

# Can the Security Council Prevent Conflict?



Secretary-General António Guterres speaks to the press following the Security Council's 10 January 2017 ministerial-level open debate on "conflict prevention and sustaining peace." (UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe)

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One of the Security Council's most important tasks—and one of the things it does least well—is to prevent conflict. In recent years, the Council, among other international actors, has struggled to prevent the outbreak and escalation of conflicts in Syria, South Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen, among other situations. Yet the Council does possess several tools to prevent conflict, which is one of its core responsibilities under the UN Charter.

*Can the Security Council Prevent Conflict?* is our first research report on conflict prevention. The report addresses the factors that inhibit the Council's ability to prevent or mitigate conflict, gives a brief historical background of its debates and efforts regarding conflict prevention in the

post-Cold War period and discusses some of the ways in which it can improve its preventive work.

The report argues that the Security Council needs to spend more time addressing country situations in a preventive mode, rather than debating conflict prevention mainly at the thematic level. It suggests that the Council could make better use of the tools at its disposal in accordance with Chapter VI of the UN Charter, giving political backing to the good offices of the Secretary-General or other mediators, engaging in more interactive discussions among senior diplomats on emerging and evolving crises, making more strategic use of visiting missions and encouraging increased involvement of the elected members in proposing initiatives.▪

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Few issues at the UN receive more discussion and attention than how the world body can improve its conflict prevention work. Every few years, there appears to be a surge of interest in this issue, brought on by the conviction that the UN system must do a better job of preventing conflict. Renewed interest today is with good reason. New wars have erupted in Mali, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, among other cases, while political solutions to long-standing conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Darfur, for example, have proved elusive, with civilians suffering the brunt of the fighting. Humanitarian crises have become more pronounced, and there are now approximately 65 million people displaced by conflict worldwide, the highest number since the establishment of the UN in the wake of World War II.

As the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the UN Security Council's conflict prevention role is perhaps more pertinent now than at any other time in the post-Cold War era. And yet, despite strong rhetorical support for prevention, the Council struggles to translate its words into deeds, as concrete, meaningful preventive action is too often lacking. Instead, the Council sags under the weight of managing multiple crises, heavily burdened by its conflict management agenda and expending significant time pursuing thematic

discussions that could be better spent focusing on specific situations.

This report seeks to address one basic issue: can the Security Council prevent conflict? It is clear that the Council faces significant political and operational obstacles in discharging its prevention responsibilities. Nonetheless, preventing conflict is one of its most significant responsibilities under the UN Charter, and there are opportunities for this organ to sharpen and expand its preventive capacities.

In exploring this issue, the report is divided into five sections:

- First, the report explores what the UN Charter has to say about conflict prevention and why this is central to the Council.
- Second, the report explores the current political and operational hindrances that make it so difficult for this organ to play a more effective preventive role.
- Third, it provides an overview of the Council's conflict prevention efforts since the end of the Cold War. Understanding how the Council has addressed this issue in the past provides the contextual background for its current preventive efforts.
- Fourth, the report analyses the preventive tools available to the Council.
- A fifth and final section offers some observations and options for how the preventive work of the Council can be strengthened.

## Charter Foundations

The UN Charter is clear that conflict prevention is a fundamental responsibility of the Security Council and the UN system more broadly. While the Council by necessity spends the majority of its time managing conflicts, one could argue that conflict prevention is at the heart of its Charter mandate, and that failure by the Council to invest sufficient time and energy in conflict prevention is an abdication of this responsibility. As new Secretary-General António Guterres remarked during his swearing-in ceremony on 12 December 2016, "prevention is not a novel concept—it is what the founders of the UN asked us to do."

The animating vision behind the Charter was "to save succeeding generations from the

scourge of war," the oft-cited phrase from the Preamble that captured the lofty aspirations of a world emerging from the bloodiest conflict in human history, one which claimed over 50 million lives. This preventive orientation is reinforced by Chapter I, Article 2 of the Charter, which emphasises that one of the primary purposes of the world body is to "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and...to bring about by peaceful means...adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace." Chapter I, Article 1 could in large part be considered a reference to the Security Council's conflict prevention

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(and mitigation) responsibilities, given that it is the Council which is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security.

Several other parts of the Charter also focus on prevention. Collectively they demonstrate that several actors both in and outside of the UN system were envisioned to engage in preventive activities, while the Council was to be the cornerstone and coordinator of the international community's preventive activities. Regional actors, UN member states and non-member states, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the UN Secretary-General are among the other key actors whose relationship with the Council is delineated in the Charter.

The Council's level of engagement with these different actors has varied. It has historically had extensive and constant interactions

with the Secretariat and member states during all stages of the conflict cycle, ranging from prevention through to post-conflict peace-building. Especially in recent years, it has engaged intensively with regional and sub-regional organisations on these matters. The Council's involvement with the ICJ has been the most limited.

Many UN observers note that while the world body may have helped to prevent a third world war, it has not been particularly effective at preventing smaller-scale conflicts, including the many civil wars that have proliferated in recent years. While the Charter is a durable and in many ways farsighted document, it was drafted with the objective of preventing inter-state conflict and does not direct itself to preventing and resolving internal disputes—which have

accounted for the vast majority of conflicts in the post-Cold War world. The role of non-state actors in conflict, a critical element in many situations now on the Security Council's agenda, is not addressed in the Charter. There also exists a fundamental tension between the principle that the internal affairs of a state are its own business (Article 2:7) and the importance of preventing threats to the peace and respecting human rights (Article 1:3)—violations of which are often a precursor to conflict. Furthermore, the Charter's call for international cooperation in addressing "international problems" of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian nature in Article 1:3 does not take into account such problems that also exist within states and can lead to conflict if not appropriately addressed.

## UN CHARTER: KEY PREVENTION-RELATED ARTICLES

Charter Article	Actors and Means
Chapter I, Article 1	A purpose of the UN is: "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace."
Chapter I, Article 1:4	A purpose of the UN is: "To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends." [i.e., those outlined in Chapter I, Articles 1-3]
Chapter VI, Article 33:2	"The Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute" through means outlined in Article 33:1, including "negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice."
Chapter VI, Article 34	"The Security Council may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security."
Chapter VI, Article 35:1	"Any Member of the United Nations may bring any dispute, or any situation of the nature referred to in Article 34, to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly."
Chapter VI, Article 36:1	"The Security Council may, at any stage of a dispute of the nature referred to in Article 33 [one which has the potential to undermine international peace and security] or of a situation of like nature, recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment."
Chapter VI, Article 36:3	"In making recommendations under this Article the Security Council should also take into consideration that legal disputes should as a general rule be referred by the parties to the International Court of Justice in accordance with the provisions of the Statute of the Court."
Chapter VII, Article 40	"In order to prevent an aggravation of the situation, the Security Council may...call upon the parties concerned to comply with such provisional measures as it deems necessary or desirable."
Chapter VIII, Article 52:3	"The Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through... regional arrangements or by...regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council."
Chapter XV, Article 99	"The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."

# Political and Operational Hindrances

A variety of factors hinder effective preventive action by the Security Council. Some of these—such as different perspectives on the nature of state sovereignty, the political interests of powerful states, the impact of the veto and the Council’s onerous conflict management responsibilities—reflect geopolitical realities. Others are more a matter of culture and custom, including the penholder system (whereby the permanent members draft the majority of Council outcomes and play a leading role on all other issues related to the given situation) and the limited substantive interaction among Council members. Many of these factors apply to the broad spectrum of the Council’s work, but are nonetheless relevant to a discussion on conflict prevention.

## The Sovereignty Shield

In practice, the tension between the need to engage in effective conflict prevention and the Charter’s emphasis on state sovereignty has been hard to resolve. Different and evolving understandings of the nature of state sovereignty remain one of the biggest reasons why prevention, particularly in intra-state conflicts, has been so difficult. While some UN member states, both in and outside of the Security Council, maintain that sovereignty is not an inviolable shield against external involvement to prevent or mitigate conflict, especially when a state abuses its people, other members argue that state sovereignty must be respected unless there is a “threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression” of an international nature under Article 39 of the Charter requiring Council action.

As China, Russia and other member states holding traditional notions of sovereignty have maintained, external involvement in internal crises, especially through more coercive means such as the use of sanctions and the use of force, can have the effect of exacerbating instability and conflict. For example, Russia has repeatedly pointed to the crises in Iraq and Libya as examples of the instability that can result from military intervention, as recently reflected by Ambassador Vitaly Churkin’s statement in the 10 January Council debate on “conflict prevention and sustaining peace”. Furthermore, it should be noted that, even if they profess a desire to prevent or resolve conflict, states often have or are suspected of having ulterior motives related to their national interests for interfering in other states, militarily or otherwise.

However, there is a flip side to these arguments. States that protest against any interference in state sovereignty, regardless of the level of coercion, sometimes do so to protect their allies from international scrutiny or action, rather than because of legitimate concerns that international engagement might exacerbate the situation. Furthermore, those Security Council members that hold strict views of sovereignty have limited the tools at the Council’s disposal, at times preventing it from engaging at all in crises at an early stage, when opportunities for preventive engagement are usually most promising.

Sovereignty concerns may remain throughout the various stages of a crisis; however, they are often particularly strong early on in its development. A distinction should be made between situations already on the agenda of the Security Council and those that have not yet been addressed formally. In the former case, if a conflict has erupted, prevention can be said to have failed, but the Council is likely to recognise its responsibility to seek to mitigate continuing conflict, or to prevent a later relapse. In such cases, sovereignty considerations may still divide Council members regarding the tools to be used. But the greater hurdle to formal discussion and action by the Council is often the opening of engagement with a new situation where there is a threat to the peace. A halfway house may be found where new situations can initially be addressed under a regional agenda item, such as “Peace and security in Africa” and “The situation in the Middle East”.

## Political Interests

Beyond the sovereignty issue, the political interests of powerful Security Council members can undermine efforts to prevent conflicts from breaking out or escalating. States frequently attach a political stigma to being discussed in the Council, and powerful international or regional patrons can significantly limit, or at times prevent discussion of crises affecting their allies. As a result, even when warning signs exist of an impending crisis, preventive action—or the mere discussion of the situation—can be delayed or precluded.

Efforts to mitigate and resolve conflict are particularly difficult when one or more Security Council members—including permanent or influential elected members—is party to a conflict or provides support to

one of the parties. This is one reason why the Council was inhibited in preventing the escalation of crises in Syria and Ukraine. Efforts to address the situation in Yemen have similarly been complicated by the association of some of the permanent members with the Saudi-led coalition.

## Relationship between the Secretariat and the Council

The primary problem for the Security Council with regard to prevention is a lack of action rather than a lack of information. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Council could receive higher quality information in a more timely and coherent way from the Secretariat to inform its decision-making, and its 15 members are more likely to achieve consensus and make good decisions if presented with well-considered strategic proposals or options. UN mediation to prevent conflict begins with the good offices of the Secretary-General, who will seek the quiet support of member states with relevant influence, including but not confined to members of the Council. When the Secretariat briefs the Council on a situation, at its own request or at the request of a member, there is room for much improvement with regard to its capacity to synthesise information from various UN entities, to undertake strategic analysis and to provide these to the Council, along with proposals for forms of engagement which can support and complement the efforts of the Secretary-General.

Currently, the Security Council has been receiving information from various sources in the UN system in a way that at times reflects its fragmentation. While briefings on particular aspects of a situation—political, humanitarian, human rights, etc.—will always be useful and necessary, channelling shared analysis and recommendations from across the UN system to Council members in a coherent, holistic way has proved difficult over the years. Some progress has been made in this direction, internally through the Human Rights Up Front initiative and in presentation to Council members through the recently launched situational awareness briefings (both discussed below). However, the UN system’s follow-through from its Human Rights Up Front analysis has been weak, and the situational awareness briefing format is only in its nascent stages, having been initiated in September 2016. Thus, notwithstanding

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these efforts, the lack of integrated analysis and information-sharing remains a significant systemic problem. The immediate decisions of Secretary-General Guterres to strengthen strategic analysis and decision-making within his executive office are clearly designed to address this weakness.

The oft-repeated quote from the 2000 Brahimi report that the Secretariat must tell the Security Council what it needs to know rather than what it wants to hear still carries weight nearly two decades after its publication. The Secretariat has at times been criticised for not demonstrating the courage to provide unvarnished analysis to the Council, especially when this risks ruffling the political feathers of powerful states. The fact that the contents of reports of the Secretary-General, which are already highly sanitised documents, are still from time to time manipulated by influential member states is a reflection of this problem.

A further difficulty the Secretariat faces is when to alert the Security Council to a looming crisis. It is at times difficult for the Secretariat to strike a balance between not being overly alarmist and not missing the deterioration of situations before it becomes too late for early preventive engagement.

At the same time, criticism of the Secretariat needs to be tempered by recognition of the lack of political will often exhibited by the Security Council. The best and most timely analysis and information is useless if it is not acted upon. In several country cases, the problem was not that the Council lacked the information it needed; rather it was that the Council was unwilling or unable to respond effectively, as in Syria since 2011.

## Penholder System

Starting around 2010, a process developed that prevails today whereby the P3 (France, the UK and the US) draft the majority of Council decisions. In most cases, one of the P3 drafts a resolution that is then agreed to amongst this small group. The draft is next discussed with China and Russia in an effort to reach agreement among all the permanent members, before being circulated to the rest of the Council members, often with only a short period remaining before a decision is required or proposed to be made.

While the process may be thought to have some advantages in terms of convenience

and efficiency, it has significant drawbacks that can militate against effective preventive action. To the degree that all members, permanent and non-permanent, see the penholder as the lead on an issue, they are in effect validating a default situation in which other Council members defer to the penholder. In many cases, the penholder has a strong national interest or perspective regarding the country concerned. When the penholder delays in taking action because it is preoccupied with other agenda items or when it is slow in considering an appropriate response, the Council can be paralysed unless other members fill the void. The scope for the effective contribution of elected members is severely limited.

## Conflict Management Burden

Council members often note that they are overwhelmed with the burden of managing so many existing crises, including overseeing complex peace operations and dealing with the security, humanitarian and other consequences of ongoing conflicts in which peace operations are not deployed. Some Council members express weariness, almost exhaustion, at having to manage so many conflicts simultaneously.

At the present time, the Council is experiencing very high levels of activity, mostly in a conflict management role. Its 256 meetings in 2016 was the second highest number in the last decade, second only to the 263 meetings in 2014. Its 96 decisions (77 resolutions and 19 presidential statements) in 2016 were the most since 2008. The 10 non-consensual resolutions adopted in 2016—on issues including Burundi, Israel/Palestine, the International Criminal Tribunals on the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, Libya, Liberia, nuclear non-proliferation, sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peace operations, Somalia, South Sudan and Western Sahara—were the highest number in the post-Cold War era. Last year, there were also two draft resolutions (on South Sudan and Syria) that failed to be adopted because they did not receive the nine votes required, as well as two vetoed draft resolutions (both on Syria). This level of divisiveness suggests that a significant portion of time and energy is being expended on trying to reach agreement, in large part (albeit not entirely) on ongoing crises in a conflict management capacity.

One could also argue that the Security Council does not always manage its time effectively. Perhaps this is most clearly reflected by its penchant for holding thematic debates. While these debates may be useful in highlighting important issues, they are probably overused and they certainly do not represent the best use of the Council's time. Many hours are spent in such debates, with members reading from prepared statements that often focus on general themes and concepts only indirectly linked to country-specific cases. In 2016, the Council spent 160 hours in 24 open debates; in 2006, only 67 hours were spent in 13 open debates. The open debate on the Great Lakes region during Angola's presidency in March 2016 was the only conflict-specific situation discussed in this format last year. Thematic debates take precious time away from the work of preventing potential crises and responding to existing ones. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the discussions in thematic debates succeed in generating ideas and thinking that helps the Council to carry out its country-specific work more effectively.

The aforementioned penholder system further contributes to the Security Council's conflict management burden. Prior to its emergence, while not all elected members would necessarily volunteer to draft, many did and the burden was shared among a range of members. Nowadays, as the agenda has become more crowded, drafting is concentrated mainly among three permanent members, who expend a significant amount of time and energy producing draft outcomes for the Council's consideration.

The Council finds itself in a catch-22 situation. On the one hand, the burdens placed on its workload by peace operations and other conflict management responsibilities could in time be alleviated by the success of a greater emphasis on conflict prevention. On the other hand, it is hard for the Council to focus intensively on its preventive responsibilities because it is overwhelmed with the multiple crises it must manage.

## Lack of Strategic Interaction

The Council deals with numerous complex and intractable issues on a near daily basis. In a world of proliferating threats to international peace and security, one would hope for well-considered and nuanced strategies

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resulting from rigorous analysis, debate and problem-solving. And yet, Council members themselves acknowledge that most of the Council's meetings, even the informal ones, are scripted affairs with little spontaneity and little strategic discussion. Prepared statements are read not just in public sessions, but in the closed consultations in which much of the Council's business is conducted. For several years, Council members have complained that the closed consultations should be more informal, more interactive and more focused on finding solutions to difficult problems. Nonetheless, in spite of some efforts in this direction, consultations by and large remain stilted and formal, with members reading prepared statements, often repeating what colleagues around the table have said before them, while only infrequently exchanging ideas and engaging in constructive dialogue. It may be that not all representatives are

well-versed enough on the multiple issues on the agenda to engage consistently in meaningful discussion. Political sensitivities are also at play; members often prefer the safety of reading from carefully prepared statements setting out positions approved in capitals, concerned that what is said in private could be revealed and reported in the media as a national position, when one has not been officially cleared or made public. Whatever the case may be, the culture of formality that pervades much of the Council's work is a hindrance to efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts.

### The Veto

The veto and the threat of the veto continue to play a considerable role in the growing disappointment with how the Council is managed. There is a perception among many member states that the prerogative of the veto is at times abused to the detriment

of international peace and security. Over the past five years, this sentiment has been fuelled by the Council's ineffective response to the crisis in Syria. The first Syria veto was cast by China and Russia on 4 October 2011 on a draft resolution that would have condemned the use of force by Syrian authorities and expressed the Council's intent to consider further options, including measures under Article 41 (e.g. sanctions) of the UN Charter. At the time, the conflict was only in its early stages and had claimed 3,000 lives. A unified Council exerting leverage on the Syrian government might have made a difference in mitigating or resolving the crisis at an early stage. But the veto-wielding permanent members—and at times the elected members—were and continue to be divided, largely crippling the Council's work. Since the October 2011 veto, five more draft resolutions on Syria have been vetoed. As of January 2017, the conflict has claimed over 400,000 lives.

## The Council's Prevention Efforts: A Post-Cold War Background

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been significant activity with regard to conflict prevention at the thematic level, with the Council embracing a comprehensive view of prevention in its meetings and outcomes. This has extended not only to operational prevention (actions taken to prevent the proximate outbreak of conflict or limit its escalation), but also to structural prevention (actions taken to target underlying causes of conflict such as socio-economic inequality, ethnic discrimination and lack of participatory politics) and to systemic prevention (actions taken to address cross-border threats such as the spread of diseases and climate change). The Carnegie Commission's important 1997 report *Preventing Deadly Conflict* represented an early effort to distinguish between operational and structural prevention, a distinction that was first explored in depth by the UN Secretary-General in his June 2001 report, *Prevention of Armed Conflict*. The concept of systemic prevention has gained currency in more recent years.

In keeping with the spirit and letter of the UN Charter, the Security Council has viewed itself as playing a central role in conflict

prevention in collaboration with several other actors, including other parts of the UN system, regional and subregional organisations, member states and civil society. However, the level of the Council's interest and engagement with conflict prevention has not been consistent. Furthermore, while there have been some successes over the years, the activity at the thematic level has been difficult to translate into concrete results at the country level. In practice, concerns about state sovereignty, the political interests of influential states and perceptions that the Council is overreaching its mandate have made problematic—especially in the last decade or so—efforts to apply prevention to specific country situations or to structural and systemic issues that some view as contributing to conflict, such as lack of sustainable development or climate change.

### The Early Post-Cold War Period (1992–2001): Developing a Comprehensive View of Prevention

In the early post-Cold War period, when the Security Council was no longer blocked by frequent Soviet and US vetoes, there was a sense of excitement at the newfound

potential of the organ in maintaining international peace and security, including in relation to conflict prevention. The early years of the post-Cold War era began with enthusiasm about the preventive capacities of the Council and the UN more broadly, followed by disillusionment after high-profile failures in the mid-1990s. This period ended with the events of 9/11, which shifted the Council's focus away from conflict prevention.

In January 1992, the Security Council held its first meeting of heads of state and issued a presidential statement in which members recognised that the meeting took "place at a time of momentous change" and requested a report from the Secretary-General on preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. The statement added that the "Secretary-General's analysis and recommendations could cover the role of the United Nations in identifying potential crises and areas of instability as well as the contribution to be made by regional organizations in accordance with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter in helping the work of the Council."

In the resulting report, *An Agenda for Peace*, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali

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defined preventive diplomacy as “action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur”. The report delineated confidence-building, fact-finding, early warning, preventive deployment and the use of demilitarised zones as elements of preventive diplomacy. It introduced the term “post-conflict peace-building” into mainstream UN vernacular, describing it as “comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people.” It noted the complementary relationship between preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peacebuilding as important to strategies aimed at preventing the occurrence and reoccurrence of conflict.

After the failures in addressing conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia during the early to mid-1990s—in large part due to ineffective Security Council action—the optimism of the immediate post-Cold War period had largely waned. Even without the gridlock of the Cold War, efforts to prevent and resolve conflict proved difficult. In 1996, for example, 14 of Africa’s 53 countries were engulfed in war. When the Council held its first ministerial-level debate on Africa in September 1997, it issued a presidential statement that expressed grave concern at “the number and intensity of armed conflicts on the continent”. The statement requested the Secretary-General to produce a report on the “sources of conflict in Africa, ways to prevent and address these conflicts, and how to lay the foundation for durable peace and economic growth following their resolution.”

The ensuing report, *The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa*, was released in April 1998. It offered a series of wide-ranging suggestions for enhancing the UN’s preventive work, from curtailing the proliferation of small arms and refining the use of sanctions to promoting human rights and fostering integrated peacebuilding strategies. Presidential statements in November 1999 and July 2000 mirrored the report’s broad view of prevention. Sharing much of the same language, these statements emphasised “the importance of a coordinated international response to economic, social, cultural [and] humanitarian problems”, and recognised

that “early warning, preventive deployment, preventive disarmament and post-conflict peacebuilding are interdependent and complementary components of a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy.” They recognised the importance of cooperation with regional organisations in preventing conflict and highlighted the link between development assistance and conflict prevention.

The July 2000 presidential statement invited the Secretary-General to submit a report on conflict prevention. Issued in June 2001, *Prevention of Armed Conflict* was the first comprehensive report by a Secretary-General exclusively on this topic. It distinguished between *operational prevention*, measures taken in the midst of an immediate crisis, and *structural prevention*, long-term efforts that strive to address the root causes of potential conflict (e.g. socio-economic inequality, ethnic discrimination, lack of participatory politics, human rights abuses, etc.). It stated that conflict prevention strategies should include both types of prevention, employing “a comprehensive approach that encompasses both short-term and long-term political, diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights, developmental, institutional and other measures taken by the international community, in cooperation with national and regional actors.” The report highlighted the relationship between development and sustainable peace. It offered a total of 29 recommendations for different parts of the UN system (including the Security Council), member states, NGOs and the donor community to help promote conflict prevention.

Over the years, some of the report’s recommendations for the Security Council have informed the Council’s work. Its call to integrate peacebuilding elements into the mandates of UN peacekeeping missions has become standard practice. It recommended the Council to “consider...an ad hoc Working Group” on prevention. Several months later, in March 2002, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa was established through a presidential statement that was issued during a meeting on the thematic issue, “Situation in Africa”.

The 2001 *Prevention of Armed Conflict* report noted the potential preventive impact of Security Council visiting missions. While the Council conducted several visiting missions in the 1990s and early 2000s, its 6-12 September 1999 mission to Dili, East Timor

and Jakarta, Indonesia, was the first Council visiting mission in over four years and the one with perhaps the most direct impact, although it was in response to a violent crisis rather than to prevent one from breaking out, as initially proposed by the Secretariat. This visit—which included the participation of five Council members (Malaysia, Namibia, Netherlands, Slovenia and the UK)—came in response to violent repression by pro-government militia supported by the Indonesian military, following a referendum in which the people of East Timor chose to become independent from Indonesia. The diplomacy conducted during the visit played a significant role in persuading the Indonesian government to accept international military intervention to restore security in the territory. The Council’s November 1999 presidential statement on conflict prevention pointed to the Jakarta/Dili visit as evidence that “such missions undertaken with the consent of the host country and with clear goals can be useful if dispatched in a timely and appropriate manner”.

Another useful innovation during the 1990s was the preventive deployment represented by the UN Preventive Deployment Force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (UNPREDEP) (March 1995–February 1999). The Security Council has maintained that UNPREDEP “prevented the spillover of conflict and tensions from the region to the host country” and said that it would “continue to consider the establishment of such preventive missions in appropriate circumstances”. The UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (2011–present) could be considered a later example of a preventive deployment, as it has helped to maintain a degree of stability in the disputed Abyei region straddling the Sudan-South Sudan border.

## From 9/11 to the World Summit (2001–2005): Other Issues Become a Major Focus

Following the terrorist attacks in the US on 9/11, the attention of the Council shifted and conflict prevention in general received limited attention in the years leading up to the 2005 World Summit. There were no debates on “the prevention of armed conflict” as a distinct topic during this period, while debates on related subjects were quite modest. The Security Council held one debate and issued a presidential statement on the “pacific

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settlement of disputes" in May 2003, as well as one debate on "post-conflict national reconciliation" in January 2004, which also resulted in a presidential statement.

It is striking to contrast the Security Council's limited focus on conflict prevention during this period with its intensive engagement with issues such as counter-terrorism and the Middle East. From 2002 to 2004, it held 45 meetings on counter-terrorism and 68 meetings on the "Middle East situation, including the Palestinian question," the latter largely in reaction to the heightened violence between Israel and the Palestinians in the midst of the second Intifada.

While the Security Council was engaged primarily with other matters in this period, some progress was made on preventive issues between 2002 and 2004 in the context of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. Through letters to the broader Council, the Working Group made sensible recommendations with respect to the responsibilities of the Groups of Friends and the appointment of personnel to leadership positions in the UN. For example, it suggested that Groups of Friends are most effective in supporting the Council when their responsibilities are clearly delineated and when they focus on the implementation of agreements that have already been made. Likewise, the Working Group noted that Special Representatives of the Secretary-General should be appointed based on their managerial skills and should work closely with counterparts in regional and subregional organisations. In June 2003, the Working Group played an important role in planning the joint UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)-Security Council visit to Guinea-Bissau. It later collaborated with the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau and ECOSOC's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau to develop an Emergency Economic Management Fund for the country.

## The 2005 World Summit: Key Decisions

By the 2005 World Summit, a resurgent interest in prevention had emerged, as reflected by the World Summit Outcome Document of 16 September 2005. World leaders committed themselves "to promote a culture of prevention of armed conflict as a means of effectively addressing the interconnected security and development challenges faced

by peoples throughout the world, as well as to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations for the prevention of armed conflict." They recognised the important role of the Secretary-General's good offices and endorsed his efforts to enhance his mediation capacities; a mediation support unit was subsequently established in the DPA in 2007. They endorsed the concept of 'the responsibility to protect' whereby states have a responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and the international community assumes this responsibility if they fail to do so, and welcomed the mandate given to a Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide.

While the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was a key achievement of the Summit, the Commission was given a mandate to address only post-conflict situations, following contentious discussions on the issue in the General Assembly that reflected the view held by some member states that preventive engagement could constitute a potential infringement on national sovereignty. Divisions over conflict prevention had similarly affected the debates surrounding the Brahimi report on peacekeeping and the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

The Security Council adopted resolution 1625 during the Summit in an effort to affirm its "determination to strengthen United Nations conflict prevention capacities", particularly in Africa. It reiterated calls for a comprehensive approach to prevention that had been made in its outcomes from the late 1990s and early 2000s, emphasising the need to address security, economic, social, human rights and humanitarian factors that could lead to conflict. Among other things, the resolution:

- focused strongly on the relationship between the Secretary-General and the Security Council, encouraging the Secretary-General to inform the Council of developments in regions at risk of conflict in keeping with Article 99 of the UN Charter;
- highlighted the importance of cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional arrangements in early warning and mediation efforts;
- called for special attention to be paid to

"developing...activities to prevent conflicts from arising from competition for economic resources";

- encouraged African states to continue to work with the UN Secretariat and UN regional offices to implement "measures aimed at securing peace, security, stability, democracy and sustainable development";
- called for special attention to be paid to enhancing the capacities of civil society groups (including women's groups) promoting peace;
- emphasised the importance of developing policy approaches that promote good governance and human rights; and
- reaffirmed the Council's determination to "take action against illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources and high-value commodities in areas where it contributes to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict".

## 2005-2016: New Developments Regarding Prevention

In the years since the World Summit, the Security Council has held numerous thematic debates and adopted outcomes that have focused on a wide range of prevention-related activities. One prominent theme that has emerged has been its willingness to engage more assiduously in systemic (i.e. cross-border factors of a global nature) and structural (i.e. underlying political and socio-economic factors) threats to peace and security, in spite of the resistance of some members. While there has been considerable discussion of prevention at the thematic level, the Council has struggled when trying to prevent large-scale violence in a number of countries. This has contributed to a resurgence of interest in and analysis of how the Council and the broader UN system can strengthen their preventive capacities.

The notion of systemic prevention was highlighted in the Secretary-General's July 2006 progress report on the *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, which argued that conflict prevention strategies should address transnational risks to "bolster the chances of peace". In August 2007, the Security Council issued a presidential statement during a debate on the "role of the Security Council in conflict prevention and resolution, particularly in Africa," which cited the 2006 progress report, noting that systemic prevention—along with

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structural and operational prevention—should be part of a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy. Systemic threats to peace and security discussed in recent years by the Council have included drug-trafficking, climate change, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, human trafficking and counter-terrorism.

In recent years, counter-terrorism has increasingly been discussed in the context of prevention, in large part due to the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and especially in relation to the theme of countering violent extremism. During its April 2015 presidency, Jordan organised an open debate on “the role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace”. The Security Council followed up this debate with the adoption of a resolution on youth, peace and security on 9 December 2015 that recognised the contribution of youth to the prevention and resolution of conflicts and warned against the rise of radicalisation to violence and violent extremism among youth. In May 2016, during the Egyptian presidency, the Council held an open debate focusing on countering the narratives and ideologies of terrorism; a presidential statement was issued that requested the Counter-Terrorism Committee, working with other UN actors and member states, to present a proposal to the Council by 30 April 2017 for a “comprehensive international framework” to counter the use of narratives by ISIL, Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups that encourage, motivate and recruit members to commit terrorist acts. Furthermore, the role of women in countering terrorism and violent extremism was the focus of an open briefing by the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee on 9 September 2015.

The link between security and development has become a recurring topic in Security Council deliberations. For example, there was a briefing on “Prevention of Conflicts in Africa: Addressing the Root Causes” in April 2013 under the Rwandan presidency; a ministerial-level open debate on “Inclusive Development for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security” under the Chilean presidency in January 2015; and a ministerial-level open debate on “Security, Development, and the Root Causes of Conflict” under the UK presidency in November 2015. Both the April 2013 and the January 2015 meetings resulted in presidential statements that underlined the relationship between security and

development, reiterating a key point agreed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

In 2015, one of the key developments within the UN system with potential impact on the Council’s prevention work took place in the General Assembly. In September, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as targets to be achieved by 2030. The development framework set by the SDGs emphasised the promotion of peaceful societies, justice and strong institutions, as outlined in Goal 16. The previous development framework, the Millennium Development Goals, operating from 2000 to 2015, had focused primarily on overall development and poverty reduction. By adopting the SDGs, an overwhelming majority of the UN membership has recognised the special role of promoting peaceful societies in enhancing sustainable development. This could create an opportunity for greater cooperation between the Security Council, as the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, and other UN bodies responsible for the development agenda.

Whether and how this will happen remains to be seen. The widening scope of the Security Council’s preventive work has been accompanied by difficult dynamics among its members. While it is generally acknowledged that prevention is a multifaceted concept, there remain different interpretations of what the precise role of the Council should be. Some members, including the P3, have an expansive view of what constitutes a threat to international peace and security; thus, they are generally more amenable to discussing within the Council the connections among human rights, development, climate change and peace and security. Other members, including China and Russia, seem to be wary of the Council taking on issues that they perceive as beyond the Council’s mandate to maintain international peace and security. For example, at the Council’s 17 November 2015 debate on conflict prevention, Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said, “questions of international law, human rights and development... should fall to the General Assembly”. Churkin has subsequently maintained that human right violations and a lack of development are not necessarily indicators of conflict, and that interference in the affairs of sovereign states

has been the cause of several crises, referring to US interventions in Iraq and Libya.

Divisions have also coloured the Security Council’s discussion of violent extremism. Even though all Council members agree on the magnitude of the problem and the need to address it, tensions exist among members regarding how to strike a balance between preventing violent extremism and respecting state sovereignty and between developing counter-terrorism strategies and upholding human rights.

At the country level, the past several years have been particularly difficult from a prevention standpoint. Since 2011, the Security Council and the broader international community have been unable to prevent the onset of, and in some cases escalation of, intractable conflicts in the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen. Instead, a significant amount of time, money and effort has been spent trying to alleviate the impact on these and other conflicts on civilians.

When the Secretary-General issued his report to the Security Council on conflict prevention in September 2015, he acknowledged that this “was a difficult time to write about conflict prevention.” Sensing the urgency of the times, he called for Council members and all member states to recommit themselves to conflict prevention. He took note of the changing landscape and nature of conflicts due to the increasingly active role of non-state actors and their use of evolving tactics. The Secretary-General pointed to the increasing number of active conflicts throughout the world, with civilians bearing the heaviest burden in regard to the number of casualties and displaced persons.

In the context of this troubling international landscape, three reviews of the UN’s peace and security architecture reported in 2015: the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO); the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) review of the peacebuilding architecture; and the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security. A central theme linking the three reviews was their emphasis on the importance of conflict prevention.

## HIPPO Report

The HIPPO, appointed to review the current state of peace operations, submitted its report to the Secretary-General on 16 June

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2015. It called for four essential shifts that would allow the UN to position its peace operations to better respond to current and future challenges: ensuring the primacy of politics, a flexible use of the full spectrum of peace operations, the need for stronger partnerships and a field-focused UN Secretariat and people-centred peace operations.

The HIPPO report highlighted how efforts aimed at conflict prevention struggle to galvanise the necessary political urgency for action, remaining “the poor relative of better-resourced peace operations deployed during and after armed conflict.” The report welcomed the establishment of UN regional political offices, which serve as forward platforms for preventive diplomacy and mediation. It warned against the “chronic severe under resourcing of prevention activities” and the lack of predictable funding, advocating such funding through the regular budget. It highlighted how the Security Council has infrequently engaged in emerging conflicts, focusing instead on dealing with armed conflicts and emergencies after they occur. Hence, it called for earlier Council engagement, including deliberations in informal formats, regionally-focused discussions and visits to turbulent areas.

The report stressed that political sensitivities regarding the Secretariat’s role in bringing to the Security Council’s attention any matter that might threaten international peace and security must not deter the Secretary-General from bringing early analysis and frank advice to the Council, as provided for in Article 99 of the UN Charter. It posited that such analysis should be undertaken by UN country teams with enhanced preventive capacities, as well as by the DPA. In this context, the report firmly supported the Secretary-General’s Human Rights Up Front action plan, launched in December 2013, reiterating its call for the UN system to work closely together to identify early indicators of potential conflict, to adopt a common analysis and strategy, to ensure that headquarters and field are aligned to prioritise human rights concerns in conflict prevention and good offices and then to act on UN responsibilities.

## AGE Report on Peacebuilding

On 29 June 2015, the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) submitted its report on the UN’s peacebuilding architecture. The

AGE report was a product of the review process mandated by the Security Council and the General Assembly for the tenth anniversaries of the PBC, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO).

The AGE report’s overarching thesis was that peacebuilding is an activity that happens not only in post-conflict situations but rather as a process before, during and after conflict. Peacebuilding should therefore be seen as a responsibility of the entire UN system, and greater emphasis should be placed on conflict prevention. The AGE suggested that a more appropriate term to reflect this broader understanding of peacebuilding could be “sustaining peace”.

The report triggered an intergovernmental review process, led by Angola on behalf of the Security Council and Australia on behalf of the General Assembly, to consider the findings of the AGE. That culminated in the concurrent adoption by the General Assembly and the Council of substantively identical resolutions on the peacebuilding architecture on 27 April 2016. According to the resolutions, sustaining peace includes “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict...and should flow through all three pillars of the United Nation’s engagement [peace and security, human rights and sustainable development] at all stages of conflict”.

## Global Study on Women, Peace and Security

The Global Study was mandated by Security Council resolution 2122 of 18 October 2013, which noted persistent gaps in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. It observed that there were serious deficiencies in both the financial and human resources committed to this agenda. The study found that women’s inclusion and participation is central to long-term peace and security.

The Global Study focused on both operational and structural causes of conflict. It found that increased violence against women is often a precursor to conflict and that women have an important role to play in early warning processes. It highlighted the effectiveness of women as mediators. It concurred with the AGE report’s “approach to conflict prevention which views peace as inextricably

linked with development and human rights.”

The Global Study made several recommendations with regard to conflict prevention. Among other things, the study called for women’s participation in early warning mechanisms, enhanced data collection and awareness regarding violence against women and the creation of new strategies to incorporate women into preventive diplomacy efforts.

## Towards a New Prevention Era?

New Secretary-General António Guterres has asserted that he will focus intensively on conflict prevention. In his April 2016 vision statement, he called for the development of “a comprehensive, modern and effective operational peace architecture, encompassing prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and long-term development—the ‘peace continuum’”. He said during his 12 December 2016 swearing-in ceremony that prevention must be integrated into the three pillars of the UN’s work: peace and security, human rights and development. And in interviews he has emphasised the need for a “surge in diplomacy for peace.”

On 10 January 2017, in his first address to the Security Council, Guterres outlined his vision for conflict prevention and sustaining peace in a ministerial-level open debate on these issues under Sweden’s presidency. He maintained that “millions of people in crisis look to this Council to preserve global stability and to protect them from harm.” He asserted that there are many interconnected causes of conflict—including the competition over resources and power, marginalisation, inequality and poor governance—which are in turn exacerbated by factors such as climate change, population growth, terrorism and organised crime. However, in spite of the interconnected nature of these threats, the UN system had responded to them in a fragmented way.

To respond to these interconnected threats, Guterres outlined reforms he was setting in motion for equipping the UN to do a better job at preventing conflict. He noted that he had formed an Executive Committee to “increase our capacity to integrate all pillars of the United Nations, under a common vision for action.” He referred to the appointment of a senior advisor on policy, whose primary responsibility would be to “map the prevention capacities of the United Nations system and to bring them together into an integrated

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platform for early detection and action.” Guterres further emphasised the importance of women’s participation in decision-making processes and of addressing youth unemployment as factors promoting peace and stability. He said that he would launch an initiative to enhance mediation capacity, both at UN Headquarters and in the field, and to support regional and national mediation efforts.

The new Secretary-General highlighted the importance of the Security Council’s role in prevention. He asked the Council to make more use of the UN Charter’s Chapter VI tools, while pledging that he would support

such efforts through his good offices. He said that preventive action can happen more quickly when the Council collaborates with other parts of the UN system and regional organisations in response to warning signs of potential conflict. Guterres added that trust among member states and between member states and the UN is needed for early action; in this sense, he pledged his preparedness “to foster a more trusting relationship and to improve communications with the Council...”.

In his first days in office, the Secretary-General made a number of decisions relevant to the UN’s peace and security work, in

addition to those addressed in his speech. He has decided to co-locate the regional divisions of the DPA and DPKO in an effort to promote more coherent analysis and decision-making. Guterres furthermore established an inter-departmental internal review team to study the proposals for change in Secretariat peace and security architecture in the three 2015 reviews and to provide options by June 2017 for improvements to the functioning of the peace and security work of the Secretariat. It will probably be several months before one can gauge the impact of his changes on the UN’s preventive work.

## Council Tools for Analysis and Action

The Security Council has a variety of means to gather information and to take action to fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security. By and large, the Council could make better use of its tools in a way that will help it to understand, analyse and respond to emerging crises.

### Meeting Formats

The ability of the Council to receive frank and timely analysis and information is critical to its effective engagement on conflict prevention, mediation, management and resolution. In recent years, there has been significant experimentation with various meeting formats designed to inform the Security Council’s decision-making. While the Secretariat is the primary source of information for the Council, members also receive information from other sources through different meeting formats that have developed over time. However, it has to be said that—due to the political sensitivities of discussing matters not already on the agenda and the fact that the Council is in perpetual conflict management mode—it very rarely uses these meeting formats for preventive purposes and only sometimes for a Council role in mediation. Hence, while platforms for preventive discussion exist, they are in general not being effectively utilised.

### Horizon Scanning Sessions

Initiated by the UK in November 2010, horizon scanning was an item on the monthly

programme of work, entitled “Briefing by DPA”, designed to promote better conflict prevention and mediation. These briefings, held in consultations, were usually provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and topics were chosen by the department, identifying situations deemed to be at potential risk of conflict. It was hoped that the format would allow for an unscripted exchange of ideas. Horizon scanning got off to a strong start, being held every month from November 2010 to March 2012, with the exception of December 2010 under the US presidency. However, the cycle was broken again by the US in April 2012. After that, the briefings were held sporadically until the last one was convened in December 2013.

The horizon scanning briefings ranged from covering just a single issue to more than nine. A number of issues that required the sustained attention of the Council—such as Gulf of Guinea piracy, Tuareg activity in northern Mali and instability in Guinea-Bissau following the death of President Malam Bacai Sanhá—were first raised at these meetings. The sessions also helped members to be updated on rapidly evolving situations in Libya, Syria and Yemen, as well as Iraq, which at the time was only discussed infrequently. They were useful in alerting members to potential instability in countries such as Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives and Mexico that were not agenda items.

A number of factors led to the demise of horizon scanning as a monthly item on the

programme of work. The stigma attached to a country being on the Security Council’s radar screen made some Council members uncomfortable with discussing issues not on the formal agenda. The horizon scanning’s treatment of elections in particular regions, notably Africa and Latin America, generated negative reactions, while discussions held on situations such as Myanmar and Israel/Palestine were politically sensitive for certain permanent members. Furthermore, some members maintained that they did not have sufficient time to prepare for the meetings, with DPA tending to inform them of the topics to be discussed only a day or two beforehand. Over time, the interactivity of the discussions diminished with members reading prepared statements as they would in other consultations. Some members felt that the quality of the analysis could have been better, and that much of the information being provided could be found in the public record. DPA itself appears to have lost enthusiasm for the briefings, and by early 2014 was actively discouraging members from holding these sessions during their monthly presidencies.

Although horizon scanning was discontinued, it was replaced in May 2014 by a more informal DPA briefing that does not appear as a standing item on the programme of work. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs is the most regular briefer, although other DPA officials, including Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, have briefed at these sessions, which are held in

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a Secretariat conference room rather than in the consultations room. The briefings are often used to keep members informed of pertinent developments in countries on the Council's agenda, but which may not be garnering significant attention at the time. They are mostly attended at the political coordinator level, although permanent representatives and their deputies have attended as well, depending on the topic(s) of discussion. In 2016, only four of these sessions were convened.

## *Situational Awareness Briefings*

In September 2016, a new initiative was launched out of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General after requests by then Security Council member New Zealand. The goal of these informal meetings, which are not listed on the programme of work, is to aid conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy and early engagement, by providing members with timely and holistic briefings that integrate analysis and information from across the UN's peace and security, human rights and development pillars. These sessions are chaired by an official in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, which sets the agenda. They include briefings by senior representatives from UN entities, including DPA, DPKO, OCHA and OHCHR. One hour in length, the meetings are intended to be interactive, with visuals used to make them more engaging.

To date, most but not all Security Council members have found these meetings useful. Several members have participated at ambassador level. Japan, the UK and Uruguay referred favourably to the situational awareness sessions during the 10 January 2017 open debate on conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

One interesting pattern thus far is that the meetings have only focused on situations—Boko Haram, the CAR, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq and Mali—already on the Security Council agenda. It remains to be seen whether over time the Secretariat will brief on issues not already on the agenda in an upstream preventive context.

The coordinated, holistic analysis provided by these briefings is in line with the Human Rights up Front initiative that was launched in December 2013 in response to the recommendations of the November 2012

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS BRIEFINGS	
Month	Issue(s) Discussed
September 2016	Mali and Boko Haram
October 2016	Situation in northern Iraq (Mosul)
November 2016	Colombia and Haiti
December 2016	Protection of civilians issues facing MINUSCA, MONUSCO and MINUSMA

report of the internal review panel on UN action in the final stages of the civil war in Sri Lanka in 2008-2009, which found significant failings by the UN system in the face of human rights violations against civilians. Among other things, the Human Rights up Front Action Plan, which was developed by an inter-departmental and inter-agency UN working group, strives to adopt a “One-UN approach” to facilitate early coordinated action, and to develop a common UN system of information management regarding serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and thus strives to be able to provide member states with candid information with respect to peoples at risk of, or subject to, such violations. Addressing the lessons of the past, the main purpose of Human Rights up Front is to ensure that the UN system does everything in its power to prevent serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, in accordance with the UN Charter.

## *Arria-Formula Meetings*

An informal format created in 1992, the Arria-formula meetings allow members to receive insights and information from people with knowledge and expertise from outside the UN system, although UN officials frequently participate in these meetings as well. This distinguishes them from consultations, where only Security Council members and UN officials are permitted to participate, and they can be convened by any Council member. Since 2012, after only three such meetings in 2010-2011, there has been a significant increase in the use of Arria-formula meetings, with 12 being held in 2016 alone. In addition to channelling pertinent information to members, a benefit of these meetings is their informality, which facilitates

discussion on sensitive topics that might be more difficult to address in formal meetings. For example, the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was discussed in an Arria-formula meeting in April 2014 that was organised by then Council member Australia, France and the US, prior to its placement on the formal agenda. The situation in the DPRK ultimately became an agenda item separate from the non-proliferation issue on 22 December 2014, after a procedural vote that followed an objection by China that the Council was not mandated to consider human rights issues.

Climate change is an example of a systemic threat to international peace and security that has been discussed in Arria-formula meetings. Some members maintain that the Security Council is not the appropriate forum for discussing climate change and that by doing so it encroaches on the work of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Council debates on climate change have been divisive. However, Arria-formula meetings have helped to defuse the political tensions surrounding Council members' engagement with this issue; they have allowed members to hear the views of diverse and informed individuals in an informal format that is not on the programme of work. Thus, Pakistan and the UK organised an Arria-formula meeting on the “security dimensions of climate change” in February 2013 in which then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was among the speakers, while Malaysia and Spain hosted one on “climate change as a threat multiplier” in June 2015.

## *Informal Interactive Dialogues*

The informal interactive dialogue, first used in 2009, is similar to the Arria-formula

# Council Tools for Analysis and Action (con't)

meeting in that it allows members to hear from non-UN individuals. However, there are some notable differences between the Arria-formula and the informal interactive dialogue. Briefers in informal interactive dialogues are usually high-level officials, the meetings are chaired by the Security Council president and access is limited to Council members, whereas Arria-formula meetings are sometimes open to attendance by the wider UN membership and people outside the UN system, and are even occasionally webcast on UNTV. The dialogues frequently focus on country situations, and occasionally on conflict mediation, although one would be hard-pressed to cite an example of up-stream prevention being discussed in these meetings. One example from recent years of a dialogue on conflict mediation was the 27 June 2014 interactive dialogue in which members met to discuss the South Sudan mediation process with Seyoum Messfin, the chief mediator of the IGAD-facilitated South Sudan peace talks. Similarly, Thabo Mbeki, the chair of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, has over the years briefed members on a number of occasions on relations between Sudan and South

Sudan and on internal political processes in Sudan within informal interactive dialogues. Most recently, Mbeki briefed members on 12 January 2017 via video teleconference on the political process in Darfur, a conflict now in its 14th year.

## Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa was established in March 2002. It was designed to be an informal body whose chair would report to the Security Council "whenever appropriate", according to its terms of reference.

In the Terms of Reference, the Working Group's mandate includes:

- monitoring the execution of recommendations from S/PRST/2002/2 (which focused on the relationship between the Council and regional and subregional organisations in Africa) and other presidential statements and resolutions concerning conflict prevention and resolution in Africa;
- offering recommendations on how to strengthen cooperation between the Security Council and ECOSOC and other UN

bodies that do work in Africa;

- examining issues of a cross-conflict or regional nature relating to the Security Council's work on conflict prevention and resolution in Africa; and
- offering recommendations on how to strengthen cooperation between the Security Council and regional and subregional organisations in Africa that deal with conflict prevention and resolution.

In its early years, the Working Group, which has always been chaired by an African member of the Security Council, was willing to engage in country-specific discussions. For example, the Working Group addressed the situation in Guinea-Bissau when it was chaired by Mauritius in 2002, and then continued its work on Guinea-Bissau and discussed the situation in the DRC under Angola's chairmanship in 2003-2004. However, since that time, its focus has been on thematic issues (usually in the context of briefings and seminars), and its level of activity has varied depending on the chair. A positive aspect of its work since 2013 has been its role in helping to prepare the annual meetings of the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC).

## AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

Year	Chair	Activities/Issues Discussed
2002	Mauritius	Groups of Friends; Special Representatives of the Secretary-General; and Guinea Bissau
2003-2004	Angola	Cooperation between the Security Council and ECOSOC; International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region; the DRC; Guinea-Bissau; Security Council missions to Central and West Africa; and resolving conflicts in the 21st century
2005	Benin	Cooperation between the Security Council and ECOSOC; the role of the Security Council in enhancing the UN's conflict prevention capacity; cooperation between the UN and regional organisations in peace and security
2006-2007	Republic of the Congo	Briefings/seminars on conflict prevention
2008	South Africa	The role of the UN Department of Political Affairs in conflict prevention and resolution; and the responsibility to protect
2009-2010	Uganda	The situation in West Africa (UNOWA); addressing the needs of states emerging from conflict; the establishment of UNOWA; early warning mechanisms; UN-AU partnership on security sector reform
2011-2012	South Africa	Enhancing the Working Group's effectiveness; cooperation between the Security Council and the AU PSC; early warning mechanisms and indicators of risk of election-related violence; root causes of conflict and emerging peace and security challenges in Africa; lessons learned in African conflict prevention; enhancing UN-AU cooperation; rule of law and justice in conflict prevention and resolution

# Council Tools for Analysis and Action (con't)

## AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

Year	Chair	Activities/Issues Discussed
2013	Rwanda	Assessment of the Working Group's activities and how they could have more impact on the Security Council's work; institution-building and good governance as prevention tools in Africa; preparations for the annual UN Security Council and AU PSC meeting
2014	Nigeria	Preparations for the UN Security Council-AU PSC annual meeting
2015-2016	Angola	Preparations for the annual UNSC and AU PSC meeting; cooperation between the UN and the AU in peacebuilding; mitigating pre- and post-electoral challenges in Africa; the AU's role and its cooperation with the UN regarding preventive diplomacy in Africa; and cooperation between the PBC and the UN Security Council for sustaining peace in Africa

### Security Council Visiting Missions

Since the Security Council first travelled to Cambodia and Viet Nam in 1964, visiting missions have been used as a tool for information gathering, support for peace operations and peace processes, conflict mediation and preventive diplomacy. As of January 2017, the Council has undertaken 55 visiting missions to over 45 countries since the end of the Cold War. While visiting missions consisted of a sub-set of Council members throughout much of the UN's history, the practice over the past 15 years has been for all 15 members to take part in them.

The Council's five visiting missions in 2016 were the most in any calendar year since 2000. These included missions to: Burundi and the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (21-23 January 2016); Mali, Guinea-Bissau and UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in Dakar, Senegal (3-9 March 2016); Somalia, Kenya and Egypt (17-22 May 2016); South Sudan and Addis Ababa, including meetings with the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (2-5 September 2016); and the DRC and Angola (11-14 November 2016).

A key challenge is trying to ensure that the Security Council delivers a unified message to its interlocutors (whether government officials, opposition or rebel leaders, or civil society representatives) and maintains its sense of unity and purpose after returning from the field. Ideally, a unified Council can provide political support for the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General—and others playing a mediating role—to continue to exercise good offices when the Council leaves. However, the Council (and the UN system more broadly) loses its leverage when the parties to a conflict

realise that there are divisions among Council members that can be exploited to their benefit.

Recent examples make this point. Lack of unity hindered the effectiveness of the Council's March 2015 visit to Burundi, when members appeared to differ in meetings with Burundian politicians over the legality and legitimacy of President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to pursue a third term. Members were unified during the September 2016 visit to South Sudan in demanding that the government abide by resolution 2304, which called for the government to accept the deployment of a Regional Protection Force consisting of 4,000 soldiers or else face "appropriate measures" including an arms embargo; however, this unity evaporated following the visit, and the government has vacillated with regard to permitting the force to be deployed. Similarly, they were unified in their messaging during the November 2016 visiting mission to the DRC, but some differences emerged subsequently and the presidential statement that it had been hoped would be issued right after the mission's return took over two weeks to agree.

Better preparation and follow-up could enhance the effectiveness of Council visits. Negotiation of terms of reference is generally at expert-level and involves little discussion of strategic purpose among permanent representatives. Furthermore, the degree of unity forged during a visit tends to dissipate when participants return to the Council's over loaded agenda, while follow-up is overly-dependent on the penholder.

### Regional Offices

One positive development over the years has been efforts of UN regional offices conducting conflict prevention and mediation work. The

2015 HIPPO report called them a "particularly effective innovation" noting that they "have played a credible though discreet facilitating role in addressing emerging or incipient conflict." There are currently three such special political offices. The first to be established was the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) in 2002, which was expanded into UNOWAS in 2016. This was followed by the creation of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) in 2007, and by the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in 2011. Collectively these offices have played a constructive role in helping to mediate crises in Kyrgyzstan (2010), Guinea (2013) and Burkina Faso (2014), among other cases. HIPPO called for the establishment of additional regional offices, including one for the North Africa and West Asia, but this has yet to happen.

These offices were established through an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the Security Council. While the mandate of UNRCCA is open-ended, the Council renews the mandate of UNOWAS and UNOCA every three years, through a further exchange of letters. As a general rule, the Council receives a briefing, which is followed by consultations, on UNOWAS and UNOCA every six months, while members are also briefed on UNRCCA on a semi-annual basis, but in a closed session.

The work of these offices is discussed on other occasions depending on developments in the field, with the Security Council at times providing political backing for their efforts. A recent example of this was the electoral crisis in The Gambia, which ended with Yahya Jammeh's decision on 21 January 2017—amid intense international pressure—to relinquish

# Council Tools for Analysis and Action (con't)

power to Adama Barrow, who defeated him in the 1 December 2016 presidential election. Diplomatic efforts in the region to end the crisis included the engagement of the Special Representative to West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, encouraged by the Council to do so in collaboration with the AU and ECOWAS.

## Article 34 of the UN Charter

Article 34 indicates that the Security Council “may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute...”. This lends legitimacy to the Council’s conflict prevention efforts, notwithstanding concerns about sovereignty. Commissions of inquiry, Council fact-finding missions and the establishment of investigatory subcommittees of the Council (as were often undertaken during the Cold War) are examples of Article 34 in action. One example from recent years of the Council employing Article 34 was its December 2013 decision to call on the Secretary-General to launch an international commission of inquiry to investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Central African Republic.

## Sanctions

Sanctions are among the tools available to the Security Council under Article 41 of the UN Charter, which says that “measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions.” While not a strictly prevention tool, sanctions, or the threat of sanctions, can be used to support political processes by exerting leverage on intransigent parties in an effort to shape their behaviour. Certain sanctions measures, such as arms embargoes, can play a role in preventing an armed conflict from expanding.

The views on the potential effectiveness of sanctions in the Council vary widely. During the 10 January 2017 debate on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, Matthias Fekl—France’s Minister of State for Foreign Trade, the Promotion of Tourism and French Nationals Abroad—maintained that sanctions had compelled parties to negotiate during conflicts in Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia. Other Council members as well support the

use of sanctions as a tool supporting political processes. However, members such as China and Russia have been wary of their use in several different contexts.

There is often considerable ambiguity regarding how sanctions are meant to reinforce other aspects of UN engagement, such as peacekeeping, mediation or peacebuilding. It is not clear that there is always close coordination between the Security Council in considering sanctions and the UN Special Representative or Envoy, or other mediator, leading the efforts to prevent or mitigate conflict. There may also be insufficient consideration of alternative policy options being effectively ruled out by imposing sanctions under certain circumstances.

## Peacebuilding Commission

The 27 April 2016 Security Council and General Assembly concurrent resolutions were the most comprehensive resolutions adopted on peacebuilding at the UN. They expanded the understanding of peacebuilding from being perceived as a post-conflict activity to a process occurring before, during and after conflict; recognised peacebuilding as a responsibility of the entire UN system; and placed new emphasis on conflict prevention. By envisioning peacebuilding as something that occurs across the ‘peace continuum’, the resolutions opened political space for enhanced interaction between the Security Council and the PBC and created the potential for the PBC to consider a more diverse array of country and regional issues.

Over the years, the P5 have often perceived the PBC as seeking to intrude on the peace and security prerogatives of the Security Council and have been sceptical about the added value it has provided to the Council’s work. While it remains to be seen whether and how this will change over time, one key area where engagement of the PBC could be constructive is in the mandating, review and drawdown of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The Council expressed its intention to regularly request and draw upon the PBC’s “specific, strategic and targeted advice” on these matters in resolution 2282. To date, it has yet to follow through on this intention in any meaningful way.

## International Court of Justice

The UN Charter underscores the potential role of the ICJ as a prevention and mediation instrument. As noted in the first section of this report, Article 36:3 states that the Security Council “should take into consideration that legal disputes should as a general rule be referred... to the International Court of Justice...”. Furthermore, under Article 96 of the Charter, the Council “may request the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on any legal question”, while Article 94:2 says that the Council “may, if it deems necessary, make recommendations or decide upon measures to be taken to give effect to [an ICJ] judgment.”

These articles clearly give the Security Council the power and the responsibility to have recourse to and interact with the ICJ and with states that are unwilling to abide by a ruling in their case. However, although the Council has been provided with these significant tools by the Charter, it has lacked the political will to employ them when they could play an important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It has only once recommended that a dispute be settled through the ICJ: in April 1947 in a maritime dispute between Albania and the UK known as the Corfu Channel incident. Furthermore, it has only once requested an advisory opinion from the ICJ: in July 1970, when it requested the Court’s advisory opinion on the “legal consequences for States of the continued presence of South Africa in Namibia”. At present, of the permanent members only the UK accepts the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court.

One of the responsibilities of the Security Council under Chapter VI is to remind states that at least some of their disputes may be resolved by an early recourse to judicial settlement, particularly before the ICJ. If the Council were to begin using its power to recommend to parties to a dispute that their differences could be settled before the ICJ, this could influence more states to do so over time. (For more on the relationship between the Council and the ICJ, please see our 20 December 2016 research report *The Rule of Law: Can the Security Council make better use of the International Court of Justice?*)

## Observations and Options

In his January 2008 report on the implementation of resolution 1625, then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon concluded that “despite the increased recognition of the utility and effectiveness of preventive measures, a considerable gap remains between rhetoric and reality...the overriding challenge for the international community remains the development of more effective strategies for preventing conflicts”. This would be a fair assessment of the state of affairs nine years later, especially given the limited progress in preventing and mitigating conflicts in Syria, South Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere.

One would be hard-pressed to find any improvement in the effectiveness of the Security Council’s conflict prevention efforts in recent years. Nor does the Council invest significant time and energy in conflict prevention. Discussions of prevention at the thematic level rarely impact the Council’s work in country-specific contexts. One senior diplomat recently said in private that conflict prevention is “the most important thing we do, but the thing we are worst at.” There are many reasons for this which we have tried to reflect in this report, including concerns about state sovereignty, the political interests of influential states and the Council’s conflict management burden, among others.

However, prevention is a core responsibility of the Security Council in the UN Charter. In an August 2014 open debate on conflict prevention, then UK Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant rightly said, “The Council was designed to be a smoke detector, not just a fire extinguisher”. Furthermore, if the Council does not do a better job at prevention, it will be perpetually doomed to managing an oppressive array of intractable conflicts, with their attendant human misery and onerous financial implications.

In spite of its overall poor track record in recent years, there are some positive signs. The Security Council does possess an impressive variety of tools to prevent conflicts or resolve them at an early stage; it needs to find a way to use them more frequently and more effectively. The new Secretary-General’s commitment to prevention is also encouraging. He has already put in place reforms designed to strengthen the Secretariat’s preventive capacities and has vowed to work closely with the Council with regard to preventive diplomacy and conflict mediation. The Human Rights

up Front initiative has shown promise in integrating analysis from across the different pillars of the UN system to inform decision-making; the situational awareness briefings are an outgrowth of this “One-UN” mind-set.

Lastly, it should be noted that the Security Council is only one of many actors responsible for conflict prevention, albeit a very important one. The Council itself has made this point in its resolutions and presidential statements throughout the post-Cold War era. Other parts of the UN system, regional arrangements, member states and civil society actors also have critical roles to play. This suggests the Council does not—and in fact, should not—always take the lead role in preventing and mediating conflict. In a number of successful mediations from the past decade—e.g., Guinea (2009-2010), Kenya (2008) and Kyrgyzstan (2010-2011)<sup>1</sup>—the Council’s role was limited. Many good offices efforts, by the UN and others, take place in a discreet, low key manner, which is not conducive to the highly publicised diplomatic engagement often associated with the Council. What is important, however, is that in situations in which the Council is not in the lead, it provides the political backing to those who are when they need it. And, of course, when other efforts are faltering, the Council has a responsibility to step in and do what it can to help defuse crises.

Based on the analysis in this report, the following options are intended to stimulate thinking on how the Security Council can improve its conflict prevention and mediation efforts:

- Given the highly scripted nature of most Council meetings, more efforts could be made to hold strategic, interactive discussions among senior diplomats on emerging and evolving crises. The monthly breakfast of permanent representatives initiated in 2015 is a positive development. In general, Council consultations and other meetings need to become more interactive, more spontaneous and more geared toward substantive problem-solving if the Council is to improve its decision-making.
- As suggested in the HIPPO report, efforts could be made to strengthen the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. Rather than focusing on thematic issues, it could renew its consideration of country situations, generate ideas for how to approach these
- and report to the Council with options for action. The Working Group could similarly develop strategies for addressing cross-border threats such as terrorism, climate change or HIV/AIDS, consistent with its mandated terms of reference calling on the Working Group to “examine ... regional and cross-conflict issues that affect the Council’s work on African conflict prevention and resolution.” Some of these changes would require the Working Group to adopt more flexible working methods that include planning meetings quickly in response to the rapidly evolving peace and security landscape in Africa; currently the Working Group agrees to an annual programme of work early in the calendar year. The Council could also consider how to ensure equivalent consideration of emerging conflicts in other regions.
- The Council could make use of smaller, more quickly deployed visiting missions. During the Cold War, visiting missions often took place in the context of ad hoc sub-committees established by the Council that included a sub-group of members who were tasked with investigating an issue and reporting back to the Council. This could be a useful model to explore. Smaller missions would be able to deploy more quickly, given that logistical and security arrangements would be less onerous. Furthermore, they might be able to engage more easily in the type of face-to-face preventive diplomacy and mediation that can be difficult with a larger group.
- Given the positive experience of the UN’s regional offices in conflict prevention and mediation, the Council could request a report from the Secretary-General regarding how it can enhance its support for such offices. The report could also include an analysis of the potential implications of establishing additional regional offices, including where they are most needed, what value-added they might have, and how the Council could best collaborate with them.
- The elected members could take greater initiative in drafting Council outcomes, including in the face of a developing crisis, rather than waiting for the permanent members to act. It should further be noted that the elected members can at times play a useful bridging role between permanent

1. For a good discussion of these mediation efforts, please see Charles T. Call, “UN Mediation and the Politics of Transition after Constitutional Crises,” <https://www.ipinst.org/2012/02/un-mediation-and-the-politics-of-transition-after-constitutional-crises-2>, New York, International Peace Institute, February 2012

# Observations and Options (con't)

members at loggerheads over an issue. The penholders on the humanitarian track in Syria have always been elected members, beginning with Australia and Luxembourg in 2013; without their initiative, the Council's authorisation of cross-border and cross-line aid in Syria—albeit with all the restrictions placed on it by the Syrian government—might not have been possible, given the divisions among the permanent members. While this is not an example of conflict prevention, it does indicate the important role the elected members can play in the Council's work in general, including potentially in cases related to prevention and mediation.

- There could be greater interaction between the Council and the PBC. In this sense, the Council could follow through on its intention in resolution 2282 to regularly request and draw upon the PBC's "specific, strategic, and targeted" advice in the formation, review and drawdown

of peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

- While the situational awareness briefings appear to have been useful thus far, one option moving forward would be to include the participation of the UN Development Programme in addition to the other UN entities that already brief. This would enable members to learn more about the relationship between development and security in the country situations discussed.
- Sanctions could be used more effectively to support mediation processes if they are linked to a clear political strategy. Prior to authorisation, the Council could take a more considered approach that systematically determines the objectives and potential negative consequences of their implementation. This would include efforts to ensure that the sanctions approach is aligned with the political strategy being pursued by the key mediators, which means that Council decisions should be

made in consultation with them. Furthermore, more efforts could be made to build incentives and disincentives into the design of sanctions regimes, including for example by making aid conditional on compliance or by easing sanctions as behaviour improves.

- The Council could make better use of the ICJ. For example, it could, when appropriate, recommend that states involved in a situation that threatens international peace and security resolve the legal aspects of their dispute through the ICJ. Furthermore, it could, as appropriate, request an advisory opinion from the Court on legal matters that arise within its work. This might assist the Council in resolving a dispute that threatens international peace and security (or part of such a dispute) or might clarify the legal standing of certain Council actions.

## UN Documents

### Security Council Resolutions

[S/RES/2304](#) (12 August 2016) authorised the Regional Protection Force in South Sudan.

[S/RES/2282](#) (27 April 2016) was a concurrent resolution with the General Assembly on the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

[S/RES/2205](#) (9 December 2015) was on youth, peace and security.

[S/RES/2165](#) (14 July 2014) authorised cross-border and cross-line access for the UN and its partners to deliver humanitarian aid in Syria without state consent.

[S/RES/2150](#) (16 April 2014) called on all states to prevent and fight against genocide and other serious crimes under international law, reaffirming the principle of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and underscoring the importance of taking into account lessons learned from the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, during which Hutu and others who opposed the genocide were also killed.

[S/RES/2127](#) (5 December 2013) authorised the deployment of MISCA in the CAR, with a mandate to protect civilians, support reform efforts and create conditions for humanitarian assistance.

[S/RES/2122](#) (18 October 2013) addressed the persistent gaps in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and mandated the Global Study.

[S/RES/1625](#) (14 September 2005) was a heads of state and heads of government level declaration adopted during the World Summit on the Council's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa.

[S/RES/1366](#) (30 August 2001) addressed the issue of DDR in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates and stated that preventing armed conflict was a major part of the Council's work.

[S/RES/1327](#) (13 November 2000) emphasised the importance of the Secretary-General in conflict prevention and reaffirmed the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.

[S/RES/1318](#) (7 September 2000) was the adoption of the Millennium Summit declaration on ensuring an effective role for the Council in maintaining peace and security, especially in Africa.

[S/RES/1209](#) (19 November 1998) recognised the threat of illicit flow of arms to and in Africa to international peace and security.

[S/RES/1197](#) (18 September 1998) concerned the strengthening of coordination between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in conflict prevention and the maintenance peace.

[S/RES/1170](#) (28 May 1998) established an ad hoc working group for six months to review recommendations in the Secretary-General's 13 April 1998 report on conflict, prepare a framework for their implementation and make proposals for concrete action for the Council.

[S/RES/284](#) (29 July 1970) requested an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of South Africa's continued presence in Namibia for other States.

[S/RES/22](#) (9 April 1947) recommended that Albania and the UK immediately refer their dispute to the ICJ.

### Reports of the Working Group

[S/2016/1092](#) (20 December 2016), [S/2015/1013](#) (17 December 2015), [S/2014/937](#) (23 December 2014), [S/2013/778](#) (30 December 2013), [S/2012/965](#) (31 December 2012), [S/2011/820](#) (30 December 2011), [S/2010/694](#) (30 December 2010), [S/2009/681](#) (30 December 2009), [S/2008/836](#) (30 December 2008), [S/2007/783](#) (31 December 2007), [S/2005/833](#) (30 December 2005), [S/2004/989](#) (21 December 2004), [S/2003/1188](#) (18 December 2003), [S/2002/1352](#) (12 December 2002) and [S/2002/607](#) (22 May 2002) were reports summarising the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

### Security Council Presidential Statements

[S/PRST/2016/19](#) (21 December 2016) welcomed the decisions at the 17 December 2016 ECOWAS summit related to The Gambia.

[S/PRST/2016/6](#) (11 May 2016) focused on countering the narratives and ideologies of terrorism.

[S/PRST/2015/3](#) (19 January 2015) underlined that "security and development are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing and key to attaining sustainable peace".

# UN Documents (con't)

[S/PRST/2013/4](#) (15 April 2013) was adopted at the conclusion of the meeting on “Prevention of conflicts in Africa: addressing the root causes”.

[S/PRST/2007/31](#) (28 August 2007) requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on options for further implementation of resolution 1625.

[S/PRST/2007/1](#) (8 January 2007) focused on threats to international peace and security.

[S/PRST/2004/2](#) (26 January 2004) was on post-conflict national reconciliation.

[S/PRST/2003/5](#) (13 May 2003) was a statement of the Council after considering the item, “The Role of the Security Council in the Pacific Settlement of Disputes”.

[S/PRST/2002/2](#) (31 January 2002) made recommendations for achieving conflict prevention and resolution in Africa and noted that the Council would consider establishing a Working Group to monitor these recommendations.

[S/PRST/2000/25](#) (20 July 2000) invited the Secretary-General to submit a report on the prevention of armed conflict.

[S/PRST/1999/34](#) (30 November 1999) recognised the importance of building a culture of armed conflict prevention and the need for a contribution from all principal UN organs to achieve this goal.

[S/PRST/1998/28](#) (16 September 1998) focused on enhancing Africa's peacekeeping capacity and highlighted the problem of children in armed conflict.

[S/PRST/1997/46](#) (25 September 1997) noted that addressing the challenges of conflict in Africa required a comprehensive approach and called on the Secretary-General to produce a report to address the issue.

## Security Council Meeting Records

[S/PV.7857](#) (10 January 2017) was a ministerial-level open debate on conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

[S/PV.7690](#) (11 May 2016) was an open debate focusing on countering the narratives and ideologies of terrorism.

[S/PV.7561](#) (17 November 2015) was a ministerial-level open debate on “Security, development and the root

causes of conflict”.

[S/PV.7432](#) (23 May 2015) was a high-level open debate on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace.

[S/PV.7361](#) (19 January 2015) was a ministerial-level open debate on inclusive development.

[S/PV.7247](#) (21 August 2014) was an open debate on conflict prevention.

[S/PV.6946](#) (15 April 2013) was a briefing on “Prevention of conflicts in Africa: addressing root causes.”

[S/PV.6621](#) (22 September 2011) was a high-level meeting on preventive diplomacy.

[S/PV.6360](#) and [Resumption 1](#) (16 July 2010) was an open debate on the topic “Optimising the use of preventive diplomacy tools: Prospects and challenges in Africa”.

[S/PV.5979](#) (23 September 2008) was a debate on mediation and settlement of disputes.

[S/PV.5735](#) and [Resumption 1](#) (28 August 2007) was a debate on the role of the Security Council in conflict prevention and resolution, particularly in Africa.

[S/PV.4903](#) and [Resumption 1](#) (26 January 2004) was an open debate on the role of the UN in post-conflict national reconciliation.

[S/PV.4776](#) (19 June 2003) focused on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and alluded frequently to the activities of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

[S/PV.4766](#) and [Resumption 1](#) (30 May 2003) was a wrap-up discussion on the Council's monthly activities that dealt with conflicts in Africa.

[S/PV.4753](#) (13 May 2003) was a meeting on the pacific settlement of disputes.

[S/PV.4538](#) and [Resumption 1](#) (22 May 2002) dealt with the situation in Africa and the Working Group.

[S/PV.4465](#) (31 January 2002) was a thematic debate on the situation in Africa.

[S/PV.4334](#) and [Resumption 1](#) (21 June 2001) focused on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict and the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (S/2001/574).

[S/PV.4174](#) and [Resumption 1](#) (20 July 2000) was an open debate on conflict prevention.

[S/PV.3819](#) (25 September 1997) was the first ministerial-level debate on the situation in Africa.

## Secretary-General's Reports

[S/2015/730](#) (25 September 2015) was on “the United Nations and conflict prevention: a collective recommitment.”

[S/2011/552](#) (26 August 2011) was the first-ever Secretary-General's report on the use of preventive diplomacy.

[S/2008/18](#) (14 January 2008) was on the implementation of resolution 1625 on conflict prevention, particularly in Africa.

[A/60/891](#) (18 July 2006) was a progress report for the General Assembly on the prevention of armed conflict.

[A/59/2005](#) (21 March 2005) was the report in larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all.

[S/2001/574](#) (7 June 2001) was the Secretary-General's first comprehensive report on conflict prevention.

[S/1998/318](#) (13 April 1998) was the report The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

## Other

[S/2015/446](#) (17 June 2015) was the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

[A/RES/60/1](#) (24 October 2005) was the 2005 World Summit Outcome document.

[A/59/565](#) (1 December 2004) was the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

[S/2002/979](#) (29 August 2002) were recommendations from the Working Group regarding Groups of Friends, coordination between the Security Council and the AU and peace-building in Guinea-Bissau.

[S/2002/207](#) (1 March 2002) outlined the terms of reference and mandate for the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

[S/2000/809](#) (21 August 2000) was the report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations (also known as the Brahimi Report).

# Useful Additional Resources

Charles T. Call, “UN Mediation and the Politics of Transition after Constitutional Crises,” New York, International Peace Institute, February 2012

Carnegie Corporation, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, New York, 1997

Elizabeth M. Cousens, “Conflict Prevention,” in The

*UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, David M. Malone, ed., Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004, pp 101-116

Richard Gowan, “Diplomacy in Action: Expanding the UN Security Council’s Role in Crisis and Conflict Prevention,” Center on International Cooperation, forthcoming.

*Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action*, International Crisis Group, 23 June 2016

Paul Romita, “The UN Security Council and Conflict Prevention: A Primer,” New York, International Peace Institute, 26 October 2011



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