

Speech: “There has been repeated discrimination against NGOs with a human rights focus.”

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce this draft decision, and I would like to begin by thanking Australia, Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Nigeria, the United States of America and Uruguay for their co-sponsorship, as well as Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Sweden who co-sponsored from the floor this morning.

As ECOSOC members, we know that the Sustainable Development Goals will only be achieved through the concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders. Among these are non-governmental organisations who bring energy, expertise and fresh perspectives to our work.

The role of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations is set out in ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31. We agree that we need a system to review applications received from NGOs for consultative status with ECOSOC. But the aim should be to enable, not to frustrate, the participation of productive, professional civil society organizations.

When a serious and credible NGO such as Christian Solidarity Worldwide is kept waiting in limbo for seven years, the system is clearly not working as it should.

Over those seven years CSW was considered 14 times by the Committee on NGOs. It participated in good faith in question and answer sessions. It responded fully and promptly to more than 80, often repetitive, questions posed by committee members. It undertook bilateral consultations with every NGO committee member. Yet each time it was deferred.

CSW clearly fulfils every requirement set out in Resolution 1996/31. Its work is directly relevant to ECOSOC. It is in full compatibility with the aims and purposes of the UN Charter, as well as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other United Nations human rights covenants. CSW works actively to promote the aims and purposes of the Charter. It even trains other civil society partners to work within the UN system and fully utilise UN mechanisms.

The conclusion we draw is that the NGO Committee's decisions have not been based on the merits of CSW's application. Those concerns are widely shared. And they have been expressed by several Nobel laureates and dignitaries in letters to this Council.

The United Nations Special Rapporteurs for the freedom of opinion and expression, the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the situation of human rights defenders, minority issues, and the freedom of religion or belief have also written in support of CSW's application.

We agree with them that the repeated arbitrary deferrals by the Committee contravene the principles of non-discrimination, equality, participation, transparency and accountability set out in Resolution 1996/31.

CSW does vital work. It promotes the right to freedom of religion or belief set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and developed in other international instruments. It espouses that right in its entirety. CSW advocates for the rights of all peoples to practice their faith, whatever that faith may be, and also the rights of people who profess no religion.

Recent examples of their work include support for the rights of the Rohingya in Burma, or Myanmar, and the rights of civilians of all faiths caught in the cross-fire of conflict in the Central African Republic.

I wish that CSW were an isolated example of an NGO singled out for repeated deferral by the NGO Committee. But sadly that is not the case. There has been repeated discrimination against NGOs with a human rights focus in particular. Yet we know that human rights, including freedom of religion and belief, are essential to build societies which are secure, prosperous and resilient against extremism.

It's vital that NGOs granted consultative status reflect the full spectrum of issues of concern to ECOSOC and the United Nations. That must include the promotion and protection of human rights, one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations.

CSW has waited too long for accreditation. It fully meets the criteria this Council has set for consultative status. Its engagement would benefit this Council and the United Nations. That's why we together with our co-sponsors put forward this draft decision today to grant CSW consultative status.

We do it on their behalf, and on behalf of the many other NGOs whose applications languish in the Committee year after year. We strongly urge positive action by ECOSOC members today to send an uplifting message about the value we attach to NGO engagement and the promotion of human rights.

Thank you.

Speech: "Human rights are intertwined with so much of what the Security Council does."

Thank you Madam President for calling this important debate. I welcome the clear Security Council support for discussing this issue. I also thank the

Secretary-General for his briefing, and strongly agree with all of it.

The United Kingdom is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. Not just because this is the right thing to do but also because it is a cornerstone of peace, stability and security and a tool for conflict prevention.

The Security Council has a clear role to play. It is necessary in order for us to do the job the United Nations Charter gave us. It is absolutely not encroachment, for the reasons the Secretary-General so eloquently set out.

Too often after a conflict the international community looks back and concludes that more should have been done at the outset, and that warning signs had not been acted upon. All too often those warning signs involve human rights violations and abuses.

Twenty-five years ago, the Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial executions reported on allegations of killings in Rwanda. A year later, his successor visited Rwanda, and later warned the Commission for Human Rights of his fears of potential genocide. We all know now the consequences of the international community not responding decisively to those concerns. Today the international community is being asked the same questions and given similar warnings in South Sudan, and we need to come up with better answers.

The situation in Syria also shows the clear connection between human rights violations and conflict. A regime faced in 2011 by peaceful protests from its people responded not with reform, but with repression and violence. We have seen where this has led: a civil war; a huge rise in violent extremism; death and forced disappearances; a refugee crisis; regional instability and even the use of chemical weapons against civilians.

The story of Masri, a Syrian man, is sadly just one example. He was arrested after participating in a peaceful protest at the start of the conflict. He was tortured, starved and interrogated over two years in four detention facilities, and then taken to a regime hospital that has been described as a 'slaughterhouse.' A rare survivor, he was taken back to the notorious Sednaya Prison for another year of torture. He was eventually released; but by the time he returned home, he screamed at his own reflection in the mirror. He did not recognise himself; a ghostly skeleton of a human standing where he once stood.

And that's an illustration of why repeated abuses of the veto in this Council to block accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses in Syria are so damaging. They reinforce the Syrian regime's certainty that they can get away carrying out gross violations of human rights with impunity. The United Kingdom will continue to do our utmost to hold accountable the perpetrators of all such violations and abuses.

And that is why the United Kingdom also welcomes, Secretary-General, your continued focus on prevention, and this includes your support for your predecessor's Human Rights Upfront initiative, which seeks to bring the UN system together to prioritise human rights, and work together on cross

cutting issues. It also seeks to ensure that the UN does all it can not just to respond to, but to prevent, serious violations or abuses of human rights – and we have seen time and again how detrimental those are to peace and security.

Two institutions of the United Nations are particularly vital to delivering this joined up approach to human rights. First, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office provide invaluable support to UN peace operations. They advise on mandates, they carry out strategic assessment missions to South Sudan, Liberia and Mali, they send technical and operational support missions to Iraq, & Kosovo to name just a few from the last year. We welcome the interactions between this Council and the UN High Commissioner and his Office.

Second, is the Human Rights Council. Like many others, we are concerned when countries with poor human rights records get on to the Human Rights Council. But the Human Rights Council nevertheless plays a central role in responding to human rights violations that pose imminent threats to peace and security. Every country, including the worst offenders, have a Universal Periodic Review, they have to explain policies and actions. The United Kingdom particularly values the role the Human Rights Council plays in overseeing the special rapporteurs and other investigative mechanisms such as Commissions of Inquiry. Crucially for this Security Council's work, these vital tools help provide objective and professionally-gathered information on how potential or active conflicts are evolving.

Madam President, human rights are intertwined with so much of what the Security Council does. The United Kingdom welcomes this debate. This Council cannot fully discharge our responsibility enshrined in the UN Charter to maintain international peace and security, without addressing human rights every single day.

Speech: “Libya needs urgent progress towards full political reconciliation now more than ever.”

Thank you Madam President, thank you Martin, thank you Olof for your briefings.

And at the outset, let me express to you Martin the UK's complete support for your work and reiterate our commitment to the Libyan Political Agreement. It's the sole framework for a political solution to the situation in Libya, but sadly, as you have made clear, its implementation remains mixed at best. I very much agree with all seven points of your seven point agenda.

As the penholder for Libya, we see three interlinked areas of concern; security, the economy, and the political process.

On the first, 2017 has seen a significant deterioration, including in particular, right now in the South, where there is renewed, escalating clashes which are edging the country towards civil war. The United Kingdom condemns all such violence as well as threats of military action and reports of gross human rights abuses by armed groups. Such acts have no place in the Libya of today. And we are clear that the military and other security structures need to be under civilian and political oversight.

As the Ambassadors to Libya from China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States said last week, there is a difference between acts against the terrorist threat and acts that can lead to further deterioration in Libya. On tackling terrorism, it's important to recognise the defeat of Daesh in Sirte and I pay tribute to all involved and acknowledge the many lives lost in that effort.

But in spite of that success, we are now faced with a threat that has dispersed across Libya. Those who continue to undermine effective government in Libya are feeding the terrorist threat by creating ungoverned spaces. It's a threat that extends not only across Libya but to the region as a whole.

Such ungoverned spaces create conditions for human trafficking and criminal networks to profit from the political and security vacuum in parts of Libya. Irregular migration can only be tackled properly by a strong and stable government.

Turning to my second point, the economy also remains vulnerable to the volatile political and security situation. So we need to see real improvements: the Presidency Council and the Central Bank must work co-operatively to address the liquidity crisis, and ensure that public services like water and electricity are sustained throughout Ramadan. And we need to see an end to parallel institutions undermining the Presidency Council.

There has been some progress; including the dispersal of the budget in the early months of 2017, and the economic dialogue on the detail of fiscal and monetary policy now taking place in Tripoli.

But it's clear that more steps are needed. Throughout, it is crucial that Libya's oil resources remain neutral and are used to benefit the whole country. The continued unity of the National Oil Corporation is essential to ensuring that revenues are used for the national good, and we call for much-needed investment in maintenance of oil infrastructure to help increase national exports and reduce the drain on the economy.

Turning to my final point, Madam President, the common thread in both the security and the economic situations is of course the political process. I'm pleased to reiterate here in this Chamber the UK's continued support for the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord, headed by Prime Minister Al Sarraj, as the legitimate executive authorities under the Libyan Political Agreement, in line with our Resolution 2259.

But as the security and economic instability illustrate, Libya needs urgent progress towards full political reconciliation now more than ever. We support early signs of progress to bridge political differences, including regional efforts within the framework of the UN-led political process and re-engagement by Libya's legitimate institutions – the House of Representatives, the Higher State Council – with preparations for dialogue.

We have a difficult and long road ahead. So we urge all parties to commit to progress, we underline our firm opposition to any attempt to disrupt the political process. All those who have a role to play, including those still outside the Libyan Political Agreement, must engage constructively and in a spirit of compromise. The international community, as Martin reminded us, must continue to support them to do so.

So we welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to Libya as one of his personal priorities and we reiterate our full support for UNMSIL's central role in advancing the political process in Libya.

As the penholder on this issue in the Council, we will carry on playing our part. We will continue to monitor the situation in Libya closely, we will support all efforts to reach a more inclusive political settlement within the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement, and we will work with the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord in their efforts to deliver for the people of Libya. Because continued support from this Council and the wider international community will remain vital if we are to secure a better future for all Libyans.

Thank you.

Press release: PM meeting with Ukrainian President Poroshenko: 19 April 2017

The Prime Minister hosted President Poroshenko of Ukraine at Downing Street this afternoon for their first bilateral meeting.

They began by welcoming the strength of bilateral relations as we mark 25 years of diplomatic ties, and committed to working together to deepen our relationship in the years ahead.

The Prime Minister was clear that the UK recognises the threat posed by Russia through the illegal annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and noted that the UK continues to offer support to counter this threat.

They agreed on the importance of maintaining sanctions until the Minsk agreement is fully implemented, and of looking at how we work together to enhance our bilateral security and defence co-operation.

They also discussed Ukraine's reform agenda, and the Prime Minister welcomed the progress that has been made so far. She confirmed that the UK government looks forward to holding a reform conference on 6 July, to maintain momentum and galvanise international support for Ukraine's efforts.

The President thanked the Prime Minister for the close co-operation between our 2 countries, and invited her to visit Ukraine at her earliest convenience.

News story: British Embassy Budapest is moving to a new address

The Embassy is moving to 5-7 Füge utca.

On the 20th of April the British Embassy moves out of its building in Harmincad utca after 70 years. We move into an office building at 5-7 Füge utca in the second district of Budapest. This building, which used to be the Dutch Embassy, has been completely renovated to provide the British Embassy, its staff and visitors a modern and fit for purpose working environment.

The Embassy reopens on 25 April, our phone numbers and email addresses remain the same.

In case of consular emergency call the following number: 0036 1 266 2888 except for 20 April when you should call our temporary phone number: 0044 1908 51 6666