

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
19 October 2021
English
Original: Spanish

**Letter dated 15 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative
of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that, during its presidency of the Security Council in November 2021, Mexico will convene an open debate on the theme “Maintaining international peace and security: exclusion, inequality and conflict”, to be held on Tuesday, 9 November, at 10 a.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, Mexico has prepared a concept note (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and the concept note circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Juan Ramón **de la Fuente**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Mexico



Annex to the letter dated 15 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Concept note for the Security Council high-level open debate on the theme “Maintaining international peace and security: exclusion, inequality and conflict”, to be held on 9 November 2021, at 10 a.m.

Objective

1. The objective of the open debate is to advance the discussion on the nexus between the underlying causes or catalysts of armed conflict, such as exclusion, inequality and poverty. The debate will build on the conclusions drawn from several recent discussions during open debates, namely:

(a) “Peace and security in Africa: addressing root causes of conflict while promoting post-pandemic recovery in Africa”, open debate held by China in May 2021 ([S/2021/420](#));

(b) “Maintenance of international peace and security: conflict and food security”, open debate held by the United States in March 2021 ([S/2021/250](#));

(c) “Maintenance of international peace and security: challenges of maintaining peace and security in fragile contexts”, open debate held by Tunisia in January 2021 ([S/2021/24](#));

(d) “Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: contemporary drivers of conflict and insecurity”, open debate held by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in November 2020 ([S/2020/1064](#));

(e) “Maintenance of international peace and security: building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model to link security and development”, open debate held by Kazakhstan in January 2018 ([S/2018/7](#));

(f) “Maintenance of international peace and security: security, development and the root causes of conflict”, open debate held by the United Kingdom in November 2015 ([S/2015/845](#));

(g) “Maintenance of international peace and security: the interdependence between security and development”, open debate held by Brazil in February 2011 ([S/PRST/2011/4](#)).

Background

The contemporary humanitarian situation demonstrates that the Security Council is not effectively addressing the root causes of conflict

2. For more than a decade, humanitarian needs in the context of armed conflicts have observed an upward trend. Today, their levels are at a historical high. Consequently, the Security Council has devoted increasing attention to access, protection and humanitarian assistance in order to address emergency situations. More commonly, the Council focuses on the emergency situations and manages to integrate humanitarian assistance into its mandates. However, in its role as a crisis management body, the Council has not succeeded in addressing the structural causes of different types of violence that can become threats to international peace and security.

3. For this reason, it is fundamental that the actions of the Security Council systematically take into account the nexus between conflict and aggravating factors such as poverty and inequality, which are often ignored. This must also be considered as a priority through the lens of the preventive work of the United Nations and the need to enhance the coordination of its principal organs in preventing the outbreak, resurgence, protraction or expansion of conflicts.

4. So long as humanitarian needs continue to escalate to critical levels, the international community's margin for action will be constantly minimized. Violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and, more generally, infringements of the rule of law, coupled with the inability of fragile States to provide their populations with basic services, including food and medicines, create a perverse circle of exclusion, inequality and conflict in its various manifestations.

There is no sustained peace without development and no sustained development without peace

5. Humanitarian and peacebuilding work increasingly incorporates programmes and activities that foster sustainable development and promote poverty eradication. These are essential prerequisites for the prevention of the outbreak, resurgence, protraction or expansion of armed conflict.

6. The marginalization and exclusion of any segment of the population can have serious consequences for national and international stability. These situations and the absence of solidarity lead to a breakdown of the social fabric, resulting in structural poverty. This manifests in high levels of corruption, lack of employment opportunities, human rights violations and the emergence of crimes such as money laundering, among other things.

7. In post-conflict situations, damage to infrastructure, a lack of health and education services, and resentments between ethnic groups or regions within a State can jeopardize the rebuilding of peaceful coexistence. The impact of armed conflict on survivors' mental health also entails long-term struggles. The lack of cash flows and adequate funding for the reintegration of former combatants, including children, can easily constitute new factors of instability. The dismantling of "war economies" is essential to sustaining peace.

8. Not all those suffering from poverty resort to violence, but social, political and economic exclusion can contribute to exacerbating conflicts or accelerating their outbreak. The Security Council has recognized the nexus between security and development in the past, and it is also explicit in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is therefore imperative to apply a comprehensive, coherent and preventive approach that encompasses peace, security and development.

9. In addition, the Secretary-General has requested the Council to revamp efforts to break the "vicious cycle" of poverty, fragility and conflict, more so considering that, in 2020, extreme poverty grew for the first time in 22 years as a consequence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Inequitable access to vaccines is, undoubtedly, one of the above-mentioned considerations.

The rule of law is key to breaking the vicious circle of shortcomings in peace and development

10. An international order based on the rule of law is indispensable for a peaceful, more prosperous and just world. Progress in this realm, in both the national and international spheres, is essential to sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and the full realization of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. At the same time, it is fundamental for the prevention and

resolution of conflict, and for peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Fighting corruption is key to good governance and the rule of law. It is an issue of accountability, trust in a State's institutions and compliance with international legal obligations.

11. In his report entitled "Our Common Agenda" ([A/75/982](#)), the Secretary-General calls for a "renewed social contract", the foundations of which are: (a) trust; (b) inclusion, protection and participation; and (c) measuring and evaluating what is important for people and the planet.

12. While exclusion and marginalization hinder sustainable development and give way to corruption, strengthening the rule of law is the most suitable tool to bolster public trust in a State's institutions and prevent potential threats to regional, national and international stability.

Approach

13. The proposed approach is not for the Council to directly address exclusion and inequality to the detriment of the attributions of other bodies, agencies, funds or programmes. These must maintain their respective mandates regarding development issues.

14. However, the Council must analyse the opportunities that the rule of law presents, within its own mandate, as a preventive tool to revert tendencies of exclusion and inequality that destabilize societies. The Security Council can receive information and give due consideration to the nexus between these aspects and threats to international peace and security, with the objective of not only reacting to conflicts but preventing their outbreak.

15. It is necessary that the Security Council incorporate social and development aspects into its deliberations in order to ensure conflict prevention and the transition to peace, as well as peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

16. Providing support to countries affected by conflict must be a commitment of the entire United Nations system. There is a legitimate interest in the coordination of all missions mandated by the Security Council, with actors on the ground who are devoted to development aspects. The Council must discuss ways to strengthen the rule of law as a vehicle for both peace and development. The Council could consider cases in which early actions geared towards peacebuilding could be carried out as preventive efforts.

17. A coordinated strategy between all stakeholders could significantly increase the prospects of success for the efforts of the Security Council to provide for peace and security, which would, in turn, generate the conditions for sustainable development.

18. In line with the above, the Council could:

- (a) Draw attention to the security implications of development issues;
- (b) Analyse challenges and opportunities in the realm of the rule of law and consider appropriate measures to prevent the outbreak or escalation of conflict;
- (c) Convey its concerns about the impact that exclusion, poverty and inequality can have as drivers of violence or other aggravating factors in conflicts and on humanitarian access, and request that such information be included in the Secretary-General's reports;
- (d) Request the Peacebuilding Commission to provide proactive and constant advice on aspects that could have an impact on security issues, in accordance with a more comprehensive and preventive approach;

(e) Take into consideration the reform of the development system of the United Nations as a tool for promoting the rule of law and greater coherence in the work of the United Nations as a whole.

Format

19. The event will be a high-level open debate chaired by the President of Mexico. The Secretary-General and a civil society representative from a marginalized sector will also be invited.

Expected result

20. A presidential statement is expected.

Guiding questions

21. The following questions will serve to guide the debate:

(a) What information should the Security Council avail itself of in order to comprehensively address the root causes of conflict and avoid a multiplying effect of “permanent emergencies”? How can the Security Council contribute, within its mandate, to breaking the vicious cycle of exclusion, inequality and conflict?

(b) To what extent could peace operations or special political missions undertake preventive action to address destabilizing socioeconomic factors and work with resident coordinators to prevent armed conflict? How can the Security Council strengthen cooperation with relevant United Nations bodies to ensure that funds for development are not diverted due to corruption and mismanagement?

(c) How can the Security Council foster the participation of women and youth in the development of inclusive strategies to address the underlying causes of conflict such as lack of inclusion, poverty and inequality?

(d) How can the rule of law be strengthened in peacekeeping mandates and used as a preventive tool to support peace and sustainable development?
