



Security Council

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Letter dated 11 November 2019 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As President of the Security Council in November, the United Kingdom will convene an open debate on Tuesday, 19 November on the role of reconciliation in maintaining international peace and security.

I attach a concept note for the benefit of Member States wishing to participate in this debate. I should be grateful if the present concept note could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Karen Pierce



Annex to the letter dated 11 November 2019 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the role of reconciliation in maintaining international peace and security, 19 November 2019 at 10 a.m., in the Security Council Chamber

Objective

The objective of the open debate is to contribute to a deeper understanding of what produces reconciliation in the context of efforts to build and sustain peace, its role and value as a process and an objective within broader peacebuilding efforts, and how the United Nations can better support reconciliation to prevent the recurrence of conflict and advance sustainable peace and security.

Background

In countries and communities afflicted by conflict, including many of those on the Security Council's agenda, reconciliation has an important role to play in recovery processes and in preventing further cycles of violence and insecurity. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly have emphasized the importance of reconciliation as part of a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace.¹ However, differences remain among policymakers and practitioners over definitions, scope and approaches when it comes to reconciliation.

Since the early 1990s, reconciliation has been closely associated with transitional justice and, in particular, with its restorative dimension, which focuses on recognizing victims, rebuilding trust and preventing future violations – a model advanced by the ground-breaking truth and reconciliation commissions in Chile and South Africa. The question of how to approach accountability for widespread human rights violations has often been part of this discourse.

Fundamentally, reconciliation is about building or rebuilding relationships. In this respect, it has been conceptualized more broadly as a set of processes aimed at transforming relationships between people and groups in society, as well as society and the State, towards a future goal based on political, social and economic inclusivity and fairness, thereby avoiding relapse into conflict. The protection of minorities – religious, ethnic or other – and their successful integration into national economic and political life is a vital component. For countries on the Security Council's agenda, such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria or South Sudan, reconciliation will be a crucial factor in creating a lasting, sustainable resolution to these conflicts.

Experience has generated extensive lessons learned in relation to the role and value of reconciliation as a process and an objective in building and sustaining peace, and the role that the international community and the United Nations can provide in support of reconciliation efforts. Some of the key lessons include:

- Broad national ownership of reconciliation processes is vital for their success
- National and local reconciliation processes are complementary. In crises from Afghanistan to South Sudan to Libya, it has become clear that engagement with actors at the national level alone is insufficient to resolve local conflicts, and

¹ Security Council resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#) and General Assembly resolution [70/262](#).

that local dynamics constitute an immediate and longer-term factor in sustainable peace

- Community and faith leaders can play a critical role in reconciliation efforts at the local and national levels, especially in grappling with issues around freedom of religion and belief.²

The United Nations has a number of tools at its disposal to support reconciliation: Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General can use their good offices to assist national counterparts to advance reconciliation initiatives; United Nations presences can use their reach in the field to support local level dispute resolution and build confidence in national reconciliation processes (as the United Nations mission in South Sudan has done to great effect); and United Nations missions and their United Nations country team partners are often tasked and resourced with supporting the design and roll-out of justice and accountability programmes (such as in the case of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo).

The open debate provides a forum for Member States to draw from practical experience of reconciliation processes to consider best practices, the factors that can contribute to successful reconciliation processes, the role of the Security Council, and how United Nations missions, their leadership and partners can promote local and national reconciliation processes. The United Kingdom intervention will focus on religious minorities and freedom of religion and belief.

Guiding questions

In consideration of the overarching objectives of the debate, the following questions may help guide interventions by Member States:

1. What practical lessons can we draw from experiences of past reconciliation processes?
2. How might the Security Council more systematically incorporate reconciliation into its consideration of country situations on its agenda?
3. How can the Security Council and the United Nations Organization most effectively support nationally owned reconciliation processes, and within or alongside what broader frameworks and objectives?
4. What approaches are necessary to link national and local level reconciliation initiatives effectively?
5. What role can faith leaders and trusted community leaders play in reconciliation?
6. How can transitional justice and accountability processes effectively contribute to reconciliation?
7. What approaches to partnerships and capacity-building of local actors should United Nations missions assume in the context of their conflict resolution and reconciliation work?
8. How can the United Nations partner with other multilaterals to strengthen reconciliation processes and ensure sustainability of conflict resolution and reconciliation?

² In the United Kingdom, a recent Government-commissioned report by the Bishop of Truro has highlighted the importance of the involvement of religious leaders in supporting reconciliation.

Format

The open debate will take place in the Security Council Chamber from 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 19 November 2019. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, United Kingdom Minister of State for the Commonwealth, the United Nations and South Asia, will preside. The following speakers will brief:

- António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General
 - Alpaslan Özerdem, Dean of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University
 - One further civil society briefer (to be confirmed)
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