

The UN Development Pillar & Peace and Security Pillar

Here below follows the text of the lunch debate with Mr. Rory Keane (Head of UNLOPS) and Ms. Maria Luisa Silva (UNDP Director Geneva) on 03 July 2017. The lecture was organized by the United Nations Association Flanders Belgium (VVN) and the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies. It took place at the UN House in Brussels. We are grateful to Mr. Rory Keane and Ms. Maria Luisa Silva for taking the time to participate in this debate and to UN House for its generous hospitality.

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Ms. Maria Luisa Silva (Director UNDP, Geneva)

At UNDP we believe there is no room for complacency as we are facing unprecedented challenges. Those forcibly displaced have reached a staggering level of 65 million people, which is the highest number since World War II. They spend longer than ever in displacement as protracted conflicts linger and doors close to many of them. For the first time since the end of the Berlin Wall, the total number of victims from brutal and violent conflict has again started to increase. Terrorism and violence conflict affect all regions of the world. Climate related natural disasters are becoming more frequent and their destructive powers more intense. Every year we continue to achieve the wrong set of records, whether on air or ocean temperatures or in greenhouse concentrations in the atmosphere.

For far too many, sustainable development seems distant. Inequalities are on the rise, leaving people behind including in developed countries where millions of jobs have disappeared and new ones are out of reach for many and particularly for the young hardly hit by unemployment. Globalization is under attack by far too many who are discontent and who lost their trust in the multilateral system. So the question for the UN leadership was “how can the United Nations better help countries to meet these challenges and build resilient societies that can deliver on the promise of leaving no one behind? How can we preserve the norms that safeguard humanity and how can we win back the trust of the people who we are meant to serve as established in the UN Charter?”.

The answer of Mr. Antonio Guterres, our new Secretary-General, has been to prioritize crisis prevention in everything the United Nations does. Crisis prevention is not just understood as diplomatic action but as “a way to avert the outbreak of crises that take such a high toll on humanity and undermining institutions and capacities to achieve peace and development”. So the Secretary-General’s prevention agenda goes beyond addressing conflicts calling into all parts of the organization to rededicate ourselves to the UN Charter and address the root causes of conflict across the three pillars of the organization: (i) peace and security, (ii) development, and (iii) human rights. This means that the prevention agenda finds its basis in the universal frameworks that member States have put forward such as Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, the climate change agreements reached in Paris, the resolutions on sustaining peace, the international human rights treaties and a broad array of mandates across the three pillars of the UN.

Of course preventing human suffering and ensuring progress towards sustainable development so as to avoid future crises is primarily a responsibility of each State but the United Nations has a pivotal support role and we need to become much better at it. The Secretary-General believes that the UN’s most serious shortcoming is our inability to prevent crises. Therefore he has proposed four ways to build trust of member States and stakeholders in an organization that is more capable of preventing crises. This is by (i) a surge in preventive diplomacy, (ii) implementing Agenda 2030 and the sustaining peace resolutions, (iii) strengthening partnerships, and (iv) reforming the UN operational system to overcome fragmentation and consolidate our capacities to meet the prevention challenge.

I would like to talk for a moment on Agenda 2030 on sustainable development. Agenda 2030 is the way we refer to the three major agreement reached in 2015: (i) the disaster reduction framework, (ii) the sustainable development goals, and (iii) the climate change agenda. Together

they represent a roadmap to guide development action during the next 15 years offering a chance to meet global aspirations for a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future. Agenda 2030 has three key features. The first feature is that it is integrated and transformative. It has 17 goals addressing challenges in the three aspects of development, being economic, social and environmental. It is meant to improve the livelihoods of those still living in poverty, the so-called “bottom billion” for whom every day is still a struggle. The first pillar is therefore also called the peoples’ pillar.

It is also meant to expand the reach of services to the many that still have no access to these. This is the progress pillar.

But it is also meant to ensure a future for our climate by de-carbonizing our economies and reducing our ecological footprint. We should remember that the largest thematic expansion of the sustainable development goals has been in this environmental dimension. This is the planet pillar.

It is, last but not least, also meant to help in building inclusive and peaceful societies. This is the peace pillar. For the first time, the peace dimensions of development are recognized in a globally agreed development agenda. The most important reason why this was done is to reduce human suffering but also for a pragmatic reason because the international community cannot continue treading humanitarian budgets every decade. So root causes of conflict must be addressed.

The second feature of Agenda 2030 is that it is truly universal. It is meant to apply to all countries and all peoples, not only on developing ones. Sustainable development in the 21st century is not something which happens to somebody else somewhere else. We all have a stake in it and every country has work to do to progress towards this. This includes the EU and its member States. I would like to underline that Agenda 2030 for sustainable development is an important and positive agenda for Europe.

The third feature is that Agenda 2030 has built in accountability mechanisms. It is not merely aspirational but has also established targets and indicators so as to facilitate monitoring. In the case concretely of the SDG’s, countries will be submitting voluntary reports which are sort of peer reviewed by the high-level political forum of the ECOSOC in July. This provides a platform for countries to showcase their achievements and share their challenges. Some say these are soft accountability mechanisms but it is some sort of accountability. It builds into the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council that has proven to be an important engaging tool in the human rights area.

So the sustainable development goals are the key driver of the UN and of course in itself for today’s discussion also an essential means for long term prevention of conflict. As Agenda 2030 itself says “there can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development”. The best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis is to ensure that they are resilient, inclusive, sustainable, that they have the capacities to manage risks and shocks effectively including by undertaking concerted action and managing mass migration. We should also know however that investments in countries to help them build strong and inclusive institutions and resilient communities are clearly insufficient, particularly in least development countries, low income countries, fragile countries and those in special circumstances.

Let me now spend a couple of minutes to talk about the ongoing efforts by the UN development system to support countries in the implementation of Agenda 2030. I should start by saying that

the demand from countries to the UN for support in implementing Agenda 2030 has been very high. So far over 140 UN country teams have received requests for support on their national efforts towards SDG implementation. Being early days, the support requested by more than 2/3 of the governments is for general orientation and advocacy on the SDG's or for mainstreaming the SDG's in national development plans. The UN has developed a common approach to support SDG implementation through the UN Development Group which is a consortium of 33 UN development agencies and entities. We call this common approach "MAPS" which stands for "Mainstreaming" which is what we have been doing mostly until now, "Acceleration" which stands for targeted programmatic interventions to accelerate the implementation through removing systemic obstacles and to achieve the SDG's, and "Policy Support" which stands for integrated knowledge and advice from across the UN system. It is on the policy level that we need to make more progress now.

To further advance the efforts UNDP has been leading deployment of rapid, integrated MAPS missions in already 14 countries such as Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Trinidad, Mauritius, Guinea, Sudan, Djibouti, Jamaica, Cambodia and Tajikistan. We have the ambition to be able to reach 50 by the end of this year. These efforts are now cross-agency efforts. The UN country teams are also supporting countries in the preparation of the voluntary national reviews which are presented at the UN High-Level Political Forum of ECOSOC in New York next week. Actually most of the developing countries' voluntary reports have been prepared with the support of the United Nations. In total 44 countries have signed up for this year's High-Level Political Forum including ten European Union member States. Together with last year's four, half of the EU member States have already presented or will be presenting their reviews as to how they see they are progressing towards the implementation of the SDG's and on where they see major challenges lie. Of course it is very positive to see that so many countries are engaged and setting plans for the implementation of Agenda 2030. But they are not alone. They collaborate with the UN, civil society, academia and the private sector and it cannot be otherwise than that the complexity and ambitions of the Agenda 2030 requires building meaningful and active partnerships. Actually, Sustainable Development Goal 17 is on partnerships recognizing government's commitment as vital but insufficient on its own. So innovative solutions and experience are needed across stakeholders' groups and sectors but also across countries. So partnerships should also happen at the international level because the international community needs to work more closely together.

With legitimacy of its common values and universality of its membership, the United Nations has an unparalleled capacity to convene and mobilize and indeed the UN system is most impactful when we are truly enabling others. To illustrate this point, let me go one step back. None of the UN instruments I mentioned earlier could have been negotiated and agreed outside the UN and without the strong support from our partners including the EU. The EU is an essential partner of the UN and has also been a very important leader in the necessary transformations in global agendas. But partnerships are not only important during the negotiation phase leading to the adoption of these agendas. Partnerships are extremely important also in the implementation phase. Now, more than ever, enhanced partnerships are necessary to keep the momentum for the implementation of the Paris Agreement but also for Agenda 2030. This has to happen particularly at the field level. We truly hope that UN country teams, EU Delegations and member States developing cooperation agencies will be stepping up their collaboration in the field to achieve SDG's and by doing so preventing crises and sustaining peace.

So a bold agenda needs bold reforms. Since his appointment, the UN Secretary-General has publicly and fairly committed to make the United Nations fit for purpose of dealing with the prevention of conflicts, development and peace challenges. He has embarked the organization on a profound reform process to ensure that it is well positioned to effectively serve member States in their collective efforts to manage global challenges and opportunities. The main areas of reform are (i) the peace and security strategy, (ii) the UN development system in order to improve accountability and to better support countries in the implementation of the SDG's and the Paris Agreement, and (iii) the management reforms to enhance efficiency, transparency and accountability to member States with a focus on the UN Secretariat and with an overall ambition to be less bureaucratic, with simplified procedures and decentralized decisions. These three reforms are mutually reinforcing and are complemented by strategies and action plans to eradicate gender parity and sexual exploitation and abuse as well as to strengthen counterterrorism structures.

The Secretary-General has made it clear that the UN needs to be much more united in its thinking and in its actions, putting people at the centre of its work. We need to bring the capacities of the organization together in support of people and countries, in managing risks, in building resilience against shocks and averting the outbreak of crises. This means horizontally joining all pillars of the United Nations' work as well as a stronger vertical coordination within each of the pillars.

A leading objective of horizontal integration is to ensure that prevention becomes a cross-pillar priority. The way he wants to do that is to bring the capacities of the UN system together in a integrated platform for effective action. The overseas development institute in the UK has been tasked to mark these capacities and the report is expected next month. When it comes to the integrated platform the Secretary-General is clear that this is not a new entity or a new structure but rather an integrated way of thinking and acting harnessing the diverse protection tools and capacities scattered across the system, at headquarters and in the field, in support of member States. The platform will be built in the Human Rights Upfront initiative and will have an operational orientation aiming to enhance our work in the field. It will seek to enhance accountability of each of the participating UN actors and it will be underpinned by a consolidated arrangement for financing prevention so that existing and new funding streams are most effectively utilized. This is to respond to the UN Secretary-General's call that we need to maximize our resources and capacities to be able to be more impactful on the ground. He has also underlined that this vision of prevention will not divert resources from development to security nor confuse competencies between the UNGA and the UNSC. It is rather driven by the idea that investing and inclusive and sustainable development is the best means to prevent a crisis.

With regard to the reform of the UN development system, sustainable development is at the heart of the work of the UN so it will be critical to operationalize the Secretary-General's commitment to prevention, to addressing root causes of conflicts and recurrent crises and importantly to meet the promise of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and the climate change agreements. The Secretary-General has repeatedly underlined that this will in turn require a more cohesive and integrated system with enhanced leadership at all levels, more effectiveness on the ground and greater accountability to results. This is also in line with UNGA Resolution 71/243, the so-called QCPR Resolution, standing for "Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations". This is where

member States provide orientation every four years to the development system of the UN. The QCPR calls for a higher degree of integration, coordination, accountability and transparency of the UN development system as it supports countries to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. It has also encouraged the Secretary-General to propose measures to reform the UN. Work is well underway and there is the leadership of the Deputy-Secretary-General of the UN, Ms. Amina Mohammed, who has been tasked to lead on the whole development pillar of the UN and on the reforms.

Today's discussion is therefore very timely as this week the Secretary-General will issue his first report on the reform of the UN development system to member States. This report will set the marks for the future direction of the UN development system. We expect that this will be followed by debate with member States and many other stakeholders and that by the end of the year a second report with more details and concrete directions and instructions will come out. So it is early days and it is still unclear how the reform will exactly look like but we can already appreciate from the language and the mandates we have received and with the announcements made by the Deputy-Secretary-General. Let me provide some highlights of these directions. Firstly, there will be a focus on system-wide accountability for results at country level. This is really very important because it is truly the first time that we are looking holistically at the UN development system, functions and capacities for supporting the achievement of the SDG's. Let us not forget that the UN is a sort of amalgamation of many entities that emerge in support to specific challenges and opportunities.

The second direction is that no one size will fit all in recognition of the wide diversity that characterizes the world today. The system must therefore be flexible aiming to respond to different country contexts and to adapt to nationally defined priorities.

The third direction is that more cohesion is needed. The soft coordination and information exchanges that has characterized the UN development system until now will not suffice as countries confront complex trade-offs to localize the goals. For this reason the reform is aiming for a new generation of UN country teams equipped with the tools, capacities and performance systems to act as one in helping governments to unlock the potential of partnerships and financing for achieving the SDG's and preventing crises. This requires of course working across the Charter but also a steering of the UN country teams by a new set of resident coordinators who will be leaders, competent, impartial and with a strengthened authority.

The fourth direction is to create the right incentives for collaboration. Here financing is a central piece of the work because we need to be bold and innovative in seeking additional financing for the SDG's implementation. We need to move from the billions to the trillions that SDG's implementation requires. We also need to improve official development assistance and in particular the way we finance the UN. We need to address fragmentation. A forthcoming report of the UN Multipartner Trust Fund Office will show that only 10 percent of UN funding is general. So most of the funding that the UN is receiving today are funds to do something specifically. This does not allow for the flexibility necessary to implement the SDG's and definitely does not allow for collaboration. Only 6 percent of those funds are pooled funds aiming to have several agencies cooperating together for the same purpose.

Thank you.

Mr. Rory Keane (Head of UNLOPS, Brussels)

I am very pleased to be here and I am going to speak a little bit about peace and security. As mentioned in the outset, I work for the UN Secretariat here in Brussels so I will be able to give you some insights from the Secretariat perspective notwithstanding the United Nations, at the end of the day, is an intergovernmental organization so we look to the wisdom of our member States for guidance also in terms of how we run through and focus on the agenda going ahead.

There are three major reviews going on right now. The development pillar is under review right now and we just received an excellent presentation on that. There is also a management review which we will not be talking about today but I think we should talk about it someday because it is so critical to how all of this is going to glue together. It is an area I believe we also need to put more focus on. The third are is peace and security and what we can do with regard to this agenda.

As you are aware, the myriad of conflicts that the world is facing right now requires a comprehensive response. We need to become more innovative, more imaginative and we need to do all this in an efficient and cost-effective manner. There is a real challenge ahead of us right now.

Let us start by looking at the type of conflict the world is facing today. What we see is that the conflict is moving from traditional inter-state conflict to more proxy wars (Syria, Libya) where many countries and actors are involved. It is not the traditional conflict between two countries. That is one characteristic that we are dealing with. We have to be able to respond to that.

We also noticed that conflicts are becoming more localized and becoming more regionalized at the same time. We have to find a way of dealing with that and responding to it. Traditionally, international organizations are set up in a very state-centric manner. We tend to be based in the capital and focus on a country. But the type of conflict we are seeing is not state-centric at all. In many cases it is regionalized and even local so we need to be adaptive to this reality as well.

We are also seeing a rise in violent extremism which also means that the United Nations and the blue helmets are no longer sacred ground. Blue helmets are often a target in places such as Mali. This is also a reality we are dealing with.

That brings me to the final point which is that we are dealing with more complex, more robust and more asymmetric conflicts. Asymmetric is the name of the game right now with improvised explosive devices. It is difficult to deal with asymmetric because it is searching for the weakest link.

Those are the types of challenges that we are facing and we are going to need a very comprehensive approach to deal with those challenges. One key pillar, maybe the key pillar, in dealing with that is to put a much stronger emphasis on the prevention agenda because we know from looking at Syria that once a conflict spirals out of control, it is very difficult to go about solving it. UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura will again try to get some talks back on track in a couple of days but it is a very slow and challenging process. Therefore prevention is the best cure and we need to figure out to put this into practice. This is what the UN Secretary-General wants to focus on and that is what is going to be a significant challenge for us to be honest.

Early warning works. We know what is going to happen. The challenge is that we do not have a strong enough correlation between early warning and early response. Or we have some correlation but it is not holistic enough and not pushing on all the different leaders from diplomatic to humanitarian to trade and economic. We need to really figure out much better how to operationalize early response. That also represents huge challenges including political challenges.

We see in many countries in the world where there is a conflict, that state sovereignty claims are preventing an upstream response. We are going to have to think through this. When we think about prevention, one thing is predictable financing but it is not just this.

We do know what works to some degree as we have some examples of what works in prevention. We have done quite a lot of mediation support work, we have had some recent successes in West Africa in Gabon. In the past we have also had successes in Cote d'Ivoire where the peace operation just closed down and exited peacefully last Friday. So there are examples of what works and we need to pick on that and provide a surge so that it is really scaled up. This is what can be done but we also need to be honest on the fact that a lot of work needs to be done.

It was already mentioned before but one particular phrase that the UN Secretary-General used is 'the need for a surge in diplomacy'. That will also be part of the equation in terms of making prevention work. All of us together need to think a bit about what surge in diplomacy will actually mean in reality. It certainly means that we need to be more politically engaged as the United Nations, we need to understand the structural causes of conflict, we need to create partnerships with organizations like the EU and others such as key member states so that we can try and drive ourselves out of an emerging conflict before it happens.

Much of the work on the peace and security pillar that the Secretary-General is now taking forward finds its roots in the High-Level Report on Peace Operations (HIPPO). One of the members of this panel reminded me that a hippo is a very stubborn animal and also that it is very fast once it starts to run. Maybe we also need something stubborn and fast to really push this agenda forward. There are a couple of themes in the HIPPO report that the Secretary-General is taking forward on the peace and security pillar.

A first one is prevention and the surge in diplomacy and how to move that forward. Another theme that I mentioned is partnerships. We need to work in partnership with other global actors and regional organizations, member states, civil society, community groups, philanthropists, etc. Partnerships is value for money as different partners will have leverage and have local knowledge. So there are a lot of reasons to work in partnerships and we have already seen the Secretary-General take a number of steps in this area of partnerships. A new Framework Agreement between the African Union and the UN was signed recently. The agreement really sets out how this partnership can work in the area of peace and security. The UN and the World Bank also signed a partnership agreement on the margins of the Spring meetings. Here in the European Union of course we have a very strong and living partnership through the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peacekeeping and Crisis Management that runs up to 2018.

Politics is another area. This is hard to admit but sometimes we simply do not know enough about what we are talking about. So we are working in countries but we do not have enough information and knowledge about their root causes, the triggers of conflict. We do not understand the societies that we are working in enough. So we need much better conflict

analysis, social understanding, grounded understanding of where we are working so that we can build peace. We are beginning to see much stronger emphasis on analysis: in the office of the Secretary-General a strategic planning and analysis cell has been created, we are also doing more conflict analysis.

The other area is people. When we have our operations, we are putting protection of civilians at the centre of everything we do. You are probably thinking that this needs to be the basis of everything we do but having it at the centerpiece of everything you decide, is what we are talking about. About having the protection of civilians at the centre of your mandate when you are working on the ground: to ensure that everything is been done at all levels to protect civilians. It also means, in cases where this is challenging, ensure that we have human rights monitoring in place. A much stronger emphasis is being put on the protection of civilians in going forward with the agenda.

I am now turning specifically to peacekeeping because peacekeeping is such a fundamental part of what the UN does and the Secretary-General has made it clear that part of the peace and security review will include changes to peacekeeping. Changes like these occur because we are eager to prove to all our Member States that our work is as effective and efficient as possible, and that money spent on UN peacekeeping is money well spent. It is an investment in peace. It is about making sure that we deliver mandates as effectively as possible and that the system across the three pillars works as effectively and coherently as possible. So there is a real energy about ensuring that peacekeeping can do everything that it can to be as effective as possible.

A first point is that we know that peacekeeping saves lives and prevents the spread of violence so we know e.g. in 2014 that the UN peacekeeping operation in Central African Republic helped prevent a looming catastrophe in the country. In South Sudan in 2015 the lives of at least 220,000 people were saved by being allowed to take refuge in UN bases. Extremists in Mali have been curtailed due to the operation MINUSMA. We know that the operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Haiti, all missions that are closing down now, have helped to engender peace in those countries. So I think that is probably a good point to start with. We know that peacekeeping works and we know that it is cheap. It is good value for money. The budget is decreasing because a number of missions have closed or are closing down so the budget is something like 7,5 billion dollars per year and you may be thinking that this is a lot of money but if you think about it, in return for this money, over 120,000 UN officials are deployed in peacekeeping operations. That figure is also less than 0,5% of global defense expenditure.

We also know that peacekeeping is valued for helping sustaining peace agreements as we have seen in Mali and we know that peacekeeping operations are closed down once they are finished. As I mentioned earlier, Côte d'Ivoire is closed down, Liberia will close down after the elections, Haiti is closed down and has been transformed into a different type of mission. In recent years, also Timor-Leste has closed down as well as Sierra Leone and Guatemala.

That being said, we are striving for more efficiency and peacekeeping can be made more effective and there are a number of ways to take this forward. One area is about the whole issue of combating sexual exploitation and abuse. We need to ensure that our peacekeepers really are there to support local communities and no community should ever fear a peacekeeper. We had some problems with sexual exploitation and abuse and the Secretary-General has taken this very seriously and has put a very sophisticated plan in place that is being implemented to deal with

sexual exploitation and abuse carried out by peacekeepers. I would encourage you to read a website on dealing with sexual exploitation and abuse that is put up by the UN: www.conduct.un.org. If you go to this website, you can see everything that has been put in place in order to deal with this issue by the Secretary-General which includes a comprehensive system for prevention, investigation, accountability and support for victims. One key aspect of the new plan on sexual exploitation and abuse is reporting. It is much easier now to report an allegation. Reporting can be done through local liaison officers, through local community groups or on the phone or the website.

Part of this reform also includes stronger emphasis on strengthening the performance of uniformed personnel. It is not just about numbers as we also need to make sure that we have quality troops, that they are well trained and well-equipped, with good command in control. A huge amount of work is being done on this. Related to this, a lot of work has also been done regarding capabilities. If we are serious about protecting civilians, we need to give troops the capabilities, not only the training, to protect civilians. We cannot send them into harm's way if they cannot protect themselves.

A huge amount of work is being done on Strategic Force Generation making sure that we have the right capabilities in the right place at the right time. We are also working with the EU and EU Member States on this because Europe has an important leadership role to play in ensuring that the UN has the capabilities and rapid response that it needs in order to protect civilians.

A lot of work has also been done on ensuring that peacekeeping planning is more effective and with more focus on gender. We do not want gender to be some type of horizontal issue that is dealt with by some sub-office somewhere. We want the gender adviser to be at the centre of decision-making, both political, policy and operational decision-making. That is why the best place to have gender is in the office of the Under-Secretary-General of Peacekeeping Operations and also in the office of the Under-Secretary-General of Political Affairs. We are also doing this in the field as well which is an important development.

Very briefly, we also have a number of special political missions which are doing preventive diplomacy work and political good offices work. What the review will try to do is to scale up this work and to make sure that it is everybody's business. We have to make sure that, whether we are working in peacekeeping, political affairs or development, we have to make sure that the work on prevention is everybody's business and that we are all working in the same direction to achieve it.

To conclude, on the bureaucratic side, an internal review was established within the UN Secretariat to look at the current peace and security structures and to come up with some proposals and suggestions that will be put forward to the Secretary-General in terms of how the system could be improved to be more effective, more efficient, have more impact and to be as coherent as possible taking also on board some of the key issues such as partnerships and prevention and to have all the right tools in place to deal with the type of conflict we face in 2017. That report has been worked on in the Secretariat and options have been offered to the Secretary-General. Now he is reflecting on them and discussing them with other interlocutors. Over the months ahead we will see what we will end up with. The idea is that some of the principles that I have outlined will define how the new structure will work.