

## Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace

### SG Quote:

- “War is always a choice: to resort to arms instead of dialogue, coercion instead of negotiation, imposition instead of persuasion. Therein lies our greatest prospect, for if war is a choice, peace can be too. It is time for a recommitment to peace.”

### Background

- In the Declaration on the Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations, Heads of State and Government undertook to promote peace and prevent conflicts. Honouring this pledge will require major changes by Member States, in their own actions and in their commitment to uphold and strengthen the multilateral system as the only viable means to address an interlocking set of global threats and deliver on the promises of the United Nations Charter around the world.
- My report on “Our Common Agenda” offered a vision to deliver on this promise. It outlined a multilateral system that could be more just, networked and effective. Building this new multilateralism must start with action for peace, not only because war undermines progress across all our other agendas, but because it was the pursuit of peace that in 1945 unified States around the need for global governance and international organization.
- This new multilateralism must recognize that the world order is shifting. It must adjust to a more fragmented geopolitical landscape. It must respond to the emergence of new potential conflict domains.
- We are now at an inflection point. The post-Cold War period is over. A transition is underway to a new global order. While its contours remain to be defined, leaders across the world have referred to multipolarity as one of its defining traits. In this moment of transition, power dynamics have become increasingly fragmented as new poles of influence emerge, new economic blocs form, and axes of contestation are redefined. There is greater competition among major powers and a loss of trust between the Global North and South. A number of States increasingly seek to enhance their strategic independence, while trying to maneuver across existing dividing lines. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have hastened this process. The unity of purpose expressed by Member States in the early 1990s has waned.
- The growing complexity of the conflict environment has made conflict resolution more difficult, owing to a proliferation of non-state armed groups, including terrorists, and as local and regional dynamics intersect in complex ways.
- Peacemaking and peacekeeping have helped to end wars and prevent numerous crises from escalating into full-blown violence. Where wars broke out, collective action by the United Nations often helped shorten their duration and alleviate their worst effects.
- Yet violence is risking lives and livelihoods outside conflicts contexts too. Fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies must start with the eradication of all forms of violence.
- Trust, solidarity, and universality form the basis for friendly relations and cooperation among nations and within societies. It is in these principles, taken together and carried forward by all States, and within countries, that action for peace must be grounded.  
We must move away from a logic of competition towards cooperation and a recognition of our shared interests.

### Recommendations and Actions

The following recommendations are presented for the consideration of Member States.

#### PREVENTION AT GLOBAL LEVEL: STRATEGIC RISKS

1. Eliminate nuclear weapons while strengthening norms and mechanisms against their spread and use.

2. Boost preventive diplomacy with greater use of the UN and the good offices of the Secretary-General including for geopolitical and geoeconomic relations and incidents in new domains; and more use of regional efforts and security architectures.

#### **PREVENTING CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE AND SUSTAINING PEACE**

3. Shift the prevention and sustaining peace paradigm with attention to all countries and all forms of violence through national prevention strategies and infrastructures for peace; human rights and rule of law; sustainable and predictable financing; and cross-regional approaches to transboundary threats.
4. Accelerate SDG implementation to address underlying drivers of violence and insecurity through proven development pathways that enhance the social contract and human security; new and emerging ways to protect livelihoods and provide social protection in communities emerging from conflict and in post-conflict countries; and alignment of international funding mechanisms.
5. Transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security through concrete measures to secure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making; the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence; and sustained, predictable and flexible financing for gender equality.
6. Address links between climate, peace and security. Recognize as a political priority, ensuring that climate action and peacebuilding reinforce each other; that the Security Council systematically addresses implications for peace and security; and through a dedicated IPCC expert group on climate action, resilience and peacebuilding; a new Peacebuilding Fund window; and joint regional hubs.
7. Reduce human cost of weapons. Strengthen protection of civilians in populated areas, and establish mechanisms to mitigate harm, investigate, and ensure accountability; achieve universality of treaties banning inhumane and indiscriminate weapons; reduce military expenditures, renew efforts to limit conventional arms, and increase investment in prevention and social infrastructures and services; update study on the social and economic impact of military spending; and stop the use of IEDs by terrorist and other non-State armed groups. In addition, measures to address challenges related to small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

#### **STRENGTHENING PEACE OPERATIONS AND ADDRESSING PEACE ENFORCEMENT**

8. Strengthen peace operations and partnerships. Deploy peace operations based on and in support of clearly identified political processes, with realistic mandates, while leveraging civilian capacities and expertise across the system, as well as innovation, data and digital technologies. Ensure effective exit strategies and transitions. Make peacekeeping more nimble and adaptable building on A4P.
9. Address peace enforcement. Where enforcement required, authorize a multinational force or action by regional and subregional organizations; provide direct support to operations by countries or regional organizations that lack required capabilities; and accompany peace enforcement with inclusive political efforts to advance peace and non-military approaches. Ensure accountability and justice in counter-terrorism contexts; and support counter-terrorism operations through strategic action groups supported by the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.
10. Support to AU and subregional peace support operations. Ensure operations under Chapters VII and VIII of Charter have the required resources; African Union and subregional organizations' peace support operations to be systematically resourced.

#### **NOVEL APPROACHES TO PEACE AND POTENTIAL DOMAINS OF CONFLICT**

11. Prevent the weaponization of emerging domains and promote responsible innovation.
12. Cyberspace: declare that essential infrastructure for public services and functioning of society is off-limits to malicious cyberactivity; establish an independent multilateral accountability mechanism for malicious use of cyberspace by States.
13. Outer Space: international norms, rules, and principles to address threats to space systems and negotiations on a treaty to ensure peace, security, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.
14. Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS): legal instrument by 2026 to prohibit LAWS that are not in compliance with international humanitarian law, and regulate all other types of autonomous weapons systems.

15. Artificial Intelligence (AI): national strategies on responsible design, development and use of AI; norms, rules and principles on military applications of AI through a multilateral process; global framework regulating and strengthening oversight mechanisms for use of data-driven technology, including AI, for counter-terrorism purposes.
16. Biorisks: reinforce capacities to identify, anticipate, coordinate and prepare for emerging and evolving biological risks; measures to address risks in applying biotechnology and human enhancement technologies in the military domain, including implications of advances in neurobiology and related converging technologies.

#### **STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE**

17. Stronger collective security machinery.
18. Security Council: urgent progress on reform for a more just and representative body; democratize procedures to enhance ability to reach consensus and for durable decisions; sanctions measures that are targeted, regularly adjusted, benchmarked, with prompt action on listing and delisting, and considering an expanded terrorism scope.
19. General Assembly: exercise primary role for disarmament deliberations; reform disarmament machinery; intergovernmental process on the above.
20. Peacebuilding Commission: enhanced role as convener of thematic discussions on cross-pillar issues, with focus on peace and development; mechanism to mobilize political and financial support for national and regional strategies, and to formalize relationship with IFIs and regional development banks; formalize participation of regional and other organizations; other organs to consult with PBC.