

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 30 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November 2020, I have the honour to transmit herewith the concept note for the virtual open debate, under the agenda item “peacebuilding and sustaining peace”, which will take place on 3 November 2020 at 8.30 a.m. (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Inga Rhonda **King**
Ambassador/Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 30 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: contemporary drivers of conflict and insecurity

Concept note

3 November 2020

1. Introduction

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace are multifaceted processes involving a wide range of actors across the international community that work together to support and facilitate national ownership over peace and political processes in order to promote lasting peace and well-being. Within the United Nations system, the peacebuilding architecture was established to play a bridging role that fosters an integrated and coherent approach to advance the sustaining peace agenda, but contemporary drivers of conflict and insecurity serve to further compound this already challenging task. It has become universally accepted that peace and security are inextricably linked to development. Indeed, many of the countries that grapple with armed conflict also face impediments to their sustainable development as their institutional and governance capacities become easily overwhelmed. Conversely, those countries that struggle with persistent underdevelopment face challenges in providing security and remain prone to rifts in their social fabric as negative forces, such as terrorism and violent extremism, intercommunal violence and organized crime, to name only a few, easily flourish against this backdrop. The emergence of contemporary risk factors, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the ever-growing threat of climate change, add further complexity to this challenging security context.

These overlapping and interconnecting challenges can be effectively addressed only through comprehensive and coherent strategies. The Security Council maintains the primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security, but in order to successfully fulfil its mandate, it must work closely with other organs and agencies across the United Nations system to systematically address the root causes of conflict, which include, but are not limited to, social, economic and political inequalities; economic stagnation and decline; acute levels of unemployment and abject poverty; incapacitated governance structures; health and environmental challenges; and the fears, uncertainties and economic incentives to conflict that emerge during moments of crisis.

As we move further into the twenty-first century, new challenges to international peace and security are likely to emerge. Given our increased interconnectedness as a globalized community and the evolving interlinkages between our political, socioeconomic, health and environmental contexts, it is impractical to address the challenges to peace, security and development in isolation from one another. To be sure, no nation is an island unto itself. We can protect ourselves only by safeguarding each other, because insecurity affects all nations and peoples – although not in equal measure, for the least developed countries and most vulnerable groups are often predisposed to the greatest challenges. However, given that climate change is projected to create forced displacement of as many as 250 million people globally by the year 2050 and infectious diseases such as COVID-19 are able to spread with great rapidity and intensity as a result of urbanization and modern advances in travel and trade, the ensuing socioeconomic, political, humanitarian and security challenges could profoundly affect us all. We must work assiduously to ensure that the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development is implemented, rather than remains a fleeting illusion to be pursued but never attained. Only through a whole-of-system approach can the goals of lasting peace and security, and sustainable development for all nations and peoples, be realized.

2. Background

Since the inception of the United Nations, international economic and social cooperation has been a central premise on which peace and security would be ensured. It is stipulated in Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations that conditions of stability and well-being “are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”. It is also indicated in the Charter that “the Economic and Social Council may furnish information to the Security Council and shall assist the Security Council upon its request” (Art. 65) These references signify an acknowledgement by our forebears that efforts to promote development and enhance security must be pursued simultaneously for either to succeed. They are two sides of the same coin, and the urgent challenges to peace, security and development, which are aggravated and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the hazards of climate change, demand coordinated actions across all pillars of the United Nations system.

References to a “whole-of-system” approach that links the peace and security, development and human rights pillars upon which the United Nations system was founded have become a regular feature in discussions of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. However, this is not a novel idea. It is established in Chapter IV of the Charter that the General Assembly may discuss questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security brought before it and may make recommendations to the Security Council. It may also call the attention of the Council to situations that are likely to endanger international peace and security. Similarly, Chapter XIV of the Charter establishes a symbiotic relationship between the Council and the International Court of Justice, the primary rule of law organ of the United Nations system. However, over the years, the Council has not taken full advantage of the possible contributions that the Court can make to resolving disputes.

In the statement by the President of the Security Council dated 11 February 2011 (S/PRST/2011/4), the Security Council reiterated that, “in order to support a country to emerge sustainably from conflict, there is a need for a comprehensive and integrated approach that incorporates and strengthens coherence between political, security, development, human rights and rule of law activities, and addresses the underlying causes of each conflict”, and affirmed “the necessity to consider relevant economic, political and social dimensions of conflict”. The Council underlined that “integrated action on the ground by security and development actors needs to be coordinated with the national authorities and can significantly contribute to stabilizing and improving the security situation and ensuring the protection of civilians”. The Council also affirmed that “sustainable peace and development cannot be achieved without the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders and underlined that women must be included as active participants in all stages of peacebuilding, peace agreements and development programs”. It also reiterated its support for the Peacebuilding Commission and its readiness to make greater use of the Commission’s advisory role, and highlighted the contribution that the Economic and Social Council can make in addressing “economic, social, cultural and humanitarian issues”.

The Peacebuilding Commission remains the United Nations organ with the mandate and the convening power to “serve a bridging role among the principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations by sharing advice on peacebuilding needs and priorities, in line with the respective competencies and responsibilities of these bodies” (Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), para. 4 (c)). However, while

the peacebuilding architecture has made much progress in fostering greater coherence and complementarity between the United Nations peace and security efforts and its development, human rights and humanitarian work, there remains potential for greater collaboration between the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. As highlighted by the Secretary-General in his 2020 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, “[this] would contribute to closer cooperation and coherence among intergovernmental bodies, including the governing bodies of agencies, funds and programmes” (A/74/976-S/2020/773, para. 13).

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to claim lives, destroy livelihoods and alter conditions for social, economic and political relations globally, the Security Council has the opportunity to further examine our methods of conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding to ensure the optimal delivery of security and development outcomes. A better post-COVID-19 world remains within our reach, but this would be achieved only if we ensure that our United Nations remain fit for the purpose of safeguarding the bedrock principles of international law, while promoting peace, security and development for all.

3. Objective and guiding questions

The aim of the open debate is for members of the Security Council to exchange views on the security implications of contemporary drivers of conflict and insecurity, such as pandemics and environmental challenges, including climate change, and the role of the Council in fostering an integrated and coherent “whole-of-system” approach to address these multifaceted challenges.

Security Council members are invited to share their views and perspectives on the following:

- It is an oft-repeated mantra that crises provide us with critical opportunities for reflection and change. What lessons can we, as the Security Council, extract from the COVID-19 pandemic, the ever-growing climate crisis and the persistent development challenges facing many countries?
- Are the questions of pandemics, environmental challenges (including climate change) and underdevelopment matters that must now be seriously considered in the context of Article 39 of the Charter?
- In the light of the challenges posed by COVID-19, climate change and the development deficits associated with conflict, how can the Security Council collaborate more closely with the United Nations development system to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals remain within reach of conflict-affected countries?
- Is there an opportunity to explore new modalities alongside the Peacebuilding Commission and the Economic and Social Council for mobilizing comprehensive development responses to the urgent challenges of conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding?
- What can the Security Council do to strengthen and mainstream the integrated approach across the peace-security-humanitarian-development nexus to promote people-centred, climate-informed and sovereignty-supporting solutions to contemporary challenges to international peace and security?

4. Format of the meeting

The high-level virtual open debate will be held on 3 November 2020 at 8:30 a.m. and will be chaired by the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ralph Gonsalves.

Member States and observers are invited, upon request, to submit a written statement of approximately 500 words to the Security Council Affairs Division (dppa-scsb3@un.org). All statements submitted no later than the day of the meeting will be included in a compilation document. The names of Member States that have submitted statements by 3 November at 10 a.m. will also be read out by the presidency at the conclusion of the meeting.

5. Briefers

- Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed
 - Chief Executive Officer of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, Ibrahim Mayaki
 - Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Sir Hilary Beckles
 - President of the Economic and Social Council, Munir Akram
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