



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention de H.E. P. Kridelka,
Représentant permanent de la Belgique
auprès des Nations Unies

UNSC - Briefing on the implementation of resolution 2532

New York, 9 sept 2020

Mr President,
Dear colleagues,

The Covid-19 pandemic has only magnified the challenges and human costs of conflict. Over the last couple of months, we have witnessed unprecedented needs and repeated calls for an urgent and coordinated response.

On July 1, 2020, we have unanimously adopted Resolution 2532 (2020) – **calling for a 90 day cease-fire**. Today, seventy days later, we must admit that the outlook does not look promising. The call for a global ceasefire did not have the effect we hoped for, while the COVID-pandemic is still spreading and weakening the health systems in conflict areas. Libya, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan are just a few of the worrisome examples in this respect. We need to continue, in each relevant situation on our agenda, to pursue the implementation of resolution 2532.

The resolution also calls for **all relevant parts of the UN system to support and accelerate the response to the pandemic**. We welcome the overview of these actions we received today. Everywhere on the ground, the UN Country Teams, the peacekeeping operations have followed-up on this call. The duration and spread of this pandemic will probably allow us to draw lessons and implement adaptive measures while still fighting it. We are therefore interested to learn which lessons can be drawn and how the UN builds on them.

Let me add **four remarks on the way forward**:

- First, it is our duty as member states to **provide the UN with the support it needs to implement the actions we mandate**. We are especially concerned by the fact that the UN is currently lacking the means to react to COVID-19 because member states do not pay their mandatory contributions on time. We call those member states to take action, and we call on all member states to continue to uphold our shared respect and belief in multilateralism.

- Second, **we commend the work done by the UN in matters such as hate speech, mis- and disinformation.** Misinformation exploits fears and can fuel more extreme reactions, violence or violations of human rights, which could exacerbate existing fault lines in society. The initiatives taken to counter the infodemic, such as the Verified Campaign, were innovative and we encourage the Secretariat to pursue such partnerships with the medias, businesses and civil society.
- Thirdly, today is the first international day to protect education from attack. While we mark this day, the education of **refugee and IDP children** continues to be under attack, literally or metaphorically as COVID-19 continues to compound their vulnerability. Half of refugee children have no access to school. And the negative effect is gendered. While girls still face gender-based violence in schools and universities, others lose their safe haven when schools are forced to close. Or like the young Farhan Roshan shared this morning at the event to mark this International Day: "When education is under attack, women and children suffer the most."
- Lastly, indeed, **lockdown measures increase women's and children's exposure to violent partners, and have far-reaching social and economic impact on families.** This is anticipated to lead to a 33% reduction of the progress on ending gender-based violence, ending child marriages and ending female genital mutilation. Post-COVID education needs to rely on sustainable and holistic measures that go beyond accessing education. These should also address the obstacles encountered by girls specifically in accessing quality education and completing the school cycle.

To fight these multiple crises, a coordinated global response is the only way forward, supported by multilateral efforts, based on the shared respect of principles and values, fuelled by innovative approaches. In short, we need to be more strategic, focussed and unified in tackling the pandemic and the challenges it presents.

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