



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8877th meeting
 Tuesday, 12 October 2021, 10 a.m.
 New York

Provisional

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| <i>President:</i> | President Kenyatta. | (Kenya) |
| <i>Members:</i> | China | Mr. Zhang Jun |
| | Estonia | Mr. Jürgenson |
| | France | Mr. De Rivière |
| | India | Mr. Muraleedharan |
| | Ireland | Ms. Byrne Nason |
| | Mexico | Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez |
| | Niger | Mr. Aougi |
| | Norway | Ms. Juul |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| | Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | Ms. DeShong |
| | Tunisia | Mr. Ladeb |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Dame Barbara Woodward |
| | United States of America | Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield |
| | Viet Nam | Mr. Dang |

Agenda

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Diversity, State-building and the search for peace

Letter dated 6 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/854)

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of Security Council members dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this official record of the Security Council will be supplemented by a compilation of annexes (S/2021/868) containing the statements submitted by interested non-members of the Council.



The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Diversity, State-building and the search for peace

Letter dated 6 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/854)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Rwanda to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda. I request the Protocol Officer to escort the President to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa; and Ms. Fawzia Koofi, first woman Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Afghanistan.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/854, which contains the text of a letter dated 6 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: My thanks to the Government of Kenya for convening today's open debate on the important issue of diversity, State-building and peace. Your theme, Mr. President, captures a crucial but often overlooked idea — that peace is not found in a piece of paper. It is found in people — more specifically, a diversity of people from different backgrounds coming together to chart a common course for a country.

Parties to conflicts can agree to end hostilities. They can agree to begin the long process of rebuilding the country, and they can even join forces to reconstitute the Government. But, without including a wide range of diverse voices at every step of the process and bringing all people along, any peace will be short-lived. Long-standing grievances, inequalities, mistrust and social divisions do not simply vanish when the fighting stops; they can easily flare up again. They can be worsened if people in groups hungry for change do not see their needs and vision for the future being addressed. We see that cycle playing out all around us. Each week, the Chamber echoes with updates on the grinding conflicts that scar our world and on their devastating humanitarian toll.

One undeniable trend is the sharp increase in the number of non-State armed groups at the heart of conflicts, including rebels, insurgents, militias, criminal gangs and arms traffickers, terrorists and extremist groups. Many coalesce around joint identities or shared beliefs. Others are opportunistic, driven by the profits of crime or the promise of power. We are also seeing a rise in military coups and, as the joint United Nations-World Bank study entitled *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* found, many conflicts are deeply rooted in long-standing inequalities among groups.

People feel excluded and marginalized. They are denied the same opportunities and justice as their neighbours because of their culture, race, skin colour, ethnicity or income. While inequalities exist in every country, they are particularly rampant in countries where social services like health, education, security and justice are lacking and where the scars of colonialism are still visible, seen in arbitrarily drawn borders and historical advantages for certain groups over others.

Against that backdrop, the coronavirus disease pandemic has compounded inequalities and reversed development and peacebuilding gains. Those inequalities and weak governance structures create a vacuum that is easily filled by the voices of intolerance and extremism that can lead to violent conflict. Conversely, inclusion is foundational to resilience and sustainable peace. Nowhere is that clearer than in the linkages between women's inclusion, gender equality and sustainable peace and security, as the Council will discuss later this month.

As countries look to build sustainable peace, they need to include and involve all segments of the population in the process of rebuilding communities and sustaining peace. That idea is at the heart of the twin Security Council and General Assembly resolutions adopted at the conclusion of the 2015 (resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 70/262) and 2020 (resolution 2558 (2020) and General Assembly resolution 75/201) peacebuilding architecture reviews. It is also at the heart of my new agenda for peace, as part of the report entitled *Our Common Agenda*. When we open the door to inclusion and participation, we take a giant step forward in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. I want to emphasize three areas in particular.

First, national institutions and laws must work for all people. The proposed new agenda for peace includes a strong emphasis on inclusion at every step of a country's journey, whether before, during and after conflict and once State-building takes hold and gathers speed.

That means protecting and promoting human rights, including people's right to health, education, protection and opportunity. It means implementing policies and laws that protect vulnerable groups, including laws against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. It means working with all partners to develop strong national capacities anchored in human rights that can serve all people equally.

(spoke in French)

Secondly, countries should consider giving more space to subnational regions. Countries emerging from years or even decades of instability cannot afford to ignore the views of broad swathes of the population and thereby risk stirring up future enmities. Governments must find new ways to move the population forward together in unity through constant dialogue while recognizing and respecting differences, even if that means devolving certain areas of authority. That is why the United Nations, through its missions and country offices, strives to facilitate a constant dialogue between national institutions and local populations and groups. That is the condition for all people to contribute to shaping the future of their country.

(spoke in English)

Indeed, women, young people and the most marginalized must be involved at every step along the way. Building and sustaining peace requires their voices and actions. That is why our peacekeeping operations and special political missions place strong emphasis on the greater inclusion and meaningful participation of women and young people.

In Somalia, for example, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia has trained young political aspirants from different political parties, and the Mission has supported the Government and women leaders in fully implementing the 30 per cent gender quota in their country's elections. The Deputy Secretary-General recently travelled there to highlight the critical importance of women's leadership in building and sustaining peace and security. As a global community, we must continue encouraging and supporting the full and effective participation of women and young people on that journey.

For countries emerging from the horrors of conflict and looking to a better future — indeed, for all countries — diversity must not be seen as a threat. It is a source of strength and an anchor of peace and stability in parts of the world that have seen too little of either. It is also a rallying point for every person to contribute to a better future for themselves and for their societies. As a global community, let us find new ways to make that happen.

My thanks again to Kenya for highlighting this important issue.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

President Kagame: I wish to start by thanking His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta for the invitation to join the Security Council today and for choosing such an important and timely topic for this debate.

Peace is much more than the absence of violence. The precondition for sustainable peace is a shared understanding of the root causes of conflict by a broad range of stakeholders in society. Allow me to offer a few thoughts on what that may entail, informed by Rwanda's own recent experience.

First, peacebuilding should be understood as an ongoing process — a constant search for solutions through dialogue and consensus, as we say in Rwanda. It may not be possible to prevent all conflict entirely; in fact, disagreements and grievances will always be present in one form or another. However, the intensity and the impact of conflicts can be minimized by remaining attentive to local needs and expectations. That means investing in the capacity of institutions and individuals so that they can deliver the results that citizens expect and deserve.

Secondly, there is no universal template that can be transferred automatically from one context to another. External advice and examples can be helpful in encouraging reflection and finding new approaches. We have benefited from various partnerships ourselves in Rwanda.

Thirdly, we must reckon with the growing power of social media to exploit vectors of division in society that can quickly weaken the social fabric.

Finally, peacebuilding is not a purely technical enterprise. It is deeply political and human and must take into account the emotions and the memories that the various parties bring to the table. Multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations and the African Union, have a central role to play in many situations. Civil society groups, particularly those led by women, also have a key role to play, as do business leaders. However, even though we have had the opportunity to learn lessons from previous failures and successes of peacebuilding processes, the international community's toolbox has hardly changed.

Rwanda's post-genocide trajectory is marked by a consistent focus on our national unity, inclusion and service delivery. There are other positive examples from Africa and beyond. Practical and tangible partnership is critical. Rwanda's experience is that no matter how bad the situation appears, success is always an option.

Let us build on today's debate and challenge ourselves to work together to demand better results in international peacebuilding.

Once again, I commend the Republic of Kenya for organizing today's event.

The President: I thank President Kagame for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency former President Thabo Mbeki.

Mr. Mbeki: First of all, I would like to thank the Kenyan presidency of the Security Council for its initiative in convening this high-level open debate on peacebuilding and sustainable peace, focusing on the important matter of the relationship between diversity, on the one hand, and peacebuilding and State-building, on the other.

As Council members know, a few years ago the African Union (AU) took the bold decision to silence the guns by 2020, and this meant that the continent's political leadership came to the view that finally Africa must rid herself of the scourge of war and violent conflict, which had persisted for almost all of the years of its States' independence. In this context, the African national States and Governments were fully conscious of Africa's critical need for the sustainable peace that the Security Council has convened to discuss.

As Council members also know, over the years more or less standard procedures have been followed to resolve conflicts that have broken out, certainly including those in Africa. The international community would intervene to ensure that the belligerents concluded ceasefire agreements. Peacekeepers would then be deployed to ensure the observance of the ceasefire. Interim Government arrangements would then be put in place, and a new Constitution negotiated. Elections based on that Constitution would take place to constitute a new Government, after which the peacekeeping mission would be wound up, peace having been achieved.

However, and quite legitimately, the question would arise: will this be sustainable peace? Five years ago, the World Peace Foundation produced an important report entitled *African Politics, African Peace*, acting on a request from within the African Union peace architecture that the Foundation should reflect on the matter of the future of peace missions in Africa. The report said, inter alia, "Centralizing the 'primacy of the political' within all AU responses is essential" and insisted on the primary role of politics in the design and implementation of peace operations. It went on to say that

"Preventive action to avert political crises and armed conflicts is the single most essential task for African peace missions",

adding that

“This demands exceptional access to the highest level of decision makers along with credibility and discretion”.

Furthermore, the report said that it agrees with the United Nations High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations of 2015 about, first, the primacy of politics in driving the design and implementation of peace operations, and, secondly, a new and stronger emphasis on conflict prevention.

As you know, Mr. President, this insistence on the primacy of politics is to emphasize that the resolution of conflicts should not be driven simply or mainly by security considerations. The primacy of politics means that conflict resolution must address the vital matter of the root causes of the conflict, and that aims not merely to silence the guns, important as that is, but to ensure sustainable peace.

This draws attention exactly to the central matter in today’s Security Council open debate, that is, the issue of diversity. Certainly my own personal experience, derived from involvement in conflict resolution on our continent, confirms the centrality of the failure to properly manage diversity as one of the root causes of civil war and violent conflict, and that experience relates to such countries as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire and the Sudan. In that context, I would even recommend a study of the 2004 report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which tells the naked truth that it was as a result of the failure to manage diversity that the country experienced a very costly 11-year war, which started in 1991. Similarly, we see a result of the failure to manage diversity in the violent conflict which has been, and is still, going on in Cameroon.

Yet another painful example is the ongoing major military conflict in Ethiopia. As Council members know, as the African Union’s year to silence the guns, 2020, was coming to a close, this conflict broke out in the Tigray region. The challenge to properly manage the very pronounced diversity of Ethiopia constitutes the very heart of the violent conflict involving Tigray, and the incontestable truth is that the successful management of this diversity cannot and will not be achieved through weapons of war. As many of the members of the Council have said before, the belligerents in Ethiopia should enter into a permanent ceasefire and engage one another in an inclusive national dialogue

precisely to agree on what they should do together to achieve the very important and noble goal of unity in diversity. At the end of the Biafra War in Nigeria in 1970, the victorious national leaders announced that they would follow a policy of no victor, no vanquished. I believe that this is exactly what Ethiopia needs.

In the end, what I would like to suggest is that, as it discharges its obligation to maintain international peace and security, the Security Council should proceed from a position of acceptance of the primacy of the political. Its interventions would therefore help to produce sustainable peace and contribute to State-building by addressing such challenges as the proper management of diversity.

The President: I thank former President Mbeki for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Koofi.

Ms. Koofi: It is my honour to join this timely open debate on peacebuilding and sustainable peace. I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to Kenya for inviting me to brief the Security Council.

The overall theme of this meeting is “Diversity, State-building and the search for peace”. Diversity and inclusion are the cornerstone of State- and peacebuilding. Who appreciates the value of living in peace and harmony as much as my people in Afghanistan — those who are born and die in war?

The future of Afghanistan, my country, is the latest test of whether we can come together as a global community to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the face of adversity. In fact, as I speak to the Security Council today, in my country, the women and men who dedicated their lives to building peace, to promoting the rule of law, justice and equality — people who put their own lives at risk to protect and serve ours — are living under harsh oppression imposed on them through the power of exclusion.

What is happening in Afghanistan should be of concern to all of us. In fact, when I left Afghanistan a few weeks ago, as I was arriving at the airport, I saw thousands of people walking in the streets of Kabul. The city looked like a graveyard of people who were alive — people who were hopeless, disappointed and powerless.

At the same time, we have to come together to hold the Taliban accountable for what is happening in my country. There are serious reports that fundamental freedoms are being flouted. Women and girls are once again regarded as second-class citizens. They are literally making us invisible again.

That situation shows how power imbalances are at the root of so much conflict and inequality. Let me mention two specific areas where power structures cause particular chaos where we need to take action together to address the harmful outcomes.

The first is close to home, in the relationship between men and women. The playbook for running today's world was written primarily by men with men's interests in mind. It presents men as the norm and women as the exception. In short, the world has been set up to make it easier for men to perpetuate themselves in power.

The Sustainable Development Goals — our common blueprint for building peaceful, prosperous and inclusive societies — clearly state that gender equality is a goal in itself and key to achieving the other 16 goals. In order to achieve that, we should make our political processes, structures and methods of work more responsive to women's needs.

In Afghanistan, for instance, we want direct face-to-face talks with the Taliban. The United Nations can include us in its own mediation teams. It can also facilitate a meeting of a delegation of our women with the Taliban. We want to do it for our sisters back home. For years, women in Afghanistan have been advocating, lobbying and demanding the meaningful participation of women, youth and victims of war as a prerequisite for the success of the peace process. We were told, "The decisions have not made; once the decisions are made, we will include you." Let us be part of the decision-making. Do not decide on our behalf. Let us make decisions together with men in order to make the decisions sustainable, meaningful and acceptable to all. If women were only listened to and if the people of Afghanistan were only given more time to negotiate their future, we could have avoided the situation that we face now. Even if we had an agreement between the warring parties that was 50 per cent acceptable by all sides, it would be much better than the chaotic situation that we face now.

As every Council member engages with the Taliban caretaker establishment, no matter what the

strategic focus is, please remember that there are some 16 to 17 million women and girls in Afghanistan who do not know what tomorrow holds for them. That is heartbreaking. As a woman who has spent and lived all my life in Afghanistan, after 20 years of investment of blood and treasure, it breaks my heart to start from scratch.

Another area where power imbalances can do harm is when they are directed — or rather, misdirected — at minorities. All countries in the world include persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Although situations greatly vary, common to all is the fact that too often minorities face multiple forms of discrimination, resulting in marginalization, exclusion, forced displacement and migration. Look at the situation in Afghanistan: thousands of people from religious minorities and other minority groups are forced to flee their villages and left with no home and no future. Only people who live in that situation understand the pain of being homeless and having no identity.

Achieving the effective participation of minorities and ending their exclusion requires that we embrace diversity through the promotion and implementation of international human rights standards. There can be no place for discrimination, which scars societies and pushes communities to grow further apart. The public platform Council members enjoy comes with a responsibility to use it, and to use it wisely. As political and diplomatic leaders, Council members have the duty to bring in those who are different, rather than to push them out. At a time when our societies are increasingly divided, Council members can promote the essential values of respect, compromise and dialogue.

As a country of minorities, of several ethnic and linguistic groups living together for centuries during conflict and peace, inclusivity through the meaningful participation of all groups and power structures is more relevant today than at any other time in my country. People in my country today want meaningful representation. That is the message I wanted to convey to the Taliban during my negotiations with its representatives. I wanted to tell them that Afghanistan today is a transformed Afghanistan. The Taliban needs to adapt to the new realities of Afghanistan. The fact that there are thousands of people every day using their civic rights and protesting against what is happening in the country is a small example of how the current generation has transformed.

The main lesson from the past 150 years of my country's history is that a durable peace and sustainable State in a multi-ethnic and diverse country requires a pluralistic social and political structure. Hence the international community has to make it clear that it will work with the authorities in Kabul only if they work with all parties to map out a clear path that guarantees the fundamental rights of all segments of society, in particular women and girls, and their inclusion in the State. That should include a speedy return to the constitutional order through elections in which everyone should be able to take part. I know that we do not have many good experiences and examples of elections in Afghanistan, but there is no alternative to elections. People, with all their problems, stand by elections. We remember that people paid the highest price; their fingers were cut for voting, but they still exercised that right.

Finally, as the humanitarian crisis looms, women and children constitute the majority of the vulnerable population. To reach them, especially given the gender-discrimination ideology of those holding power in Kabul, it is imperative that the United Nations demand the protection and inclusion of Afghan female aid workers and peacebuilders and other civic professionals and community organizations — not only the recipients but also the decision-makers. They are critical to the distribution and delivery of aid, and they are the neediest. That is entirely in the control of the United Nations. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other agencies must learn from the lessons of 1996 to 2001. When I was living in Afghanistan, I was a recipient of that. They must demonstrate a practical and clear gender-responsive aid plan.

Let us remember that a safe, stable and just Afghanistan means a secure world.

The President: I thank Ms. Koofi for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the President of Kenya.

At the outset, I want to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, His Excellency President Paul Kagame, His Excellency former President Thabo Mbeki and Ms. Fawzia Koofi for their insights. I am very grateful to all of them for honouring my invitation to participate in this important debate.

The key message that I wish to deliver today is that the poor management of diversity is leading to grave threats to international peace and security. Inequality within and among States is too often the result of exclusion on the basis of identity. That exclusion is often institutionalized in governance and economic relations at the national and global levels. It manifests itself in stereotyping and bigotry. Among other things, it leads to a lack of employment or livelihood opportunities for billions of people, purely based on their identities, and communities and countries being unable to benefit from their natural resources. It leads to climate injustice and an unfair trading system.

The result is a profound sense of grievance and bitterness, which populists and demagogues can easily exploit. That is so especially when such feelings and narratives are carried by social media and its spreading of misinformation, disinformation and narratives that are often laced with incitement and extremism tendencies. It leads to trust in institutions deteriorating and State legitimacy weakening. It is fodder for terrorism, insurgencies, the rise of xenophobia, hate speech, divisive tribalism and racism.

The escalation of a social or political conflict finds the State much less able to prevent or mitigate the crisis. It is worth emphasizing that, rather than serving to legitimize the State, in that environment of grievance based on identity, elections sometimes only further the divides. They become a zero-sum game in a winner-takes-all contest that appears to pit racial, ethnic and religious identities against each other.

Images of desperate men and women on sinking rafts, trying to migrate in pursuit of economic opportunity, have today become commonplace. They point to an international political and economic system that is inadequate for the challenges of today and that is definitely not adequate to meet our Sustainable Development Goals.

The inability of their countries to offer them viable opportunities is often the result of one-size-fits-all prescriptions and templates by powerful global institutions that fail to take into account the diversity and different needs of States, as well as the different contexts. They therefore perpetuate inequality and exclusion. Vaccine nationalism, travel bans and red lists further inflame the divisions between rich and poor States.

Those are manifestations of the inability to deal with a diverse world. They are major factors in most conflict situations of which the Security Council is more often than not seized. We need to deal with that. That requires that we accept that there is a need to change our national and global economic and governance systems to manage diversity more effectively. A necessary start is to restructure global cooperation and governance so that they truly accord to the principle that all peoples and countries are of equal worth. We also need to change how we embrace diversity at the national and local levels.

The State must be seen, and indeed act, as a leading protector of national unity and cohesion. That means that, as a core duty, it must embrace respect for difference. If the State is to demonstrate such a characteristic, the political leaders who lead it will need to emerge from a new politics of cohesion. In deeply divided countries, as a start, individual leaders can demonstrate that, although they may have deep political differences, they can unite for the sake of the nation.

I am proud that Kenya demonstrated that approach when, in early 2018, Kenya was facing dangerous politics of division. Political differences were increasingly being communicated by politicians as ethnic rivalry and exclusion. It was therefore not acceptable to continue on that path if we were indeed to build the prosperous and secure Kenya for which our people yearn.

On 8 March of the same year, I had a handshake with the leader of the opposition. We did it to make the point to all Kenyans that our country's cohesion and unity were far greater than our political rivalry. That handshake created a powerful surge of hope in Kenyans. Tempers cooled, and we remembered that we were part of a Kenyan family and not defined by our political rivalry. It became clear that we were fellow citizens, without regard to ethnicity or regional differences, and that we shared a common interest in peace.

The handshake was more than a political gesture; it was a political innovation that proposed to insert the safety, unity and prosperity of Kenya at the core of our politics. We sought to build those safety rails into how the State is structured and works through a national conversation. Kenya will continue to build and protect its unity. I hope that we sustain it and that other countries come to a similar conclusion. Our States would then be good at preventing conflict and would be exporters of stability and security to our neighbours.

It is against that backdrop that I chose today's topic to inform our debate. I want to offer a few recommendations that I consider essential in the management of diversity, which supports State-building and sustainable peace.

First, we should place safety rails on political competition in all States, democratic or not. That can be achieved by incentivizing a political culture that does not endanger national cohesion through exploiting identity to divide and create enmity among citizens.

Second, we need to undertake thorough reviews of our international institutions to consider whether they are fit for purpose in building a more inclusive world and managing diversity better, particularly in times of crisis, such as the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Third, we need to accelerate Security Council reform. The membership of the Council lacks transparency and inclusion.

Fourth, the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Glasgow next month, will be an opportunity to ensure that climate-change adaptation commitments are aimed at accelerating development, investment and job creation, particularly in the developing world. Climate adaptation must offer a clear and viable path to green industrialization for Africa and the Global South.

Fifth, States should be offered every assistance to develop internal mechanisms for national dialogue and reconciliation. They should establish early-warning systems to avert conflicts and human suffering.

Sixth, the United Nations, regional organizations and development partners should focus on State capacity-building that delivers competence, as opposed to the exclusive focus on good governance as a set of normative standards.

Seventh, the United Nations and its peacebuilding initiatives should include diversity management as a component of peacebuilding and State stabilization.

Eighth, we should initiate a collaborative approach among States, the United Nations system and social media companies to combat hate speech and incitement. That can include an agreed global code of conduct by companies and the development of early-warning tools to detect escalation trends and facilitate pre-emptive measures.

I hope that those insights and recommendations will be embraced by the Security Council and the United Nations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

I call on the Permanent Representative of the United States and Member of President Biden's Cabinet

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting today and for the important message you just delivered to us. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, President Kagame and President Mbeki for their briefings today. And I would like to thank Ms. Koofi for her message and to highlight the important work that she continues to do to promote peace and security.

I have spent more than half of my life travelling the world as part of my career, and I have experienced and seen racism in every single place that I have been, including in my own country. I bring this up to acknowledge a simple fact — there is no society, no region and no country that does not face division over diversity. Our discussion today on how we can prevent and stop conflict based on identity must acknowledge that. This is a problem that we all share in different ways and that we must all work together to resolve.

For our part, the United States believes in being fully transparent about our shortcomings. We do not claim to be perfect. Instead, we aim every single day to form that more perfect union and to strive for justice in our own country. In June, when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report on racism and police brutality against Africans and people of African descent (A/HRC/47/53), we not only acknowledged the examination of such cases in the United States but we also issued a standing invitation to the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues to visit the United States. Addressing brutality and advancing racial equity is a core priority of the Biden-Harris Administration. We encourage every community and country to look internally to advance diversity and inclusion, to be fully transparent about those formidable challenges and to work tirelessly to

end racism, sexism, ableism, religious discrimination and xenophobia.

We must also collaborate with the United Nations and others to not only ameliorate conflict but to prevent and address the fundamental sources of conflict. The Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* notably and rightfully includes aspects of addressing racism, discrimination and inequality. We need to put in greater protections for all racial, ethnic and religious minorities; people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people; as well as indigenous people. That is particularly true for the many and burgeoning places where conflict has broken out mainly as a result of identity.

I scarcely need to say that, because we deal with these issues almost on a weekly basis here at the Security Council. In situations most vulnerable to this type of threat, regional and subregional organizations should take a more comprehensive approach, including through prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking, peacebuilding and counter-terrorism. All of us must work together to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, especially here in the Security Council.

The Peacebuilding Commission has an important convening role to play in this work and helps mobilize attention and commitment to international peacebuilding efforts. Strong local partnerships and international cooperation are critical elements in fostering stability and resilience, particularly in fragile States.

The women and peace and security agenda has a vital role to play here too. Women make the world more peaceful and should be empowered to meaningfully participate in those efforts. Without women, we will not achieve the progress that we seek.

The stated causes of those conflicts are myriad, but the root causes are often the same — inequality, discrimination, fear, hatred. Social media may amplify those forces; they create an echo chamber and fuel much of the disinformation that causes extreme hatred. But, ultimately, the root causes are nothing new. They are the same root causes that have always driven racial, ethnic, regional, partisan and religious conflict. Working together, we can take away the power of those divisive forces, not by shying away from diversity and inclusion but by embracing them.

That is why I champion people-to-people diplomacy. When one meets someone in person and is able to

look at them face to face and hear about their goals and their dreams, hatred is harder. Now I am not naïve; not everyone lets hate in their hearts disappear easily. But many people die because of that hatred. I believe fundamentally, to my core, that embracing diversity and celebrating one's identity and the identities of those different from oneself are some of the most effective ways in which we can spread peace and security in the world.

That work has great urgency, and we must use the extraordinary power of our example to demonstrate our unwavering commitment to inclusion. Together let us work to promote diversity, to prevent conflict, to save lives, to build a more peaceful world.

The President: I call on the Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs of India.

Mr. Muraleedharan (India): Let me begin by conveying the best wishes and greetings of my Prime Minister to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, on Kenya's historic presidency of the Security Council.

It is indeed a singular privilege to represent my Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, at this important high-level debate on a topic that is extremely important and pertinent to the global south, particularly countries in Africa.

I would like to thank His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres; His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda; His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa; and Ms. Fawzia Koofi, First Woman Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Afghanistan, for enriching this open debate with their insights.

The countries facing conflicts or emerging from them face multiple challenges on their path to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Those are related to factors causative of the conflict and primarily involve ethnicity, race and religion, which are dominant identity markers in society.

In addition, societies also encounter political, social and economic factors that play a determining role in how countries successfully emerge and move forward in addressing those fundamental challenges of State-building. History has shown that those challenges are not limited to Africa or the developing world. Even the developed world, at some points in history, faced

such challenges, including through extremely violent transitions, before eventually emerging successful.

India's own context offers a unique manifestation of unity in diversity, where, in spite of the convulsions caused by the partition, we still came together as one to form a democratic, pluralistic and inclusive society with our Constitution as the basic bedrock of our polity.

Consequently, if one were to talk about embracing diversity and inclusion, India has much to offer on how diversity of identities, whether ethnic, regional, religious, linguistic or other, can come together and live as one nation — the common thread binding us being the identity of being an Indian first and all other things later. That is what the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, taught us, and that is what we follow in letter and spirit. We believe in the ethos of tolerance and understanding, practicing the age-old ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — that is, the whole world is one family. That is relevant everywhere, including to post-conflict societies, for the human race to reach its fullest potential.

In a globalized, liberalized and interlinked world, post-conflict State-building has faced increasing societal expectations in terms of political space and socioeconomic development, gender equality and human rights. As a result, State-building has become more complicated. Building peace and sustaining the same, therefore, is proving more complex than ending the conflict. That is even more evident in the context of the developing world.

At the same time, we have several successful examples where countries have managed to overcome post-conflict challenges. Those include South Africa, with its transition from apartheid to a free and open society; Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Burundi, each of which has been an example of a successful transition of post-conflict State-building; and South Sudan, where we are witnessing the transition.

Those societies are diverse and have managed to sustain peace through an inclusive approach by setting examples for similar States to emulate. We also have several other examples, including in South Asia, where diversity has always been the hallmark of societies. The political leadership of respective countries respecting universal values of peace, truth and compassion have contributed immensely to State-building.

When we deal with countries coming out of conflict and going into peacebuilding, putting in place a strong legal framework as well as building credible institutions based on solid principles is critical. That will also ensure that diversity is protected and inclusivity fostered. We need to encourage donor countries that are contributing generously to peacebuilding in Africa and other regions to ensure that those countries coming out of conflict are able to put in place an enduring framework that withstands the test of time.

The challenge will always be to make a trade-off between the immediate and the long term. We believe that the United Nations system as a whole should work closely with Member States and regional organizations, in line with their national requirements and needs, and not advocate the imposition of ideas or solutions from outside.

Terrorism is a clear manifestation of how forces inimical to unity and diversity can seek to destroy the social cohesion and democratic fabric of countries by, inter alia, fomenting disaffection, hatred and violence. The increasing spread of terrorism in Africa is a matter of serious concern. What is even more unfortunate is that those terrorist forces and groups are receiving encouragement from Member States that seek to divide communities by legitimizing terrorist activities.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy has clearly reinforced yet again that terrorism cannot be justified on any grounds and that no country should provide an excuse for such activities. It is equally important that United Nations organizations take the Strategy as a template and not give any encouragement or excuse, even indirectly, to the efforts of Member States to justify terrorism in any way.

With regard to religious identities, we are witnessing how Member States are facing newer forms of religious phobia. While we have condemned anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and Christianophobia, we fail to recognize that there are more virulent forms of religious phobias emerging and taking root, including anti-Hindu, anti-Buddhist and anti-Sikh phobias.

In our own neighbourhood and elsewhere, we have seen the destruction of temples, the glorification of breaking idols in temples, the violation of gurdwara premises, the massacre of Sikh pilgrims in gurdwaras and the destruction of the Bamyán Buddhas and other religious iconic sites. Our inability to even acknowledge those atrocities and phobias only gives those forces

encouragement that phobias against some religions are more acceptable than those against others. If we choose to be selective about criticizing such phobias or ignoring them, we do so at our own peril.

It is now time to look at peacebuilding in the broader context in a more focused manner, especially in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic, which is threatening to erode the gains we have made over the years. The 2020 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture that was concluded last year has given us a new set of twin resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (resolution 2558 (2020) and General Assembly resolution 75/201). We appreciate that, as part of its 2020 to 2024 strategy, the Peace Building Fund has put forth a comprehensive scenario covering a horizon of five years.

We heard earlier the remarks by Ms. Koofi. The change in authority in Kabul was neither done through negotiations nor inclusive. We have consistently called for a broad-based, inclusive process that involves the representation of all segments of the Afghan population. The expectations of the international community with regard to Afghanistan, including on combating terrorism, are set out clearly in resolution 2593 (2021). It is important that commitments made in that regard be respected and adhered to.

India has always played a constructive and significant role in the context of peacebuilding through its extensive development partnership with developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia and with least-developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. India continues bilaterally to assist countries in post-conflict situations by providing substantial grants and soft loans.

Apart from focusing on infrastructure — especially housing, education and health, connectivity, providing livelihoods to those impacted by conflict, especially in agriculture, and projects at the grass-roots level, which directly impact the lives of people — India also provides extensive education, training and capacity-building, including vocational training and information technology, focusing particularly on youth. We will continue to be a pillar of strength for all developing countries in their transition to development, progress and prosperity.

Mr. Aougi (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, Mr. António

Guterres and Mr. Mbeki for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Fawzia Koofi for her contribution.

We know, Mr. President, how important the theme of this open debate is to you, given the recent history of your country, which went through difficult times in the aftermath of the 2007 elections. But fortunately, thanks to the upsurge in patriotism and dialogue among Kenyans themselves, your country was able to overcome those challenges in its commitment to building a united and prosperous nation, which serves as a model in a region that is facing several challenges to its stability.

Whether we are discussing Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mali or Syria, managing diversity remains today a challenge to the stability and viability of the modern State. That statement is even more self-evident today in Africa, where State borders were arbitrarily drawn by the former colonial Powers, which brought together diverse groups under a then new central national authority and system of governance. Henceforth, the viability and political stability of those new entities depended on the ability of the rulers to accommodate ethnic, racial and tribal sensitivities in a political system capable of providing citizens with a sense of belonging and participation in the political and economic governance of their nation.

The recent political history of our continent has shown us that, where such a balance has been lacking, the failure to address legitimate claims relating to identity, politics and the economy has led to internal strife, which has taken the form of rebellions, civil wars, coups d'état and, even worse, genocide. Even today, in tandem with the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the misuse of new information technologies, the issue of diversity management remains a serious problem with the rise of xenophobia, racism and the stigmatization of minorities, in particular owing to the propagation of misinformation and hate speech through social media.

In order to overcome the challenges related to the management of their diversity and build domestic peace, our States must resolutely commit to establishing an inclusive political and economic governance system that guarantees the participation of all national groups in the management of the State within a democratic framework. In drawing lessons from its past experience in the political and security spheres, my country, the Niger, has resolutely committed itself to establishing and consolidating its democratic institutions to provide all its sons and daughters an opportunity to participate

in the political and economic life of the country. The Niger is pleased to take this opportunity to commend itself on the first peaceful political transition, which, this year, saw the transfer of power between two democratically elected Presidents.

Furthermore, in relying on its past experience in managing internal conflicts, dating back 1995, the Niger established the High Authority for Peacebuilding in order to ensure the follow-up of and addressing the root causes of conflict in a sustainable manner. Through its activities, the High Authority, the goal of which is to promote dialogue among national communities and promote inclusiveness and community participation in political and economic life, has contributed to strengthening cohesion and national unity at the community and local levels.

In conclusion, my delegation continues to believe that, in order to overcome the challenges of managing diversity, we must necessarily adopt policies adapted to every specific national context. It is also imperative that such ethnic, religious and tribal fault lines cease being used as instruments of incitement by politicians and other influencers to achieve their selfish ends.

Although such crises are often internal in nature, they have repercussions on immediate neighbours — and sometimes even beyond. Accordingly, we should acknowledge the extremely constructive role played by regional organizations such as the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Economic Community of West African States and other similar regional organizations in providing their good offices to help their members achieve national reconciliation and lasting peace. The intervention of the international community, which is embodied by the United Nations, in internal conflicts must be used only as a last resort.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank you, President Kenyatta, for convening this important and timely debate. The United Kingdom values our close cooperation with Kenya on the issues brought to the Security Council. I would also like to thank our briefers for sharing their experience and distilling it into insightful comments for us today.

Today's topic is a pressing one. Economic pressures, a global pandemic and climate change have put unprecedented strain on the social contract that holds States together. The United Kingdom believes in open societies. We value human rights, inclusion,

gender equality and free expression. Open societies respect identities and differences as integral aspects of community, and not as forces for division. Our experience is that societies are stronger and more stable when we embrace diversity. But history has also shown us what happens when identity is weaponized — from Bosnia to Rwanda.

I want to support this important debate by offering three thoughts: first, why the Council should be concerned when identity is used to stoke conflict; secondly, why inclusivity matters for peacebuilding; and thirdly, how to advance the use of United Nations peacebuilding tools more fully.

First, we know the danger of identity-based incitement. It marginalizes already vulnerable populations, fuels extremism, manifests in human rights violations and sparks war. The Council, with its responsibility for peace and security, has an obligation to call it out and to end the protection of States that choose to ignore warning signs.

In Myanmar, the exclusion of the Rohingya population has escalated into systematic violence and forced displacement. In Ethiopia, identity politics and hate speech are dividing communities, exacerbating a conflict that has already pushed 400,000 people into famine. Therefore, the Council should not stand by as violence escalates. We should heed the warnings of humanitarians on the ground.

Secondly, inclusion is central to peacebuilding and makes States more resilient to shocks. As we heard so clearly from our speakers today on the lessons of Rwanda and the situation in Afghanistan, peace processes that include the warring parties, civil society actors and women's groups strengthen national ownership.

Thirdly, as other speakers mentioned, the United Nations has a range of tools to support countries that are struggling with identity-based violence and are committed to pursuing peace. In United Nations peace operations, human rights monitoring is a critical early-warning function. United Nations political leaders, mediators and advisers facilitate inclusive peace processes to build sustainable peace. The Peacebuilding Commission supports countries grappling with their peacebuilding challenges, while the Peacebuilding Fund — to which the United Kingdom remains a major donor — provides catalytic funding to encourage those efforts.

But as you said, President Kenyatta, the system can do a better job of getting ahead of threats to peace. Peace and development are mutually reinforcing, and many of the tools to build sustainable peace are found in the United Nations development system. We urge the development system to embed peacebuilding approaches now in order to avert humanitarian crises later.

In conclusion, identity does not need to be a source of violence, but a source of pride. By supporting diversity, we can build stronger national and international bonds and open, resilient and prosperous societies.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome your presence among us here today, Sir, and I thank you for bringing us together to debate such a pertinent topic. I also thank the Secretary-General for his participation.

Conflicts often thrive by exploiting differences between peoples. Since 1957, the European project has shown that, through political will, exchanges between peoples, cooperation and solidarity, we can act to ensure that those differences strengthen peace instead. It is first and foremost through political discourse that peace is built, hence why I welcome the participation of both a former and a current Head of State, namely, His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki and His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, respectively. Both have taken the necessary actions in their countries to reconcile and rebuild.

Preserving diversity helps to prevent conflicts. For France, the fight against all forms of discrimination must be part of a universal and indivisible approach that is based on the equality of all individuals, without distinction. France condemns all violations of human rights, violence and persecution committed against individuals, in particular in relation to their origins, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity, whether true or assumed. That is why France supports, for example, the fund to support victims of ethnic and religious violence in the Middle East. That fund has already supported approximately 100 projects in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

Secondly, conflict resolution requires inclusive political processes. In the Sahel, terrorist groups use differences to stir up hatred between communities. France, in conjunction with the United Nations, the European Union and its other partners, encourages reconciliation processes and the restoration of State

authority, particularly in peripheral areas, in order to guarantee lasting peace and equal rights for all components of those societies. Education must be at the heart of those efforts.

In the Horn of Africa, we call on the Ethiopian Prime Minister to launch an inclusive national dialogue without delay in accordance with his commitments.

The inclusion of all segments of society, in particular women and young people, must be at the heart of peace processes. In that respect, we welcome the presence of Ms. Fawzia Koofi and recall that the substantial participation of women is non-negotiable in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

At the Generation Equality Forum, which was held in Paris in late June and jointly organized with UN-Women and Mexico, we launched a monitoring and accountability mechanism for the women and peace and security agenda known as the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact. The universal implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is a priority in our diplomacy, and the publication of our third national action plan illustrates that commitment.

Finally, peacebuilding can succeed only if diversity is also preserved. That is the responsibility of every State, and France is doing its utmost to play its part in that regard. That is the meaning of the approach taken by France for a shared historical understanding of the Tutsi genocide. That is the meaning of our commitment to ensure that no one suspected of genocide crimes can escape justice.

In Iraq, France welcomes national efforts to rebuild the country after the abuses committed by Da'esh, while paying special attention to minorities. This has recently been reflected in the law on Yazidi survivors, the historic visit of the Pope and the joint work with UNESCO to "revive the spirit" of Mosul. On 29 August in Mosul, President Macron announced concrete commitments in the fields of heritage and education to support the reconstruction of the governorate for the benefit of all parts of Iraqi society. The United Nations can further assist national efforts. The Peacebuilding Fund should continue to support accountability and the fight against impunity. It is already doing so in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, through its Peace, Justice, Reconciliation and Reconstruction programme in Central Kasai. The Fund will continue to receive support from France, which

has quadrupled its contributions in 2021. France will continue to do its utmost to make diversity a factor for peace.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta for convening today's debate on the links between peacebuilding, sustainable peace and diversity, as well as Secretary-General António Guterres, Rwandan President Paul Kagame, former South African President Thabo Mbeki and Ms. Fawzia Koofi for their informative briefings.

Risks and threats to international peace and security are multidimensional and inextricably linked to economic and social development challenges. A 2018 study by the United Nations and the World Bank showed that violent conflict had reached its highest levels in 30 years. It is projected that, by 2030, two thirds of people living in extreme poverty will be living in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence. Exclusion, inequality, systemic discrimination, misinformation and hate speech fuel cycles of violence that in extreme cases lead to crimes against humanity and the outbreak of internal armed conflicts with risks that transcend borders. Religious or ethnic tensions have been the cause of regrettable and notorious genocides. Many of the situations with which the Security Council is concerned share similar causes.

Other factors, such as the coronavirus disease pandemic, climate change, food insecurity, technological transformations that increase exclusion, supremacism, an irresponsible arms trade and extreme poverty, exacerbate conditions conducive to violence and conflict. National or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as persons in vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, indigenous peoples, and women and children, are often the groups most affected by exclusion and cycles of violence and conflict. It is therefore necessary to create a culture of coexistence that values diversity and in which everyone feels included.

It is essential to address the spectrum of root causes of conflict with a preventive approach, sensitive to the situations of the most vulnerable people. In this regard, I would like to highlight four points. First, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace are essential elements for long-term prevention.

Lasting peace is ensured by building more resilient societies, based on strong institutions, respect for human rights, gender equality, inclusion and diversity.

Secondly, early-warning mechanisms play a key role in identifying risks and triggers. We must continue to strengthen such mechanisms, with particular sensitivity in identifying aggravating causes for the marginalized and most vulnerable groups. It is important to see capacities for effective conflict-prevention action through the lens of inclusion. Preventive diplomacy needs better instruments. The report recently submitted by the Secretary-General entitled *Our Common Agenda* is one of them.

Thirdly, the full and effective participation of women, youth and civil society in prevention work is essential. Resolution 2475 (2019), for example, provides the basis for including persons with disabilities in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, while resolution 1325 (2000) was a milestone in the recognition of women's full participation in conflict resolution and peace processes.

Fourthly, the Security Council must strengthen dialogue with the other main bodies of the United Nations, namely, the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, as well as with the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, specifically to prevent development challenges and human rights violations from becoming a threat to international peace and security. Waiting to see happen is too late.

Mexico firmly believes in sustainable peace as the central axis on which the architecture of prevention and peacebuilding must repose. Rebuilding the social fabric is a central element of post-conflict strategies, for peace will only be sustainable and lasting if it is inclusive, and to be inclusive it must recognize diversity.

Ms. DeShong (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines commends the Republic of Kenya for convening today's discussion, and we thank our esteemed briefers — Secretary-General Guterres, President Kagame, President Mbeki and Ms. Koofi — for their salient contributions.

At this moment in history, when many intractable conflicts seem to stem from clashes of identity along ethnic, communal and political lines, today's debate is as timely as it is pertinent. Peace and security, at both the community and national levels, are corollary to

the social relations through which stable identities of responsible citizenship are moulded. All stakeholders, including women and youth, religious leaders, ethnic and indigenous minorities, elected officials, and representatives from the private sector, academia and across civil society, must therefore be mobilized to build public trust and cultivate social cohesion. That multi-stakeholder approach, centred around diversity and inclusiveness, provides the surest pathway to building stable and resilient societies.

It is axiomatic that peaceful communities founded on the ideals of unity and social solidarity and sustained by a sound socioeconomic basis can be achieved only through comprehensive developmental and reparatory solutions. Those stratagems must address not only the symptoms but also the root causes of conflict and insecurity, including poverty and unemployment; socioeconomic and political marginalization; pervasive hunger and acute food insecurity; a changing climate, widespread environmental degradation and the security risks they produce; and the lasting legacies of underdevelopment and intergenerational trauma felt in the wake of egregious human rights abuses, including the historical crimes of chattel slavery, native genocide and violent colonization, which brought with them a systemic racism that persists to this day.

Those stressors, most evident in vulnerable settings, serve to heighten social and economic inequalities and deepen political divides, both within and between countries. Against the backdrop of the current pandemic, in which those afflictions have been greatly amplified, we must move swiftly — taking bold steps and innovative measures — to promote a common agenda that systematically addresses all those concerns to prevent conflicts and to build and sustain peace.

Greater efforts must be made to advance a whole-of-system approach in which all organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations work in tandem to enhance sovereignty, reinforce social contracts and hasten the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end, there can be no one-size-fits-all approach. Practical, people-centred, gender-responsive and climate-sensitive solutions must be delivered across the peace and security-development-humanitarian nexus and implemented in line with the particular needs, cultural perspectives and national priorities of all the countries concerned.

Committed stakeholders, particularly the international financial institutions and partners from the global North, should scale up their capacity-building and overseas development assistance initiatives. Focused and coordinated multilateral action on contemporary security risks, such as terrorism, cybercrime, the coronavirus disease and climate change, should be pragmatically and extensively pursued. Certainly, those emergent issues have already become battlegrounds of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech, serving to erode State-building processes along the way.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the complementary role of the Peacebuilding Commission through its bridging, advisory and convening platforms to foster comprehensive multistakeholder approaches to peacebuilding. It is crucial that those efforts be intensified to foment social cohesion and strengthen national peacebuilding processes. Robust measures to ensure adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding remain an urgent priority.

As we continue this struggle for global peace, those challenges related to diversity must form part of both the analysis and the prescription in all contexts. Furthermore, conflict-prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding must always be conducted in line with the principles of international law and with special consideration for the demographic diversity, cultural sensitivities and the material circumstances of development in each country.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank Kenya for convening this open debate and to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his valuable remarks. We also thank President Kagame, President Mbeki and Ms. Koofi for their insightful presentations.

Rather than separating us from one another, diversity should bring us collective strength. In multi-religious and multi-ethnic countries, diversity with inclusion could provide tangible benefits, while embracing one another's uniqueness and inspiring innovation. In contrast, diversity without inclusion could lead to tensions, social riots and even violence and conflicts through incitement, hate speech, fake news and misinformation. That fact endangers State-building and the peacebuilding process. Against that background, we wish to highlight the following points.

First, strong emphasis must be placed on conflict prevention, and the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with States. In that connection, the root causes and the intertwined issues of poverty, inequality and justice, intolerance, discrimination and incitement of violence must be addressed as early as possible to defuse tensions.

Furthermore, States need to focus on an effective preventive strategy, which requires a comprehensive approach encompassing both short-term and long-term political, diplomatic, humanitarian, developmental and institutional measures. In those processes, the role of the United Nations and the international community is to support national efforts for conflict prevention and capacity-building.

My second point concerns the importance of meaningful inclusion. States should take steps to build national reconciliation and unity through inclusive dialogue and mediation with the participation of all stakeholders, including women, youth, elders and vulnerable groups. That will help foster unity, tolerance and cooperation at all levels so as to narrow the gap among peoples of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.

Thirdly, with regard to enforcement, the needs of all segments of society should be taken into account in the development of legal frameworks, policies and mechanisms at all levels, especially at local levels. In that process, Governments should focus their actions on fostering sustainable development, eradicating poverty and inequality, ensuring transparent and accountable governance and the rule of law and promoting a culture of peace and non-violence.

Last but not least, international cooperation is essential. States should broaden and deepen all spheres of cooperation with the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations for peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflicts, including from countries in transition or with relevant experience in post-conflict peacebuilding. In particular, attention to resource mobilization and capacity-building for the countries concerned is vital for peacebuilding efforts.

We also wish to stress the need for more coordinated, coherent and integrated peacebuilding among United Nations missions, United Nations country teams, regional organizations and development actors.

In the cooperation process, it is necessary to respect the principles of non-interference in internal affairs, territorial integrity and the political independence of States, in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It is also essential to take into consideration various development levels, historical backgrounds and the particularities of each country.

As a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, Viet Nam has been doing its utmost to promote equality, unity, tolerance, mutual respect and understanding among our religions and 54 ethnic groups. We acknowledge that each has its unique identity and role in bringing to bear the rich diversity of Viet Nam in the country's sustainable development. Therefore, respect for, and building on, diversity have been the source of our strength, stability and development through all historical periods of the country, be it at war or at peace.

Our achievements in nation-building and development result from building consensus and meeting the needs and interests of our people via regular consultations and dialogue with people from all strata of society, international partners and relevant agencies of the United Nations.

In spite of our great achievements, there remain challenges in ensuring prosperity for our people in practice. In that regard, we look forward to the continued cooperation and support of the international community and United Nations agencies in such efforts.

In conclusion, we are committed to working unanimously towards a world of peace, stability and sustainable development.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I would like to thank the Secretary-General, President Kagame and His Excellency Mr. Mbeki for their thought-provoking briefings.

I also thank Ms. Koofi for her words. She rightly highlighted that, in Afghanistan, neither the parties nor the international actors supporting the process were previously able to achieve the equal and meaningful participation of women or build the necessary foundation for an inclusive political solution. We must learn from that. We must reinforce the voices of Afghan women fighting to influence their future. Without that, there will be no stability or prosperity in Afghanistan and no sustainable peace.

However, we regret that the High Commissioner for Human Rights was not able to brief us today. She and her Office have such a valuable contribution to make on this issue.

We thank you, Mr. President, for putting this issue on our agenda and for your participation and wise words and recommendations on this pertinent topic.

For several decades, Norway has been engaged in peace efforts around the world. While all conflicts are of course unique, we have found that there are common lessons on the importance of inclusivity in peace and reconciliation. We would like to contribute three lessons learned to our discussions here today.

First, inclusive political settlements and institutions are key to sustaining peace. For example, ensuring inclusivity and participation can mitigate the likelihood of actors exploiting the frustration of marginalized groups. That means that we must design processes and mechanisms with the inclusion of all, taking into consideration different cultures, races, ethnicities, languages, religions and, in particular, women's meaningful participation at all levels and in all phases of peace processes.

The second lesson is the importance of talking to all relevant actors to resolve conflict. We have experienced that engagement with non-State armed actors can be necessary to resolve conflicts. Engagement builds trust and promotes a better understanding of underlying interests. We saw that methodology bear fruit through our engagement with the Palestine Liberation Organization in the Middle East more than 30 years ago, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in Colombia and the Maoists in Nepal.

The third lesson is that engagement cannot end when a peace agreement is signed. The implementation phase is when the stamina of the parties is tested and where a long-term commitment by the international community is needed. Maintaining an inclusive character throughout implementation can be especially challenging; yet we know that it pays off.

From our engagement in Colombia, we saw first-hand that the efforts of the parties to establish an inclusive, victim-centred approach led to a more inclusive agreement and implementation mechanisms, enhancing the possibility for sustainable peace.

We should draw on positive experiences by inclusivity being prioritized, from wherever they come, and use them to enhance our peacebuilding capabilities, especially in the United Nations context, where we can, and must, better utilize the tools that we have. For example, the Peacebuilding Commission is uniquely placed to provide a deeper understanding of how patterns of exclusion and demands for inclusion relate to peacebuilding. We must implement closer collaboration, where the Security Council actively requests, deliberates and draws on the targeted advice and the convening power of the Commission.

Norway also sees the potential for closer cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and the regional economic communities, in preventive diplomacy and building sustainable peace.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight that, in order for such an approach to be successful, inclusion must not be about tallying who is or is not at the negotiating table. It is instead about creating opportunities for people with a stake in sustaining peace to shape it. That is a central component in strengthening a society's resilience against violence and armed conflict and why the Security Council needs to be more engaged in those efforts

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Kenya for organizing this meeting on this important topic of sustaining peace, diversity and State-building. I would also like to thank His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta for presiding over our meeting and for his briefing, which included important proposals. I also thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Their Excellencies President Paul Kagame and former President Thabo Mbeki for their briefings. My thanks also go to Ms. Fauzia Koofi for her intervention, which included important ideas.

Although the causes of conflicts are numerous, many of them, especially those that erupt within a country, are usually the most complex. They are related in one way or another to the issue of pluralism and identity-related ethnic, religious, sectarian, sexual and cultural diversity, as well as to socioeconomic inequalities, exclusion and marginalization. Such dimensions have continued to become exacerbated, leading not only to fuelling conflicts but also exacerbating their impacts.

They clearly affect efforts to achieve, build and sustain peace.

A number of countries succeeded in preventing the issue of identity from becoming a factor of fragility, division and conflict, after going through harsh experiences. Many of the conflicts and instability that exist today in many countries are witnessing major complications, exacerbated by the effects of other factors such as the currents of terrorism and violent extremism that seek to exploit differences on the basis of identity and differences between groups within societies and manifestations of exclusion and marginalization, as well as climatic changes and the repercussions of natural and health pandemics, the latest of which is the coronavirus disease pandemic.

From that point of view, it is important to take the issue of managing diversity in its various dimensions into account in the tracks of conflict resolution, achieving and building peace. Experiences have proven that stability and development in some countries have not been achieved in the post-conflict and peace-building stages due to the persistence of manifestations of differences and disharmony on the basis of identity and the lack of focus when building the State on the concept of a unified, united State for all spectrums of society and its components, on the basis of equality of rights, political participation and socioeconomic development.

Achieving peace and ensuring its sustainability require focusing on supporting the State's ability to contain and manage differences and diversity, promoting the values of dialogue, consultation and equality, rejecting discrimination and exclusion, focusing on shared values, unity of destiny and belonging, and the legal identity of all members of society.

As much as Tunisia values the awareness of the United Nations on such issues, its establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, its concern for human rights and the comprehensiveness of conflict settlements, we renew our support for its efforts to resolve conflicts, achieve and build peace. We also support its efforts to help countries and peoples concerned to transcend the effects of conflicts.

Tunisia stresses as well the need for more concerted efforts to strengthen early-warning plans and mechanisms, conflict prevention and anticipation through addressing fragility causes and factors linked to social coherence, human rights, identity differences,

manifestations of exclusion and marginalization and the absence or weakness of State authority.

It is also important that United Nations institutions working on conflict prevention, at the forefront of which is the Security Council, focus on achieving and building peace, invest in diversity in race, gender, religion and history in order to consolidate pillars of peace and prevent its use to fuel disagreements and grudges, which can compel some groups to seek other points of reference and opt for the path of violence.

We also call for further partnerships among the United Nations, international, regional and subregional organization, international financial institutions and civil society organizations so as peacebuilding operations encompass sustainability, particularly comprehensive development and capacity-building while promoting the role of State institutions, social cohesion and the active participation of all groups, especially women and youth.

Tunisia will continue to contribute to international peace and security and to make diversity an integrated source of enrichment and peace.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I thank the Kenyan presidency for organizing this open debate today. I extend my warmest welcome to the Secretary-General and His Excellency President Thabo Mbeki and thank them for their insightful briefings. I also thank Ms. Fawzia Koofi on her presentation on the evolving situation in Afghanistan and the important role of women in peacebuilding.

Looking into the role of diversity in peacebuilding can be like opening Pandora's box. The multitude of differences — whether ethnic, religious or political — exacerbate existing economic and social problems. Maintaining stability will be even more difficult if we do not dismantle radicalized identities in time.

In an effort to identify ways to overcome challenges in building peace, the experience of the European community is worth examining. Different cultural, ethnic, religious and political groups have reconciled under the banner of "United in Diversity" — the official motto of the European Union (EU).

As we look forward, new challenges to cooperation are emerging. These fresh tensions are playing out with increasing frequency in cyberspace. Extremist groups use cyberspace to mobilize their followers, while

authoritarian States utilize it to extend the State's reach, control and interests within and outside their borders. Attacks on critical infrastructure, manipulation of information, interference in elections all remain a substantial concern.

I reiterate Estonia's position that the efforts at the United Nations play an important role in advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace. As a priority, the EU and its member States are committed to promoting a global, free, open, stable and secure cyberspace grounded in existing international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Respect for diversity does not mean tolerating authoritarian attempts to limit the freedom of expression and suppress other human rights and fundamental freedoms. The promotion and protection of human rights is one of the most efficient means of conflict prevention. Importantly, the notion also entails the important role of women in peacebuilding and respect for gender equality.

We render our full support to the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights. This transformative vision underpins the work of the entire United Nations system. The success of the European experiment is a result of unity, based on these very same notions. Respect for human rights is essential to addressing the broad causes of all complex crises and to building sustainable, safe and peaceful societies.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome your participation in today's meeting, Mr. President. We would like to thank the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, and the former President of the Republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, as well as Ms. Fawzia Koofi, for their briefings. It was especially important for us to hear the opinion of leaders of countries that have gone through difficult conflicts. Their experience and knowledge are invaluable for those who are still in the midst of crisis and are experiencing its consequences and ramifications. We are also grateful to Secretary-General António Guterres for his assessments.

We share the Kenyan presidency's view that there is a link between diversity, State-building and the search for peace. Indeed, many conflicts are associated with religious, ethnic and racial differences and triggered by social inequality.

Unfortunately, there are still many conflicts raging on the African continent. We believe that there are objective historical reasons for that. As a result of Africa's particularly difficult colonial past, the natural process through which States are normally formed was disrupted. Borders were then drawn arbitrarily, and many peoples were either randomly divided or grouped together into States. That policy, as well as the long-term imposition of languages and customs alien to the local population, could only foster the emergence of interreligious and inter-ethnic conflicts. Some colonial empires deliberately left behind artificial lines of division, hoping to maintain their influence in the spirit of divide-and-conquer policies. That was also accompanied by the continuing economic exploitation of certain regions. In many countries, that did not help create truly cohesive societies or strong States united by a common history and culture, which are key to preventing conflicts and resolving differences.

Unfortunately, today sociopolitical models are being imposed on certain sovereign States. If they show their independence by violating certain rules, then unilateral sanctions, trade wars and even forcible regime change are used. More than once, we have seen situations where elections were designated as one of the criteria for assessing whether a State is moving towards domestic political stability — as if elections in themselves were a panacea. At the same time, many fundamental underlying issues of societal differences have been ignored for years. We also see the opposite, where an illegitimate power transfer in some States elicited no reaction and was even supported.

The concept of transitional justice has also been shown to be ineffective. Often, special courts only exacerbate existing differences by enshrining the victory of one side over another in a conflict and help settle political scores. Sometimes they are even used by foreign States as a means of intervening in the internal affairs of countries weakened by conflicts.

We are convinced that the establishment of post-conflict everyday life should be based on local traditions and features. Sometimes, to ensure sustainable reconciliation, the work of a truth commission is enough. In other places, traditional mechanisms, such as the Gacaca courts in Rwanda, are appropriate. We are convinced that the issues of transitional justice in the work of the Security Council are not a search for a universal formula, but rather specific work with the specificities of each country.

We appreciate the contribution of peacekeeping and political missions, which help ensure peace and stability in conflict-affected States and have broad mandates and billions in resources. They contribute greatly to ending violence, protecting individuals and moving political processes forward, as well as mediation and good offices. However, that cannot substitute for national political decisions and the process of State-building based on a country's own interests and priorities. What is needed is a thought-out national strategy based on civic patriotism. Every person, regardless of his or her ethnicity or religion, must be first and foremost a citizen of his or her country and be proud of it. No one has the right to put ethnic and religious distinctions above a State's law. But, at the same time, the laws of a country should take into account ethnic and religious characteristics.

We are convinced that respecting history, creating national education programmes, working with youth and devising a national policy aimed at the establishment of a responsible security sector and State institutions is key to building a stable country and society, recognizing their vital responsibility for ensuring peace and stability. The end result is inevitably a national identity that takes into account the diversity of social groups and cultural and civilizational values, as well as the historic characteristics of a society. It is a lengthy, complicated process but should take place organically, without ready-made formulas being imposed from the outside.

We do not mean to mentor anyone, because Russia itself is a multinational and multi-religious State that has seen difficult periods in its history, and we respect the right of every nation to choose its own development path. We stand ready to share our unique and vast experience of peaceful coexistence among various civilizations, religions and cultures. We support aspirations of States to ensure the well-being and safety of their people through their own efforts, with assistance from their neighbours and regional integration bodies.

We note in particular the efforts made by the African Union and countries on the continent to build an inclusive and diverse African society unified being a part of humankind's common history and culture.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): The quest for peace, our collective effort to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, is the foundation stone of the United Nations and the mandate of the Security

Council. Such an enormous responsibility is entrusted to each member of the Council. Every day, millions of vulnerable people look to us around this table for hope. They look to us to set aside our differences and to prevent and end conflict. Our successes are theirs. When we come together, we can help to alleviate immense suffering; we can provide vital support to peace processes. And yes, our actions, our words, can save lives.

This debate gives us not only a welcome opportunity to reflect on those successes, but also time to reflect on our collective failures. It is appropriate that we are joined today by deeply thoughtful briefers. I want to thank the Secretary-General, President Kagame and President Mbeki for their insightful messages. The courageous briefing from Ms. Fawzia Koofi struck a deep chord, and I thank her.

Today I will make three points.

First, as the Council seeks to build and sustain peace, the leitmotif must be the fullest respect for the human rights of all people. Human rights belong to individual human beings in all their diversity. They belong to all persons, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity; regardless of religion, belief or disability; regardless of whether they are rich or poor; and regardless of where they live on this planet.

Our instinct as humans is to form groups and communities; we carry this identity with us. But, as our briefers have pointed out, too often group identity can become the basis for marginalization, for discrimination and even for abuse. Every woman knows this. The LGBTIQ+ community knows this. Ethnic groups, religious groups, racial groups — they know this.

That should not be the case. The late Irish peacemaker John Hume said:

“Difference is the essence of humanity. Difference is an accident of birth, and it should therefore never be the source of hatred or conflict”.

In situations on the Council’s agenda, people are persecuted because they happen to be members of a certain group. We should strive to resist the creation of the “other” — resist creating hierarchies of humankind. The very worst episodes of human history bear testament to the danger of marginalization and to the dangers of persecution on the basis of group identity.

One thing is clear: difference alone does not cause conflict, nor does homogeneity prevent it. As a Council we must take care to recognize that human rights violations, including on grounds of identity, can be a prelude to and even a driver of conflict.

Secondly, the Council should think about peace not as an event but a process. The Irish poet W.B. Yeats wrote of how “peace comes dropping slow”. In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, the peace we cherish took decades to achieve.

Often it is brave women, women like Fawzia Koofi in Afghanistan, Hala Al-Karib in Sudan and Shukria Dini in Somalia, who reach across community divides to seek peace, as the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition did during our own peace process. The lesson I take from the courage of their example is that the peace we build must be inclusive and based on partnerships. It is critical that we hear from grass-roots women peacebuilders who actually get down and do this work.

Those civil-society voices were a golden thread running through Ireland’s presidency of the Council last month. They also bear witness to how in places like Somalia and Myanmar, climate change and extreme weather events are placing pressure on already fragile communities.

The Peacebuilding Commission is an important partner in the Council’s quest for sustainable peace. It brings together not only United Nations actors but also local peacebuilders in the field. In the aftermath of conflict, building good governance cannot be a top-down exercise from a conference room here in New York. It has to have its roots on the ground, in local communities and in inclusive decision-making.

My third point is that inclusive peacekeeping transitions are a litmus test for the durability of peace. The moment the Blue Helmets of United Nations peacekeepers leave, a reconfigured United Nations, in cooperation with international actors such as the international financial institutions and regional and subregional organizations, needs to be ready to step up and step in to support and to protect the peace left behind. That is a critical inflection point, particularly when it comes to ensuring that divisions recently healed, including those based on identity, are not reopened.

The Council’s unanimous adoption of resolution 2594 (2021) is a recognition of that and a sign that we agree that transitions should be nationally owned and

inclusive. Where transitions occur, the views of local communities, of women, of youth and of marginalized groups should be taken into account. The protection of civilians is also a key barometer of the success of any transition.

In the Council's quest for peace, sometimes in the depths of seemingly unending conflict, let us not forget what we are trying to achieve. A *sine qua non* is that we invest in human rights. We need to invest in inclusion. And we should learn how to invest in critical moments of transition. The overall dividend of such efforts will be a more sustainable peace, which expels intolerance and helps all people in their infinite diversity to belong with dignity.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation thanks Kenya for organizing this open debate. We extend a warm welcome to you, President Kenyatta. I thank you for presiding over today's meeting. The briefings by the Secretary-General, President Kagame and former President Mbeki on the theme of the open debate were insightful and inspiring, for which I am truly grateful. I also listened closely to Ms. Koofi's briefing.

Diversity is an intrinsic characteristic of the world. It is a perpetual force that drives human development, but it sometimes may also become a source of tension and conflict. In the wake of the Second World War, many Asian, African and Latin American countries emerged from colonial rule and gained independence. The legacy of colonialism, however, has not been fully eliminated. National borders artificially drawn up by external Powers and the bizarre political and economic structures inherited from the colonial era have all but hindered the organic formation of national identities among the peoples of former colonies, have resulted in a wide range of complex issues within the newly independent countries and have become root causes of conflict.

In the process of resolving hotspot issues and post-conflict peacebuilding, how to make diversity a positive driver is a topic that merits and in-depth discussion. China is of the view that we must support the efforts of developing countries to maintain national unity. In order to govern any country, it is essential to respect the diversity of society and, at the same time, remain committed to maintaining national unity. Those two goals are not incompatible or mutually exclusive.

For many developing countries, the task of maintaining national unity is more urgent, and the related challenges are more pronounced. Many conflict situations currently on the agenda of the Security Council are the result of intensified intercommunal disputes and weakened national identities. China calls on all parties to internal conflicts to put the interests of their country and people first, set aside communal and partisan differences, build political consensus and establish and consolidate a broad and inclusive political architecture. We support United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in redoubling their efforts in that regard on the path forward.

Kenya has forged ahead with reforms in recent years and expanded the political participation of women and other social groups. Kenya's experience and practices have set a laudable example for the international community. We need to support the efforts of developing countries to achieve inclusive development. Development is key to finding solutions to all problems. Decent living conditions for all is the fundamental guarantee for the realization of lasting peace.

In the process of post-conflict peacebuilding, the countries concerned should uphold a people-centred approach, formulate inclusive development policies, encourage people's initiative at all levels of society and adopt a grow-the-pie mindset in national development. That is the economic basis for achieving international harmony and enhancing social cohesion. At a time when the world economy continues to reel from the shock of the coronavirus disease pandemic, developing countries are in a more disadvantaged position in international economic relations, and the goal of inclusive development remains elusive.

We must improve global economic governance and rectify the unjust and unreasonable arrangements in the current system through reforms so that developing countries can participate in and benefit from international economic cooperation on an equal footing. We should support developing countries to address uneven development within their borders, pay more attention to vulnerable groups, redistribute the pie, enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of development, prevent the polarization of wealth and leave no one behind.

We must support the efforts of developing countries to stand up to foreign interference. Every country has its

own unique history and culture and, as such, is entitled to follow a development path that accords with its own national circumstances. Attempts by foreign Powers to promote regime change, impose their own governance model on others and promote so-called democratic transformation and the partiality of foreign influence in internal disputes have plunged countries such as Libya and Syria into civil strife and have resulted in Afghanistan falling into a vicious cycle. History teaches us that a world where peace and development prevail is one that comprises different forms of civilization as well as diverse paths to modernization.

Concerning the question of how a country should be governed, it is the people of the country who should have the final say. Countries should respect one another's choices regarding each one's development path and political system. Parties to hotspot issues should be encouraged to seek solutions that reflect realities on the ground. Regional organizations should receive our support in playing an important role in resolving their own regional issues. We should also resolutely oppose any act that spreads hate speech or

incites enmity among different communities, including through the misuse of the Internet.

Humankind lives in a global village. The global threats and challenges that confront us all require a stronger commitment to solidarity and a collective response under the banner of the United Nations. China stands ready to work with other countries to practice true multilateralism, promote the building of a community with a shared future for humankind and jointly build a better world.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

Before concluding, I would like once again to thank all of the participants who joined us today. I would also like to thank the Member States and regional groups that have so far submitted written statements on the subject of today's discussion. Statements that are received by the end of today will form part of the compilation of statements from this meeting. We look forward to receiving more.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.