Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

"Let us seize the momentum - and unity - of this month and redouble our efforts."

2015-08-30

Thank you very much Madam President.

And I want to begin as Christian did by expressing condolences both to the leadership of the United Nations and MINUSTAH and to the government of Brazil for the tragic death of General Jaborandy of MINUSTAH.

I also want to echo what Christian said in thanking you, Joy, and your team for delivering a successful month in August. It was a busy month. I think that you brought some welcome unity to the Council on several important issues, most notably on Syria.

I want to focus on three sets of issues today. First of all, I would like to use this session to reflect on our successes this month, and on how we can build on them. Secondly, I will have a look on where we were unable to find agreement, including some of the events in July. And finally, I will look back on our working methods and assess whether they have delivered as best they could.

This month, Madam President, the Council covered a wide breadth of issues. On the role of regional and sub-regional organisations in our work on international peace and security. On the importance of security sector reform in sustainable peacebuilding. And on the vital need to learn from last year’s Ebola outbreak and recommit to reaching zero.

I’m pleased that under your Presidency you have continued to bring diverse issues such as these to the Council’s attention.

But it is this month’s discussions on Syria that I want to focus on. The resolution on the Joint Investigative Mechanism represents a much-needed step towards accountability for the barbaric use of chemicals as weapons in Syria. For too long this Council has been less effective that we would like in the face of continuing reports of the horrific use of chlorine and mustard gas against civilians. We look forward to the urgent implementation of the resolution in the coming weeks. Reports of ISIL using chemical weapons are worrying and they must be investigated. But they don’t make any better the Syrian regime’s continued use of such weapons.

Through the PRST on the work of Special Envoy de Mistura, this Council recommitted to a political solution in Syria based on the implementation of the Geneva communiqué. This was the first positive, united signal on this issue from the Council in 18 months.

These are two overdue steps. The disturbing attacks on Douma and the harrowing Arria-formula meeting on LGBT persecution showed just how much more work lies ahead. But we should not be deterred by the scale of the challenge. These two small steps felt out of reach at our last wrap-up session in June. So let us seize the momentum - and unity - of this month and redouble our efforts to draw to a close over four years of fighting.

Madam President,

We know what we can achieve when our diplomatic efforts are aligned. Last month's Iran nuclear deal clearly showed how a united Council, working closely with regional organisations like the European Union, can really make a difference. In a world of escalating threats to international peace and security, it was immensely satisfying to tackle that one.

I want to pay tribute to Gerard, and his team, from New Zealand for their vital stewardship of that important issue through the Council.

Sadly, July also showed the dire consequences of division. We had the chance to bring justice for those tragically killed on Malaysian Airlines flight MH17. And we had a unique moment to remember those murdered in the Srebrenica genocide and advance the cause of reconciliation in Bosnia. On both occasions, we were denied by the actions of one Council member. This cannot continue if this Council is to retain its credibility.

We faced wider challenges to our collective credibility over the past months. We cannot, must not, shy away from the shocking allegations that have emerged about sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN peacekeepers. These horrific reports must be investigated urgently and decisively. I welcome the responsiveness of the Secretary-General in briefing the Council so quickly after the allegations emerged.

It is this responsiveness, Madam President, that demonstrates that the Council's impact is not always determined by its products, but also by its working methods. I applaud you for your creative use of the 'any other business' on Burundi, Guinea Bissau and Burkina Faso. For humanising the impact of Ebola by inviting a briefer to the Council who worked in the field. And for your dedication to agreeing strong and clear press elements so that we can communicate our work to the world at large.

Your efforts have been a welcome continuation of the steps taken by Gerard to bring more interactivity and informality to our consultations.

Let me conclude, Madam President, by welcoming that you are holding this session in public. It is important that we share our success, and be frank about our shortcomings to the widest possible audience. By working together in this way we can help improve our effectiveness in the future and tackle the challenges ahead and I look forward to doing so in the coming month under the Russian Presidency.

Thank you.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/let-us-seize-the-momentum-and-unity-of-this-month-and-redouble-our-efforts