



Security Council

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Letter dated 27 January 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations; Mr. Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support; and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “Maintenance of international peace and security: Follow-up on the implementation of resolution 2532 (2020)”, convened on Monday, 25 January 2021.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of Security Council members (S/2020/372), which was agreed in light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefing and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tarek **Ladeb**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo**

Thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to update the Security Council on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on peace and security.

Since the Council last met on this issue in September (see S/2020/897), the devastation wrought by the pandemic has deepened. More than 2 million people have died. Close to 100 million — over 1 per cent of the world's population — have been infected. Workers have lost over \$3 trillion in wages. And new strains of the virus are poised to unleash more severe waves of infection at a time when health systems and social safety net are already on the brink.

The pandemic's impact on peace and security is of pressing concern. The trends that we reported on in September, and which the Secretary-General had already warned about in July, have intensified.

By upending lives and economies, challenging community relations and undermining trust in the very institutions meant to address its fall out, the pandemic has exacerbated inequality and corruption; bred misinformation, stigmatization and hate speech; and created new flashpoints for tension and increased risks of instability.

We remain particularly alarmed by the impact of COVID-19 on women and youth as well as other populations suffering from marginalization. This includes the loss of employment and income and the dramatic escalation of gender-based and domestic violence. Young women and men are also at risk of being left behind in education and economic opportunities.

The pandemic has hindered diplomatic action and complicated our peacemaking efforts. It has not, for the most part, affected the underlying dynamics of armed conflicts. Yet, by exacerbating existing fragilities it has amplified the prevention challenge I underlined in September and made the steps needed to address that challenge more urgent.

The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire generated widespread support and, in some instances, added new momentum to faltering peace processes. Libya is an example of how sustained political engagement, more unified support from the international community, and commitment by the parties can lead to tangible progress.

The signing of a ceasefire agreement by the Libyan parties on 23 October was a major achievement. Since then, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission has been working to operationalize the ceasefire agreement and establish a ceasefire-monitoring mechanism.

The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum met in Tunis, despite an initial lack of much-needed in-person meetings, thanks to the creativity and perseverance of all involved. The Forum represents a pivotal opportunity for moving towards inclusive, intra-Libyan political negotiations and national elections on 24 December 2021. I would like to thank the Government and people of Tunisia for their support in assisting with mitigation measures, which enabled the holding of this event. Libya remains at a critical juncture; it is imperative that the Libyan parties maintain the momentum towards peace, with the full support of the Security Council.

Afghanistan is also at a historically consequential inflection point. The Afghanistan peace negotiations present an opportunity to end decades of instability and conflict. The increased levels of violence in the country underscore the stakes.

The United Nations will do everything in its power to assist Afghans and achieve an inclusive, negotiated political solution to the conflict.

In Mozambique, notwithstanding serious obstacles caused by the pandemic, insurgent groups, with the active support of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, began a process of disarmament. An estimated 29 per cent of the process was completed in 2020 — an important milestone. The announcement of a unilateral ceasefire by a breakaway group of the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana on 23 December is encouraging and will allow negotiations to take place without the threat of violence.

And in eastern Ukraine, the ceasefire agreed on 21 July has continued to hold, constituting the longest such period since the start of the conflict and giving us cause for hope.

Despite these positive developments, in a number of other contexts, the ceasefire call had more mixed results. In some situations, regrettably, we saw dangerous escalation.

In the South Caucasus, despite the support of both Armenia and Azerbaijan for the Secretary-General's ceasefire appeal, large-scale hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh broke out in September. The clashes presented a serious risk of regional escalation. The Secretary-General welcomed the 9 November ceasefire and called on all concerned to cooperate fully with United Nations entities to ensure unfettered access to conflict-affected areas.

We take note of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Group co-Chairs' united position for a comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the conflict and hope that both countries will embark on a path of dialogue.

The pandemic has affected how we support political and peace processes. Without exception, our special representatives, envoys and missions have had to adjust to the changing reality brought about by the pandemic, combining virtual and in-person work and taking calculated risks to fulfil their mandates to advance peace processes, de-escalate crises and prevent conflict.

New tools — such as digital focus groups — have been developed and used to broaden the inclusiveness of our engagements. They have been particularly useful to enhance our outreach to women and youth.

In Yemen, our Special Envoy has not let up on efforts to help bring the devastating conflict to an end. He has continued his shuttle diplomacy, in addition to virtual meetings. With the support of the Swiss Government and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Special Envoy successfully and safely convened the parties in Geneva last year for talks that led to the largest prisoner swap since the start of the Yemeni conflict.

Our urgent work to end the suffering in Syria also continues. Today, the fifth meeting of the Syrian Constitutional Committee is taking place in Geneva, a demonstration of the determination of the Syrian people to resolve issues that have undermined peace in that war-torn country. And here, let me thank the Government and people of Switzerland for their cooperation in hosting this and other meetings during the pandemic.

Furthermore, we have had to adapt our electoral assistance to comply with virus-related restrictions and to bring it in line with Government decisions to hold elections as planned or reschedule them. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have supported 18 countries in holding 19 elections and one referendum. In addition, we

provided electoral assistance to eight countries where elections planned for 2020 did not take place.

In Bolivia, for example, despite tensions over the initial postponement of elections, thanks to the commitment of the Bolivian people and the support of the United Nations, polling took place peacefully in October.

As the impact of the pandemic continues to increase, thus deepening vulnerabilities and fomenting grievances, the risk of tensions and instability will continue to rise, magnified by inequalities in the global recovery. As wealthier countries get vaccinated, the developing world, including countries already affected by conflict and instability, risk being left behind. That would be a catastrophic moral failure, as Mr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted last week. It would also be a severe blow to peace and security.

One thing is clear — the pandemic has served as a political stress test as much as a structural and public health one. It has laid bare where acute crisis is seen as an opportunity to gain advantage in the battlefield or as a pretext to perpetuate or entrench oppressive practices. But it has also confirmed that where there is real political will to make and sustain peace, almost no barrier is insurmountable, especially if there is support from the global community.

The collective and individual engagement of members of the Council will remain crucial, especially in supporting the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and engaging with parties to conflicts and their backers to ensure that the appeal is heeded.

The pandemic was impossible to predict. Many of its consequences for peace and security are not. Not surprisingly, COVID-19 has hit hardest in the most vulnerable places and among the most vulnerable people. That is why recovering better must involve strengthening our capacity for prevention with more political and financial investment. The support of the international community in this endeavour is critical.

Annex II

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix

I am grateful for this opportunity to update the Security Council on the measures taken to address the challenges the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic poses to peacekeeping operations and to the countries where they are deployed. I am pleased to join Under-Secretaries-General DiCarlo, Khare and Lowcock in briefing the Council.

In my remarks today, I will focus on five key messages.

First, since we last briefed the Council, in September (see S/2020/897), complex political situations have continued to feel the strain of COVID-19.

In South Sudan, for instance, the pandemic has further delayed the implementation of the peace process, which was already hampered by a lack of political will and resources and has at times resulted in increased mistrust and hostility between the parties. In Cyprus, restrictions have limited contacts between the two communities.

In some cases, the pandemic has led to the crystallization of tensions among stakeholders. In Lebanon, it has exacerbated an already difficult political and economic situation. In the Central African Republic, some political actors have tried to leverage the pandemic as a pretext to delay the presidential election and establish an unconstitutional transition.

The COVID-19 crisis has put a spotlight on the importance of women's leadership during crisis. Women are on the front lines responding to and preventing COVID-19 and helping mitigate the political risks associated with the pandemic. In the Central African Republic, women leaders called on the signatories of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic to support the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and came out massively to advocate for peaceful and inclusive elections.

Nonetheless, the pandemic has exacerbated existing gender inequalities, as resources are diverted elsewhere. Incidents of domestic violence against women and girls have multiplied. Women are also disproportionately exposed to and impacted by the pandemic, due to their abundant representation in health-care roles, the informal sector, the service sector and as caregivers in the home.

Secondly, despite these challenges, our peacekeeping missions continue to deliver on their mandated tasks. With the collaboration of Member States, troop- and police-contributing countries and host States, missions have demonstrated adaptability, resilience and innovation.

For instance, in Darfur, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) provided technical, advisory and logistical support for peace negotiations, including the facilitation of virtual meetings, which culminated in the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement in October. Now, virus-related restrictions continue to present challenges and risks as UNAMID continues its drawdown and liquidation process.

In the Central African Republic, despite daunting challenges and attempts to disrupt the holding of the elections, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) supported holding elections, including through an interim cooperation arrangement implemented in a very short time frame, with continued attention on preventing the spread of the virus. And in Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission

in Mali (MINUSMA) continues to use its good offices to support the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States to assist in setting up the transition.

Despite the challenges the pandemic posed for mandate delivery, peacekeeping operations have also continued to prevent and respond to threats to civilians, as those have not been diminished by the pandemic. In Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the operational tempo of peacekeeping operations has remained very high. Operations have been adapted to limit the risk of spread of the virus to local communities. Remote predeployment visits have been conducted to validate the operational readiness of contingents and units for deployment and rotation.

Thirdly, while they have been adapting to these challenges, peacekeeping operations have put a constant and steadfast emphasis on ensuring the safety and health of their personnel, be they military, police or civilian. Under-Secretary-General Khare will further address that area in his statement. The implementation of preventive measures to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission, including through physical distancing, travel restrictions, telecommuting and rotations of in-office staff, has remained a cornerstone of our approach.

As of today, 25 January, across all field missions — totalling more than 100,000 people — 2,486 cumulative cases among United Nations personnel and their dependants have been recorded, with 2,047 recovered, 439 active cases and, unfortunately, 24 deaths. I would like to pay tribute to the peacekeepers who died because of COVID-19 and express my deepest condolences to their countries and families. Protecting the health, safety and security of peacekeeping personnel will remain a priority.

This also contributes to protecting the communities in which operations are deployed. In that regard, we have continually focused on safely conducting rotations of uniformed personnel. Following their partial resumption in July, concerted efforts by troop- and police-contributing countries and missions have led to a steady increase in the number of rotated units and a decrease in the backlog of pending or postponed rotations.

As of the end of December, 77 per cent of rotations scheduled for the second half of 2020 had been completed, 21 per cent of rotations were ongoing and only 2 per cent had been postponed. Those figures fully match those from before COVID-19. Pre-deployment awareness training for COVID-19 has also been developed and disseminated in order to equip all peacekeepers with the knowledge and skills needed to protect themselves and their colleagues from the disease.

The implementation of these measures rests on the strength of partnerships that are at the core of peacekeeping. Partnerships with troop- and police-contributing countries have continued to be critical. I wish to once again salute them for their cooperation and their commitment in these challenging circumstances, and for their continued and steadfast engagement with United Nations peacekeeping. In the Secretariat, in the spirit of the Secretary-General's reform, the Headquarters Field Support Group on COVID-19 has continued to help coordinate the support we provide to peace operations, together with the Department of Operational Support and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. I would like to thank all our colleagues at Headquarters, as well as the leadership and peacekeeping personnel in all missions, for their ongoing commitment to tackling the challenges of COVID-19.

Fourthly, since the beginning of the pandemic, peacekeeping operations have consistently endeavoured to support host country authorities to contain the spread of COVID-19, at both national and subnational levels. For instance, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(MONUSCO) provided support to the Congolese authorities in developing procedures and policies to manage the implementation of COVID-19 response measures, as well as ensuring security and air transport for the movement of materials.

To combat misinformation, MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan have used their own radio stations to uphold factual narratives. They have also contributed to sensitizing the population through campaigns, dedicated radio programming, partnerships with community stations and, in some cases, have hosted distance learning programmes for school pupils to continue their education.

To address the adverse socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, missions have supported women's economic empowerment and leadership activities. In contexts as varied as Abyei, Kosovo and the Central African Republic, they have supported the local initiatives of women's organizations, including initiatives aimed at producing face masks.

And across missions, the United Nations police continues to support the first-responder efforts of national police services and other law enforcement entities to fight the transmission of COVID-19 and to sustain operations while mitigating the risk of spreading the virus.

Finally, we will also need to turn our collective attention to managing the long-term impact of the pandemic and the role that peace operations may be able to play. Over the past year, they have had to adapt, innovate and respond to fast-changing conditions. The pandemic has had an impact on weak economies and vulnerable communities and has generated additional political and security risks in already difficult situations. Peacekeeping operations are working to anticipate these changing risks through long-term horizon-scanning, with a view to better preparing for them.

We will also need to continue drawing lessons from the pandemic and understanding its impact on peace operations so that good practices can be fostered and emulated. We already see that enhanced coordination among Headquarters, field missions, the wider United Nations system, Member States and partner international organizations has played a key role in that regard. The importance of engaging and involving women has become even more acute. In these areas and others, we will continue to draw on lessons at the level of the peacekeeping system.

Despite all the challenges, the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and its Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations have continued to provide a framework for our response and a road map for our collective efforts to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping. We have continued to work on all its priority areas while adapting its implementation to the constraints of the pandemic. We are currently evaluating the progress that has been achieved, identifying remaining or new challenges that we need to tackle and, on that basis, adjusting our action.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a test of our collective commitment to international peace and security. I would like to salute the courage and tenacity of the women and men serving in peace operations, both uniformed and civilian, who, in these exceptionally trying circumstances, have continued to demonstrate dedication and commitment to, and solidarity with, the populations they serve.

In these circumstances, we are grateful for the Council's strong and steadfast support to peacekeeping, which remains indispensable as we continue to face the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19.

Annex III

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, Atul Khare

The goal of the Department of Operational Support (DOS) has been to give our field operations the assurances, tools and support needed to continue to carry out their mandates.

We have activated our supply chains and have taken proactive measures to support the field with supplies, equipment and personal protective equipment. Over 4 million items of personal protective equipment and equipment for intensive care units have been procured and distributed to field missions, along with 35 testing machines and 150,000 antibody test kits.

Medical facilities in Juba and Goma have been upgraded by adding over 30 medical staff and equipping them with polymerase chain reaction testing and intensive care unit capacities. Guidance and training materials have been provided to the field by our public health colleagues. That includes coronavirus disease (COVID-19) predeployment training for uniformed personnel, also available as an application, training on the standardized treatment process for COVID-19 patients, an exchange of best practices on the management of COVID-19 cases and training on World Health Organization (WHO) standards related to hospital readiness for epidemics.

We have conducted virtual walk-throughs of a total of 22 duty stations, 43 contingents' living arrangements, 83 clinics and hospitals — distributed over 11 missions, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS).

We have done our best to provide simple but effective solutions to reduce the risk of spread, such as foot-operated hand-washing stations, indoor tents to implement social distancing, staggered mealtimes for soldiers and repurposing gym and recreational areas for quarantine purposes.

We have also relied on innovation to minimize exposure and contact. The Field Remote Infrastructure Management technology platform uses sensors to remotely manage field missions engineering and facilities infrastructure, reducing the overall exposure to COVID-19.

The United Nations System-Wide Task Force on COVID-19 Medical Evacuations (MEDEVAC), led by my Department, has now conducted 140 MEDEVACs as part of an inter-agency and system-wide effort. That includes 2 international non-governmental organizations, 4 from special political missions, 4 from other Secretariat entities, 32 from peacekeeping operations and 98 from agencies, funds and programmes.

Regional hubs have been established in Nairobi, Accra, Costa Rica, and Kuwait, with the facilities in Nairobi and Accra now receiving the largest number of MEDEVACs. We are grateful to European countries for the initial MEDEVACs to Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Australia and Turkey.

Discussions are ongoing with the Governments of China, Cuba, Russia and Viet Nam, which have indicated their willingness to receive patients.

We express our appreciation to Spain for agreeing to accepting MEDEVACs, and to France for its willingness to accept foreign uniformed peacekeepers in its

military hospitals. We also thank troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs), including Burundi, Egypt, India and Peru, which have welcomed home their uniformed personnel for treatment.

The mechanism has been a success and has given our personnel and partners the confidence to stay and deliver in some of the Organization's most difficult duty stations around the world.

The rotation policy has allowed for the quick detection of cases and the ability to isolate and replace personnel without delay. Predeployment cases have been detected among uniformed personnel before their arrival in UNMISS, UNSOS, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and MONUSCO.

The new long-term air charter agreements introduced in July 2020 were designed to reduce the cost of troop movements by 15.5 per cent. Since the resumption of the rotations, we have witnessed savings that, regardless of the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, are significant. We have also seen on average a decrease in cost of 8 per cent in movements conducted under the letter-of-assist arrangement. The single point of entry of our Uniformed Capabilities Support Division has proved invaluable in working closely with TCCs and PCCs to manage rotations.

We are working with other partners, including the African Union and the European Union, to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in various operational contexts and to exchange lessons learned. We continue to plan for the future.

The Secretary-General has tasked DOS to coordinate a system-wide vaccination effort for all United Nations personnel and dependents worldwide. I am encouraged by the positive responses that we have received to the Secretary-General's call for host countries to include United Nations personnel in their national roll-out programmes and to provide access to the vaccine in accordance with the WHO prioritization framework. I wish to thank Israel for becoming the first country to have provided the first doses to seven peacekeepers in Camp Ziouani.

In cases where vaccine delivery will not be possible through the host country, DOS will identify alternative arrangements in coordination with the Resident Coordinators and Designated Officials and our United Nations counterparts in the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility.

A group of friends of TCCs and PCCs has been convened to agree upon a pragmatic, coherent and common approach to the vaccination of troops and police. Nevertheless, even as we move forward with vaccination roll-outs, we must remain vigilant and simultaneously continue our focus on the prevention and mitigation of the spread of COVID-19.

Annex IV**Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock**

When I last briefed the Security Council on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), together with Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, in September (see S/2020/897), I warned members that the virus and its secondary effects would hit the world's most fragile and conflict-affected countries hardest. That is still the case.

As Ms. DiCarlo and Mr. Lacroix said, the pandemic is hampering our ability to resolve and end conflicts. That, in turn, has major humanitarian consequences, as most of the people who need our assistance live in conflict settings.

Ten days ago, the world passed the grim milestone of 2 million deaths from COVID-19. Almost 98 million people are confirmed to have contracted the virus across the world. Twenty-four million, that is, almost a quarter, live in countries facing humanitarian or refugee crises. That is the tip of the iceberg. Most cases are still not in the figures. It is clear that many poor countries are in the midst of a dangerous further wave. New and more infectious variants will make that worse.

Remarkable progress with vaccines shows the way out, but no one will be safe until everyone is safe, and the risk that the most fragile countries are at the end of a long, slow moving queue for the vaccine imperils us all.

The secondary consequences of the virus are still even more lethal. This year, we estimate that 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection — 40 per cent more than last year and almost entirely due to COVID-19. The worst global economic contraction in 90 years is worst of all in the poorest and most fragile countries. Many countries may lose a decade or more of per-capita income growth. Sovereign debt defaults loom. Extreme poverty is rising for the first time in 20 years.

With all that comes a steep increase in food insecurity. Multiple famines are on the horizon. Public services are disappearing. In more than 20 countries in which my Office is present, disruption in routine immunization campaigns leaves millions of children vulnerable to killer diseases such as measles and cholera. School closures leave children more likely to be married off or recruited into armed groups. The number of out-of-school children is set to increase by 24 million owing to the pandemic. Women and girls are being hit the hardest. They are the first to miss meals and they represent 70 per cent of the world's hungry. Gender-based violence continues to proliferate, causing a deadly shadow pandemic of violence resulting from the behaviour of men. The picture for the world's most vulnerable people is therefore bleak.

I want to say a few words about how the humanitarian system has responded to COVID-19. In 2020, humanitarian agencies provided life-saving assistance to almost 100 million people.

Through the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, we raised almost \$4 billion thanks to generous contributions from 160 donors. With that money, we were able to transport more than 26,000 health and humanitarian personnel and more than 118,000 cubic metres of critical COVID-19 cargo, reach 74 million people with critical water and sanitation supplies and services, provide 75 million women and children with essential health care and assist more than 33 million refugees, internally displaced people and asylum seekers affected by the pandemic.

But it has become harder to reach people. More must be done to improve access to the most vulnerable and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian and health workers. While the humanitarian community has managed to sustain and scale up assistance to an unprecedented level, that effort has been outpaced by the growing scale of the crisis. I seek the Security Council's help in three areas.

First, we need immediate and generous funding for the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*, which we published last month. In 2021, the United Nations-coordinated humanitarian system needs \$35 billion to reach 160 million people. We need additional funding if we are to avoid some of the worst-case scenarios that lie on the horizon.

Secondly, their shareholders must do more to strengthen the support that the international financial institutions provide to their most vulnerable members. It is staggering to me that of the \$110 billion pledged by the international financial institutions since March, only \$11.7 billion, just 10 per cent, was targeted at low-income countries. Only \$7 billion has actually been disbursed, which is equivalent to about \$10 per person.

Thirdly, we need to take urgent action to ensure that vaccines reach the most vulnerable people in the world. Countries should scale up their support to the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility. While they have the primary responsibility for vaccinating their own citizens, Governments should also consider channelling surplus doses through the COVAX Facility. That is not about generosity but a matter of the self-interest of wealthier countries. New analysis reported by *The New York Times* yesterday suggests that wealthy countries vaccinating themselves by the middle of the year, but with poor countries largely excluded, could reduce the global economy by \$9 trillion, nearly half the costs accruing to wealthy countries themselves. National Governments must also fulfil their responsibility to include in their national vaccination plans all high-risk populations within their territories, including refugees, internally displaced people and people living in areas under the control of non-State armed groups.

We must also ensure that COVID-19 vaccines do not get financed in the very poorest countries at the expense of other life-saving activities. If money is diverted from routine immunization, famine relief or other health services to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine, the result will be more, not less, loss of life. We have reasons for hope. The speed with which effective vaccines have been developed is a historic achievement for humanity. But we have also seen a dangerous failure to take adequate action to help the world's most vulnerable countries. The next six months will be crucial. Today's decisions will determine our course for years to come.

Annex V**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Dai Bing**

[Original: Chinese]

China thanks Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General Khare and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

In July last year, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2532 (2020), supporting the Secretary-General's global ceasefire initiative and calling for a people-centred approach in combating the coronavirus disease pandemic. The resolution sets out a direction for the maintenance of international peace and security in the context of the pandemic. So far, more than 180 countries have endorsed the global ceasefire initiative, and significant progress has been made on the situations in Libya, the Sudan and other countries. Regrettably, however, even under the impact of the pandemic, some conflicts still continue. Some countries that had previously ceased fighting are once again in turmoil.

The year 2021 is critical to the global fight against the pandemic. The Security Council should take this opportunity to expedite the implementation of resolution 2532 (2020), strive to promote a global ceasefire and unite to fight the pandemic.

First, we need to step up efforts towards a ceasefire and the cessation of violence. In armed conflicts in the context of the pandemic, no one wins. Given that the virus is a common enemy, all parties to a conflict should unconditionally cease hostilities, leave the smouldering battlefield and mobilize to the front line of the pandemic. The United Nations should seize this opportunity to follow up on the implementation in a timely manner and step up its good offices to create more space for political resolution.

Secondly, we need to coordinate the prevention and control of the pandemic and the work of the United Nations on the ground. Pandemic mitigation, peacekeeping and humanitarian work all seek to save lives and should be carried out in an integrated manner. We should continue with our diplomatic engagements, dialogue and coordination and maintain the momentum for the political settlement of hotspot issues. It is necessary to stabilize the supply chain, ensure the delivery of humanitarian supplies and better protect the safety and health of United Nations personnel on the ground. The Secretariat, host countries and troop-contributing countries should strengthen communication and develop a feasible plan for vaccinating field personnel as soon as possible.

Thirdly, we should increase support for countries in conflict to fight the pandemic. Such countries are the weak link in the global fight against the pandemic. The international community should step up its support to those countries, increase aid delivery and the exchange of experiences and strengthen capacity-building so that vaccines will be accessible and affordable in conflict-affected countries. Meanwhile, those countries should also strive to create conditions for the international community to support the fight against the pandemic.

Fourthly, unilateral sanctions should be lifted as soon as possible. Such sanctions violate international law, seriously undermine the capacity of the countries concerned to access the necessary resources to combat the pandemic, endanger the lives and health of innocent civilians and lead to serious humanitarian consequences. We urge the relevant countries to heed the international call for an immediate lifting of the illegal unilateral sanctions.

Unity and cooperation are the most powerful weapons in the fight against the pandemic. Our approach must be based on science and facts. Multilateralism is the most effective path. The politicization of the pandemic will lead only to the ravage of the virus and the further spread of the pandemic and will not provide a solution. China sincerely hopes that the Security Council will make a fresh start in the new year, follow the correct direction in the fight against the pandemic and lead by example by boosting trust in, and providing impetus for, the global fight against the pandemic.

The Chinese Government and people through arduous efforts have made significant strategic achievements in combating the pandemic. We launched the largest global emergency humanitarian operation in the history of new China, providing anti-epidemic assistance to more than 150 countries and 10 international organizations and sending 36 medical expert groups to 34 countries in need. As the largest producer of medical supplies, China has provided more than 220 billion masks, 2.3 billion protective suits and 1 billion testing kits to countries around the world. Vaccines are an important tool to fight the pandemic. China already has one vaccine in use with conditional approval and many others in clinical trials at different stages. Despite the huge demand for vaccines within China, we are providing support and assistance within our abilities to other countries, especially developing countries, in various ways. As of now, many countries are using the Chinese vaccines. In addition, China joined the World Health Organization's COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, actively supports the Group of 20 in promoting international cooperation on vaccines. We will continue to advance the equitable distribution of vaccines and strive to make vaccines an accessible public good that is affordable to people of all countries.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations

First, I want to thank the briefers for their overview on the topic.

When Estonia first tried to raise the issue of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Security Council in March 2020, the numbers were the following: 413,000 confirmed cases and more than 18,000 deaths. That is according to the World Health Organization as of 25 March 2020. If we fast forward not even a year, but only 10 months, the numbers are the following: over 100 million cases and more than 2 million deaths. That is an increase of over 24,000 per cent in confirmed cases and over 11,000 per cent in deaths.

This is an unprecedented situation for all of us, which means that we must be more cooperative than ever to come through the pandemic with as little damage as possible. For that, we need strong multilateralism, and we feel that we have wind in our sails. The Security Council must show strength and unity in dealing with the security implications of the pandemic.

Estonia continues to stress that all States Members of the United Nations follow norms of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace. During the fight against the pandemic, the greatest resources must go into tackling the virus, not attacking health organizations or citizens online. We also hereby reiterate our support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire.

That notwithstanding, our global response to the pandemic has been weakened by the malicious use of cybermeans. According to the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, COVID-19 has sparked an upward trend in cybercrime. Many attacks have been directed against health institutions. We must address and condemn cyberattacks against hospitals, which can pose a direct threat to human lives. Countries should take steps to strengthen the rule of law in cyberspace and curb malicious activities against the health sector.

We must not diffuse our focus. Using COVID-19 as a pretext for lifting sanctions is misleading. Sanctions are too often made a scapegoat for the mismanagement of resources by Governments that are not willing to take responsibility for their actions or omissions. European Union (EU) sanctions are targeted and do not obstruct the fight against the pandemic, as they and United Nations sanctions include the possibility of applying humanitarian exemptions. Targeted sanctions do not play a role in how well a country can deal with the pandemic.

We know that the pandemic and its consequences have a growing negative impact on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as on civic space. Curtailing human rights and restricting civic space under the pretext of COVID-19 is unacceptable.

Last but not least, Estonia reiterates its support for ensuring global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19, as outlined in the COVID-19 omnibus resolution in the General Assembly (General Assembly resolution 74/307).

Annex VII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: French]

First of all, I would like to thank Tunisia for organizing today's meeting. More than six months after the adoption of resolution 2532 (2020), upon the initiative of our two countries, the time has indeed come for taking stock, but also, and above all, for engaging collectively to speed up the implementation of the resolution.

I also thank Rosemary DiCarlo, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mark Lowcock and Atul Khare for their briefings. They are proof that the entire United Nations system has been mobilized to deal with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I would like to pay tribute to the absolutely outstanding work that has been carried out by all United Nations actors and teams in New York and in the field.

Above all, the cessation of hostilities is an indispensable condition for effectively fighting the pandemic. Despite some of the progress that has been noted, particularly in Libya with the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement, and despite more than 180 countries supporting the Secretary-General's appeal, the situation, as we have seen, remains very unstable in many countries. In Syria, Yemen and the Sahel, the civilian populations continue to pay a high price.

As Mr. Lacroix pointed out, the Blue Helmets are doing a remarkable job in extremely difficult conditions. More than ever, we must support peacekeeping operations and enable them to fully implement their mandates despite the pandemic. We also need to think about how to take peacekeeping personnel into account in vaccination strategies.

We have said it several times: the vaccine against COVID-19 must be a global public good, accessible to all, and we fully support the COVAX initiative. Global access to this vaccine will be a test case for a new multilateralism, bringing together both States and private companies.

On the humanitarian front, the situation just presented to us by Mr. Lowcock is alarming: the number of people in need of humanitarian aid has never been so high. The pandemic has pushed more than 88 million people into poverty, and more than 270 million people are now acutely food insecure. We have a collective responsibility to prevent the return of famine, particularly in Yemen.

It is essential to support the implementation of the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan to COVID-19 as well as to fund the different humanitarian response plans. France will continue to do so and will increase the level of its humanitarian aid to €500 million in 2022. In addition, humanitarian aid will be one of the priorities of the French presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2022. The European Union has also made it possible, through a humanitarian air bridge, to transport more than 1,700 humanitarian and medical personnel and more than 1,200 tons of aid.

The pandemic has been accompanied by an increase in attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel, which is unacceptable. The perpetrators of these crimes must be brought to justice. We will not stop repeating that respect for international humanitarian law is non-negotiable. I am thinking not only of the protection of humanitarian and medical personnel, but also of the guarantee of safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

We must also step up our efforts to limit the negative and disproportionate effects of the pandemic, in particular on women, young people, girls, refugees and displaced persons. It is essential to enable their full participation in both the design and implementation of the response to the pandemic. As it is more determined than ever, France will organize the Generation Equality Forum, in partnership with Mexico and UN-Women, in the first half of 2021.

Finally, the global health architecture must be consolidated around the World Health Organization (WHO). In particular, the WHO's role in coordination, preparedness and response to future health crises must be strengthened, the alert system must be upgraded, the implementation of the International Health Regulations must be strengthened, and a crisis-investigation mechanism must be set up.

The current health crisis has also highlighted the need for reliable, science-based information on the links among human, animal and environmental health. This is why we fully support the launch of the One Health High-Level Council of Experts announced by the heads of the WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme. We hope that the High-Level Council can be put in place before the World Health Assembly to be held in May 2021.

There is no time to lose. We must collectively intensify our efforts to enable the full implementation of resolution 2532 (2020). Council members can count on France's full support.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Nagaraj Naidu Kakanur

I thank all the briefers for their useful insights into the various dimensions of the challenges we face today owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We take this opportunity to continue our dialogue as a follow-up to resolution 2532 (2020).

We express our deepest condolences to all States Members of the United Nations and to the United Nations community as a whole that have lost loved ones to COVID-19. We commend the work of our peacekeepers, front-line and health-care workers, as well as humanitarian partners, for assisting in COVID-19 response plans.

While the pandemic continues to rage across the world, 2021 has started on a positive note with many countries having initiated the vaccination process. However, until everyone is safe, no one is safe. We should endeavour to work towards making the vaccine accessible on a universal, equitable and affordable basis.

As the largest vaccine-producing country in the world, India is fulfilling its commitment to making its vaccine production and delivery capacity available for the benefit of all of humankind. Two vaccines have already been granted approval for emergency use in India. We plan to vaccinate about 300 million citizens in the first six months.

We have already airlifted more than 6 million doses to nine countries in phase 1 as grant assistance. Contractual supplies to various countries are also being undertaken in a phased manner. We will also gradually supply the COVAX facility of the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition, India has also provided training to several partner countries to strengthen their clinical capabilities and enhance their vaccine-administration capacities.

The pandemic, for one, has disrupted humanitarian aid flows and threatened hard-won development and peacebuilding gains. In fragile and conflict-affected States with weak governing institutions and faltering health systems the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the vulnerable parts of the population, particularly women, children, the elderly and those with disabilities. The pandemic has also highlighted vulnerabilities of States in dealing with threats posed by the misuse of social media, disinformation campaigns, possible opportunities for bioterrorism and cyberattacks on critical infrastructure.

The Secretary-General's noble call for a global ceasefire and the 90-day humanitarian pause was well-intentioned. However, many of the ceasefires announced in the wake of the call were not negotiated, and as such have since expired or in some cases broken down. In conflict situations, we have seen no let-up in fighting, and, in some cases, conflicts have only intensified. It is important that the call by the Secretary-General be heeded. In this context, we reiterate our call for a comprehensive ceasefire in Afghanistan.

At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, India responded to the Secretary-General's call and upgraded the medical facilities of United Nations peacekeeping missions in Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Juba in South Sudan. India has also assisted more than 150 countries through urgent health and medical supplies. We have pledged \$15 million for the Gavi Alliance and operationalized the COVID-19 Emergency Fund for our neighbours, with an initial contribution of \$10 million. In the spirit of South-South cooperation, through the \$150 million India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund, we have responded to the requests of Member States for COVID-19-related assistance.

While countries such as India have launched vaccination drives and assisted others during the pandemic, there are countries that continue to foment terror and indulge in hate speech and widespread disinformation campaigns. While we are working with the scientific community, the medical fraternity, industry and academia to find solutions to COVID-19, these globally recognized State sponsors of terrorism have used the pandemic to ramp up recruitment and infiltration activity to spread the venom of terror. The international community needs to hold those countries accountable for their actions. We are glad that resolution 2532 (2020) had the foresight to recognize the threats posed by such State sponsors of terrorism and ensured that the Secretary-General's global ceasefire call did not apply to Security Council-listed individuals and terrorist entities.

It is heartening to note that, despite the numerous challenges to our peacekeeping missions due to the pandemic, peacekeeping missions have adapted and updated their contingency plans to ensure the safety of their personnel and protect their capacity to continue critical operations, thereby continuing to deliver on their mandates. The Council also needs to recognize the sacrifices of our peacekeepers, especially in tough mission settings where tours of duty were extended. We are also glad to note that, despite the severe logistical restrictions and funding limitations, the Peacebuilding Commission convened a series of virtual consultations with countries and regions affected by COVID-19.

As the world continues to deal with the pandemic, the Council's initiatives on combating COVID-19 should transcend conflict lines and contribute to global social cohesion. The Council needs to have an approach centred around the human being to tackle the pandemic. Lack of funding for emergency relief and the complications created by the pandemic have pushed some of the world's neediest populations closer to famine conditions. The donor community and civil society organizations should sustain the necessary support and partnership they offer during the crisis.

As a priority, the Council must work towards supporting initiatives that guarantee a safe and sustained recovery of economies in conflict situations and ensure speedy and equitable distribution of vaccines and therapeutics among the most-disadvantaged populations in conflict-ridden countries. We also need to put in place an inclusive system that will provide for early vaccination of our peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and other United Nations front-line workers and guarantee safe and secure access for humanitarian operations.

Annex IX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

I thank the Tunisian presidency for convening today's important debate, and I want to offer special thanks to each of our excellent briefers this morning.

When the Security Council finally adopted resolution 2532 (2020), in July last year, the world had already endured six long months of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In many countries, it seemed then that the end might be in sight. However, in this crisis, for which the world had failed to prepare, the worst was yet to come. Let us be clear: for many, the darkest days are now.

In the COVID-19 pandemic, as with climate change, we may all be experiencing the same storm, but many of us are in different boats. The effects of the pandemic have been, and will continue to be, much more severe for those living in countries in, on the verge of or at risk of conflict.

While the World Health Organization (WHO) is rightly leading the global response, we are convinced that the Security Council cannot ignore the threat to peace and security posed by the pandemic. COVID-19 has increased poverty, disrupted education and worsened food insecurity. It has weakened economies and eroded trust in public institutions. We all know that these factors can lead to or exacerbate conflict. As we see it, there are three key areas where the international community can and should act.

First, we can act now to prevent conflicts resulting from the interaction of this health crisis with pre-existing fragilities. This means fully implementing resolution 2532 (2020). As we have seen in Libya, a cessation of violence creates space for dialogue. It also frees up essential resources to combat the pandemic, including for health systems that will be essential to combating the virus and to vaccination programmes. Ireland continues to fully support the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. We urge all parties to conflict to heed it.

Within the Council, we must listen to — and act on — the analysis on COVID-19 provided in the Secretary-General's regular reporting. To prevent crises, we need to be engaged in preventive diplomacy, looking at where COVID-19 is exacerbating tensions that could potentially lead to the outbreak of conflict. The Council's voice matters. That means calling out discrimination, including in access to health services. We must be united against disinformation, against hate speech and against stigmatization, which sometimes targets health workers and United Nations personnel.

In post-conflict contexts, we simply have to safeguard the really hard-won peacebuilding gains. The Peacebuilding Commission's own reorientation of its work since March, focusing on the impact of the pandemic on countries on its agenda, is a welcome example of a very pragmatic implementation of the resolution. Ensuring equitable access to quality, safe and effective vaccines will be an important pillar for global recovery and for stabilization in fragile contexts.

Secondly, we must carefully consider the impact of COVID-19 on United Nations peacekeeping operations. United Nations peacekeeping missions have admirably adjusted to the new challenges posed by the pandemic, including through the reallocation of resources, some delayed rotations and remote working arrangements. We commend the United Nations for enabling peacekeeping missions to continue their work, not least in the protection of vulnerable communities.

As an experienced troop contributor, we know that community engagement is a vital aspect of peacekeeping. The pandemic has created new challenges for peacekeepers in reaching and protecting those vulnerable populations. We believe that we must ensure that peacekeepers are fully supported and fully resourced in the implementation of their mandates. We also need to be watchful for disproportionate measures at local levels that impede peacekeepers' access, and we need to be alert to the risk of misinformation. We welcome the measures that the United Nations has put in place to help protect both peacekeepers and the communities they work with.

Our peacekeepers are front-line workers, just as health-care and humanitarian actors are. That should be taken into account as we plan vaccine rollout. We appreciate last week's discussion on the vaccination of United Nations peacekeepers against COVID-19 and the implementation of transitional rotation measures and welcome the suggestion for the group of friends of troop- and police-contributing countries to further discuss those issues.

Thirdly, in conflict situations, if humanitarian access was already a significant challenge, this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. While countries necessarily introduced movement restrictions to combat COVID-19, these should not hamper the ability of humanitarian and health workers to reach those in greatest need. Those affected by conflict before the pandemic — internally displaced persons, refugees and migrant workers — have been hardest hit during the pandemic. We also know that there has been a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable women and girls, and we are concerned with the increase in gender-based violence. The Secretary-General, and Mark Lowcock this morning, have called on us to be alert; we need to match our vigilance with follow-through.

We are living in unprecedented times, dealing with unprecedented challenges that test all of us, every day. But that does not mean that we become observers. The Council has a duty and responsibility in these times to step up. Where conflict continues, preventing the spread of a pandemic, mitigating its impact and protecting civilians is more difficult than ever. Vaccinating those most vulnerable is an enormous responsibility for the international community, but clearly one on which we must deliver. Dr. Mike Ryan of WHO has regularly reminded us that no one is safe until all of us are safe. No one should be left behind.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani**

I thank Rosemary DiCarlo, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mark Lowcock and Atul Khare for their briefings.

Kenya applauds the adoption of resolution 2532 (2020) and its linking of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to international peace and security.

We also strongly applaud President Joe Biden's decision to re-join the World Health Organization and to make global efforts designed to stop and prevent COVID-19 a part of his strategy.

Kenya is proud of the concrete contribution to the continuity of United Nations work across Africa that will be enabled by the United Nations-the Nairobi Hospital Treatment Facility in Nairobi, as briefed by Under-Secretary-General Khare. The facility is equipped with 150 beds, including 15-bed intensive care units and 45-bed high-dependency units. It is a partnership between the Kenya Government, the United Nations and Nairobi Hospital, which is Kenya's largest private hospital. The facility will cater for United Nations staff in Kenya, Africa and beyond, and Kenyans.

The Kenya Government's commitment to that project reflects the importance that we hold in hosting the only United Nations headquarters in Africa and the Global South. We continue to work with the United Nations to improve facilities and the processes that enable the United Nations to carry out its duties in Nairobi efficiently and effectively.

I thought Mr. Lowcock's assessment of the economic effects of the pandemic to be astute. I would highly recommend more briefers who specifically speak to that aspect, especially the potential link between economic and political crises.

It is clear in the historical record that economic crises have often sparked their political counterparts and that the most pronounced economic troubles, particularly those that deeply upend the social order, have led to sustained insecurity and even State collapse. It is also a matter of fact that this pandemic is causing extensive economic stress globally, particularly in countries without expansive fiscal or monetary space.

It is therefore not a stretch to argue that, without vaccine access for the most fragile countries, the destruction to their economies wrought by the pandemic may lead to threats to peace and security of a magnitude that compels the action of the Security Council.

It is of course understandable that States prioritize the care of their citizens. And, by some happenstance, it is largely the countries that have taken the lead in the production of vaccines that are also the hardest hit. We therefore find it entirely understandable that, being in the grip of emergency, they will focus strongly on the domestic challenge.

However, there are now ominous signs that the lack of vaccination in entire stretches of the world, for long stretches of time, may in time lead to mutations that endanger us all, including risk to those countries that today have the greatest access to the vaccine. It is for those security and public-health reasons that we discourage vaccine nationalism. It does a profound disservice to the very people it is invoked on behalf of, and along the way endangers global peace and health.

We urge the members of the Council, which include countries with above-average resources and industrial capacities, to show global leadership by ensuring vaccine availability and affordability to the most fragile countries and regions.

We also know that, beyond this pandemic, every country and every region faces historic challenges that will require multilateral, connected solutions. From climate change to the dangerous political instability caused by inequality, and a growing trust gap between people and institutions, we are living on the brink of a rapid unravelling of the global order.

The anger and alienation that billions feel due to perceived and real marginalization, alienation, indignity and the turn to religious extremism is leading to the rise of new fascisms. A shot of faith is needed by those billions to know that the United Nations, as a collective of nations and as an organization, can reach out to them whether they are rich or poor, brown or white. The COVID-19 vaccine is the shot in the arm that will make them feel that we around this table are equal to the moment.

We stand on the fork of a road to different futures. Ensuring that the same old tired hierarchies of wealth do not apply to vaccine access will catapult us into a post-COVID future in which we can successfully tackle other pressing challenges together.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico thanks the presidency of Tunisia for having placed this issue on the agenda. We also thank the Under-Secretaries-General for their informative briefings.

We commend the leadership of Tunisia and France in having achieved the adoption of resolution 2532 (2020), on an immediate global ceasefire in the light of the pandemic caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), on which we are following up today. We reiterate Mexico's unequivocal support for that resolution and for the Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian truce, which has not been achieved in all cases. It is necessary to renew and strengthen the Security Council's commitment to that common goal.

Threats to international peace and security are multidimensional and constantly evolving, and the pandemic has led to unprecedented multidimensional disruptions. These are exacerbated in conflict and post-conflict situations, because while the problem originates in the area of public health, it goes beyond it, as we have seen. The pandemic has caused great harm to the economy and public finances, undermined politics, exposed the unacceptable level of inequality that prevails, severely put to the test multilateral institutions and become, de facto, an international security issue.

The leadership and collective commitment of the Security Council, beyond our natural and welcome differences, is essential to strengthening the unity and coordination of the United Nations, mitigating the ravages related to the pandemic in conflict situations and containing the increasing deterioration in situations of instability and violence. It is necessary to strengthen the measures adopted to ensure the continuity of the work of peacekeeping operations and of the special political missions undertaken by the United Nations.

The entire world has found that the effects of the pandemic further escalate existing challenges in terms of, inter alia, insecurity; violence; inequality; poverty; unemployment; health services, including mental health; human rights; and democratic governance. Added to this is the complex landscape that has led to misinformation; this is a new challenge whose consequences were underestimated that distorts facts, generates mistrust and hampers strategies aimed at responding to the pandemic.

We are convinced that resolution 2532 (2020) was a step in the right direction but believe that it should have been taken earlier. We must now redouble our efforts to continue strengthening global actions to promote post-pandemic recovery. That is where the Security Council must play a more active role in guiding the quest for solutions based on a preventive approach that includes inclusive measures, such as "build back better".

The United Nations priority approach to overcoming the crisis, which, owing to its dimensions, affects international security, must include universal and free access to vaccines. We must make vaccines, drugs and all essential medical supplies available to everyone, without exception. It has to be said as many times as necessary, because it is true that no one will be safe until we all are safe.

For that reason, Mexico welcomes the recent decision of the United States to join COVAX, a multilateral effort by more than 170 countries, to ensure effective international cooperation that guarantees equitable access to vaccines

against COVID-19, in line with resolution 74/274, submitted by Mexico last April and which was co-sponsored by 178 countries and adopted by consensus by the General Assembly.

Effective cooperation implies working jointly with all stakeholders and relevant bodies. For that reason, Mexico also acknowledges the work being done by the Group of Friends of Solidarity for Global Health Security, which brings together more than 40 Member States from all regions and which works to raise awareness about the implications of global health crises for global security. Not to recognize that dimension would be to shirk our current and even more serious responsibility in the face of future pandemics.

Mexico expresses its commitment to a multilateralism that is capable of ensuring timely and effective action on the part of the United Nations system as a whole. For that to happen, the Security Council must agree to address the threats to international security that may be posed by health crises of global significance such as the one that we are experiencing now.

Annex XII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

As the co-author, along with France, of resolution 2532 (2020), it is only natural for Tunisia to devote a meeting to it during its presidency in order to assess the implementation of that important resolution. I would like to recall that under my country's presidency, in September, a meeting of the same type was convened (see S/2020/953), again at the request of Tunisia and France.

When resolution 2532 (2020) was adopted, on 1 July 2020, we were far from being able to imagine the devastating effects of the pandemic in terms of loss of human life, the impact on the world economy and, in general, on our habits and our ways of living and working.

Unfortunately, the year that has just begun is, in many respects, looking similar to the one that has just ended, with the addition of a second wave of the deadly pandemic, owing to a new variant of the virus that is more virulent and faster-spreading. Allow me here to thank Ms. DiCarlo and Mr. Lacroix, Mr. Khare and Mr. Lowcock for their additional briefings, which have enlightened us about the various facets of this terrible pandemic.

Despite the tremendous challenges faced by countries large and small, rich and poor alike, there is hope thanks to the outstanding work done by the pharmaceutical companies, which has enabled the creation of vaccines whose distribution and use have already begun. As we have often said in previous statements, it is imperative to ensure that vaccine distribution does not give rise to protectionist and inconsistent health responses, where some countries would use this common good as an instrument for advancing their hegemonic vision and other spheres of influence. No country or region of the world can feel protected or safe until all other countries and regions are, because the virus knows no borders.

In that regard, as resolution 2532 (2020) underlines, the fight against the pandemic, of which vaccine distribution is an integral part, requires strengthened national, regional and international cooperation and solidarity, as well as coordinated, inclusive and comprehensive international action. The delivery of the vaccine to low-income countries and areas of conflict can be achieved only through that dynamic of multilateralism.

To that end, the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), at the Summit they just held on 23 January, established a vaccine procurement process through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) initiative, led by the World Health Organization, based on the initiatives already undertaken by Member States and the international community, with a view to ensuring the availability of vaccines in sufficient quantities, in accordance with the recommendations of the Niamey Summit. They also agreed that the vaccination campaign should start in the ECOWAS region by the end of June 2021 at the latest.

In addition to an equitable distribution of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine, my delegation believes that it is necessary to resume vaccination campaigns against other serious diseases that have been interrupted because of the pandemic. The interruption of immunization cycles exposes more than 80 million children under one year of age to vaccine-preventable diseases in a context where those countries face several other challenges, such as insecurity and recurrent humanitarian crises.

Beyond being a health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a so-called poly-pandemic, threatening to wipe out decades of development progress, further exacerbating State fragility and even becoming a catalyst for violent conflict.

In the Sahel, a region where climate change and acts of terrorism have an impact on populations, the pandemic has added a new layer to an already disastrous situation given the fragile health systems that have made populations particularly vulnerable to disease and hunger. Today we are witnessing an acute rise in food insecurity levels in this region as in many others, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen, to name but a few. Faced with this complex situation, we must support, more than ever, the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, and at the same time ensure that the conflicts on our agenda are given due attention before this pandemic develops.

The need for humanitarian assistance, coupled with the need for vaccine distribution when the time comes, requires us to secure the corridors of passage, free from controversy and political considerations. That is how we will help provide assistance to people in need, including women, children, refugees, the elderly and people with disabilities.

In that regard, I am pleased to thank the Secretary-General, who, through his various reports to the Council, has sought to shed light on the impact of the pandemic on countries in crisis, as well as on the capacity of peacekeeping operations and special political missions to carry out their priority mandates in a context that has become especially difficult.

At this time, when health personnel and humanitarian workers are spearheading the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences, I would like, in conclusion, to pay special tribute to those women and men, who work day and night to be of service to others, often at the risk of their own lives.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

I thank the Under-Secretaries-General for their briefings this morning. We meet as we are facing perhaps the darkest hours of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The number of deaths has now surpassed 2 million people. And the virus has exacerbated human suffering in conflict areas.

Progress on vaccines gives us hope. But we need to reach the most vulnerable. For that purpose, Norway is proud to co-chair, together with South Africa, the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator Facilitation Council. Securing fair and global access to vaccines and mitigating the negative consequences of the pandemic require an effective and efficient multilateral system. The Security Council must also play its part in that and deliver a united response.

Like many other countries, Norway echoed Secretary-General Guterres' timely call for a global ceasefire. We encouraged parties to conflict to adhere to the appeal. However, as we have all seen, the response has not been sufficient. Where ceasefires were announced, most were unilateral and limited, lacking follow-up mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and conflict management. We should apply lessons from that experience as we assist parties moving forward. One lesson to draw is the importance of encouraging mutual commitments by conflict parties to allow ceasefires to serve their purpose — whether it is vaccine distribution or steps towards a settlement.

The leadership and coordination by the World Health Organization, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme were essential to ensure effective and immediate health, humanitarian and socioeconomic responses. We also commend the Secretary-General for his swift response when Norway proposed establishing the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund in March 2020. The pandemic has demonstrated the need for strong and efficient United Nations collaboration at the country level. Reports from the field confirm the importance of the strengthened United Nations Resident Coordinator system — a key element of United Nations reform. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for a global health agenda that can improve resilience, prevention, preparedness and response to health threats. Multilateral cooperation in those areas is more important than ever.

Despite the lack of implementation of a full global ceasefire, important results have been achieved. In particular, United Nations missions have delivered impressively towards the objectives set out by the Secretary-General in April last year. Their efforts should continue to support national authorities, protect United Nations personnel, mitigate the spread of the virus and assist in the protection of vulnerable communities while ensuring operational continuity.

In addition, it remains essential that humanitarian workers get safe and unhindered access to those in need, including for vaccination. Norway supports the United Nations in its efforts to ensure humanitarian access under those challenging circumstances. We particularly stress the key role of local first-line humanitarian workers.

COVID-19 has exacerbated protection challenges, including combating sexual and gender-based violence. Violations against children also persist. And the lack of safe access to education remains a key concern. Norway will continue to prioritize the protection of civilians in response to the pandemic, including the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.

COVID-19 has impacted us all, but not evenly. We have seen disproportionate impacts among countries, communities and even genders. We need a gender-transformative perspective, and, above all, human rights, the rule of law and gender equality must underpin our global response to COVID-19.

The pandemic has also brought into sharp relief the importance of the women and peace and security agenda to every aspect of crisis prevention and response. At the community level, women peacebuilders and human rights defenders have also found themselves at the forefront of COVID-19 prevention and response efforts. They remain a vital component of pandemic response and recovery, and are key to long-term resilience, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

The world is facing several crises at once: the global pandemic, climate change and biodiversity loss. They interact and reinforce one another. They exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and add complexity to situations where communities are already under stress from armed conflict. Our recovery efforts provide an opportunity to build back better and greener, and perhaps more peacefully. The many pressures exerted by the pandemic shift conflict dynamics in different ways. Some conflicts will harden, while in others new windows for coordinated diplomatic efforts might open.

It is our duty as the Security Council to closely watch those shifting dynamics to coordinate efforts and facilitate humanitarian access and peaceful resolution of conflicts when possible.

Annex XIV**Statement by the First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanskiy**

[Original: Russian]

We thank our speakers today for their briefings.

Russia was among the first countries to support the call of Secretary-General Guterres, on 23 March 2020, for a global ceasefire and advocates strict compliance with resolution 2532 (2020). We continue to stress the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a humanitarian pause in conflict zones. However, that should not apply to operations being carried out against internationally recognized terrorist groups.

Unfortunately, the full implementation of the resolution's provisions is stalling. In particular, violent hostilities continue in various hotspots around the world, including those fuelled from the outside. We are seeing some terrorist groups seeking to benefit from the situation in order to gain an advantage on the ground.

It is important to bear in mind that a ceasefire is not the only thing that resolution 2532 (2020) calls for. In particular, it supports the Secretary-General's call for the lifting of illegal unilateral sanctions, which limit the capacity of countries, especially developing and least developed countries, to respond to the challenges posed by the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and its socioeconomic impact.

The persistent adherence by a select group of States to illegitimate and inhumane unilateral restrictions, adopted in defiance of the Security Council, is disappointing. In that connection, we recall the Russian President's initiative to create "green corridors" free of trade wars and sanctions to deliver essential goods and medicine to countries in need.

I would like to commend the professionalism of United Nations peacekeepers and the staff of United Nations special political missions, who continue to honourably carry out their duties despite the gravest of circumstances. It is encouraging that Blue Helmets continue to provide comprehensive support to host Governments in combating the epidemic.

It is now more important than ever to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable populations. At the same time, such work must be carried out on the basis of full respect for the sovereignty of the recipient States and without any preconditions, that is, in strict compliance with the Guiding Principles on the Right to Humanitarian Assistance and General Assembly resolution 46/182. In that context, we express concern over the increasing frequency of attempts to erase those fundamental provisions from resolutions extending the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We share the message of the resolution on the importance of an inclusive, comprehensive and global response to the coronavirus pandemic, with a coordinating role for the United Nations. The unconditional support of the World Health Organization (WHO) as the leading body for mobilizing States' efforts in the fight against COVID-19 remains relevant.

For its part, Russia continues to contribute to international efforts to combat COVID-19 as much as it can. It cooperates with WHO, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and other organizations and mechanisms.

As the Council knows, Russia created and registered the world's first Sputnik-V coronavirus vaccine. That enables us to assist countries in need on a bilateral basis. In December 2020, the process of mass vaccination was launched in our country. President Putin's proposal to provide Russian vaccines free of charge to United Nations staff remains in effect.

We are ready to cooperate productively with all interested partners to effectively combat the pandemic and prevent vaccine discrimination.

Annex XV**Statement by the Second Deputy Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Halimah DeShong**

Let me begin by thanking the President for convening this timely discussion and expressing our appreciation to Under-Secretaries-General DiCarlo, Lacroix, Lowcock and Khare for their comprehensive briefings.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose disastrous health, socioeconomic and security challenges in every corner of the globe. The humanitarian impacts of the pandemic, which are felt most acutely in conflict-affected countries, necessitate greater attention and urgent action by the international community to alleviate the suffering of those made most vulnerable, including women and children, internally displaced persons and refugees.

We commend the continued efforts by the Secretary-General, his Special Representatives and Special Envoys and the range of United Nations presences, both at Headquarters and in the field, to facilitate peace talks geared towards achieving a global ceasefire as part of the COVID-19 response; provide operational support to affected countries to help bolster health and safety; mitigate the risk of virus transmission among deployed personnel; and maintain the delivery of mandates, despite the immense risks posed by the pandemic.

We reiterate our full support to the provisions of resolution 2532 (2020) and emphasize that only through a total cessation of hostilities will conflict-affected countries be able to effectively manage the health crisis as they mend their social fabrics and advance peace processes. In Libya, the Sudan and South Sudan, although the peace processes are still delicate, the positive overall developments stand as a testament to the ongoing commitments of United Nations personnel, both uniformed and civilian, to achieve sustainable peace. Yet, as we saw with the horrendous slaughter of innocent civilians by rebel forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in mid-January and the recent series of armed group attacks in the Central African Republic, more must be done to achieve peace for those who yearn for it.

If we are to successfully address the simultaneous challenges of COVID-19 and conflict, greater political will, scaled up humanitarian and developmental assistance, full respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, and earnest efforts towards pursuing dialogue, compromise and reconciliation are all required. As vaccines are rolled out to combat the disease, we must also spare no effort to ensure that they are equitably available to all, including conflict-affected and least developed countries. In that regard, our delegation calls for greater financial support to the COVAX Facility to strengthen the global immunization campaign against COVID-19. In addition, we need an enforceable, international rules-based compact among all countries and major pharmaceutical companies to deliver, universally and affordably, COVID-19 vaccines.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms its support of the key coordinating role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in ensuring safe and effective vaccine distribution. We also underscore the firm partnership between WHO and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, which highlights the importance of strong cooperation at the regional and subregional levels, not only for traditional security issues but across the entire spectrum of the peace and security, development and humanitarian nexus.

In conclusion, we reiterate the importance of an integrated and coordinated approach in which all organs of the United Nations, its relevant specialized

agencies and programmes, Member States and other important stakeholders, such as international financial institutions, work together to systematically address the variegated challenges and dimensions of COVID-19. As we seek to recover from the pandemic, let us also seek to advance peace and justice for all, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let us remember that unless everyone is safe, no one is safe.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretaries-General Rosemary DiCarlo, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Atul Khare and Mark Lowcock for their valuable briefings.

Since the pandemic began, Tunisia has been warning of its direct effects on international peace and security, and my country's President has called on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities in addressing the consequences of the pandemic. Tunisia has stressed the need for a joint and coordinated response under United Nations auspices, based on a broader concept of collective security and on greater cooperation and international solidarity.

Today, nearly a year after the onset of the epidemic, and despite the efforts made and actions taken, the world is still reeling from the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic at various levels. The pandemic continues to spread across the globe, leaving in its wake more than 2 million deaths and 100 million infections. In addition, the world economy has sustained heavy losses in all sectors and countries, and the social repercussions of those losses — a dramatic rise in unemployment, widespread poverty and a decline in growth indicators — have been severe. The effects of the pandemic have been harsher and felt more profoundly in conflict zones and refugee camps, exacerbating the situation in those areas and disrupting the work of United Nations missions to establish and build peace, as well as humanitarian relief efforts. Today millions, especially children, are at risk of famine as a result.

Our meeting today highlights our shared conviction that the repercussions of the pandemic on international peace and security are dire. It also highlights the urgent need to continue redoubling and intensifying efforts to implement resolution 2532 (2020), which was adopted unanimously following a Tunisian-French initiative. That resolution constitutes a milestone in the Council's work and the effort to establish a shared international understanding of the nature of the unprecedented challenge facing our world today, a challenge that portends increasingly complex situations, particularly in conflict zones, additional tensions and conflicts in the world and new crises that imperil peace, security and stability and the destructive effects of which will affect all our countries and peoples, without exception.

We commend the valuable efforts of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, chief among them the World Health Organization, to help countries combat the pandemic. We highly value the continued work of United Nations missions to establish and build peace, their valuable efforts and the great sacrifices they make to achieve peace, restore security and stability in conflict zones and assist local authorities with their efforts to address the pandemic, despite the difficulties involved. In that context, we reaffirm that the establishment of a comprehensive global ceasefire, in implementation of resolution 2532 (2020) and in response to the Secretary-General's call, is a matter of urgent priority. Such a ceasefire would make it possible for international efforts to be focused on confronting the pandemic and containing its effects, particularly in conflict zones.

We reiterate that the COVID-19 pandemic will be a major factor in exacerbating the fragility that will fuel tensions and violence and prolong conflicts around the world, given that the immediate, direct repercussions of the pandemic on the global

health situation and on international peace and security will continue to be felt for several years, if not for decades.

In the midst of this difficult situation, producing a COVID-19 vaccine is an important step towards reducing the spread of the disease and containing its effects. However, such an achievement hinges on international cooperation and solidarity in order to ensure equitable access to vaccines for all, especially for people in countries with limited capabilities or those dealing with conflicts or their aftermath.

We believe that this issue is also linked to international peace and security, since the failure to provide equitable access to vaccines would deepen feelings of injustice, fuel tensions and affect international efforts to address the pandemic. It also runs counter to the principles of human solidarity and to the concepts of collective security and shared destiny. Abiding by those principles and concepts is essential if the world is to succeed in rising to this unprecedented challenge, as no one can be secure until everyone is secure. On the other hand, my country stresses that it is necessary to vaccinate personnel serving in United Nations missions in conflict zones and in areas where tensions persist, so that those missions can continue to carry out their vital tasks and fulfil their mandates. Moreover, a ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities are prerequisites for conducting vaccination campaigns in such areas.

In conclusion, I reiterate that it is necessary to strengthen international and United Nations efforts to address this pandemic, and that the Security Council has a pivotal role to play in dealing with its implications for international peace and security. I also stress the importance of following up on the implementation of resolution 2532 (2020) and developing the mechanisms for its implementation, in line with developments in the epidemiological situation and its effects on international peace and security and on United Nations efforts to resolve conflicts.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations**

May I start by thanking you, Mr. President, for calling this debate. The United Kingdom reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and the implementation of the commitments under resolution 2532 (2020).

Sadly, as we have heard, despite a global pandemic of historic proportions, peacebuilding has not always been afforded the priority it deserves. There has indeed been some progress, but the implementation of the resolution continues to be mixed, as the following three examples illustrate.

In Yemen, as we also heard, the Houthis failed to reciprocate the Saudi-led coalition's unilateral ceasefire offers in 2020, and the recent Houthi attack on Aden has gravely undercut peace efforts. Now is the time to rally round the efforts of the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General to secure a lasting political solution to the conflict. The stakes have never been higher, and the humanitarian crisis, already the world's worst, is significantly worsening with the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In September, the Foreign Secretary warned that Yemen had never looked more likely to slide into famine. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification data, published in 2020, 16,500 Yemenis were living in famine conditions, a number now set to almost triple to 47,000 by June 2021.

Secondly, in South Sudan, sustained increases in violence throughout 2020, combined with record flooding, mean areas of the country now likely face famine or famine-like conditions. This is a catastrophe that the Government of South Sudan must urgently address with international support. The 2018 peace deal remains the best chance of an end to violence and longer-term stability. However, implementation has stagnated. As such, greater coordinated international and regional pressure is needed on the Government of South Sudan to ensure they deliver their commitments.

More encouragingly, we welcome the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement on 3 October 2020 by the Government of the Sudan, the Sudan Revolutionary Front and the Sudan Liberation Movement Minni Minawi faction. This is a crucial step towards comprehensive peace. But despite that progress, significant challenges remain there too, including intercommunal violence. The violence that occurred recently in West and South Darfur serves to highlight the continued need for the protection of civilians, which the full implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement could help provide for. We encourage the signatories to the Agreement to begin swiftly the process of implementation, particularly those provisions of the Agreement pertaining to security arrangements and addressing the root causes of conflict. We also urge all those who remain outside the peace negotiations to engage immediately and constructively without preconditions.

As we heard throughout 2020, we sadly saw the voices of women side-lined in peace processes. This is a grave problem, not just morally but also because peace is more sustainable when it meets and reflects the needs of all people, men and women. The United Kingdom strongly urges the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth, religious groups and non-governmental organizations in peacebuilding. And we must ensure women are able to carry out their work free from threats and violence. No woman should have to risk her safety to heal her community.

Finally, as we know, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens international peace and security. Ending the pandemic requires equitable global access to vaccines. Yet there are particular barriers to vaccine delivery in contexts affected by conflict and

insecurity. We welcome the initiative of the Tunisian presidency to do more at this critical time. Building on resolution 2532 (2020) the United Kingdom will convene a meeting during our presidency next month to address potential barriers to vaccine access such as ceasefires, logistics and funding for delivery.

Annex XVIII**Statement by the Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations, Rodney Hunter**

I thank Tunisia for convening today's discussion on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and for the leadership it has shown on this critical issue.

It has been over a year since the world became aware of this terrible virus, and none of us have been spared its impacts. We express profound sorrow for the deaths, illnesses and economic devastation that have occurred as a result of this horrible pandemic.

On behalf of the United States, I want to express our deepest condolences to the members of the United Nations community who have lost loved ones and colleagues to the pandemic. The city we call home, New York, was hit particularly hard by the pandemic, and I want to express our deep appreciation for those on the front lines — the doctors, the health-care workers and others who have risked their lives and, in doing so, have saved countless others. Their selfless courage and selflessness show the best of who we are as human beings, and we should strive to emulate that same spirit here in the Security Council and in our work each and every day. We thank them so much.

The United States is committed to working together with other countries to combat this deadly virus. As a first sign of our renewed commitment to supporting multilateral efforts to fight the pandemic, on 20 January President Biden signed a letter to the Secretary-General retracting the previous Administration's notification of the United States intention to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as a letter informing the WHO Director-General of that decision.

Despite all that the global community has endured during this pandemic, there is light at the end of the tunnel. It is nothing short of a modern scientific marvel that, in less than one year, numerous safe and effective vaccines and therapeutics have been developed around the world. The United States is working to ensure those vaccines get to those who need them most, and we will also work with our partners to facilitate access to those most in need. No one will be safe until the virus is finally and completely defeated.

As the Chief Medical Adviser to President Biden, Dr. Anthony Fauci, told our WHO colleagues last week that the United States

“will commit to building global health security capacity, expanding pandemic preparedness and supporting efforts to strengthen health systems around the world and to advance the Sustainable Development Goals”.

WHO must play a central role in our combined response to this pandemic, and we look forward to working with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), WHO, the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility to help facilitate a rapid global vaccine roll-out. As a WHO member State, the United States will work closely with all Security Council members to ensure WHO is strengthened and reformed appropriately, not only to face this current challenge but also to effectively stand up to other challenges yet to come.

The language in resolution 2532 (2020) remains as relevant and critical now as when it was adopted in July 2020. Conflict-affected countries, weakened by war and violence, remain highly vulnerable to this virus, particularly as COVID-19 becomes more transmissible. Public-health officials must have the space and safety needed

to continue fighting this virus, to provide affected populations with accurate and factual information and to deploy vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics.

We are all concerned with ensuring that conflict-affected countries are able to access testing, combat disinformation, safely treat their patients, continue to implement public-safety guidelines and access and deliver the critical vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics needed for recovery. Many of the countries affected by conflicts also suffer from poverty and lack of humanitarian assistance, including access to sufficient volumes of vaccines to protect their populations.

We were pleased that, well before the Security Council adopted resolution 2532 (2020), several armed groups declared ceasefires to heed the Secretary-General's call. As early as April 2020, fighters in 12 countries had put down their weapons, including those involved in some of the world's most intractable conflicts.

But, unfortunately, many of those ceasefires have not held, and parties have resumed fighting even as the virus raged on. We strongly urge States and other parties to armed conflict to respect existing ceasefires, or to conclude new ceasefire agreements so that they may focus on managing this pandemic and protecting their citizens.

Faithfully implemented, ceasefires would provide a necessary respite for women, children and men on the front lines of violence and conflict, and thus particularly vulnerable to the virus. We must also ensure that vitally needed humanitarian aid, and those delivering it, are fully protected and able to do so, especially in these vulnerable regions. And humanitarian access must be urgently granted to reach those who need aid.

From a vaccine-management perspective, including extreme cold-chain requirements for delivery of some vaccines, organizing mass vaccination events amid violence and conflict will be immensely difficult. Relevant public-health authorities must be given the space and safety they need to operate efficiently and quickly, not just to vaccinate against COVID-19 but to maintain critical vaccination campaigns against polio, measles and other devastating diseases.

We also condemn terrorist organizations that have taken advantage of this difficult situation to escalate violence while Governments try to focus on containing the virus. We will continue our legitimate operations against these terrorist groups, which threaten peace everywhere.

The United States continues to lead the world's scientific, humanitarian and health-assistance response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will engage internationally, including partnering with WHO and the entire United Nations system, to combat COVID-19, promote health and advance global health security to save lives, promote economic recovery and build better resilience against future biological threats. The United States will also seek to bolster GAVI and the COVAX Facility to support vaccines reaching all parts of the globe, new approaches to health security and an acceleration of the Global Health Security Agenda.

The United States has already announced over \$1.6 billion in additional economic, health and humanitarian assistance as part of about \$20.5 billion in United States funding to combat COVID-19.

Today's humanitarian landscape is unprecedented in its magnitude, acceleration and complexity. COVID-19's second-order impacts on the most vulnerable have been catastrophic — rising food prices, as we have heard today, falling incomes, drops in remittances, interrupted vaccine programmes, school closures and a civilian protection crisis. Those impacts continue to be felt acutely by vulnerable and marginalized populations, including here in the United States.

We have all acutely felt the impacts of this horrific pandemic, and we must be united in our efforts to eliminate it. As I said before, we know there is light at the end of this tunnel, and we must not let this virus stall long-standing efforts towards peace and security. Joining together with the United Nations and other international partners, the United States will continue to lead the fight against COVID-19 during this critical time, and we will do all we can to ensure a safer and more secure world, both now and in future.

Annex XIX**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of Viet Nam to the United Nations,
Pham Hai Anh**

I would like to thank Under-Secretaries-General Rosemary DiCarlo, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Atul Khare and Mark Lowcock for their comprehensive briefings.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2532 (2020) was a landmark action by the Security Council. Yet the resolution is not an end in itself. Monitoring its implementation is no less important. One of its key purposes was to support the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. As the briefers highlighted, the ceasefire has been observed in some situations, and several elections and referendum processes have been resumed. However, in many corners of the world ceasefire commitments have not been observed and conflicts and violence have continued or even intensified.

The resolution also recognizes the significant threat of the pandemic to international peace and security, including by exacerbating humanitarian situations and endangering peacebuilding and development gains. As we can initially assess, inequalities and other underlying causes of conflicts and violence, aggravated by the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, will take devastating tolls in the long run and risk being exploited by extremists and terrorists. While vaccination programmes are under way in several Member States, this is yet to become the case in many others, particularly in the global South.

Six months into the resolution's implementation, we appreciate this opportunity to take stock of our progress and identify gaps for further improvements. In that context, allow me to stress the following points.

First, ceasefires must be strengthened if we are to protect all humans from the double impact of conflicts and the pandemic. Warring parties must match their words with deeds in adhering to their commitment to cease hostilities and allow humanitarian response. We call for a framework to effectively oversee the implementation of ceasefires in conflict areas. We support greater efforts by the Secretary-General's Special Representatives and Special Envoys to help secure lasting solutions to conflicts and violence after the ceasefire. Regional and local actors can and must play constructive roles in confidence-building and preventive diplomacy, including through mediation.

Secondly, we must further support safer and strengthened United Nations peacekeeping operations. We commend the steps taken by United Nations missions and offices in adapting their operations and discharging their mandates. Keeping the peace and protecting civilians require, first and foremost, not becoming a source of contagion. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen the medical capacity of United Nations peacekeeping and political missions so as to protect their own personnel and better assist host countries in their pandemic response. Missions, troop- and police-contributing countries as well as host countries must work together to identify adaptation measures to allow for safe and timely rotations. We note the positive assessment of Under-Secretary-General Lacroix as to the ratio of rotations reaching that of the pre-coronavirus period.

Thirdly, while the pandemic is an ongoing challenge, it is also an opportunity to shape our future. Strengthening our commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism, with the fundamental role of the United Nations system in catalysing and coordinating the comprehensive global response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the central efforts of Member States therein, is key to our long-term comprehensive strategy. Member States must support a robust

and resilient global health system, with the World Health Organization playing a crucial role. We must pay heed to alleviating the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, facilitating fair and equitable access to vaccine and medicines and ensuring economic resilience and financing for development for least developed, developing and conflict-affected countries. We must not allow our hard-won peacebuilding and development gains to be disrupted or reversed.

In conclusion, resolution 2532 (2020) is a first step in recognizing the immediate danger of the COVID-19 pandemic to international peace and security and mapping our collective action. Its effective implementation and the long-term issues I mentioned require comprehensive and strengthened follow-up, including through appropriate updates and further guidance. The people in countries in situations of armed conflict or affected by humanitarian crises look to the Council for its continued unity, solidarity and leadership. We must not fail them.
