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SPEAKERS STRESS CRUCIAL NEED TO REBUILD POST-CONFLICT TRUST AS SECURITY COUNCIL DISCUSSES LESSONS OF WAR, QUEST FOR PERMANENT PEACE

Bypassing 'Zero-Sum Thinking' to Accept Shared National Narratives Critical to Reconciliation, Says Under-Secretary-General

With divergent historical narratives often pitting communities against each other, igniting conflict both among and within States, the international community had a responsibility to help create conditions that would enable national actors to rebuild the trust and respect required to ensure permanent peace, the senior United Nations political affairs official told the Security Council today.

Opening a day-long open debate on "War, its lessons and the search for a permanent peace", Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said distortions of history and identity could contribute to both inter-State and intra-State conflict. Helping groups within States to move beyond such "zero-sum" thinking to accepting a shared national narrative was especially hard, he emphasized. "Leaders need to set the example, not just in ceasing wartime rhetoric and ending the intentional promotion of grievances, but also by deeds of genuine cooperation and honest examinations of their own roles in conflict."

He went on to stress that ways must be found after conflict to break the cycle of divided communities, when hatred and the sense of victimhood was most pronounced. As history had shown, ending hostilities without reconciliation — especially within States — often led to resumed fighting. An end to the conflicts in the Central African Republic, Syria and South Sudan risked collapse in the absence of "strenuous" reconciliation efforts and an honest examination of each community's role.

As the United Nations reviewed its approach to enabling permanent peace, he said, peace agreements should provide agreed overall principles and mechanisms for pursuing reconciliation. The timing of elections and constitutional review processes must be carefully considered so as to prevent opportunistic leaders from carrying out premature electoral processes in order to win office. To those who questioned whether the United Nations should promote national reconciliation, he said: "I would hope that the example of the Syrian catastrophe demonstrates how unresolved internal conflicts can pose grave risks to international peace and security."

Jordan's representative, the Council President, said that divergent memories, having been passed down in communities, often lay in wait, ready to be stirred into violent effect. For that reason, fragile peace processes remained on the Council's agenda, he said, noting that the Council often spoke of the need for "dialogue and reconciliation" without knowing what that meant. He suggested that the Council mandate the creation of a historical advisory service to help countries preserve official memory. The United Nations should also have a legal advisory service to help Governments resolve the many divergent narratives between and within States, he added.

In the ensuing debate, 55 speakers discussed those suggestions, sharing examples of meaningful reconciliation and offering ways in which their respective national or regional practices could be applied in other post-conflict situations. The Head of the European Union Delegation said the bloc's experience had shown that reconciliation was possible, "even between those who saw each other as 'hereditary enemies' for countless generations". The first precondition in ensuring better historical understanding was maintaining educational activities during conflict, or re-establishing them as soon as the fighting ended.

Other speakers noted that no two conflicts were alike, and that the requirements for reconciliation would differ according to political, social, economic and cultural factors. Many aired their views on how — and whether — the Council could help secure peace that was both irreversible and reinforced by a shared understanding of

the prior conflict. Emphasizing the importance of preventive diplomacy, they called upon the Council to increase its interaction with the Peacebuilding Commission, saying the latter's advisory role should be strengthened.

Several delegates supported the idea of creating a United Nations historical advisory team, with some, including Malaysia's representative, cautioning that the involvement of such a group should be requested by the prospective host country, since nation-building could not be imposed. India's delegate added that, while sensitive, the issue was still important and the General Assembly's Sixth Committee (Legal) might be the best place to start formulating a way forward in that regard.

Still other speakers said the Council was not the appropriate place to discuss reconciliation. The matter should be taken up in the 193-member General Assembly, where it could be examined more holistically.

Also speaking today were representatives of Luxembourg, Australia, China, Lithuania, United States, United Kingdom, Chile, France, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Chad, Nigeria, Argentina, Rwanda, New Zealand, Brazil, Guatemala, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Spain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cuba, Iran, Namibia, Viet Nam, Azerbaijan, Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands, Slovakia, Kenya, Georgia, Japan, Poland, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Liechtenstein, Sao Tome and Principe, Venezuela, Slovenia, Montenegro, Romania, Ireland, Serbia, Bangladesh, Canada, Armenia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkey, Norway and Pakistan.

Taking the floor a second time were representatives of the Russian Federation, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Georgia, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, China, Armenia and Turkey.

The meeting began at 10:05 a.m. and ended at 6:20 p.m.

Background

The Security Council met this morning to hold an open debate on "War, its lessons and the search for a permanent peace". Delegates had before them a 14 January letter from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the Secretary-General (document [S/2014/30](#)), stating that the debate aimed to enable the Council to draw lessons from the understanding of war and about the requirements of a permanent peace.

Briefing

JEFFREY FELTMAN, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, noted that in recent years the United Nations had been called upon to help end conflicts within States. "Even as conflicts between States lessen in number, conflicts inside States too often recur." Distortions of history and identity could contribute to both types of conflict, he said, emphasizing that wartime rhetoric cultivated divisions. Helping groups within States to move beyond such "zero-sum" thinking to accepting a shared national narrative was especially hard. While the United Nations had a long history of helping to establish the means for resolving territorial disputes, reconciling competing visions of history and identity was a far less developed science. Past crises had shown that immediate imperatives tended to be so overpowering that longer-term aspects often received less attention. While there were "time tested" formulas for separating armies or tending to the needy, the United Nations had reflected less on its ability to repair trust and foster genuine reconciliation, he said, defining reconciliation as accounting for and sharing views about the past, including the pre-conflict past, in order to restore mutual respect and trust between groups and among individuals.

The international community had a responsibility to help create conditions that would enable national actors to live up to their duty to rebuild trust, he continued, declaring: "Leaders need to set the example, not just in ceasing wartime rhetoric and ending the intentional promotion of grievances, but also by deeds of genuine cooperation and honest examinations of their own roles in conflict." They must also show that power-sharing did not mean "the winner takes it all", but rather, that there was room for engaging all parts of society. Noting that youth brought up in the aftermath of war tended to be more extreme than their parents, he said they were often deprived of the chance to meet "the other". Ways must be found, post-conflict, to break the cycle of divided communities, when hatred and the sense of victimhood was most pronounced, he stressed. More broadly, it was critically important to start early with the development of history curricula that shared the different interpretations of recent events.

As for how the United Nations approach to crisis management could help enable social healing, he said that while there was an urgent need for a physical end to war in the Central African Republic, Syria and South Sudan, it would not produce lasting peace. As had been seen repeatedly, an end to hostilities without reconciliation, especially within States, often led to resumed fighting. In all three countries, any cessation remained at risk of collapse without "strenuous" efforts towards reconciliation, he said, calling for an honest examination by each community of its own role in the conflict. For example, while Iraq had made progress, its communities had sharply differing historical and political narratives that had inhibited the achievement of common goals, including the struggle against terrorism. The conflict in Syria had complicated Iraqi reconciliation, given the

regional crisis between Sunni and Shia, he said. “We should not neglect lending support to genuine reconciliation efforts, lest fighting resume from unaddressed grievances” and zero-sum narratives, he said.

He went on to say that beyond the physical manifestations of United Nations efforts to end conflict — the deployment of peacekeepers, for example — the Organization had become more involved in the non-physical aspects of peacebuilding. While seeking truth and accountability for the past was essential, they did not by themselves constitute a plan for healing a broken State, he cautioned. Four areas deserved attention: peace agreements should provide agreed overall principles and mechanisms for the pursuit of reconciliation; the timing of elections and constitutional review processes must be carefully considered, since premature elections could allow opportunistic leaders to cultivate grievances in order to win office; reconciliation must come from within, although States, the United Nations and regional organizations could facilitate national processes sooner rather than later; and a repository of comparative reconciliation experiences could be placed at the disposal of States, United Nations special envoys and others. To those who questioning whether the United Nations should promote national reconciliation, he said: “I would hope that the example of the Syrian catastrophe demonstrates how unresolved internal conflicts can pose grave risks to international peace and security.”

Statements

ZEID RA'AD ZEID AL-HUSSEIN ([Jordan](#)), Council President, said that unless settled by genuine agreement built upon soul-searching, divergent memories could often lay in wait, passed down in communities from parents to children, ready to be stirred up to violent effect. For that reason, fragile peace processes remained on the agenda of the Council, which often spoke of the need for “dialogue and reconciliation” without knowing what that meant. “And this, too, is dangerous,” he cautioned, emphasizing that in order to end a conflict permanently, the Council must grapple with the psychological components of war. The Council’s unwillingness to recognize the necessity of revealed truth to conflict resolution was seen in its “hesitating” treatment of the International Criminal Court, which was the best hope for establishing court-based records.

Only when the truth was recovered, or a good approximation revealed, could permanent peace be obtained, he continued. Once established, truth required acceptance by all sides and a public reckoning accompanied by individual actions. Only those actions could create a real foundation for a shared narrative, and eventually, genuine reconciliation and a permanent peace, he stressed. For its part, the Council could mandate the creation of a historical advisory service to help countries preserve what would one day be their official memory, the reference point from which the truth could emerge. In addition, the United Nations should have a legal advisory service to help States not simply set up commissions, but also resolve the many divergent narratives between and within States.

SYLVIE LUCAS ([Luxembourg](#)) said that the end of violence and conflict did not mean the erasure of pain and suffering from people’s memories. Instead, experiences during the conflict must be part of the reconstruction process. European reconciliation was one of the best examples coming out of two world wars, she said, voicing support for the suggestion that once a conflict ended, the Security Council could participate in helping those affected to recover and protect necessary historical documents. The Central African Republic was a case in point, she said. Historical documentation was needed because fighting impunity was an integral part of transitional justice and essential to the consolidation of peace. It was equally important that the voiceless have a say, including vulnerable groups such as women, children and minorities.

GARY QUINLAN ([Australia](#)) said accountability processes could play an important role in uncovering the truth. There must be accountability for perpetrators of serious crimes, regardless of affiliation, he added, emphasizing that “victors’ justice” was short-lived and ultimately destructive. One of the formative achievements of the United Nations had been the spread of universal rights as an accepted norm, he noted. The Council must continue to emphasize that. It should also make full use of the useful tools at its disposal, such as commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, he added, welcoming a recent Council decision to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate violations of international law and human rights in the Central African Republic. Regional organizations could also play a key role, he said, citing the African Union’s decision to establish a Commission of Inquiry into events in South Sudan as well as a joint initiative of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Nations to document lessons learned through ASEAN’s roles in providing good offices, mediation and facilitation.

LIU JIEYI ([China](#)), highlighting several key elements of building lasting peace, emphasized the need to change the traditional concept of security to a new one based on cooperation. It was important to resolve conflicts through peaceful means, and multilateralism could play a crucial role, with the Security Council at its core. In today’s intertwined world, dialogue was the only effective way to forge lasting peace, he said, stressing that the Council’s authority in maintaining international peace and security should be further enhanced rather than reduced. Lasting peace also required a new concept of development, he said, pointing out that countries could not be separated in the age of globalization. They should accommodate each other’s interests and eliminate breeding grounds for conflict. Warning that attempts to change history and reverse verdicts against aggression would destabilize regional security, he said that the visit by the Prime Minister of Japan to the

Yasukuni Shrine, a symbol of that country's military aggression, was a direct challenge to humankind's victory over fascism and to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

RAIMONDA MURMOKAITĖ ([Lithuania](#)) said that humanitarian law had developed from the experiences of the Second World War and continued to evolve with provisions covering attacks against civilians, human security and impunity for crimes against humanity. Inquiries and fact-finding missions as well as truth and reconciliation commissions were instrumental in the healing process. To have an impact, however, truth alone was not enough, she emphasized. It must be supported by political will and anchored in a legal and institutional framework of respect for human rights. Given the dearth of examples, conflict-prevention efforts should be enhanced, she said, citing one outstanding case of post-Second World War Franco-German reconciliation in the form of the European Coal and Steel Community, which had resulted in the European Union. Regional organizations were well placed to develop preventive capacities and offered a promising alternative for the future, she added.

SAMANTHA POWER ([United States](#)) recalled that, as a journalist in Bosnia 20 years ago, she had seen examples of how violence was fuelled. Citing Burma, she warned that there were now countless examples of old grievances boiling over into deadly results, and they must be dealt with to save lives, otherwise, a cycle of violence would take root. There were examples of disagreements on every continent, and differences of perspectives came into play when contemplating religion, colonialism and other issues. Noting that diplomatic phrases such as "inter-communal violence" showed a hesitation to place blame, she encouraged the development and preservation of historical records and the creation of national archives, with assistance from the United Nations when necessary. The Organization's missions should aim to find root causes, she said. The United States supported international efforts to record the conflicts in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Syria because they helped to establish facts.

MARK LYALL GRANT ([United Kingdom](#)) stressed the importance of understanding history in addressing contemporary challenges, formulating better policy responses and avoiding the repetition of mistakes. Noting that all countries took pride in their national histories and sacrifices, he emphasized the need to view history objectively and honestly. Only a shared understanding of history would heal the wounds of conflict and move States towards reconciliation. Recalling that Prime Minister David Cameron had apologized in 2010 for the events of "Bloody Sunday" in Northern Ireland, he said the lessons of the past had led to the establishment of the multilateral organization that was today the United Nations. Although it had made incalculable contributions, it must also reflect on its failure to prevent genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica, he said. In that regard, the United Kingdom welcomed the Organization's new Rights Up Front initiative to embed human rights protection in its policy. Stressing the vital responsibility of diplomats in creating peace, he recalled that in the run-up to the First World War 100 years ago "generals stepped up and diplomats stepped back".

OCTAVIO ERRÁZURIZ ([Chile](#)) emphasized that the role of the United Nations was not to manage crises, but to prevent them. Protecting civilians called for active preventive diplomacy, and the Security Council should use all the tools at its disposal. However, conflict prevention was also a crucial responsibility of Member States, he noted. Strengthening the rule of law, instituting the means for the peaceful settlement of disputes and establishing democratic institutions would make suitable conditions for development and social justice. Regional organizations could play an important role thanks to their proximity and wisdom in dealing with sensitive issues, he said, stressing that it was vital for the United Nations to establish effective partnerships with regional and subregional actors. Reconciliation was a long process, he said, recalling that democracy had collapsed in his country 40 years ago and that the peace process had been restored 20 years ago. "Democracy and peace are fragile values which should never be taken for granted," he emphasized, proposing the institution of early-warning mechanisms, the strengthening of peaceful settlement and human rights protection mechanisms, and the bolstering of subsidiary Council bodies such as the Peacebuilding Commission which helped post-conflict States, among other measures.

GÉRARD ARAUD ([France](#)) said that after the millions of deaths and the incalculable destruction that had ravaged Europe over the course of two world wars, his country and Germany had taken many steps towards reconciliation and were now partners, sharing the past and the future. After generations of war, a new generation had triumphed, he said, citing France and Germany as proof of that. Other countries, including the Russian Federation and Poland, had taken similar paths, transforming from enemies into allies. Historians were needed to tell the stories of war, he said. History was indispensable and while States should not meddle with it, it was not forbidden to demand respect for the feelings of "the other". Franco-German reconciliation was a unique event that could serve as a model for settling other differences, he said.

OH JOON ([Republic of Korea](#)) said genuine recognition of and remorse for past wrongdoing was the first step towards preventing a recurrence of war and securing durable peace. Unfortunately, tensions were escalating more than ever due to the distrust among the States of North-East Asia, mainly because the leadership of Japan had a distorted view of what had happened under imperialism. In Europe after the Second World War, Germany's steadfast efforts to come to terms with its past had served as the basis for genuine reconciliation with other countries, paving the way to European integration, he recalled. Japan, however, had not been able properly to address or break away from its military past. Many Japanese leaders had continually

shown an attitude of historical revisionism by paying tribute at Yasukuni, where Second World War criminals were enshrined. Japan had yet to take governmental responsibility in addressing the “comfort women” issue, he said.

VITALY CHURKIN (Russian Federation) said that speculation that there was no need to fight signs of Nazism because healthy societies would reject such ideas disregarded today’s alarming reality. Questioning why *Mein Kampf* remained an Internet best-seller, why neo-Nazi and far-right parties were growing stronger, and why a former Waffen SS legionnaire had been buried with State honours, he said all those questions required honest answers. The Council must act in the interests of the entire international community, not only those of its individual members, who might be guided by their own geopolitical, economic or ideological motives. When crises broke out, it was imperative to facilitate constructive dialogue among the parties concerned, he said, adding that permanent peace would remain a dream unless the habit of “sabre-rattling” was overcome and a strong consensus hammered out.

MAHAMAT ZENE CHERIF (Chad) said that some conflicts could be predicted and the international community must devote itself to preventive diplomacy. In countries where ethnic quarrels had emerged and which lacked basic resources, there was a risk of conflict. However, Côte d’Ivoire had been considered one of the most stable countries, yet war had prevailed there. Religious differences had emerged in the Central African Republic, to the surprise of all. What was taking place in Syria and other places in the Middle East did not give cause for optimism, he said, urging justice for perpetrators of serious violations and reconciliation for all others.

KAYODE LARO (Nigeria) said it was important to reflect on why past approaches had been successful in the search for lasting peace. To its credit, the United Nations had made key contributions in resolving conflicts by providing troops over the past six decades, a period in which the Security Council had played a pivotal role to that end. Describing war as a “human folly”, he emphasized the importance of upholding the United Nations Charter and accepting the peaceful settlement of disputes. “Any threats to international peace and security should not remain unchallenged,” he declared, saying that the current foreign policies of Member States were not designed to create lasting peace, but based on narrow national interests.

MARÍA CRISTINA PERCEVAL (Argentina), citing the gap between words and reality, emphasized the need to put the principles of the United Nations Charter into practice. The current era was dominated by internal conflict, such as the one in Syria, and existing weapons of mass destruction could destroy the world many times over. The present era had also seen a proliferation of violence, including against women and children. New threats and new forms of violence had also emerged, such as terrorism by non-State actors. Calling for the establishment of regional early-warning mechanisms, she urged Latin American and Caribbean States to strengthen the rule of law in addressing the challenges facing them. It was also important for the region to eliminate the legacy of twentieth-century imperialism, she added. Pending issues should be resolved through dialogue, she said, emphasizing that the actions of the Security Council and other United Nations bodies were necessary to establish true multilateralism.

EUGÈNE-RICHARD GASANA (Rwanda) said that the 1994 genocide in his country had been preventable, yet the Council had refused to heed the call of its citizens and those of troop-contributing countries. Recalling that more than 1 million people had been killed in 100 days, he asked whether the global community had learned anything that would motivate it to play a more vigorous role in the future. The situations in Libya, Syria and the Central African Republic were reminders that much more work was needed, he said, noting that the role of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of Congo was an example of its failure to achieve peace. Rwanda had carried out processes to match its needs with national realities, he said, noting that the country’s *Gacaca* courts had closed in 2012, having handled 2 million cases in 10 years. The archives at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda should be transferred to Rwanda, he said, emphasizing that they were integral to national history, to the memory of genocide and to the prevention of future genocide and revisionism.

PHILLIP TAULA (New Zealand) said that the Council too often had to respond to an immediate crisis with few opportunities to step back and view the wider picture. Even rarer was the chance to consider the historical factors shaping today’s security environment. “We all know that those who ignore history tend to repeat it,” he said. Had Council members reflected on Rwanda’s history in 1993, for example, they might have been better prepared to avert the crisis and the tragic collective failure to respond. More recently, the delayed action in Mali could have better informed Council action on the Central African Republic. Describing past conflict as an all-too-common indicator of future strife, he said the Council had developed many tools for Chapter VII action, but it was much less well adapted for peaceful action under Chapter VI of the Charter. The Council should also employ more flexible working methods to make it more nimble in handling conflict risk and more inclusive in terms of participation in decisions. Time should be taken to enable Council members and affected parties, or those with influence, to assess emerging threats and consider early responses. Addressing historical roots of conflict was critical in devising solutions, a key element of which was national reconciliation, he said, pointing out that while the Council had repeatedly affirmed the need for a broad strategy that would include national reconciliation, that aspect was all too often missing from mandates.

ANTONIO DE AGUIAR PATRIOTA ([Brazil](#)) said the multilateral collective security system still represented the best hope for putting the lessons of the past at the service of a future of sustainable peace, despite the Security Council's past failure to prevent genocide in Rwanda, the massacre in Srebrenica, the use of force in Iraq without its authorization and its decades-long inability effectively to address the challenge of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. In a multipolar world where geopolitical influence was undergoing rapid reconfiguration, the call for Security Council reform must be addressed with a sense of urgency, she said, pointing out that if the Council had been better able to anticipate potential threats to peace and security, several wars would have been avoided.

GERT ROSENTHAL ([Guatemala](#)) said that despite its "serious flaws", the Council had been relatively successful over the past two decades, particularly in containing and managing conflicts, with Syria topping the few exceptions. Cumulative lessons learned underpinned the Council's success, he said, pointing to major innovations in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Greater effort had also been made to address the root causes of conflict. Having experienced protracted internal conflict, Guatemala believed in the need for a culture of tolerance and reconciliation, but in an imperfect world, and while conflict prevention should also be emphasized, there were cases when despite "our best efforts, we fail", he said. The growing number of sectarian and tribal conflicts, including those in intra-State scenarios, required an assessment of the Council's toolbox. There were no "blue books" for maintaining peace, and the Council must tailor its mandates to the uniqueness of each situation, he said. The international community played a critical role, but domestic actors were the final masters of their own destiny. Given the worsening situations, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, a judicious mix of policies could prevent conflicts and reverse trends.

RON PROSOR ([Israel](#)) said that war began when the seeds of hatred were sown in the hearts of ordinary people. From Cambodia to Bosnia to Somalia, the international community had failed to prevent the killing of innocent people. "Each of us has a role to play in the struggle for human rights and human dignity." Noting that people were being taught to hate Israelis and Jews in schools, mosques and media across the Middle East, he said that a generation of Palestinians was being taught that murder was moral. It was the responsibility of Governments to educate their citizens on the need for tolerance, justice and mutual respect, he said, adding that the world had a responsibility to speak out against hatred and to equip the next generation with words, rather than weapons. War could be prevented by standing together to denounce indifference.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING, Head of the [European Union](#) Delegation, recalled that both world wars had started in Europe and the region had travelled far towards integration. "European experience has demonstrated that reconciliation is possible, even between those who saw each other as 'hereditary enemies' for countless generations." However, reconciliation could not be decreed, he emphasized, noting that reconciliation among nations required leadership and must grow over time. One of the most practical ways to promote reconciliation was probably to focus on common "concrete achievements". Some remarkable work had been done in the field of shared historical understanding, including on the elaboration of common educational material for schools and primarily at a bilateral level between individual European Union member States, he noted.

He said that the first precondition for ensuring better historical understanding among people in post-conflict situations, especially young ones, was to maintain educational activities during conflict, or at least to re-establish them as soon as the fighting ended. Durable reconciliation could not be achieved without individual criminal accountability for those responsible for the most serious crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and major war crimes. The Security Council's continued support for the International Criminal Court was particularly important. Regional integration could make a major contribution to peace and lasting reconciliation beyond the present borders of the European Union, he said, offering the perspective of membership to all the countries of the Western Balkans. European integration would provide them with the best chance to overcome the legacy of history and forge a brighter future under a "common roof", he added.

ABDALLAH YAHYA A. AL-MOUALLIMI ([Saudi Arabia](#)) said preventive diplomacy was an important development in the maintenance of international peace and security. Saudi Arabia had sought to resolve regional and international conflicts by gathering parties together, including through the Arab Peace Initiative. The non-recognition of the State of Palestine, within the pre-June 1967 borders, or questioning Palestinian refugees' right of return only undermined the justice and equity on which a final settlement would revolve. He said a just settlement in Syria should mean the departure of those whose "hands are drenched in blood" and the institution of war crimes charges against them. They should have no role in formulating the future. He expressed support for the idea of creating a United Nations advisory team that would help States create and restore historical archives.

HANS PETER WITTIG ([Germany](#)) said the collapse of the balance of power in Europe 100 years ago had been a diplomatic failure, and even as diplomacy had evolved, it had lacked the means to prevent war. Recalling that 2014 marked the fall of the "Iron Curtain" 25 years ago, he said two lessons had been drawn from the first half of the twentieth century. First, the world had worked to create an international order based on common rules and shared values. In addition, Europeans had replaced their equilibrium with a new legal order, and today, the European Union was a bloc of interlinking politics and values. "Today war has become unthinkable

in the European Union,” he said. Cautioning that questions about the past could mean opening wounds about the present, he said that working on “the why and how” could catalyse reconciliation, an honourable cause for the United Nations. However, conflicts left deep scars, especially those stemming from ethnic causes, and there were limits to what third parties could achieve.

ROMÁN OYARZUN MARCHESI ([Spain](#)) said his country could be considered an “authority”, having engaged in defensive wars, as well as wars of religion, intervention and national survival, dynastic and civil and ideological wars, in addition to having suffered the lash of terrorism. War had become “radically perverse”, having gained the cruel appearance of the Black Paintings of Goya or Picasso’s mural depicted on the tapestry hanging outside the Security Council Chamber. Humanity must be able to banish war forever, he emphasized, recalling that 100 years since the First World War, it still “shakes up our conscience because of its destructive effects as well as by the sensation that it could have been prevented, or at least mitigated”. Following the Second World War, Europe had mustered the courage and vision to lay the groundwork for economic and political union, thereby substituting cooperation for armed conflict, and negotiation and compromise for brute force. The international community could not remain insensitive to the long list of conflicts and horrific atrocities, he said, adding that the responsibility to act rested upon all, particularly the United Nations.

MIRSADA ČOLAKOVIĆ ([Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)) said national authorities bore the main responsibility for identifying peacebuilding priorities and strategies. Strengthening institutions and governance was essential to avoiding a relapse into conflict, and the handover of that responsibility from the international community to domestic actors and institutions was a “very delicate and extremely important” task. Also of critical importance was coordinated, rapid action to support the efforts of post-conflict Governments to build credible and accountable institutions and deliver peace dividends. “The search for optimal solutions that achieve synergy in this multifaceted endeavour never ends,” she declared. Given the deep divisions and different interpretations of the past in most post-conflict societies, national reconciliation and trust were prerequisite building blocks. Crimes must be investigated and perpetrators punished, she said, adding that the rule of law, human rights, sustainable returns and local integration of refugees and internally displaced persons were additional priorities. Twenty years after the end of conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reconciliation continued, she said, outlining steps that the Government had taken in the areas of education and culture to serve as a springboard for more deeply-rooted dialogue and reconciliation.

OSCAR LEÓN GONZÁLEZ ([Cuba](#)) urged the elimination of causes conspiring against peace, including aggression, the seizure of natural resources and colonialist and neocolonialist strategies. There was an urgent need to reform the Security Council into an effective forum for the maintenance of international peace and security, he emphasized, adding that it should promote peaceful solutions, resist the use of war as a resource, and never stir up armed confrontations. Expressing concern that the Council was reinterpreting its mandate and involving itself in functions outside its purview, he reiterated the General Assembly’s key role, stressing that international peace and security would remain at risk as long as nuclear weapons existed.

MOHAMMAD KHAZAAE ([Iran](#)) called for a general approach to learning the lessons of war and reviewing how the Council fulfilled its primary responsibility in maintaining international peace and security. While States had the primary duty to address such issues, regional and international organizations could contribute in such areas as poverty eradication, the promotion of human rights and cultural diversity, which would lay a strong basis for peace within and among nations. Noting that Iran had presented the General Assembly resolution on a world against violence and extremism, he said that body had an important role to play in furthering peace. The Security Council had failed to rise to the expectations of Member States, having failed in many cases to act promptly and effectively, he said, adding that political considerations had paralysed the Council and widened wars as a result.

ASOKE KUMAR MUKERJI ([India](#)) said the Council must remain focused on international conflicts. As the largest troop-contributing country, India’s experience showed that robust cooperation among concerned States was the most sustainable method of addressing inter-State conflict. On forging reconciliation among ex-combatants, he described the European Union’s evolution as a case of ex-combatant Governments coming together to create a new political reality. There were similar examples in other parts of the world. He cautioned against any proposal that the United Nations re-examine historical narratives, saying that peace would only be sustainable with the adoption of a holistic, equitable approach to inter-State relations, in which sustainable development would play a crucial role. Finally, the issue of a United Nations historical advisory team was a sensitive question, perhaps best taken up by the General Assembly’s Sixth Committee (Legal).

HUSSEIN HANIFF ([Malaysia](#)) said his country had actively facilitated peace talks within the framework of ASEAN, including the recently signed agreement between the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Malaysia had also hosted the first Asian peace and reconciliation meeting last November. Emphasizing the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, development or other issues, he said that a shared narrative could undermine the reasons for conflict. On the idea of a historic advisory team, he said its involvement should depend on requests from would-be host countries since nation-building programmes could not be imposed. There was a need for caution in defining the international community’s role in

that regard. The Council had benefited from its interaction with the Peacebuilding Commission, a body that could play an enhanced role in shared narrative efforts.

PENDAPALA ANDREAS NAANDA ([Namibia](#)), noting that his country participated in various peacekeeping missions, said the role of the United Nations in post-conflict reconciliation required more attention, and the Peacebuilding Commission could “go a long way” in addressing related challenges. A one-size-fits-all approach to reconciliation was counterproductive, since what worked in one situation might not apply to another given national and sometimes regional dynamics. Underlining the importance of women’s role in conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding, he expressed full support for their inclusion in armed forces, police and peacekeeping operations. He urged the United Nations to adopt, as had the African Union, a definition of unconstitutional change of Government that would include the manipulation of electoral laws.

LE HOAI TRUNG ([Viet Nam](#)) noted that conflicts between and within States still wrought havoc on millions of lives. It was therefore critical to reflect on what had produced such tragic outcomes in some places and prevented them in others. History had shown too often that wars stemmed from obsolete doctrines of power politics, but today, the United Nations had more and better means to prevent conflict. “We must build, strengthen and make the best use of the institutions of peace” and help post-conflict nations to reconcile their differences, he emphasized. The Council should promote themes and measures for the consolidation of peace and the prevention of war, seeking peaceful solutions to ongoing international conflicts, he said, voicing support for collective efforts to establish and strengthen international peace and security mechanisms.

TOFIG MUSAYEV ([Azerbaijan](#)) said more should be done to address the major threats affecting the international legal order and undermining the sovereignty, territorial integrity and stability of States. The fact that illegal situations persisted because of political circumstances did not mean they were legal. Underlining the role of the rule of law in preventing and resolving conflict, he said there was also a need to hold violators of international humanitarian and human rights law to account. The imperative of establishing and documenting truth, shedding light on “real facts” and combating impunity was undeniable, and called for efforts free from selectivity and politically motivated approaches, he said, emphasizing that conflict-settlement frameworks could not be applied for consolidating a priori illegal solutions.

PAUL SEGER ([Switzerland](#)) said the tragic legacy of violent conflict and atrocities not only resulted in immeasurable loss of human life and property, but also in violations of the “conscience of mankind”. Failure to address that legacy could dramatically affect future generations, he warned. It was a moral imperative to fight impunity, develop strategies for transitional justice and deal with the past. The international community had made considerable progress in developing norms for ensuring the rights of victims to truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence, the combination of which contributed to a higher degree of accountability for perpetrators while addressing the needs of victims. Emphasizing that peace could not be sustainable without addressing past grievances, he said that in Syria and elsewhere, combating impunity was of key importance, adding that, in order to prevent further atrocities, a culture of accountability and responsibility must be restored. Switzerland therefore strongly supported the deployment of fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry investigation. Upon its initiative, nearly 60 Member States had formally petitioned the Council in 2013 to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Switzerland had also launched a project several years ago to preserve relevant archives, and taken specific initiatives to disseminate good practices for fact-finding and investigative bodies.

INIGO LAMBERTINI ([Italy](#)) recalled that his Permanent Mission had hosted a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day commemoration at Headquarters. During that event, dedicated to the threat of growing inequalities, Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz had warned against the perils of economic inequality. The widening gap between those with too much and those with too little was a source of global destabilization and must be taken into account when seeking a new international development framework. Italy supported the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Security Council reform, in accordance with the principles of inclusiveness, representation and accountability, he said. Reform must increase the Council’s flexibility and its interaction with the wider United Nations membership, which should perceive it as a reliable club rather than an exclusive one.

KAREL JAN GUSTAAF VAN OOSTEROM ([Netherlands](#)) said peace and security were closely linked to justice and human rights. The peaceful settlement of disputes was crucial, and many methods had been developed for that purpose, including the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Early warning of impending conflict was also crucial, and when conflicts did occur, the United Nations must ensure accurate on-the-ground reporting, which was crucial to establishing the facts. Argentina, Belgium, Slovenia, Italy and other countries were advocating negotiations with all Member States on a multilateral treaty that would fill gaps in the international legal framework for extradition, as well as mutual legal assistance for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The tools for lasting peace existed, but the burden was on the world to use them effectively, he said.

FRANTIŠEK RUŽIČKA ([Slovakia](#)) said that several estimates suggested that there had been only 250 years of peace in more than 3,400 years of documented human history, and the twentieth century marked the most bloody period with 187 million deaths. Reconciliation was a sign of strength, not weakness, he emphasized,

pointing to Franco-German reconciliation. Regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations were the cornerstone of stability and sustainable progress. When people enjoyed basic rights and freedoms as well as economic opportunities, they would be more reluctant to start a conflict that would deprive them of those freedoms. To build a future of peace in post-conflict regions, a comprehensive approach was needed. “We must learn from the past,” he said. “We must understand the roots of conflicts and we must be strong enough to overcome differences.”

MACHARIA KAMAU (Kenya) said that 70 years after the creation of the United Nations, a large percentage of its budget was spent on peacekeeping. Since the dark eras of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and the world wars, conflict had become a permanent spectre in human history. It occurred due to structural inequalities and social divisions. While diplomats, civil actors and politicians grappled with conflict mediation, resolution and peacebuilding, scholars were studying the causes and prevention of war, he noted. Today’s transnational security and military threats were connected and must be addressed jointly at the global level. The starting point must be reform of international institutions entrusted with ensuring peace and security, as well as those created to promote equitable economic, social and environmental balance, while fighting poverty and inequality, he said.

GIORGI KVELASHVILI (Georgia) said that since January 2013, occupation forces had begun the large-scale installation of barbed wire and fences along the occupation line in his country’s Tskhinvali region, bringing the total length of the line to more than 50 kilometres, and growing. Ahead of next week’s Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, the Russian Federation had expanded into a so-called security zone 11 kilometres deeper into Georgian territory in violation of international law and the August 2008 ceasefire agreement, he said. Moreover, it continued to promote the so-called independent State of Abkhazia, granting 500 accreditations to so-called Abkhazian vehicles and implying that the region was independent. Among the lessons learned from Georgia’s experience was that impartiality on the part of peacekeepers was the key to resolving conflicts. In Georgia’s case, the State that had served as peacekeeper for 15 years not only had a vested interest in maintaining the conflict, it was also a party to it, which had led eventually to the departure of the United Nations.

He recalled that in 2009, a dangerous precedent had been set with the termination of the 15-year-long United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) through a veto wielded by just one Council member despite the plea of the host nation, Georgia, and the international community, for the extension of its mandate. Years later, with no one allowed to monitor human rights violations in Georgia, there was an even greater need for a wider discussion on the appropriateness of using the right of veto in conflict areas. It had taken a decade and a full-scale war to establish a truly international negotiating forum as an honest broker, and today, Georgia and the Russian Federation were participating in the Geneva International Discussions, mediated by the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union. The war could have been avoided had such a mechanism existed earlier, he noted, adding that maintaining the negotiations was vital to the creation of an environment conducive to long-term conflict settlement.

KAZUYOSHI UMEMOTO (Japan) said it was not practical to discuss reconciliation in the abstract because each case was different. The Security Council may not be the best place to discuss reconciliation, he suggested, adding that such a dialogue should engage the whole United Nations membership. Japan continued on its path as a peace-loving nation, but it had caused suffering, particularly in Asia, and was squarely facing the past, expressing deep remorse and offering sincere apologies. It would never change its course as a peace-loving nation. As for the issues raised by China and the Republic of Korea, recently as well as today, he clarified that Yasukuni enshrined 2.5 million souls, and they were not only Second World War criminals, but also those who had sacrificed their lives in domestic turmoil. The Prime Minister had visited the shrine to renew Japan’s pledge never to wage war again, not to pay homage to the war criminals, he emphasized. Japan had also expressed remorse over the question of “comfort women”, an issue that should not be politicized. The Government had revised elementary study guidelines because it was only natural to teach children the national territories. Japan had taken concrete actions by assisting reconciliation efforts in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, and pledging an additional \$120 million at the Geneva II Conference to improve the situation in Syria, among other measures. Prime Minister Abe wished to have direct dialogue with the leaders of China and the Republic of Korea on the basis of respect, he stressed.

RYSZARD STANISŁAW SARKOWICZ (Poland) said that war, regardless of the reason for it, brought death, suffering, fear and doubt about the ability to actually “get rid of evil”. During the last century, Poland had suffered two world wars and two totalitarian regimes — a Nazi one and a communist one. The results of the Second World War were “tragic and bitter”, with millions of lives lost, recession and the deprivation of human rights and civil liberties. He said it had taken his country almost half a century to become free and democratic, and with that had come reconciliation with some neighbours. Through small steps and intensive dialogue, Poland and Germany had managed to build trust and security, and the former was now engaged in a “historical” dialogue with the Russian Federation. Despite hard lessons, Poland had never lost its European identity, and at the same time, it knew that democratic values could neither be imported nor imposed; only national ownership could ignite change. He wondered how Africa and the Middle East would look in the coming decades if current conflicts continued, and what future generations would think. “We should turn our words into action and find courage to say no to war,” he said.

RI TONG IL (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said there had been no major breakthroughs towards peace, and instead, the world was facing an era of challenges, including large-scale military exercises, interference and regime change. Respect for the sovereignty of States was a principle of the United Nations Charter and must be upheld. Insisting that the United Nations address crimes against humanity committed during the Second World War, he said atrocities against his country's people included those perpetrated by Japan, among whose most serious crimes were the sexual enslavement of 200,000 women and the massacre of 1 million other Koreans, he said, adding that his country would never forget.

CHRISTIAN WENAWESER (Liechtenstein) highlighted the difficulty of engaging in a common narrative on the outbreak of the First World War, pointing out that after an entire century and enormous resources and brainpower dedicated to the subject, a common narrative was still lacking. Peace agreements should always contain mechanisms allowing for the reconciliation efforts among the parties to a conflict, he said, adding that they should be part and parcel of any peacebuilding effort. Only a historic narrative agreed by those formerly on opposing sides of a conflict could serve the purpose of reconciliation, thereby creating and ensuring a permanent peace. Competing historical narratives could have quite the opposite effect, with considerable potential to reignite conflict. One element of establishing such a joint narrative was ensuring individual criminal responsibility in conflict situations where the most serious crimes under international law had been committed.

ANGELO ANTONIO TORIELLO (Sao Tome and Principe) said it was imperative to find practical solutions to war, which was killing multiple thousands of people in the name of diplomacy. Peace started with the individual, yet human nature was prone to employing violent, aggressive actions over peaceful solutions. Unless world leaders opted for a more holistic vision of life, conflicts and wars would continue to germinate around the planet, he warned. The true nature of humankind, which was spiritual, would have to prevail upon the materialistic vision, he said, adding that he dreamed not about owning a good car or a big house, but about ending war and sharing humanity in harmony with the planet. It was to be hoped that one day the world would share the same dream of peace.

GUILLERMO ENRIQUE MORENO ZAPATA (Venezuela) said the conflicts in Syria and Palestine marked some of the complex challenges confronting the world. Inclusive dialogue based on cooperation was the key to lasting stability among nations. The root causes of war included the vestiges of colonialism, as well as poverty and political systems that bred conflict. Pointing to Israel's occupation of Palestine, he said the Security Council had been impotent in dealing with that situation due to the veto power enjoyed by that body's permanent members. Nothing was more lethal to peace than justifying terrorist acts, including attacks on hospitals and schools in the name of overthrowing a Government. Covert wars remained lethal while continuing to undermine sovereignty, he said, citing the sanctions imposed on his country.

ANDREJ LOGAR (Slovenia), recalling his people's bitter experience of three wars in the past 100 years, agreed that reconciliation meant "finding a way of common life that permits a common vision of the future, the rebuilding of relationships and coming to terms with past acts and enemies". That was a society-wide, long-term process of deep cooperation and change; of acknowledging, remembering and learning from the past. Noting that the world was marking the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, he pointed out that it had taken another global conflict for European leaders to take a courageous decision to link reconciliation with European integration. To avoid the "shallow peace" that had followed the "unspeakable" war in the Balkans, Slovenia was working on the so-called "Brdo process", involving not only reintegration to overcome economic, social and infrastructure challenges, but also face-to-face contacts among high-level dignitaries. Other critical components of reconciliation included regional cooperation, democratic governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and bringing the perpetrators of the most serious crimes to justice, including through the International Criminal Court. It also entailed promoting peaceful coexistence through education, and engaging youth and civil society.

MILORAD ŠČEPANOVIĆ (Montenegro) said his country was no stranger to conflict, but it had fought only "freedom wars", without territorial or other ambitions. The many lessons it had learned had given Montenegro its modern national strategic policy and orientation on peaceful solutions and coexistence. In the ever-fragile international peace and security context, the only sustainable way to solve differences and avoid conflict was through peaceful means, he said, emphasizing that warring parties must be willing to accept painful compromises. Montenegro's wisdom, patience and transparency had led to a referendum, which had resulted in its non-violent separation from Serbia, he recalled. The focus of the United Nations should be on prevention, of which mediation was a key element. Other priorities were making the responsibility to protect more operational, and holding the perpetrators of crimes against humanity to account. Montenegro's path to renewed statehood had been a carefully crafted, step-by-step process, aided by regional and subregional organizations. However, when such an approach failed, the United Nations should step in, as it had done in the Syrian crisis, he said, noting the Secretary-General's efforts to throw his full weight behind the Geneva II Conference. Once the parties were brought together, a balanced "give-and-take" must be crafted in a way that left no winners or losers, he added.

SIMONA MIRELA MICULESCU ([Romania](#)) said that her country's former leader, Nicolae Titulescu, was among those who had worked hard for peace through his fight for the preservation of stable borders, for good relations between large and small neighbouring States as well as respect for sovereignty, collective security and the prevention of aggression. Today, some of his tools for peace were seen as milestones among the Balkan States. He said the process of building sustainable peace must be based on a shared sense of security, mutual trust and addressing divergences. The accepted means for resolving conflict must be solely political and legal. Peace required international economic interdependence, a common fight against prejudice, education for peace and coordinated action leading to the eradication of the economic causes of conflict. During its previous mandate in the Security Council, she recalled, Romania had promoted resolution 1631 (2005), the first such document in United Nations history dedicated to cooperation between the Organization and regional and subregional organizations. Quoting Mr. Titulescu, she said diplomats were the soldiers of peace, and their will contained only one word: "continue".

DAVID DONOGHUE ([Ireland](#)) said that despite significant progress towards reconciliation and to Northern Ireland's lasting political stability brought about by the so-called Good Friday Agreement adopted 15 years ago, several divisive issues remained. They included the flying of flags linked to the respective communities, and the handling of contentious parades. There had been recent intensive efforts by a respected third party from the United States to broker an agreement between the communities on how those issues should be addressed. Over the years, the Governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom had worked closely on practical ways to help the different traditions in Northern Ireland deal with the past and transcend the legacy of bitterness and misunderstanding. Much valuable work was under way at the community level to foster reconciliation and increase mutual respect and acceptance of diversity, he said, adding that he wished to share Ireland's lessons from the Northern Ireland peace process and to draw on other examples of "best practices" from around the world.

MILAN MILANOVIĆ ([Serbia](#)) stressed his Government's commitment to multilateralism, saying it was a pillar of national foreign policy. Serbia worked with multilateral and regional organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The country currently participated in nine peacekeeping operations, seven within the United Nations and two within the European Union. It also enjoyed a positive experience with the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and Metohija (UNMIK), and in 2015, it would chair the OSCE jointly with Switzerland. Describing stability in South-East Europe as a basic precondition for developing Serbia, he said he was confident in the possibility of prosperity throughout the Balkans, adding that his country had joined its neighbours through the European integration process. The first Intergovernmental Conference European Union-Serbia, which had opened the negotiations for Serbia accession to the European Union, was proof of the country's Serbia's success in that regard.

ABDUL MOMEN ([Bangladesh](#)) said war remained a ubiquitous feature of the human condition. While there had been no wars among great Powers since 1945, emerging new problems challenged the world to find pathways to sustainable peace. The accumulation of excessive weapons and access to them created tension, encouraged an arms race and reinforced a sense of insecurity among all, he said, adding that there was a close relationship between expenditures on armaments and economic and social development. More had been spent on weapons than on the Millennium Development Goals, he added. As one of the top troop contributors to United Nations peacekeeping, Bangladesh supported the notion that all violence and wars emanated from a mindset of intolerance, hatred and misunderstanding.

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MICHAEL BONSER ([Canada](#)) said his country placed the values of collective human dignity at the heart of a principled foreign policy dedicated to peace, prosperity and freedom. Canada was dedicated to preventing and halting genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Respect for human dignity demanded a commitment to learning from the past. In 2013, Canada had chaired the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, whose 31 Member States were committed to implementing national and international policies and programmes in support of Holocaust education, remembrance and research. Such efforts were critical to helping prevent future acts of genocide, he said. He noted with great interest the Council President's emphasis on the importance of securing and making available national archives of State documents in addressing reconciliation in a post-conflict environment.

GAREN NAZARIAN ([Armenia](#)) said the theme of today's debate, which was enshrined in the preamble of the United Nations Charter, should be more systematically integrated into the work of the Organization, adding that it was crucial to address fully the root causes of conflict. From its own experience of genocide under the

cover of the First World War, Armenia had found that reconciliation could be delayed for decades. Unfortunately, genocide repeated itself cyclically in history. The international community had a clear role in establishing true and common historical narratives, he said, emphasizing that the world must speak in one voice against attempts to negate history. Preventive diplomacy and early-warning mechanisms were among the most important tools for avoiding conflict, he added.

DISMAS MAGBENGU SWA EMINA MONZIA, Vice-Minister for International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of Congo, said it was unfortunate that some United Nations Charter principles had not been respected. Widespread violence and anarchy existed alongside terrorism, drug and human trafficking, corruption, illegal exploitation of resources and piracy. The Security Council, tasked with maintaining peace and security, must be better structured to face those challenges, not merely to prevent conflict and end wars, but also to ensure that violence did not resurface after peace was established. Citing his country as “a textbook example”, he said that following elections in 2006 and 2011, violence had resurfaced, notably with support from Council member Rwanda. That country as well as Uganda had sent armed forces into Kisangani, a diamond-mining town. Facing new challenges, the Council had exerted new efforts, including the deployment of an intervention brigade to protect civilians, he noted. However, persistent armed conflict, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as well as small arms, transnational organized crime and other new challenges demonstrated the need to restructure and democratize the Council to better reflect the wider United Nations membership, better implement the Charter and improve collective global security.

HALIT ÇEVİK (Turkey) said no two conflicts were alike, adding that the requirements for reconciliation efforts would differ according to the particular conflict, as well as the political, social, economic, cultural and historical factors involved. Ownership of reconciliation processes by the parties concerned was a determining factor, he said, emphasizing that reconciliation could neither be forced nor sustainable without the consent of the parties. The United Nations should not attempt to act as a substitute for local populations. Establishment of historical facts through scientific means, such as impartial and objective historical commissions that might be formed by the parties, or even with the participation of third parties, could be useful in laying common ground upon which reconciliation could be built, he said. However, reconciliation should focus on the future and not be limited to revisiting the past or used to revive old animosities. Armenia’s mention of genocide during the First World War was not based on a shared understanding, he said, urging that country to replace subjective language with objective knowledge.

GEIR PEDERSEN (Norway) emphasized that conflicts did not “come out of the blue” and that there were clear signs in most cases. Such precursors often included massive violations of human rights. Parties to a conflict must be ready to talk, he said, adding that dialogue was crucial to fostering confidence. Extensive knowledge of the root causes of conflict, as well as impartiality, were absolute requirements at the negotiating table. The United Nations had the toolbox for mediation, including the good offices of the Secretary-General, special envoys, commissions of inquiry, truth and reconciliation commissions, arbitration, judicial settlements, resort to regional agencies and other arrangements. However, a fragile peace could not be sustained, he stressed. “When a ceasefire or a peace agreement has been signed, the real job begins.”

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan) said that, although war was devastating, as seen in the last century, it had become a “necessary evil”, with nations preparing for conflict as a deterrent. In the present century, the world should not repeat mistakes made 100 years ago, especially since comparisons between the present and the first decades of the last century were “eerie”, except that weapons today had become more sophisticated and widespread. War could erupt anywhere and at any time, he cautioned. Noting that the United Nations was the system that the world used to stem that threat, he said swift diplomacy should be imperative, emphasizing that the world body had risen from the ashes of the First World War. The Organization was not receiving the credit it deserved, for without it, there would have been a third, fourth and fifth world war, he said, stressing that engagement, using the means available, was better than no engagement at all. More efforts were needed to address the roots of conflict and reform was needed to prepare all for a dynamic future.

The representative of the Russian Federation, taking the floor a second time, expressed regret over a statement by his Georgian counterpart at a time when their two nations sought to normalize relations. Georgia must recognize a new geopolitical reality with the emergence of two sovereign States, he said.

The representative of the Republic of Korea, responding to a statement by his counterpart from Japan, said the Yasukuni Shrine was a facility to honour A-class war criminals and others who had inflicted unimaginable atrocities in Asia. Japan’s political leader had visited the shrine in defiance of requests from Asian neighbours not to do so, he said, adding that the visit glorified the country’s past. On the issue of “comfort women” forced into sexual slavery, he emphasized that Japan had never accepted legal responsibility. It was not a charity or humanitarian issue, but a matter of crime and accountability. Concerning the question of textbooks, Japan needed to reconcile with its past and with the victims of its aggression, while teaching the same to its youth, he said, warning that teaching unlawful territorial claims to the younger generations would only lead to another tragedy.

The representative of Rwanda, responding to his colleague from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recalled that United Nations forces had already been present in the latter country in 1961. Its representative had accused Rwanda without advancing any evidence, he added. For its part, Rwanda had supported the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The representative of Georgia, speaking in response to his counterpart from the Russian Federation, said he had cited his country's case as a "lesson learned" so that the international community could draw some insight for its future work.

The representative of Japan said the Security Council was not the correct forum in which to address issues raised by several delegations, adding that his country's position on those issues had already been expressed this afternoon.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said that remarks by the delegate of Japan today were "senseless", adding that Japanese politicians and diplomats were telling different stories. As for the issue of "comfort women", Japan could never erase history, especially that extraordinary crime against humanity. Concerning the Yasukuni Shrine, he reiterated that A-class criminals were buried there. As for textbooks, he warned that they would meet defeat if they continued in that direction.

The representative of China said the Charter entrusted the Council with the maintenance of international peace and security, and its "august chamber" was a symbol of justice conquering evil. The Charter must be adhered to and maintained, he emphasized. Drawing lessons from war required facing history squarely because facts spoke louder than words. Regarding "comfort women", the shrine and textbooks, he said Yasukuni still validated as deities war criminals whom Japan's delegate had described as having made the ultimate sacrifice. The Prime Minister's visit to the shrine was an affront that undermined regional relations and closed the door on dialogue.

The representative of Armenia said that his counterpart from Turkey had misinterpreted the event of 1915, known as the Armenian genocide, in which 1.5 million people had been killed. It had been condemned by a number of Member States, but had gone unrecognized by Turkey, whose recognition of the event would remove existing psychological barriers between the two nations.

The representative of Turkey said his Government did not deny what had happened in 1915, but the event did not fit the definition of genocide under the 1948 Convention. No international court officially recognized the event as genocide, he added.

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