



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



20 September 2011

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

EXPECTED COUNCIL ACTION

A high-level meeting of the Council focusing on how to strengthen and consolidate preventive diplomacy is scheduled for 22 September. President Michel Suleiman of Lebanon, which holds the Council presidency this month, will preside. The Secretary-General is expected to brief the Council and is likely to focus on his recent report on preventive diplomacy. It appears that several heads of state and other high level officials will participate.

A presidential statement under negotiation at press time is a likely outcome. The presidential statement may emphasise efforts to strengthen the relationship between the UN and regional and subregional organisations and national actors in preventive diplomacy. It may also highlight the need to strengthen coherence among UN entities engaged in conflict prevention and underscore the role of civil society and women's groups in preventive diplomacy.

CHARTER FOUNDATIONS

The Security Council's role in preventive diplomacy is well-grounded in the UN Charter, as reflected by Chapters I, VI, VII, and VIII:

- Chapter I, Article 1:1 states that one of the UN's primary purposes is to "maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".
- Chapter VI, Article 33 of the Charter

outlines a range of preventive means such as negotiation, mediation or arbitration and underscores the Council's role in calling upon parties "to settle their dispute by such means."

- Chapter VII, Article 40 says the Council may call upon parties "to comply with such provisional measures as it deems necessary or desirable" to prevent the escalation of a situation.
- Chapter VIII, Article 52:3 entrusts the Council with encouraging "the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through...regional arrangements or by...regional agencies either on the initiative of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council."

BACKGROUND

During the Cold War, in spite of the language of the Charter, the Council's efforts at preventive diplomacy were largely undermined by the rivalry between the two veto-wielding superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union.

In the early post-Cold War period, there was a sense of excitement at the newfound potential of the Council in maintaining international peace and security. In January 1992, the Council held its first meeting of heads of state and issued a presidential statement in which members recognised that the meeting "took place at a time of momentous change" and requested a report from the Secretary-General on preventive diplomacy, peacemaking

and peacekeeping.

In the report, *An Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General defined preventive diplomacy as "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts, and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur." The report delineated confidence-building, fact-finding, early warning, preventive deployment and the use of demilitarised zones as elements of preventive diplomacy. It also noted the complementary relationship between preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding as important strategies in preventing the occurrence and re-occurrence of conflict.

After the failure of the Council to remedy conflicts in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia during the early to mid-1990s, the optimism of the immediate post-Cold War period had largely waned. Even without a Council gridlocked by the constant threat of veto, violent conflict remained extremely difficult to resolve. In 1996, for example, 14 of Africa's 53 countries were engulfed in war. When the Council held its first ministerial-level debate on Africa in 1997, it issued a presidential statement that expressed grave concern with "the number and intensity of armed conflicts on the continent".

By the late 1990s, with several recent lessons learned from unsuccessful peacekeeping, the Council sharpened its focus on conflict prevention. In a number of resolutions

in the late 1990s and early 2000s the Council underscored the importance of conflict prevention, including preventive diplomacy. One of the tools it began to use in this context was field missions. While the Council conducted several visiting missions throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the trip with perhaps the most direct impact was the mission to East Timor in September 1999 while post-referendum violence was still ongoing. This trip, which was largely credited with contributing to ending the violence, helped the Council to coalesce around an agreement to authorise the international force for East Timor, followed by the establishment of the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).

Following the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001, the attention of the Council shifted and conflict prevention in general received limited attention from the Council for several years. Although it did form an ad-hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa in March 2002 that was quite active in its early years, the Council was by and large consumed with other issues, including, most notably, counter-terrorism. At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders committed themselves to promote a “culture of prevention”. Specifically with respect to preventive diplomacy, one notable outcome of the World Summit was that member states supported “the Secretary-General’s efforts to strengthen his capacity” with respect to his good offices role.

At a debate on the “Maintenance of International Peace and Security,” on 28 August 2007, the Council issued a presidential statement that recognised the importance of preventive action in maintaining international peace and security. The statement emphasised the need for African regional and sub-regional organisations to strengthen their early warning and conflict prevention capacities to address emerging crises.

While in theory there is widespread support among the UN membership for conflict prevention, there have

traditionally been concerns, especially among many developing countries, that conflict prevention in practice could be used as a pretext to impinge on the sovereignty of independent states.

Since August 2007, in an effort to address these concerns, the Council has used the agenda item “Peace and Security in Africa” to enable it to focus on country-specific cases without arousing the sensitivities that may arise from putting the relevant countries on the Council’s agenda. For example, through this agenda item, the Council has addressed several emerging crises in Africa—Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, and, in its early stages, Libya. Another useful innovation to the Council’s working methods in recent years, which has implications on conflict prevention, is the “interactive dialogue” meeting format. The “interactive dialogue” is a closed, informal meeting that allows a party or parties to a dispute to meet with Council members outside of the Council’s chambers, usually in cases in which they are not on the Council’s formal agenda. This format potentially offers a constructive and low-key way of defusing tensions between parties in the midst of an emerging crisis. For example, the “interactive dialogue” was employed in June 2009, when the permanent representative of Sri Lanka was given the opportunity to discuss the humanitarian and political implications of his government’s military defeat of the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam.

KEY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On 16 July 2010, during Nigeria’s presidency, the Council held an open debate on conflict prevention that focused on “optimizing the use of preventive diplomacy tools: prospects and challenges in Africa”. The resulting presidential statement recognised the benefits of an integrated approach to preventive diplomacy that “underscores the inter-relationship between political, security, development, human rights and rule of law activities.” It also asked the Secretary-General to

submit within a year “a report making recommendations on how best to optimize the use of preventive diplomacy tools within the United Nations system and in co-operation with regional and sub-regional organizations and other actors.”

In September 2010, under Turkey’s presidency, the Council held a high-level meeting under the agenda item “Maintenance of International Peace and Security” that explored the connections between preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Council members agreed to a presidential statement that highlighted preventive diplomacy as a cost-effective and efficient means of addressing conflict and recognised the need for enhanced financial support for preventive diplomacy.

Starting in November 2010 under the UK presidency, the Council has sought a monthly briefing from the DPA on thematic and country-specific issues of concern, including those which are already on the Council’s agenda as well as those that are not. To date, these “horizon scanning” briefings have occurred every month, except for December 2010. (During the July 2010 debate on preventive diplomacy the UK, France, Japan [then on the Council] and non-Council member Australia had expressed interest in such meetings.)

The ad-hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, currently chaired by South Africa, is another preventive tool of the Council. Thus far in 2011, it has held meetings on the following topics: “Enhancing the Role of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Conflict Resolution in Africa”; “UN Security Council and AU Peace and Security Council Cooperation”; and “Early Warning Tools and Indicators to Assess the Risk of Election-Related Violence in Africa”.

The discussion on “UN Security Council and AU Peace and Security Council Cooperation”, held on 3 May,

was particularly notable in that members of the AU Peace and Security Council were invited to dialogue with UN Security Council members in the context of the Working Group. This Working Group discussion helped lay the groundwork for the annual meeting between the two Councils, held this year in Addis Ababa on 21 May, which resulted in a substantive communiqué that addressed crises in Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan and Somalia. (For more details, please see our Update Report on Visit of Security Council Delegation to Africa of June 2011.)

On 21 July, the Council last used the “interactive dialogue,” with Eritrea arguing unsuccessfully in favor of the removal of sanctions. The meeting took place in the aftermath of a report of the Somalia Monitoring Group, which alleged Eritrean support for anti-government forces in Somalia. The format enabled members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development—Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda—to participate in the discussion.

On 9 September, the Secretary-General circulated the report entitled “Preventive diplomacy: Delivering results,” as requested by the presidential statement of 16 July 2010. Dedicated to the memory of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, this report is the first one a Secretary-General has released specifically on preventive diplomacy. The report underscores the importance of preventive diplomacy throughout the conflict spectrum and in support of national strategies promoting peace. It highlights factors that increase the chances of success in preventive diplomacy, including:

- effective early warning;
- flexible approaches that vary depending on the context and circumstances;
- effective partnerships among the UN, regional and subregional organisations, civil society and other actors;
- sustainable outcomes (those that enable countries to develop mechanisms to address the underlying

sources of conflict);

- ongoing evaluation of efforts (to determine what works and what does not in order to refine practices and garner enhanced financial and public support for preventive diplomacy); and
- adequate resources.

The report also offers suggestions for strengthening preventive diplomacy efforts in the coming years. These include:

- establishing more frequent informal exchanges among the UN, regional actors and other partners in order to collect relevant information and anticipate “threshold moments” for the outbreak of violence;
- enlarging the quantity of skilled mediators and envoys and enhancing the training of staff who support them;
- ensuring that resources are provided in a more consistent and timely fashion;
- strengthening partnerships between the UN, regional and subregional organisations, member states and civil society; and
- supporting the development of national mediation capacities.

On 14 September, in a town hall style discussion with UN staff, the Secretary-General reportedly highlighted conflict prevention as an important priority during his second term.

In preparation for the meeting on 22 September, Lebanon has circulated a concept paper entitled “Strengthening and Consolidating Preventive Diplomacy.” The concept paper underscores the Council’s engagement in preventive diplomacy over the years, enumerating the many resolutions and presidential statements that have been adopted by the Council relating to the issue since the late 1990s. It also notes that the Council has recognised the significance of preventive diplomacy during several thematic debates in 2011.

The concept paper proposes questions that Council members may

explore during the meeting, including:

- How can the Council strengthen its preventive diplomacy efforts?
- How can potential sources of conflict be recognised and addressed in a timely fashion?
- How can peacekeeping missions more effectively curtail the impact of violent conflict and prevent its spread?
- How can the UN Peacebuilding Commission more effectively address the underlying sources of violent conflict and thus forestall its reoccurrence?
- How can coherence among UN entities engaged in preventive diplomacy be strengthened to decrease response time to emerging crises?
- How can the Security Council and regional and subregional organisations collaborate more effectively to prevent conflict?

KEY ISSUES

The primary issue is how the Council can improve its preventive diplomacy tools to prevent the outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict.

Given the meeting’s high level nature, another key issue is whether it will generate enhanced momentum for and interest in preventive diplomacy. Other related issues include the role the Council can play in:

- generating the political will to engage meaningfully in situations not yet on its agenda;
- strengthening coherence and coordination in preventive diplomacy amongst the Council, the broader UN system, regional and subregional organisations, member states and civil society;
- enhancing the flow and quality of information amongst the Council and other actors engaged in preventive diplomacy;
- determining what combination of tools and actors is most effective in different types of scenarios that constitute a risk to peace and security; and
- building upon recent improvements in the Council’s working methods, such as the “horizon-scanning

sessions” and the “interactive dialogue”, that focus its attention on emerging crises.

OPTIONS

One option is for the Council to issue a presidential statement in which it commits to maintaining its focus on preventive diplomacy and endorses the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's recent report on the matter.

Other possible options for the Council include:

- assigning responsibility to individual Council members to serve as “rapporteurs” with responsibility for following emerging crises in different regions and reporting back to the Council;
- using the ad-hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa as a mechanism to alert the Council to potential country-specific crises;
- broadening the scope of the monthly DPA “horizon scanning” briefings to include the participation of officials from other UN departments, funds, programs and agencies, who may have relevant insights and information, on a case by case basis; and
- holding a Council meeting with relevant UN officials, regional and subregional organisations and civil society actors engaged in conflict prevention to explore strategies to promote coherence and coordination in preventive diplomacy.

COUNCIL DYNAMICS

Although some Council members remain concerned about the potential implications of conflict prevention on national sovereignty, it enjoys wide support from an array of permanent and elected members.

There are several reasons for this support. There is ongoing concern with the enormous human and economic toll of violent conflict, as well as with the perceived overstretch and high financial cost of UN peace

operations. There is also growing appreciation among many Council members that effective conflict prevention, including preventive diplomacy, not only saves lives, but is also much more cost-effective than peacekeeping.

Council members also appear united in their desire to promote greater coherence in the UN system with respect to preventive diplomacy, to support the Secretary-General's good offices role and to enhance the synergies between the Council and regional organisations in preventive diplomacy.

Lebanon has shown a strong interest in conflict prevention throughout its presence on the Council. When it hosted a debate on “Intercultural Dialogue on Peace and Security” during its presidency in May 2010, its then Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, stated that: “the best way to address and pre-empt (ethnic and sectarian violence, terrorism, and intimidation) is to deal with their root causes through preventive diplomacy.”

African Council members have been particularly strong proponents of preventive diplomacy. As Council president in July 2010, Nigeria hosted the debate on “Optimizing the use of Preventive Diplomacy Tools: Prospects and Challenges in Africa.” South Africa has been an active chair of the ad-hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. Gabon has also highlighted the usefulness of preventive diplomacy, including during a meeting at the International Peace Institute in New York in March 2010, when President Ali Bongo called for “a global strategy for conflict prevention,” emphasising the need to strengthen early warning as a part of this strategy.

The potential cost saving measures of conflict prevention also seem to have enhanced the appeal of the issue to large financial contributors to UN peacekeeping, notably the P3 and Germany.

UN DOCUMENTS

SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

- S/RES/1653 (27 January 2006) addressed conflict prevention and resolution in the Great Lakes region.
- S/RES/1631 (17 October 2005) addressed the issue of cooperation between the UN and regional organisations.
- S/RES/1625 (14 September 2005) was a heads of state and government level resolution adopted during the World Summit on the Council's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa.
- S/RES/1366 (30 August 2001) addressed the issue of DDR in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates and stated that preventing armed conflict was a major part of the Council's work.
- S/RES/1327 (13 November 2000) emphasised the importance of the Secretary-General in conflict prevention and reaffirmed the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.
- S/RES/1318 (7 September 2000) was the adoption of the Millennium Summit declaration on ensuring an effective role for the Council in maintaining peace and security, especially in Africa.
- S/RES/1197 (18 September 1998) concerned the strengthening of coordination between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations in conflict prevention and the maintenance peace.

PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENTS

- S/PRST/2010/14 (16 July 2010) requested the Secretary-General to submit within 12 months a report making recommendations on how best to utilise the preventive diplomacy

tools within the UN system in cooperation with other actors.

- S/PRST/2009/8 (21 April 2009) acknowledged the role of mediation in peace processes and requested the Secretary-General to “keep it informed of the action undertaken by him in promoting and supporting mediation and pacific settlement of disputes”.
- S/PRST/2008/36 (23 September 2008) the Council reaffirmed the UN’s role in mediation efforts and requested a report from the Secretary-General in six months on UN mediation and possible ways to improve it.
- S/PRST/2007/31 (28 August 2007) acknowledged the importance of preventive activities to address threats to international peace and security.
- S/PRST/2007/1 (8 January 2007) requested the Secretary-General to provide the Council with more regular analytical reporting on regions of potential armed conflict and stressed the importance of establishing comprehensive strategies on conflict prevention.
- S/PRST/2002/2 (31 January 2002) made recommendations for achieving conflict prevention and resolution in Africa and noted that the Council would consider establishing a Working Group to monitor these recommendations.
- S/PRST/2000/25 (20 July 2000) invited the Secretary-General to submit a report on the prevention of armed conflict.
- S/PRST/1999/34 (30 November 1999) recognised the importance of building a culture of conflict prevention and the need for a contribution from all principal UN organs to achieve this goal.
- S/PRST/1997/46 (25 September 1997) noted that addressing the challenges of conflict in Africa required a comprehensive approach and called on the

Secretary-General to produce a report to address the issue.

SECURITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

- S/PV.6360 and resumption 1 (16 July 2010) was the open debate on the topic “Optimising the Use of Preventive Diplomacy Tools: Prospects and Challenges in Africa”.
- S/PV.5735 and resumption 1 (28 August 2007) was the discussion of the role of the Security Council in conflict prevention and resolution, in particular in Africa.
- S/PV.4334 and resumption 1 (1 June 2001) focused on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict and the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (S/2001/574).
- S/PV.4174 (20 July 2000) was an open debate on conflict prevention.
- S/PV.3819 (25 September 1997) was the first ministerial-level debate on the situation in Africa.

SECRETARY-GENERAL’S REPORTS

- S/2011/552 (26 August 2011) was on preventive diplomacy.
- A/60/891 (18 July 2006) was a progress report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the prevention of armed conflict.
- A/60/L.1 (15 September 2005) was the 2005 World Summit Outcome document.
- A/59/2005 (21 March 2005) was the Secretary-General’s report In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all.
- A/59/565 (1 December 2004) was the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.
- A/55/985-S/2001/574 (7 June 2001) was the

Secretary-General’s first comprehensive report on conflict prevention.

- A/52/871-S/1998/318 (13 April 1998) was The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.
- A/47/277-S/24111 (17 June 1992) was An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peace-keeping.

OTHER

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

USEFUL ADDITIONAL SOURCES

- Elizabeth M. Cousens, "Conflict Prevention," in David M. Malone, ed., *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, (Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), pp. 101-115
- Bertrand G. Ramcharan, *Preventive Diplomacy at the UN*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 61 – 78.
- Disputes, *Update Report*, 13 April 2009
- *Update Report on Mediation and Settlement of Disputes*, 19 September 2008
- *Update Report on UN Cooperation with Regional Organisations and Sub-regional Organisations and Conflict prevention*, 14 April 2008
- Conflict Prevention, *Monthly Forecast*, February 2008
- Prevention of Armed Conflict, *Monthly Forecast*, November 2007
- Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, *Update Report*, 24 August 2007

RELEVANT PAST SCR REPORTS

- Preventive Diplomacy, *Monthly Forecast*, September 2011
- Conflict Prevention Briefings, *Monthly Forecast*, January 2011
- Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, *Monthly Forecast*, December 2010
- Conflict Prevention: Horizon Scanning, *Monthly Forecast*, November 2010
- High-Level Meeting on International Peace and Security, *Monthly Forecast*, September 2010
- *Update Report on Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Prevention*, 14 July 2010
- *Update Report on Lebanese Prime Minister to Chair Council Meeting on Intercultural Dialogue*, 21 May 2010
- Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, *Monthly Forecast*, December 2009
- Mediation and Settlement of

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