



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

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**High-Level Open Debate in the Security Council Peacebuilding
and Sustaining Peace: the contemporary drivers of conflict and
insecurity”**

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Dear Mr. President, excellencies,

I'd like to thank the briefers for their insightful remarks.

Dear Mr. President,

To say that **2020 is a challenging year** for many of us, would be an understatement. COVID-19 infections are spiking across the world. Recent tragic events remind us that the evil of terrorism and sectarian violence continues to find root.

Wildfires have destroyed large swaths of land in Australia, Brazil and California. Coastal plains and island nations everywhere are at an ever-increasing risk of being flooded. Water scarcity and erratic rain patterns cause tensions between herders and farmers and seriously impact livelihoods. The Atlantic hurricane season was so intense this year, that we ran out of names for the individual storms.

Large-scale climate events cause displacement, economic decline, food insecurity and social discontent. These circumstances are known as **root causes of fragility** and offer fertile ground for instability and turmoil. They leave young people vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups.

Many conflicts have more mundane political root causes. They simmer for a long time before erupting. What new threats - as climate change - and more traditional threats to peace have in common, is that they do not occur in a vacuum. Much like climate events can be a factor of instability, so can **inequality** or the **erosion of respect for the rule of law and international standards**. The curtailing of human rights are often early indicators of tensions. Again, this does not always end in the blatant disregard for international standards like we are witnessing, for instance, in Syria today. But all too often, it does.

Mr. President,

Early action is about preventing new conflicts from arising, as well as keeping old conflicts from re-emerging. It is important the **Security Council should be systematically alerted to serious tensions and security risks**. As the Secretary-General rightly said at the beginning of this year: *We still spend far more efforts maintaining peace, than preventing it*. Risks can arise from climate related events, from pandemics, rising inequalities, economic and food crises, from serious human rights or international humanitarian law violations, and so on.

In this respect we encourage the Secretary-General to use his right under article 99 of the UN Charter to **“bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security”**. Resolution 2532, for example, requests the Secretary-General to inform the Council on the security implications of COVID-19. The Climate Security Mechanism mobilizes existing expertise from sources within the UN System and makes it available to the Security Council. Similar initiatives on other emerging threats could be conceived. Belgium has during its mandate advocated “horizon scanning briefings” on thematic issues.

But having the necessary information on time is not enough. Ultimately, the relevance of early awareness depends on the **willingness of this Council to discuss the issues** brought to its attention. The **willingness to act upon them** early and in a coordinated manner.

As I said, today's crises do not occur in a vacuum; nor should the Council operate in one. As an elected member, Belgium has therefore consistently pushed this Council towards a holistic and preventive approach. Indeed, the **Security Council needs to foster coordination within the wider UN system and with its partners** in a proactive manner, in support of early solutions. In this regard, I emphasize the key importance of regional UN mandates like UNOWAS, UNOCA or the Great Lakes office and the coordinating role of the UN Resident Coordinators.

To achieve sustainable peace, **we all need to ensure** that our actions in the three dimensions “**peace and security**”, “**sustainable development**”, and “**humanitarian assistance**” become part of a coordinated and coherent approach. As newly appointed Minister for Development Cooperation, I will give special attention to this nexus; by addressing root causes of crises and conflicts; by coherently addressing people's vulnerabilities and promoting their resilience before, during and after crises.

Mr. President, dear colleagues,

We should *always* prioritize prevention, invest in development *wherever possible*, and *whenever necessary* support humanitarian action according to humanitarian principles. Respect for human rights should be at the heart of each of these interventions .

This October, the 75th anniversary of the UN served as a moment to reflect on what we have achieved together since its foundation. Now we need to look at our collective future. The UN Security Council needs to embrace the full scale of its mandate to ensure that this future is peaceful and no-one is left behind. This for the sake of future generations and for its own continued relevance.

I thank you.