

Ideas and Global Platforms for Preventing Violent Conflict and Sustaining Peace on the Road to 2020

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

United Nations Headquarters, New York, NY
Conference Room 12, 1:15pm – 2:45 pm
Tuesday, 24 April 2018

Co-Chairs / Co-Moderators:

H.E. Ambassador Samson Iteboje, Deputy Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations (UN)

H.E. Ambassador Michael Grant, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations (UN)

Speakers:

- 1) **Professor Ibrahim Gambari**, Founding Chairman of the Savannah Center for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development and Co-Chair of the Albright-Gambari Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance (Abuja, Nigeria)
- 2) **Adriana Erthal Abdenur**, Coordinator of the Peace & Security Division at Igarapé Institute (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
- 3) **Saba Ismail**, Co-Founder of Aware Girls: Working Towards Gender Equality and Peace (Peshawar, Pakistan and New York, USA)
- 4) **Fergus Watt**, International Coordinator, UN 2020 Initiative (Ottawa, Canada)

Coordinators:

Richard Ponzio, Director of the Stimson Center's Just Security 2020 Program (Washington, D.C.)

Nini Okey-Uche, Minister - Peace Building Commission/Responsibility-To-Protect, Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations (UN)

Introduction:

The UN General Assembly (GA) High-Level Meeting (HLM) on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace was a historic milestone for advancing the UN's work in the areas of Conflict Prevention, Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding. It will help set the stage for a wider agenda of renewal, innovation, and reform at the expected UN Heads of State gathering in September 2020 in New York. Over 120 participants who attended this side-event of the HLM heard from international scholars and activists about new ideas and platforms linking efforts to sustain peace and the UN's other core activities in Sustainable Development, Human Rights and Climate Change action, with a view toward the 75th Anniversary Commemoration of the UN, and beyond. The discussion was co-sponsored by the Missions of Nigeria and Canada to the United Nations, the Savannah Center for Diplomacy, Democracy & Development, the Igarapé Institute, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, the UN 2020 Initiative, and the Stimson Center.

Opening Welcome by Dr. Richard Ponzio:

- With the commemoration of UN's 75th Anniversary less than two-and-a-half years away, the High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace can offer a boost to the preparations of the expected Heads of State gathering to be held in September 2020 in New York City.
- The *Albright-Gambari Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance* – initiated, in 2014, by the Stimson Center and The Hague Institute for Global Justice to bring about **meaningful UN and global governance innovations** – aspired to focus the anticipated **2020 UN Summit** on essential issues of UN renewal, innovation, and reform.

Introductory Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Samson Iteboje:

- The global community is facing unprecedented security threats including cyber-attacks, climate change, and nuclear weapons.
- Recalling past GA and Security Council (SC) Resolutions, the UN's peacebuilding architecture needs to adopt a **long-term perspective and focus more on prevention**. In particular, today's discussion should consider:
 1. Strengthening the linkages between peace and security with development, human rights, and humanitarian action.
 2. Sustained engagement and coordination between the GA, SC, and ECOSOC (the UN Economic and Social Council).
 3. The need for global (UN) responses to address the root causes of conflict.
 4. How new tools, networks, and institutions are required for 2020.

Introductory Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Michael Grant:

- The Sustaining Peace agenda is highly ambitious and will require sustained political support.
- We hope we can come out of this week's meeting with new energy and momentum, and a collective commitment to improving the UN's ability to address risks of conflict using the full range of tools across peace and security, human rights, and development.
- Canada is enthusiastic about hearing from grassroots activists on **how to translate the concept of Sustaining Peace into tangible results**.

Remarks by Professor Ibrahim Gambari:

- Key recommendations:
 1. The UN urgently needs **greater conflict mediation capacities**, beginning with a cadre of Senior Mediators and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General, who would be on call to serve as the senior echelon of a larger professional civilian capacity for UN hybrid mediation efforts and field missions in cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations.
 2. The Peacebuilding Commission should be formally entrusted with a **mandate for conflict prevention**, and be empowered with a **new Peacebuilding Audit tool** to promote early warning and early action (similar to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review mechanism), including in close collaboration with relevant regional and sub-regional organizations.
 3. Increased SC support of action by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against perpetrators is required. This should include helping to **enforce ICC arrest warrants and having the SC enact sanctions, where appropriate**.
- Two proposed vehicles for taking the Sustaining Peace agenda forward on the Road to 2020:

1. With support from the civil society-driven ‘UN 2020 Initiative’ (see *Fergus Watt’s remarks below*), organize in the run-up to the UN’s 75th Anniversary a **series of discussions that are both *intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder***, leading to the convening, in September 2020, of a **Leaders Summit on UN Renewal, Innovation, and Reform**.
2. The setting up of an online **Platform on Global Security, Justice & Governance Reform** to harness the expertise found in think-tanks, universities, activist organizations, businesses, governments, and international organizations, to generate innovative global governance reform proposals for the 2020 UN Summit and other multilateral processes for progressive change.

Remarks by Adriana Abdenur:

- In connection with forthcoming platforms and publications by Instituto Igarapé’s Innovation in Conflict Prevention (ICP) initiative, including a Handbook of Conflict prevention, a data visualization platform and an interactive app for mediators and other prevention practitioners and scholars, Abdenur noted that current definitions of conflict prevention are too narrowly associated with the concept of state fragility. Consequently, **key drivers of conflict are often excluded from risk analyses and conflict prevention strategies**.
- Key recommendations:
 1. **Inter-state relations** are too often neglected in our understanding of the causes of a systemic conflict. The current emphasis on national ownership and leadership can be effective in many settings, but local capacities and the complexity of the conflict must be taken into account.
 2. Pay due regard to **transnational causes of conflict** (including the arms trade, geo-political meddling, nuclear proliferation, and organized crime), and acknowledge the key role of regional organizations in resolving protracted transnational disputes.
 3. **South-South Cooperation** can contribute significantly to conflict prevention and represents a rich source of solutions for peacemaking and peacebuilding.
- Sustaining Peace is part of the global agenda, and as such, **the permanent members of the Security Council and other geopolitical actors are not free from scrutiny** or from the consequences of their decisions when they contribute towards conflict.

Remarks by Saba Ismail:

- Partnerships are central to delivering on the sustaining peace agenda. In particular:
 1. **Engage with and train young women and girls** to be local Peace Educators.
 2. Educational institutions, the media, government representatives, and policy-makers must collaborate for **gender-sensitive youth peace policies**.
 3. **Establish regional networks of Women Peacebuilders**, learning from ongoing partnerships between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- Key recommendations:
 1. Partner with youth and **make the UN more accessible to young people**.
 2. **Divert government** funding and resources from arms and military spheres **to youth-led peace initiatives**.
 3. Ensure **coherent and disaggregated data collection** around youth-led peace initiatives.
 4. Governments and the UN must **move away from a reactive to a preventive approach**, by forging new partnerships with youth-led civil society organizations.

Remarks by Fergus Watt:

- Challenges to Sustaining Peace and effective global governance:
 1. Global military expenditures approximately \$1.7 trillion USD, dwarfing the UN's spending on peace operations (which, in turn, exceeds the organization's spending on conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction).
 2. International prohibition on the use of weapons of mass destruction is ignored.
 3. Civil society increasingly under attack.

- Key recommendations:

The UN 2020 Initiative presents a **Call to Action for a UN Summit, in September 2020, in New York**, to address today's crisis in multilateralism through a GA-mandated, multi-stakeholder process of stock-taking, recommitment to the principles of the Charter, and organizational reform. Major characteristics include:

1. Organized around the **UN's upcoming 75th Anniversary Commemoration**.
 2. Ad-Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on the Revitalization of the GA serves as **one possible vehicle for mandating this process**.
 3. The proposed September 2020 Summit would coincide with several other UN review processes – **mutually reinforcing synergies should be explored**.
- Civil society organizations are welcomed to join the UN 2020 campaign by reviewing and **signing on to its 'Call to Action' found at UN2020.org**

Synthesis of Questions & Answers:

Will the UN 2020 process' required trigger resolution occur within the framework of UNGA 73?

- **Watt:** It is hoped that the Resolution will be passed in early September 2018 (i.e., by the end of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly). Negotiations within the AHWG on GA revitalization are ongoing and so there is optimism about relevant language soon entering the 'zero draft' of the required trigger Resolution.

Some of the most fragile nations are incredibly diverse in terms of language and ethnicity. Does that impact peace and reconciliation processes? Moreover, what does the United Nations need to do better in order to look outwards rather than inwards and to engage a range of new stakeholders who are well-equipped to help forge sustainable peace?

- **Ismail:** This is definitely a source of conflict in Pakistan, but young people who use technology skillfully are empowered when raising their voice about these issues.
- **Abdenur:** Most people involved in conflict prevention are from the Global North, and this exacerbates barriers to progress. 'UN Speak/jargons' and technocratic lingo are equally isolating.

With the advent of social media and programs like GenUN, do you see technology as a useful tool in getting more youth involved in peacebuilding processes?

- **Ismail:** Social media has played a huge role in lobbying the Pakistani government and garnering public support, specifically within the context of the Pashtun uprising.

How can national ownership drive conflict analysis?

- **Abdenur:** There are instances of success, as in Colombia. However, not all countries possess the capacity for nationally-owned fragility assessments, as is the case in Syria, where geopolitical meddling has added another layer to the conflict.

In your Commission’s report ‘Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance’, a focus is placed on conflict prevention implementation, but there remain many gaps. How can these gaps be addressed?

- **Gambari:** There are very sophisticated early warning mechanisms in parts of the world that should be studied. While early warning is important, early action is far more critical. The Commission details recommendations on a New Civilian Response Capability, a Peacebuilding Audit, and other tools for filling gaps to conflict prevention implementation.

Why is there such a low level of women participation in higher-level, tier 1 mediation processes?

- **Gambari:** Mediators tend to be former Heads of State, and very few of these are women. The Albright-Gambari Commission advocates ways to strengthen the role of women as conflict mediators, in support of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace & Security.

Biography of Speakers:

Ibrahim Gambari is a former Nigerian Foreign Minister, UN Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Co-Chair of the Albright-Gambari Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance. Professor Gambari is Nigeria’s longest serving Permanent Representative at the UN. He has led UN peace operations in Darfur and Mozambique and is the founding Chairman of the Savannah Center for Diplomacy, Democracy, and Development based in Abuja, Nigeria. He holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University.

Adriana Erthal Abdenur is the Coordinator of the Peace & Security Division of the Igarapé Institute, a Think-and-do-Tank based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She works on Peacebuilding, South-South cooperation, and the role of rising powers, especially the BRICS countries, in peace and security. Abdenur holds a Ph.D. from Princeton University and a Bachelor’s degree from Harvard University. She is Brazilian and has two children.

Saba Ismail, since the age of 15, serves as Executive Director and co-founded Aware Girls: Working Towards Gender Equality and Peace, which works to strengthen girls’ voices aimed at bringing prosperity to their communities. She completed her Masters in Biotechnology from COMSATS at the University of Abbottabad, Pakistan and, in 2013, was a Hurford Youth Fellow with the National Endowment for Democracy. Foreign Policy Magazine acknowledged her bravery and activism by recognizing her as one of 2013’s Leading Global Thinkers. Ismail is also the co-founder of South Asian Regional Feminists Forum on Women’s Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and she has served as Youth Ambassador for the Asia Pacific Youth Network.

Fergus Watt is the national Executive Director of the World Federalists Movement – Canada, and he also serves on the governing Executive Committee of the World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy. His work with Civil Society to advance global governance reforms has included participation in a range of broad-based networks, in Canada and internationally, on topics such as UN Reform, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, Democracy promotion, Human Rights, and International Justice. His current work includes a coordinating role on behalf of the ‘UN2020 Initiative’, which has identified the organization’s 75th Anniversary as an opportunity to renew and strengthen the UN system.