



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 30 October 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 21 October 2024, the Security Council met under the presidency of Switzerland for a high-level briefing under the agenda item entitled “Maintenance of international peace and security”.

I have the honour to enclose an informal summary of the discussions (see annex), which were focused on anticipating scientific developments that could have a significant impact on international peace and security.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Pascale **Baeriswyl**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative



## **Annex to the letter dated 30 October 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

[Original: English]

### **High-level briefing on “Anticipating the impact of scientific developments on international peace and security”<sup>1</sup>**

**New York, 28 October 2024**

#### **Background**

The Security Council met on 21 October 2024 under the presidency of Switzerland for a high-level briefing on the theme “impact of scientific developments on peace and security”.

The high-level briefing included an outline of the anticipated scientific developments with a significant impact on international peace and security, and an examination of how the Security Council might deal with them in a timely manner, thereby fulfilling the Council’s preventive mandate. Advanced artificial intelligence, quantum technology, synthetic biology and neurotechnology were cited as examples of such developments.

Details and guiding questions are outlined in the concept note contained in document [S/2024/708](#).

#### **Briefings**

The briefers illustrated how scientific developments, current and anticipated, offer opportunities and pose risks for international peace and security. Advances in quantum technology are expected to revolutionize encryption technology or abilities to detect objects under water or ground. Neuroscientific innovation, such as the implantation of a digital link between the brain and the spinal cord, enable individuals not just to regain control over paralyzed limbs but also to control drones with their thoughts. The convergence of different scientific research strands further accelerates already rapid advances in science, requiring even more anticipation in terms of governance and risk mitigation. In the light of this, the briefers called the Security Council to action, suggesting that the Council avail itself to more regular briefings on relevant developments.

#### **Aspects highlighted by member States**

Member States widely confirmed the relevance of addressing scientific developments in the context of the mandate of the Security Council. Council members highlighted specific areas, including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, misinformation and disinformation, terrorism, peacebuilding, accountability, climate change, health and gender equality, in which they identified a significant impact of science on peace and security, both in terms of risk and potential. Reference was made to current conflicts, in which advanced technologies area had already been deployed.

Several members emphasized the importance of normative aspects to put appropriate safeguards in place in order to harness the potential of scientific advances safely and for the benefit of peace and security. International law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law were highlighted by many. Some

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<sup>1</sup> *Disclaimer: the present informal summary is not an official record of the meeting, nor does it claim to represent the positions of the Security Council or its members.*

also referenced the importance of ethical norms and of safeguarding sovereignty in the light of scientific and technological advances.

Many Council members underlined the importance of preventing and bridging divides between those who have access to scientific advances and those who do not. Equitable access to their benefits can play a role in addressing the root causes of conflict or support humanitarian action. Global scientific collaboration should be open and used to advance peace and security instead of narrowing such cooperation due to security considerations, some remarked.

The recent engagement of the Council with scientific actors and platforms, in particular during a visit of Council members to Geneva in August 2024, were put forward as an example of how the impact of scientific developments could better feed into the Council's deliberation. Several members called for the Council to take into account scientific knowledge and insight for better decision-making. The potential of science to support preventive diplomacy was also highlighted.

While further engagement with scientific developments by the Council was judged useful to anticipate and address their impact on international peace and security, one member cautioned against duplicating processes and efforts ongoing in the United Nations, notably in the General Assembly.

### **Joint action for the New Agenda for Peace**

Prior to the briefing, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Switzerland addressed media representatives in the context of their commitment to highlight conflict prevention during their consecutive presidencies of the Security Council. One month after the adoption of the Pact for the Future, they expressed their intention to prepare the Council for the future, to act early and manage uncertainty, by seeking expert advice and collaborate with academic and research institutions to provide the Council with evidence-based information and other relevant assistance.

### **Presidential statement**

Following the high-level briefing, the President of the Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2024/6) on behalf of the Council, stating that scientific developments can play a role in upholding the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Council also expressed its continued commitment to take into account scientific advances more systematically, where appropriate, and in line with its mandate, in as far as their impact on international peace and security is concerned.

### **Further resources**

An external, artificial intelligence-supported reporting tool provides further insight on the briefing, on the basis of the publicly available information. The relevant website is available at <https://dig.watch/event/unlocking-un-security-council-meetings-with-ai>.