



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.australia-unscc.gov.au

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE 'ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT WHILE PROMOTING POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY IN AFRICA'

19 May 2021

Statement by Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ)

Mr President

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ).

This is a crucial time for countries affected by conflict and fragility, including many in Africa. To address conflict drivers effectively, we call on the Security Council to put inclusivity, conflict sensitivity, and a human-rights based approach at the centre of all COVID-19 recovery efforts.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the COVID-19 crisis has disrupted SDG progress, exacerbated inequalities, and reversed development gains, in particular for women, girls, refugees, and internally displaced persons who already experience poverty, exclusion and marginalization more acutely. The pandemic has made women and girls more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices. For girls in particular, COVID-

19 threatens their education, safety and future. The widespread socio-economic impacts of the pandemic risk reversing decades of progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

We welcome the early work by the African Union on COVID-19 response and ongoing work to ensure that recovery efforts contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. We continue to work with the African Union to prioritize these issues, with a focus on the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding, early warning and mediation efforts.

CANZ members were pleased to support the Group of Friends of R2P Joint Statement on Women Peace and Security at the UN Security Council Open Debate to mark the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR1325 in 2020.

Genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing all have a gendered impact.

We welcome the joint inquiry into the Tigray conflict by the UN Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. We express our grave concern of reported egregious human rights atrocities and humanitarian law violations in Tigray. CANZ members strongly support the international community's attention on the issue of systemic sexual and gender-based violence and press for action to bring perpetrators to justice where abuses occur. We join calls for safe, timely, and unimpeded humanitarian access in the region, a top priority given the urgent need for supplies to reach those in need.

Recognizing the long-term socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 across Africa, including on human development and health indicators, economic growth and trade, CANZ countries are adapting programming to maximize our contribution to COVID-19 efforts. We also welcome the commencement of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the significant potential increased trade has for Africa's long-term recovery and resilience.

CANZ are strong supporters of the COVAX AMC, which will enable 92 low- and middle-income countries, many in Africa, to access vaccines with the support of official development assistance financing and is the centerpiece of global efforts to guard against 'vaccine nationalism'.

The UN has a responsibility to ensure that conflict-affected countries – and those members of their societies made most vulnerable – do not fall further behind. This crisis cuts across the UN's traditional siloes and requires a truly integrated, multi-sectoral, global response and regional partnerships with the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The work between the UNDP, AU Commission, and African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention on pandemic response and recovery is an example of this.

To achieve this, we need to ensure strengthened partnerships and financing. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that the UN's work to build and sustain peace has adequate, predictable, and sustained funding. In particular, initiatives which support the rights, wellbeing, health and specific needs of women and girls, LGBTQI persons, indigenous peoples,

persons with disabilities, and all communities made vulnerable must continue to receive adequate attention and funding.

CANZ supports the launch by Canada, Jamaica and the UN Secretary General of the *Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond Initiative* in May 2020, to foster global engagement and develop creative solutions to address the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Collective action in all relevant multilateral forums will be required to ensure continued and adequate funding for key development priorities in order to address the root causes of conflict and instability.

CANZ are deeply committed to the Sustaining Peace Agenda, investing in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and contributing to a UN system-wide vision for reform. The UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has an important role to play. It is the only UN body mandated to play a bridging role across the UN's principal organs to ensure integrated, coherent, and coordinated support to help countries address risks of conflict and deliver on national priorities to build and sustain peace. We call on the Security Council to increase its engagement with the PBC on addressing the root causes of conflict while promoting post-pandemic recovery.

CANZ are committed supporters of the UN Peacebuilding Fund which, in close coordination with the UN Peacebuilding Commission, peacekeeping missions and UN country teams, has been working in many African countries to prevent conflict and promote peace, with a particular focus on the inclusion of women and youth in the peacebuilding process. We support the UN Secretary-General's call for a quantum leap in the financing

for peacebuilding, to facilitate a shift to conflict prevention instead of crisis response.

The pandemic and associated crises have shown that many peacebuilding successes are fragile. We must rethink our approaches, putting economic security and inclusive economic development and human rights at the heart of peacebuilding, in a conflict sensitive manner. Although the road ahead is challenging, at the PBC we have heard many examples of the resilience of local communities, the fundamental role that civil society plays in fostering social cohesion at the local and grassroots level, and the innovation of the private sector. We must continue to support, learn from and replicate these success stories.

Thank you.

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