



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail australia@un.int

150 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 www.AustraliaUN.org

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

11 May 2016

General Assembly: High-level Thematic Debate on Peace and Security 'In a World of Risks: A New Commitment for Peace'

**Statement by H.E. Gillian Bird
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

Mr. President, thank you for convening this High-Level Thematic Debate on Peace and Security.

On this, the 70th anniversary of the UN, the need for such a Debate could not be more apparent.

With complex, simultaneous conflicts affecting the far reaches of our world, rising violent extremism and terrorism, unabated flows of illicit arms and weapons, large-scale epidemics and displacements of people, and millions in desperate need of humanitarian assistance, it is clear that the scale, nature, and compounding impact of today's global challenges are seriously straining the resources and capacity of the United Nations to respond.

Amongst this all, the United Nations has an essential role.

As former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld famously said ‘the United Nations was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell’.

But for even this to be achieved, it is critical that the United Nations has the support and the tools it needs.

Mr. President,

As we meet today, we do so with the benefit of the analysis from the three recent UN reviews on Peace Operations, Peacebuilding Architecture, and Security Council resolution 1325.

Across these reports, prescient recommendations were presented which deserve our close consideration. These include:

- prioritising conflict prevention and sustainable peace;
- acknowledging the primacy of politics;
- emphasising people-centred and inclusive processes;
- pursuing partnerships between the UN and other strategic actors;
- affirming that military responses should not be a first resort;
- strengthening UN organisational coherence across the three pillars, and between the field and Headquarters; and
- understanding that women’s participation substantially increases the effectiveness of conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

Indeed, it is for this reason that Australia is proud to have become the first and largest donor to the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security. This Instrument will help to steer resources to women’s civil society organisations working at the forefront of conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery efforts.

Mr. President,

It is vital that attention now turns to implementing the reforms needed to ensure the UN remains fit-for-purpose. Concrete action, responsible leadership, and accountability are essential.

We acknowledge the work already underway to implement much needed reforms.

This includes the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the 'Future of United Nations Peace Operations' report. It is vital that this work continue.

In this regard, we note our particular support for efforts to:

- institutionalise protection of civilians as part of broader political processes;
- improve analysis and planning, including through the use of new technologies and intelligence;
- improve performance measures for UN peacekeepers, especially regarding sexual exploitation and abuse;
- strengthen strategic force generation; and
- move towards more flexible, field-oriented and people-centred Peace Operations.

Mr. President,

We also call the United Nations to implement fully the Peacebuilding Architecture Review resolutions. These resolutions are a clear statement by the UN membership that 'sustaining peace' must form the backbone of the UN's peace and security efforts.

To this end we call for:

- prioritisation of political and preventative efforts;

- sustained UN engagement in-country, and which integrates the UN's human rights, development, and peace and security work;
- new strategic and operational partnerships between the UN and key partners, particularly regional organisations and international financial institutions;
- increased participation of women, youth and civil society as part of inclusive conflict prevention and resolution approaches; and
- the leadership of women to be systematically harnessed in peace processes.

We note that the UN's Peacebuilding Commission has a unique role in supporting preventive efforts, and we call on the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Department of Political Affairs to work together in supporting the Commission's efforts.

We also note that ahead of the UN's Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) it is essential that the UN system, including the Peacebuilding Commission, ECOSOC and UN Funds and Programs, consider how humanitarian, peacebuilding and development efforts can be better aligned to achieve collective outcomes.

Mr. President,

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that 'More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that is why we have the United Nations'.

It is time for us to move beyond rhetorical commitments and to pave the way for much-needed reforms.

It is in all of our collective interests that these efforts succeed.