

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
29 May 2020

Original: English

Letter dated 29 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Chair's summary of the high-level open Arria formula meeting of the Security Council on the theme "Seventy-five years from the end of the Second World War on European soil – lessons learned for preventing future atrocities, responsibility of the Security Council" that was held on 8 May 2020.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Sven Jürgenson**
Ambassador, Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 29 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Summary of the high-level open Arria formula meeting of the Security Council on the theme “Seventy-five years from the end of the Second World War on European soil – lessons learned for preventing future atrocities, responsibility of the Security Council”, held on 8 May 2020

Introduction

The Republic of Estonia hosted an Arria formula meeting on the theme “Seventy-five years from the end of the Second World War on European soil – lessons learned for preventing future atrocities, responsibility of the Security Council”, that was held on 8 May 2020. The meeting took place via videoconference. It was public and livestreamed on several platforms to increase the transparency of the work of the Security Council.

The debate was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, Urmas Reinsalu. The guest speakers were Josep Borrell, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; and Timothy Snyder, Professor of History at Yale University. Representatives of all Member States were invited to attend and to make statements. Following the briefings, all Council members and 61 additional Member States made statements. Forty-five were represented at the ministerial level. It was the first virtual Arria formula meeting in history that brought together such a large number of high-level participants.

The main objective of the high-level meeting was to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War on European soil and offer an opportunity to discuss the merits of the post-war order. The aim was not only to identify lessons learned from the past but also to highlight challenges to the future and provide a forum to evaluate security threats posed by conflicts in Europe and beyond.

Briefings

In the first briefing, Josep Borrell, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, emphasized the significance of the timing of the debate – it took place not only on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, but also during the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. A day later, on 9 May, the European Union celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the Schuman Declaration.

Referring to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), he underlined that the world at large is facing its biggest crisis since the end of the Second World War and the only way out of it is to strengthen solidarity and global cooperation. The European Union is a symbol of the progress made since the end of the Second World War to advance human rights, democracy and the rule of law. He also reiterated the values on which war-broken Europe was built are shared with the United Nations and are needed more than ever – solidarity, openness, freedom and respect for the rule of law.

The current crisis is a test for both humanity and multilateralism. To pass the test, rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core, must be upheld and strengthened. Mr. Borrell also pointed out the strong cooperation between

the European Union and the United Nations as well as several regional organizations in support of peace and security.

In the second briefing, Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, underlined that in 1945 world leaders chose multilateralism and international cooperation over division and isolation. The rules-based system was built on the respect of human rights and human dignity. European countries played a large role in this architecture and have been strong supporters both for multilateralism and conflict prevention. She emphasized that despite the peace and prosperity in the region, Europe is not immune from instability, as shown by the crises in Georgia and Ukraine, as well as longstanding questions of the Transnistria region and Cyprus. When emphasizing the importance of the end of the Second World War as a historic milestone and the possibility for progress deriving from it, she drew a link with the current pandemic, which also provides us with an opportunity to unite and then create a more equitable and peaceful world together. As an important element, she also recalled the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire.

In the third briefing, Timothy Snyder, Professor of History at Yale University, underlined that the acts of memory cannot change the past but they can affect the future. It must not be forgotten how the Second World War started and how Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union divided Eastern Europe. For countries like Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the end of the Second World War meant a start of a decades-long occupation.

In his analysis, he also emphasized that we should refrain from returning to a moment where we face a choice between common scientific solutions and a return to a bloody and persistent competition for limited resources as a result of climate change. When referring to the current pandemic, he said that it poses both a technical and a moral challenge. Technical solutions will come with time but what matters most is how we treat each other until then. As the truth about the past can become a language of reconciliation, we need to be truthful to have a chance of creating a better future.

Debate on lessons learned from the past and the current and future challenges

The contributors agreed that despite the fact that the two world wars left Europe devastated, the end of the Second World War marked a new beginning. For many, it meant a new rules-based international order with multilateralism as a major factor of international stability, democracy and prosperity. It led to the creation of the United Nations and the European Union and the adoption of the United Nations Charter, which demonstrated that countries would put aside their differences and work toward a more prosperous future of benefit to all Members States. A number of participants also emphasized that this new beginning and the date (8 May 1945) brought different consequences to different States and that the end of the Second World War did not mean freedom for all of Europe.

Participants called upon the need to reject all attempts to create or recreate spheres of influence, as this will inevitably serve as a cause for conflict. It was highlighted that the principle of collective security calls for a limitation by law to the use of force, as it links the security of each to the security of all. Illegal use of force must therefore be condemned. Speakers stressed that tensions and violent conflicts persist even today, including in Europe – in particular, the crises in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 have shown that new outbreaks of violence are all too possible.

The history of the Second World War teaches us that inciting populism is dangerous and that isolationism leads nowhere. Drawing from the lessons learned from the past, speakers highlighted the need to act against the re-emergence of

populism, nationalism, authoritarianism, racism and xenophobia. No one should be discriminated against for their origins, nor their religious or political beliefs.

Speakers pointed out that even though the Second World War ended 75 years ago and multilateral institutions for preventing conflicts were created, peace in the world has yet to be achieved. New threats have emerged. Today, international peace and security are endangered by pandemics, climate change, terrorism and cyberthreats; all call for stronger cooperation.

One of the recurring themes of the event was support for the rules-based world order created after the Second World War and the need to avoid the mistakes of the past in preventing conflicts. Speakers agreed that the rules-based multilateral order, with the United Nations at its core, must be upheld and strengthened.

Participants agreed that in order to maintain international peace and security, States must continue to invest in sustainable development and respect human rights, international law and international humanitarian law.

Countries emphasized the need to revitalize the peace and security agenda of the United Nations in terms of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and the strengthening of peacekeeping. Speakers also called for taking concrete steps towards the reform of the Security Council – to improve the legitimacy of that body and enhance its efficiency. References to the non-transparent use of veto by the permanent members of the Security Council were also made, particularly in mass atrocity situations, where the use of veto is deplorable.

It was also pointed out that one of the key elements of building a better future is fully implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Speakers also highlighted gender and youth mainstreaming as essential for reducing inequalities and for successful security sector reform processes in different parts of the world.

Participants highlighted the multidimensional effect of the crisis: it has triggered a health, economic and social crisis. Some were of the view that the pandemic is a threat to peace and security. The COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed the pressing need to deal with cyberthreats and close the global digital gap as quickly as possible.

Speakers expressed support to the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, and many pointed out that regrettably this appeal has yet to translate into tangible results.

Recommendations

During the discussion, the guest speakers, members of the Security Council and other participants highlighted the following principal points.

(a) For **safeguarding lasting peace and stability**, it is essential that States put aside their differences and strengthen the channels for **dialogue** and **cooperation**. The principles of international law and the peaceful settlement of disputes are key elements in achieving the aforementioned.

(b) States must **refrain from threats and use of force** against others. The principles and purposes of the United Nations must be upheld.

(c) **Solidarity** must be exercised to help the more vulnerable countries respond to the challenges they are now facing.

(d) **Peaceful settlement of disputes** and the **preventive diplomacy** were also stressed as the key contributors of preventing conflicts and finding solutions to the current challenges.

(e) The **Security Council must provide the political will to act**, be it any of the current challenges.

(f) The Security Council must have **a stronger partnership with regional and subregional organizations**, as they possess unique bonds of history and knowledge.

(g) The silence of the Security Council is sometimes deafening. Inaction must not become the norm of the Council's action. **Council unity** remains paramount in ensuring **constructive action**.

Conclusions

The lessons of the Second World War taught the world to protect and value freedom, to reject and condemn the illegal use of force and to cooperate in order to achieve and preserve peace.

A rules-based world order and peace are not self-evident. Lasting international security, stability and peace require genuine and continuous adherence to international law and norms, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States.

The meeting reaffirmed the view that global challenges need global action. Multilateralism is the key in overcoming the current and future challenges.
