



Security Council

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Letter dated 14 November 2023 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November, China intends to organize an open debate on the theme “Maintenance of international peace and security: promote sustaining peace through common development”, to be held on 20 November 2023.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, China has prepared a concept note (see annex). I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Zhang Jun**
Permanent Representative and
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 14 November 2023 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the open debate on the theme “Maintenance of international peace and security: promote sustaining peace through common development”, to be held on 20 November 2023

The linkage between peace and development has been attracting wide attention of the international community. The Security Council has also been exploring means to address security issues through development. During its presidency of the Security Council in November, China will convene an open debate on the theme “Maintenance of international peace and security: promote sustaining peace through common development”.

Building on previous discussions and practices, this open debate will provide an opportunity for participants to further exchange views on how common development contributes to sustaining peace and security, and how to take a holistic approach to support conflict-affected countries to achieve sustaining peace by enhancing their sustainable development capacity and addressing root causes of conflict, such as unbalanced and inadequate development, while tackling various obstacles to the sustainable development of such countries.

Security through a development lens

According to the 2022 Global Trends Report, prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 108 million people worldwide were forced to flee their homes because of war and violence, the highest number ever recorded and twice as many as 10 years ago. It is also reported that armed conflicts in 2022 have taken the lives of 238,000 civilians, the highest level of global civilian casualties in this century. These alarming figures underscored the imperative to revisit the strategies and approaches to maintaining peace.

As the linkages among peace, economy, development, and technology continue to deepen in a time of globalization and connectivity, it is increasingly impractical to address security challenges without taking into account other perspectives. While taking prompt actions to meet immediate challenges, the Security Council must also seek long-term solutions by addressing the root causes. Many regional conflicts are directly linked to unbalanced and inadequate development, which is often a result of extreme poverty, distribution disparity, lack of jobs, and poor infrastructure. The least developed countries and the most vulnerable populations are at greater risk from security threats, and these challenges cannot be addressed simply by traditional military and security means. A comprehensive and coordinated approach is thus much needed, with a particular focus on strengthening the synergy between common development and sustaining peace.

This idea is not exactly new. Since the 1990s, development for peace has been a consistent topic at the United Nations, including the Security Council. At a ministerial-level meeting on the situation in Africa held in September 1997, the Security Council for the first time discussed the interplay between peace and development. Participants focused on the root causes of conflicts in Africa and emphasized that the challenges in the African continent demand a more comprehensive response. A year later, the idea was further elaborated on by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who, in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa stressed that poor economic performance or inequitable development has resulted in a near-permanent economic

crisis for some States, greatly exacerbating internal tensions, and greatly diminishing their capacity to respond to those tensions, and underscored that development is central to the prospects for reducing conflicts in Africa.

Over the past decade, the Security Council has held several debates on promoting peace through development, which reflect the Council's deepening understanding of this topic.

- “The interdependence between security and development”, an open debate convened by Brazil in February 2011. A presidential statement (S/PRST/2011/4) was adopted, underlining that reconstruction, economic revitalization, and capacity-building constitute crucial elements for the long-term development of post-conflict societies and in generating sustainable peace.
- “Inclusive development for the maintenance of international peace and security”, an open debate convened by Chile in January 2015. A presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/3) was adopted, encouraging Member States to consider developing a United Nations common approach to inclusive development as a key for preventing conflict and enabling long-term stability and sustainable peace.
- “Security, development and the root causes of conflict”, an open debate convened by the United Kingdom in November 2015.
- “Addressing root causes of conflict while promoting post-pandemic recovery in Africa”, an open debate convened by China in May 2021. A presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/10) was adopted, underlining the importance of socioeconomic development for sustaining peace through economic development, including transnational and trans-regional infrastructure development, industrialization, poverty eradication, job creation, agricultural modernization and the promotion of entrepreneurship.
- “Peace and security in Africa: capacity-building for sustaining peace”, an open debate convened by China in August 2022. A presidential statement (S/PRST/2022/6) was adopted, underlining the importance of supporting socioeconomic development for sustaining peace through economic development and calling for addressing the challenges through enhanced efforts to improve capacity-building.
- “Peace and security in Africa: the impact of development policies in the implementation of the Silencing the Guns initiative”, an open debate convened by Mozambique in March 2023.

Secretary-General António Guterres in the New Agenda for Peace pointed out that “sustainable development is ultimately the only way to comprehensively address the interlinked, multidimensional drivers of violence and insecurity”. It is crucial to formulate more comprehensive and effective strategies for peace in the light of the relationship between peace and development across sectors. Furthermore, it is vital to recognize that no nation is an island entire of itself and that the security and development of all countries are closely intertwined. When one falls into fragility or conflict, negative spillover effects on its neighbours often follow. Therefore, unity and cooperation must be championed to generate more global public goods that benefit all people, so as to achieve common development and sustaining peace.

In his 2022 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the Secretary-General underscored that the best defence against violent conflicts is inclusive development that leaves no one behind. The significance of people-centred development is also highlighted in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, endorsed by world leaders in 2015.

Development projects aimed at eradicating poverty, improving employment and education, building infrastructure, and accelerating agricultural modernization and industrial transformation can create more livelihoods for the people and enhance their confidence in state governance, thus contributing to the long-term peace and stability of countries and regions. By placing people at the centre, this development approach ensures that the benefits of progress are shared by all people and therefore plays an important role in eliminating discrimination and marginalization, promoting and protecting human rights, facilitating national peace and reconciliation, and resolving conflicts.

Given its close connections with other sectors of work, development should be incorporated into conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peace sustaining efforts, and should be coordinated with political and peace processes, disarmament and demobilization, security sector reform, and the rule of law, among others.

Countries affected by conflicts face protracted humanitarian and development challenges. Humanitarian assistance, though able to meet immediate needs, cannot by itself fundamentally reverse the situation. The international community and the United Nations, bearing in mind the linkage between peace and development, have been stressing the need to supplement short-term humanitarian aid with long-term development investments, in order to help those countries not only recover and rebuild, but also foster a sense of ownership, nurture internal development drivers, and enhance their capacity to withstand shocks and sustain peace.

Multidimensional challenges

According to a 2022 report issued by the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, convened by the Secretary-General to follow up on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the poorest developing countries pay 14 per cent of revenue for interest on their debt on average, almost four times higher than developed countries. Conflict-affected countries in general are experiencing difficulties in obtaining adequate and sustainable development resources and financial support. With a shortage of resources and capacities for peacekeeping and peacebuilding, those countries are at higher risk of poverty-induced turmoil. Once they relapse into economic difficulties or political turmoil, they may encounter credit downgrades and stricter lending conditions from international agencies, which could plunge them further into a vicious cycle of conflict and poverty.

Challenges are also found in the technological domain. Emerging technologies involving artificial intelligence, clean energy, biotechnology, and so on have profoundly changed the way people work and live. However, the widening technology divide between developed and developing countries, especially the digital divide, is exacerbating new inequalities in development. Urgent actions are needed to ensure that all countries can gain equal access to and benefit from those emerging technologies, thereby empowering common development for sustaining peace.

Peacekeeping operations are an important tool for the Security Council in maintaining international peace. However, as long as the economic and social roots of conflicts are not addressed, the achievement of peacekeeping operations is still at risk of reversal. Peacekeeping operations have the potential to play a more effective role in preventing the recurrence of conflict if they can serve as a partner of the host country in facilitating local reconstruction and development. This requires the Security Council to think carefully and creatively when formulating peacekeeping operation mandates, including on the bridging of peacekeeping and peacebuilding and the synergy between security and development.

Guiding questions

(a) How can stability and security be better maintained and promoted through common development? How to ensure that development resources can equitably benefit all people?

(b) What can the United Nations and the Security Council do to help conflict-affected countries enhance capacity-building for development and strengthen resilience to security risks?

(c) How can international financial institutions be reoriented to better promote global peace and stability? How to ensure that developing countries have equitable access to financing, so as to break the vicious cycle of poverty and conflict?

(d) How to support developing countries to narrow the digital divide and development divide, and realize common development and sustaining peace?

(e) How can United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions, and other United Nations presences help create conducive conditions, both internally and externally, for the development of host countries?

Format of the meeting

The open debate is scheduled to be held in the Security Council Chamber at 10 a.m. on Monday, 20 November, and will be presided over by Ambassador Zhang Jun, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations. The following speakers will be invited to brief the Security Council:

- António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Dilma Rousseff, President of the New Development Bank
- Jeffrey Sachs, President of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University

Member States that wish to participate under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council should register their names on the list of speakers in e-deleGATE and upload a letter from their Permanent Representatives or Chargé d'affaires a.i. to the President of the Security Council. Participating Member States are not required to submit written statements through e-deleGATE. The statements made will be included in the provisional verbatim record of the meeting.