

WHS ROUNDTABLE ON CONFLICT PREVENTION

NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT

Global systems for preventing conflict are under major strain.

Increasingly they are failing. Conflict related deaths have quadrupled since 2010. Since 2011, 400,000 people have been killed in Syria alone. 60 million more have been displaced internally or as refugees. As many as one fifth of the world's population is now affected by conflict, violence or instability. Political and social structures in Syria, Yemen, Libya, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Iraq have been shattered, and will take generations to rebuild. New forms of virulent extremism have emerged, feeding on and in turn fuelling instability and chaos.

New Zealand's experience as a current member of the UN Security Council has underlined to us the fact that ***we need to invest greater resources in conflict prevention***. In the past year, the United Nations has spent close to US\$20 billion on peacekeeping and on humanitarian assistance to conflict areas. But it continues to significantly underinvest in efforts to support early engagement to prevent emerging crises developing into full-blown conflicts. New Zealand believes we need to ensure the UN Secretariat is appropriately structured and resourced to support the prevention of conflict. The current dependence of the UN Department of Political Affairs on voluntary funding for core preventive activities needs to end. New Zealand supports proposals before the Fifth Committee to dedicate increased resources to this important work.

Conflict prevention requires cooperation and coordination between the various international players engaged in this work. In today's world, this must include regional actors, who often play a critical role in preventing and resolving conflict. We need better engagement between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, particularly in Africa.

In particular, there is room for the Security Council to develop much more effective working relationships, especially with the African Union, to identify and avoid emerging conflicts.

There is a need to develop a better culture within the Security Council itself to enable it to make better use of the conflict prevention tools available to it. We need to see a greater sense of urgency and priority around this work. The use of the Secretary-General's good offices, and the range of tools available to the Security Council under Chapter VI of the Charter, need to be engaged earlier, more often and more effectively. This requires greater political will by the Council to engage early on situations of concern. It requires the Council to engage in a manner that is focused on solving the problem at hand and preventing conflict, rather than rote rehearsals of national positions. We recognise that this requires careful management of concerns about intrusion on national sovereignty. But we believe that constructive Council engagement focused with genuine efforts to prevent and resolve problems is consistent with this.

Thank you.