



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT

UPDATE REPORT



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CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

Expected Council Action

As Council president this month and the current chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, Congo has planned an open debate for 28 August to discuss ways in which the UN system can more effectively prevent and resolve conflict, particularly in Africa. The debate is expected to include discussion of current strategies and the international, regional and subregional instruments now being employed. Members are also likely to discuss the need to improve the coordination of the activities of the disparate players currently involved in conflict prevention.

Council members are expected to work on a presidential statement to focus attention on conflict prevention and resolution and highlight specific strategies. However, it is unclear at this stage whether a text will be ready to adopt on 28 August. It may be that a text will not be developed until after the debate, which could lead to adoption in September or even October.

Key Issues

- A key issue, given the huge amount of effort the Council has devoted to this matter over the past decade (as outlined below) is what can be added by a further generic or thematic statement on the subject.
- A second key issue is whether, through the debate and a statement, the Council can reinvigorate its Working Group on the subject.
- A related issue is whether the Working Group can be encouraged to shift gears from the thematic to the specific aspects of the issue—in effect picking up on one of the Secretary-General's recommendations in 2001 that a body focus on specific prevention cases.
- In this regard, a further issue is whether the Working Group can be encouraged to adapt aspects of the modus operandi of the Council's Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict. That Group has effectively and successfully shifted its focus to include specific cases and has been able, working informally, with patience and care, to introduce important procedural innovations in dealing with affected parties and even non-state actors.
- A final issue is whether the Council should include language in a statement reinforcing the Secretary-General's efforts to expand capacity to support his good offices and mediation role.

Historical Background

1997 to Early 2002: An Increased Focus on Conflict Prevention in Africa

In the 1990s, the Council began to focus increased attention on the violent conflict gripping many countries in Africa. By 1996, 13 of the continent's 54 countries were in the midst of wars that resulted in more than half of the world's conflict related deaths. After traumatic events in Angola, Mozambique, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the first half of the decade, the Council recognised that more effective strategies needed to be developed to address the political, economic and humanitarian challenges facing the continent.

In this context, the Council held its first ever ministerial-level meeting on Africa (S/PV.3819) in September 1997, with the US presiding. The meeting was intended to highlight the challenges facing the continent and to develop a basis for political and economic success in Africa. The presidential statement (S/PRST/1997/46) that resulted from the meeting called on the Secretary-General to prepare a report that generated recommendations for a “comprehensive response” to the challenges in Africa. In particular, the Secretary-General was asked to consider sources of conflict in Africa, ways of preventing and addressing these conflicts, and means for creating a foundation for durable peace and economic growth after they end.

The Secretary-General’s report, *The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa* (A/52/871–S/1998/318), came out in April 1998. Its recommendations reflected the comprehensive scope requested by the Council, focusing on peacemaking, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and post-conflict peacebuilding as means of addressing conflict. The report also emphasised good governance and sustainable development as ways of promoting lasting peace and economic progress.

An ad-hoc working group, mandated by resolution 1170 on 28 May 1998 and chaired by Gabon, was established for six months to review the report’s recommendations and submit proposals to the Council for translating them into action. In mid-September 1998, informed by the Working Group’s findings, the Council produced two resolutions and a presidential statement. These documents outlined strategies:

- to establish more effective arms embargos (S/RES/1196);
- to strengthen coordination between the UN and regional and subregional organisations (S/RES/1197); and
- to enhance peacekeeping capacity to address the challenges of conflict in Africa (S/PRST/1998/28).

A series of resolutions and presidential statements between late 1998 and late 2000 focused primarily on the UN’s role in conflict prevention, although some also emphasised conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Conflict prevention, at least at the thematic level, became a new focus of the Council’s work. This responded to Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s deep commitment to the issue. When the Council held its second open debate on conflict prevention on 20 July 2000 (S/PV.4174) under Jamaica’s presidency, Annan said that “conflict prevention must be made the cornerstone of collective security in the twenty-first century.”

The Secretary-General’s report of 7 June 2001 on the *Prevention of armed conflict* (A/55/985–S/2001/574) provided a detailed synthesis of Annan’s views on the issue. The report featured 29 recommendations for the UN and the international community to strengthen its approach to conflict prevention. It outlined the broad scope of interconnected issues that had come to be associated with conflict prevention at the UN, ranging from humanitarian assistance and human rights to economic development and political issues. While it placed the ultimate burden on national governments for preventing conflict, it noted the important role of the Security Council in addressing the issue. The report recommended the following to the Council.

- It encouraged the Council to create a body (e.g. an ad-hoc working group or subsidiary organ) to focus on prevention cases.
- It urged the Security Council to support peacebuilding components within peacekeeping operations.
- It urged the Council to strengthen the Secretariat’s capacity for supporting peacebuilding aspects of peacekeeping operations.
- It encouraged the Council to integrate demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) into peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates.
- It called on the Council to make use of analysis and information from UN human rights organs when preventing armed conflict.
- It urged the Council to call upon and support the preventive actions of relevant UN agencies when addressing humanitarian crises.
- It encouraged the Council to focus more attention on considering gender perspectives in its conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Several (but not all) of these recommendations subsequently became incorporated in the Council’s work in the

years to come. On 30 August 2001 the Council adopted resolution 1366 acknowledging that attempting to prevent armed conflict was “an integral part of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”

On 31 January 2002, the Security Council held another meeting devoted exclusively to Africa (S/PV.4465). The meeting, Mauritius presiding, led to a statement (S/PRST/2002/2) emphasising the following points with respect to achieving conflict prevention and resolution on the continent:

- the value of enhancing cooperation and coordination between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in Africa;
- the importance of more effective cooperation between the Security Council and ECOSOC to address humanitarian crises that lead to conflict; and
- the need for the international community to step up its efforts to fight HIV/AIDS and strengthen programmes that assist refugees and facilitate DDR.

The statement also noted that the Security Council would consider establishing a Working Group to monitor these recommendations.

Early 2002–Early 2005: Establishment and Early Activities of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa

Using the recommendations outlined in S/PRST/2002/2 as a basis, the Security Council established the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in early March 2002 under the chairmanship of Mauritius. The Working Group was designed to be informal, reporting to the Council when appropriate and making decisions by consensus. Its mandate, as outlined in the Terms of Reference for the Working Group (S/2002/207), included:

- monitoring the execution of recommendations from S/PRST/2002/2 and other presidential statements and resolutions concerning conflict prevention and resolution in Africa;
- offering recommendations on how to strengthen cooperation between the Security Council and ECOSOC and other UN bodies that do work in Africa;
- examining issues of a cross-conflict or regional nature relating to the Security Council’s work on conflict prevention and resolution in Africa; and
- offering recommendations on how to strengthen cooperation between the Security Council and regional and subregional organisations in Africa that deal with conflict prevention and resolution.

In 2002, the Working Group presented a series of recommendations to the Council. These were outlined in two letters from the Working Group’s chairman to the president of the Security Council submitted in August and December respectively.

The August 2002 letter (S/2002/979) provided recommendations regarding Groups of Friends, coordination between the Security Council and the AU, and peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. It suggested that Groups of Friends could be most effective in supporting the Security Council’s work when they have clear responsibilities and concentrate on implementing agreements that have already been made by the conflicting parties. The Working Group suggested that coordination between the AU and the UN could be enhanced by, for example, deploying joint AU-UN missions, assigning joint special envoys to specific conflicts and improving cooperation between the AU and the UN on DDR in the context of peacebuilding. To help Guinea-Bissau in its peacebuilding efforts, the Working Group proposed mobilising and coordinating several UN and regional institutions and suggested that ECOSOC be used as a mechanism to develop priorities to help guide the peacebuilding planning process.

In the December 2002 letter (S/2002/1352) the Working Group provided recommendations to the Council on how to enhance the effectiveness of special representatives and representatives of the Secretary-General in Africa. It suggested that the Secretary-General should appoint individuals with strong managerial skills to these posts and encourage them to collaborate with their counterparts from regional and subregional organisations. According to the Working Group, the efforts of such individuals should be results rather than

process oriented. They should also be granted clear authority over UN bodies and peacekeeping operations in the respective countries to which they have been assigned, although their mandates should be established in a case-by-case manner.

In 2003, the Working Group focused its efforts on strengthening the Council's cooperation with ECOSOC, the AU and subregional organisations in Africa. More generally, it sought to enhance the Council's work in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa, while attempting to develop confidence building measures in parts of the continent affected by conflict. It also moved from focusing primarily on thematic matters to taking on some specific situations and began reaching out to other UN bodies, in particular ECOSOC.

Under the chairmanship of Angola in 2003 and 2004 the Working Group directed much of the Security Council's attention to the situation in Guinea-Bissau (a fellow Portuguese speaking country and AU member). It held meetings with ECOSOC's ad-hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau. It emphasised the need for elections in that country to reestablish democratic principles and noted that the international community's assistance was needed to support the electoral process there, a position shared by ECOSOC's Advisory Group. The Working Group also helped to plan the joint ECOSOC-Security Council mission to Guinea-Bissau in June 2003.

Also in 2003, to address the fragile security situation in the DRC, the Working Group encouraged the Security Council and the broader international community to enhance the UN's work in the country and compel the conflicting parties to abide by their commitments. Toward this end, the Working Group held a meeting in April 2003 where it emphasised the need for the Security Council to work towards preventing the unrest in Kivu from undermining the progress that had been made toward peace.

Enhanced cooperation between the Working Group and the AU was also evidenced in 2003. Representatives of the AU Permanent Observer Mission participated in Working Group meetings. Additionally, Working Group members began receiving the work programme of the Central Organ and Commission of the AU on peace and security issues.

In 2004, the Working Group continued to focus on the cooperation between the Security Council and other UN bodies in order to address the challenges of conflict in Africa. The Working Group collaborated with ECOSOC's Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau and the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau to continue to shed light on the political and economic difficulties facing that country. The Working Group, the Advisory Group and the Group of Friends helped create the impetus for establishing an Emergency Economic Management Fund, a mechanism run by UNDP that would channel financial aid to Guinea-Bissau. The Working Group also met with ECOSOC's Advisory Group on Burundi on 15 March 2004, discussing strategies for collaboration between different UN bodies to bring peace and reconciliation to Burundi. (From today's perspective, much of what the Working Group was doing with respect to Guinea-Bissau resembles some of the country specific activities of the Peacebuilding Commission.)

In June 2004, the Working Group organised a joint meeting with the International Peace Academy to discuss a variety of themes relevant to conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. Among the topics discussed were thematic issues such as preventing conflict in Africa and the Security Council, the capacity of the AU, as well as the specific situations of Somalia and Libya. The seminar format of this meeting, which included both UN insiders and outsiders and allowed for the exchange of ideas among experts, has been applied in recent years by the Working Group to other issues.

2004 – 2005: From the High-Level Panel to the PBC

In 2005, the Working Group became somewhat overshadowed by the preparations for the September World Summit. The report of the *High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (A/59/565)* in December 2004 and the Secretary-General's March 2005 follow-up report *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All (A/59/2005)* described root causes of conflict and suggested various strategies to promote conflict prevention and resolution. The ideas presented in these documents—the relationship between peace, human rights and development, the proposal for an intergovernmental peacebuilding commission, and the need to develop greater cooperation between regional organisations and

the UN—reflected much of the thinking which had been occurring in the Working Group.

Nevertheless the Working Group remained active. Under Benin's chairmanship, it conducted a policy forum on 13 June 2005, entitled "Enhancing the UN's Capacity for Conflict Prevention: The Role of the Security Council." Among the conclusions reached at this event was the view that the Security Council needed to become more proactive in preventing conflicts, rather than reacting to their consequences. With this goal in mind, it was noted at the forum that the Secretariat's analytical capabilities should be strengthened and that coordination among UN agencies and cooperation between the UN and regional organisations could also be improved.

The conclusions of this event helped shaped the elements of future resolution 1625. Adopted unanimously by heads of state and government who had gathered at the UN for the September 2005 World Summit and were representing their countries in the Council, the resolution provided a context for future efforts in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa. While the Working Group did not negotiate the resolution, its work had provided the core materials that went into its creation.

On 15 December 2005, The Working Group hosted its second policy forum of that year, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Regional Organizations in the field of Peace and Security." The policy forum recommended ways of building the capacity of and enhancing the integration of Africa's peace and security structures. This discussion reflected approaches to conflict prevention that had been outlined in resolution 1625.

Since its adoption, resolution 1625 has had some influence on the Security Council's work in country specific situations. It has been invoked by the Council in debates, presidential statements and a resolution with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security (S/PV.5705 and resumption 1, S/PRST/2007/22); threats to international peace and security (S/PRST/2007/1); the relationship between the UN and regional organisations on behalf of peace and security (S/PV.5649 and resumption 1); and the situations in the Great Lakes region (S/PV.5359, S/RES/1653) and Côte d'Ivoire (S/PV.5617). In the context of these documents, Council members have pointed to some of the major issues described in resolution 1625. These include:

- the need to act against illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources and high-value commodities in places where they contribute to conflict;
- the importance of enhancing cooperation between the UN and regional organisations to address conflict;
- the importance of the Secretariat providing the Council with timely analytical reports on potential conflict regions, especially in Africa;
- the importance of developing multifaceted strategies to address conflict; and
- the importance of civil society in conflict prevention and resolution.

The Security-Council role and that of the Working Group has to be seen also in the light of the wider context within the UN system. While some member states have strongly supported Kofi Annan's reports described above aimed at enhancing the UN role in conflict prevention, others have been quite resistant, viewing the issue as a potential infringement on national sovereignty. Divisiveness vis-à-vis conflict prevention extends back several years and affected debate surrounding the Brahimi report (A/55/305-S/2000/809) on peacekeeping and the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. It culminated in the contentious arguments in the General Assembly over the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, which in the end was launched in 2006 without a mandate to address conflict prevention.

Differing views among member states on conflict prevention have limited progress in this area in recent years in the intergovernmental machinery. However, there have nonetheless been some important ongoing developments related to capacity-building in the Secretariat, in particular with respect to the Secretary General's good offices and mediation capacity. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome document (A/60/L.1) of 16 September 2005, member states had recognised the important role of the Secretary-General's good offices and endorsed his efforts to enhance his mediation capacities. In his 18 July 2006 *Progress report on the prevention of armed conflict*, the then Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that the good offices of the Secretary-General is an effective tool in conflict prevention, even if its results may take time to materialise, and

urged member states to take advantage of this tool to prevent conflict.

2005 to the Present: Recent Developments within the Secretariat

Former Under Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari led various efforts to build support for this vision. A small mediation support unit began to operate in the Secretariat in 2006. In October 2006, the Department of Political Affairs launched a year-long pilot program to strengthen the Secretariat's mediation capacity, including activities such as mediation training for UN staff, the development of an on-line database with mediation-related materials and the creation of a standby cadre of specialists to support mediation efforts.

The last of these initiatives seems particularly promising. Through it, the Norwegian Refugee Council, utilising voluntary funding from the Government of Norway in a partnership arrangement with the UN, will administer six high level officials (one leader and five specialists) who will be available to assist mediators in their activities. Such individuals are expected to make an initial commitment of six months to a year to the project, and might have expertise in the following areas:

- security sector reform;
- constitution making;
- power sharing issues;
- transitional justice and human rights; and
- wealth-sharing issues.

The Department of Political Affairs requested nominations for mediation specialists from member states in June 2007, and applications were to be submitted by 15 August.

Upcoming Working Group Activities

The Working Group seems to have been relatively inactive in 2006 and 2007, perhaps in part because of the wider context outlined above. The open debate on 28 August has stimulated new activity and a meeting of the Group was held on 22 August. Also it is planning to hold a seminar, probably in October, involving outside experts to discuss the implementation of conflict prevention strategies, with a particular focus on Africa. Among the themes on the agenda for this event are methods of supporting national actors to enhance their respective countries' capacity to prevent conflict; regional approaches to cross-border challenges; mediation and peacemaking strategies; and ways to mobilise the international community.

UN Documents

Selected Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1653 (27 January 2006) addressed conflict prevention and resolution in the Great Lakes region.
- S/RES/1631 (17 October 2005) addressed the issue of cooperation between the UN and regional organisations.
- S/RES/1625 (14 September 2005) was a heads-of-state and heads-of-government level declaration adopted during the World Summit on the Council's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa.
- S/RES/1366 (30 August 2001) addressed the issue of DDR in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates and stated that preventing armed conflict was a major part of the Council's work.
- S/RES/1327 (13 November 2000) emphasised the importance of the Secretary-General in conflict prevention and reaffirmed the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.
- S/RES/1318 (7 September 2000) was the adoption of the Millennium Summit declaration on ensuring an effective role for the Council in maintaining peace and security, especially in Africa.
- S/RES/1209 (19 November 1998) recognised the threat of illicit flow of arms to and in Africa to international peace and security.
- S/RES/1197 (18 September 1998) concerned the strengthening of coordination between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in conflict prevention and the maintenance peace.
- S/RES/1196 (16 September 1998) urged members, relevant UN bodies and agencies and other international agencies to facilitate implementation of arms embargoes.
- S/RES/1170 (28 May 1998) established an ad hoc working group for six months to review recommendations in the Secretary-General's 13 April 1998 report on conflict, prepare a framework for their implementation and make proposals for concrete action for the Council.

Reports of the Working Group

- S/2005/833 (30 December 2005), S/2004/989 (21 December 2004), S/2003/1188 (18 December 2003), S/2002/1352 (12 December 2002), and S/2002/607 (22 May 2002) were reports summarising the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.
- S/2005/828 (22 December 2005) was the report on a seminar held by the Working Group on cooperation between the United Nations and African regional organisations in the field of peace and security.

Selected Presidential Statements

- S/PRST/2007/22 (25 June 2007) regarded threats to international peace and security.
- S/PRST/2007/1 (8 January 2007) focused on threats to international peace and security.
- S/PRST/2002/2 (31 January 2002) made recommendations for achieving conflict prevention and resolution in Africa and noted that the Council would consider establishing a Working Group to monitor these recommendations.
- S/PRST/2000/25 (20 July 2000) invited the Secretary-General to submit a report on the prevention of armed conflict.
- S/PRST/1999/34 (30 November 1999) recognised the importance of building a culture of armed conflict prevention and the need for a contribution from all principal UN organs to achieve this goal.
- S/PRST/1998/28 (16 September 1998) focused on enhancing Africa's peacekeeping capacity and highlighted the problem of children in armed conflict.
- S/PRST/1997/46 (25 September 1997) noted that addressing the challenges of conflict in Africa required a comprehensive approach and called on the Secretary-General to produce a report to address the issue.

Selected Security Council Debates

- S/PV.5705 and resumption 1 (25 June 2007) focused on the maintenance of international peace and security.
- S/PV.5649 and resumption 1 (28 March 2007) discussed the relationship between the UN and regional organisations.
- S/PV.5617 (10 January 2007) discussed the situation in Côte d'Ivoire.
- S/PV.5369 (27 January 2006) focused on the situation in the Great Lakes region.
- S/PV.5156 (30 March 2005) was a wrap-up session of the Council's work for the month with the discussion focusing on Africa.
- S/PV.4776 (19 June 2003) focused on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and alluded frequently to the activities of the Working Group.
- S.PV.4766 (30 May 2003) was a wrap-up discussion on the Council's monthly activities that dealt with conflicts in Africa.
- S/PV.4538 (22 May 2002) dealt with the situation in Africa and the Working Group.
- S/PV.4465 (31 January 2002) dealt with the situation in Africa.
- S/PV.4334 and resumption 1 (1 January 2001) focused on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict and the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (S/2001/574).
- S/PV.4174 (20 July 2000) was an open debate on conflict prevention.
- S/PV.3819 (25 September 1997) was the first ministerial-level debate on the situation in Africa.

Selected Reports of the Secretary-General

- A/60/891 (18 July 2006) was a progress report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the prevention of armed conflict.
- A/60/L.1 (15 September 2005) was the 2005 World Summit Outcome document.
- A/59/2005 (21 March 2005) was the Secretary-General's report *In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*.
- A/59/565 (1 December 2004) was the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.
- A/55/985 - S/2001/574 (7 June 2001) was the Secretary-General's first comprehensive report on conflict prevention.
- A/52/871 - S/1998/318 (13 April 1998) was the Secretary-General's report *The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa*.

Other

- S/2007/496 (14 August 2007) was the letter from Congo containing the terms of reference for the open debate on 28 August on conflict prevention and resolution, especially in Africa.
- DPA/MS/2007/1 (15 June 2007) was a note verbale inviting member states to nominate candidates to serve as standby specialists to enhance the Secretariat's mediation support capacity.
- S/2002/1352 (12 December 2002) were recommendations from the Working Group to the Security Council on how to enhance the effectiveness of special representatives and representatives of the Secretary-General in Africa.
- S/2002/979 (29 August 2002) were recommendations from the Working Group regarding Groups of Friends, coordination between the Security Council and the AU, and peace-building in Guinea-Bissau.
- S/2002/207 (1 March 2002) outlined the terms of reference and mandate for the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

Other Relevant Facts

Chairs of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution

- Congo (January 2006 – Present)
- Benin (January 2005 – December 2005)
- Angola (January 2003 – December 2004)
- Mauritius (March 2002 – December 2002)