediators.

Let me assure you, the United Kingdom is taking its responsibility very seriously and we are therefore committing £1.6 million to the development of the Network of Women Mediators across the Commonwealth that Mossarrat alluded to. And of course, the youth voice must also be included.

What is clear, is the nature of conflict evolves, and as the nature of conflict evolves, mediation will be needed more than ever. The United Nations must stand ready to ensure that it is equal to the task. And let me assure all colleagues, all Member States across the United Nations and beyond that the United Kingdom will remain committed to supporting you, Secretary-General in your efforts, on your focus to both professionalize and enhance the United Nations approach to mediation, with women rightfully playing a full, pivotal and equal part.

Thank you.