Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

The Responsibility to Adhere to the UN Charter's Ideals

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Thank you Your Excellency for convening this session and focusing the Council’s attention on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

And thank you to the Secretary General and his Excellency the former Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for their briefings today.

This session, as you’ve said, takes place around the 27th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait. This is a clear example of the United Nations fulfilling its purposes through maintaining international peace and security.

As UN Member States, we have a responsibility to adhere to the Charter’s ideals and to work within the UN framework to solve the most challenging global problems.

When the horrific violence in Rakhine forced the Rohingya to flee, the Security Council played a vital role, focusing the world’s attention on the situation and encouraging action by the authorities on the ground. We must now take further action to ensure safe and voluntary return to take place, and we should visit the region.

Mr President,

The Council must work together to achieve the Charter’s purposes. When we do, we are successful.

We have remained united in our commitment to providing the tools to achieve peace in Colombia and in our support for Cyprus’s peace process. We were successful in Liberia and Cote de Ivoire. We have remained united in our condemnation of Daesh and the need for accountability for their atrocious actions.

And we have remained united in our condemnation of the DPRK’s flagrant violations of international law, where we have used sanctions to constrain the DPRK’s pursuit of illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. In this context sanctions play a crucial role in maintaining international peace and security.

The implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which balances sanctions relief with strict nuclear restrictions, is another significant achievement of this Council and marks a major step forward in preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapons capability.

However, there are instances where Council disunity halts our progress.

We cannot ignore Russian attempts to redraw the boundaries of Europe. This month marks the fourth anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea in breach of Article 2 of the Charter. We remain deeply concerned by the degradation of human rights in eastern Ukraine and we call upon Russia to abide by the Minsk Agreement commitments that it signed up to. It is crucial that we uphold the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Nor can we ignore the conflict that continues to rage in Syria, or its causes. The Syrian conflict, in all of its abhorrent acts and human misery, is an example of what we all set up this United Nations to prevent.

We have proved that we can work together to ease the suffering of the Syrian people. When we adopted Resolution 2393 it enabled the United Nations to continue to deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid across conflict lines and borders. Knowing that we can deliver results makes our failures even more frustrating.

These failures are having devastating consequences. The Assad regime's brutal assault of Eastern Ghouta, including reports of chemical weapons use, is causing unprecedented levels of suffering. Targeting of civilian infrastructure is a violation of international humanitarian law. Eastern Ghouta is not a de-escalation zone, it is a zone of death and destruction.

We must work together to end the conflict and prevent further suffering of the Syrian people, and I hope this Council will soon be able to pass a resolution to that effect. The Geneva talks represent the only sustainable path to peace. The opposition continues to engage constructively and in good faith and without preconditions. The Assad regime must do the same.

We must also hold the Syrian regime and others to account for the repeated use of chemical weapons. Our failure here is unacceptable. We must demonstrate that such abhorrent actions have consequences. An independent expert international investigation, set up by this Council, concluded that the regime and Da'esh have used chemical weapons. We must not allow Russian actions to force the closure of this investigation to deter us from pursuing accountability.

Mr President, despite our differences in this Council, we have demonstrated our capacity to show unity in the face of adversity. We must strive to do this more and to think creatively about how we find common solutions.

The United Kingdom is a proud signatory to the ACT Code of Conduct and we are committed to never voting against a credible draft resolution on preventing or ending a mass atrocity.

We fully support the Secretary-General's efforts and proposals to improve the United Nation's ability to prevent and respond to conflict and promote development. This includes reforms to peacekeeping and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the millions of military, police and civilian personnel who have helped to protect civilians around the world.

We must also continue to tackle relentlessly the scourge of sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, and recognise the disproportionate adverse effect of conflict on women, and the important role of women in peacebuilding.

And we must encourage increased cooperation with regional organisations and arrangements, as set out in the Charter, whether with AMISOM in its fight against Al Shabaab in Somalia, ECOWAS in its resolution of conflict, or the G5 Sahel Joint Force to combat terrorism in West Africa.

Mr President,

Our predecessors drafted the United Nations Charter in the name of the peoples of the world to help save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. In some places, we are succeeding. Elsewhere, we are falling woefully short. Let us all reflect on what more we can do to live up to the Charter's – our Charter's – ideals.

Thank you Mr President.

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