



2008 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations



**ECOSOC Chamber
20 - 21 November 2008**

Towards effective peacekeeping and the prevention of conflict Delivering on our commitments

Thursday, 20 November

9.00 a.m. – 10.00 a.m. Accreditation of participants

10 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. **Opening session**

Statements by:

- H.E. Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly
- H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations
- The Honorable Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

10.30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Session I Responsibility to protect

The 2005 World Summit Outcome reaffirms the responsibility of each individual State to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as from incitement thereto. The responsibility to protect is first and foremost based on the principle of "sovereignty as responsibility", and as such the international community is committed to assisting States in protecting their populations. At the same time, there is a provision for collective action by the international community, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities prove either unable or unwilling to act. Despite this commitment by all UN Member States, questions remain about the possible ramifications of the responsibility to protect, and how this principle is meant to work in practice. Some fear that too many caveats have been put in place that render the principle virtually inoperative; others fear that the principle may be invoked as a pretext to advance other political objectives. There is a need, therefore, to define more clearly what the responsibility to protect does and does not involve, and to elaborate on its scope and applicability.

- What is the actual political significance of the responsibility to protect and how does it change the way we understand concepts such as State sovereignty?
- How is this principle supposed to work in practice and what safeguards exist against its misuse?

- Is the United Nations equipped to render this principle operational?
- What lessons can be drawn from past experiences, such as in Kenya, in which the responsibility to protect was put to the test?
- How can parliaments help dispel misconceptions about this principle and build political support?

Discussants:

- Hon. Kenneth Marende, Speaker, National Assembly of Kenya
- Prof. Edward Luck, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect
- H. E. Mr. Joseph Nsengimana, Ambassador of Rwanda to the United Nations
- Ms. Nicola Reindorp, Director of Advocacy, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Session II Sexual violence against women and children in conflict

War-time sexual violence has been one of history's greatest silences, steeped in a self-serving myth of inevitability. Sexual violence was officially recognized as a core security challenge of our time in June 2008 when the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1820. This groundbreaking resolution establishes that rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict situations can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide.

- What does Security Council resolution 1820 mean in political and practical terms?
- Are current international agreements sufficient to address this issue and how are they to be translated into action at the national level?
- What steps can legislators take to counter the culture of impunity for sexual violence in conflict situations?
- What are the best practices that parliaments can adopt in support of sexual violence prevention, recovery and response?

Discussants:

- Senator Margaret Mensah-Williams, Vice-Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia
- Ms. Ines Alberdi, Executive Director of UNIFEM
- H.E. Mr. José Luis Cancela, Ambassador of Uruguay to the United Nations
- Mr. Stephen Lewis, Co-Director of AIDS-Free World

6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Reception in honour of participants (Delegates' Dining Room)

Friday, 21 November

10 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Session III Integrating a human security approach in the work of the UN

The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document emphasizes the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. It recognizes that all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential. The human security approach, therefore, can go a long way to addressing current global challenges, from achieving the Millennium Development Goals, to responding to climate change and securing peace in difficult conflict situations.

- How can the human security approach apply to current peace operations?
- What tools does the UN have to implement such an approach?
- How can one effectively build enough political will to systematically address insecurity and place human security at the core of the decision-making process?
- What contribution can legislators bring to the human security approach?

Discussants:

- Senator Rosario Green, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Senate of Mexico
- H. E. Mr. Shigeki Sumi, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations
- Mr. Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, Chief of Policy, Policy Development and Studies, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations
- Mr. Jonathan Granoff, President, Global Security Institute

3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Session IV Major challenges facing UN peacekeeping operations today

Nothing more visibly exemplifies the work of the United Nations around the world than the "blue helmets", as the UN peacekeeping forces are popularly known. By most standards, UN peacekeeping – some 20 missions at the moment - is a successful enterprise that has saved countless lives. But major problems and challenges remain. At one level, peacekeeping operations are growing more complex: peacekeepers are increasingly involved in situations of intra-State conflict, and troops are not always made available to respond swiftly to pressing demands. Moreover, political ownership of peacekeeping operations by UN Member States is weak: those who have the most say on troop deployments are often the least involved on the ground, and most troops and other personnel come from a limited number of countries. Finally, seldom is there a clear "exit strategy" for peacekeepers or a way to secure a lasting peace.

- Short of a standing army of the United Nations, what other arrangements can be put in place to provide peacekeepers in a timely, equitable, and effective manner?
- How is the "success" of a peacekeeping operation defined?
- How are peacekeeping operations perceived and received by local populations?
- How can peacekeeping operations ensure the protection of civilians?
- What other support do peacekeeping operations require to secure peace and prevent a relapse into conflict?
- How can parliaments contribute and help bring about and maintain peace?

Discussants:

- Hon. Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir, Speaker, National Assembly of Sudan
- Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)
- H.E. Ms. Ismat Jahan, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations
- Dr. Sarjoh Bah, Global Peace Operations Program, Centre on International Cooperation, New York University

5 p.m. – 6 p.m.

**Summary reports
Conclusions & recommendations**