

Statement by H.E. Mr. Kamalesh Sharma, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations on Report of the Secretary-General on Prevention of Armed Conflict at The United Nations General Assembly, New York on July 13, 2001

Mr. President,

For my delegation it is always a pleasure to see you chairing the Plenary. We appreciate your calling this meeting on this important subject.

Only a few years back the General Assembly, acting on the Secretary General's report 'An Agenda for Peace' and 'Supplement to an Agenda for Peace', had taken a number of decisions to address issues relating to the maintenance of international peace, including conflict prevention. The fresh report by the Secretary General on prevention of armed conflict covers a number of activities, though some of them go beyond the subject. Fresh ideas and new thinking have to be seen in the context of evidence whether the existing legislative mandate was proving short and armed conflicts were on the increase. The reality, hearteningly, may have a silver lining. A recent study by the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland, based on a study of 160 countries, has concluded that armed conflicts have decreased in number and intensity by about half in the 1990s, the number of democratic governments has vastly increased, and the number of power-sharing agreements to end ethnic fighting has also increased. In considering the subject, we could remain conscious of the old dictum cautioning against trying to fix what may not be broke and concentrate only on where value can be added.

Mr. President,

As it is your intention that the report be examined by the various organs and agencies of the UN with respect to issues falling under their competence, we shall make only some broad comments at this stage.

Some recommendations in the report merit serious consideration when considered individually; some others could have benefited from an approach more analytical and based on hard facts and empirical studies. In many cases, what has been recommended has already been agreed and is being implemented. Some examples:

- Ø In recommendation 12, the Secretary-General encourages Member States and the Security Council to make more active use of preventive deployments before the onset of conflict, as appropriate. This issue was dealt with in detail in 'An Agenda for Peace' and in Resolution 47/120 B of 20 September 1993, in which the General Assembly set out the guiding principles for preventive deployment: a case-by-case approach, and the consent of, and, in principle, at the request of Member State or Member States involved, taking into account the positions of other States concerned. The report, apart from listing the three cases where such deployment was done, would have gained from an

examination of cases where such a request has been made and how it had been dealt with.

- Ø In Recommendation 13, the Security Council has been urged to support peace-building components within peacekeeping operations as relevant, and to strengthen Secretariat capacity in this regard, inter alia through the measures outlined in the report to the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations. Peace-building activities are within the purview of the General Assembly, which has already set the guiding principles in its Resolution 47/120 B of 1993. The Council has also addressed itself fully to this issue through a 24-paragraph Presidential Statement as recently as 20th February of this year. If there are concrete cases where the Council or the broader membership should have done more or must do more, specific instances need to be provided. If not, the recommendation appears superfluous. Moreover, it is also not clear how the Security Council can strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat in this regard as the issue is being considered by the Special Committee on Peace-Keeping Operations, which reports to the General Assembly.

- Ø In recommendation 15, the Security Council has been encouraged to include, as appropriate, a Disarmament, De-mobilisation and Reintegration component in the mandates of UN peace-keeping and peace-building operations. Through a Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2000/10) specifically on this issue, the Council has already endorsed this.

- Ø In Recommendation 20, the Security Council has been called upon to invite the Emergency Relief Co-ordinator to brief its members regularly on situations where there is a substantial risk of a humanitarian emergency. The Council has also been urged to call for and support the implementation of preventive protection and assistance activities by UN agencies in situations where there is risk of a humanitarian crisis. The Emergency Relief Coordinator deals with various disasters: some, such as natural disasters like earthquakes, famines or hurricanes, do not have implications on peace and security. Little purpose will be served for the Council to have a briefing on such situations. Relief agencies have their hands full; they should not be distracted unnecessarily. The second category of disasters are the ones caused by conflict. Any action by the Council would only be to avoid escalation, it would not be preventive. Besides, dabbling by humanitarian personnel in conflict prevention activities, political by definition, risk branding them as partisan. This may expose them to avoidable risks and jeopardise their mandates. We would urge extreme caution.

Ø In Recommendation 24, the Security Council has been encouraged, in accordance with Resolution 1325 (2000), to give greater attention to gender perspectives in its conflict prevention and peace-building efforts. By resolution 1325(2000) on Women and Peace and Security the Security Council had expressed its intention to do so and had, inter alia, urged the Secretary General to appoint more women as SRSGs and Special Envoys, as well as to take other actions on gender related issues. The report does not give details of any concrete action taken by the Secretariat except that a task force has been established which is in the process of developing an action plan to implement the Resolution. This is the status of the Council's resolution eight months after adoption.

Mr. President,

We believe that the real need is to set out long term measures, which, if implemented seriously and fully, over time will contribute to reducing the chances of armed conflict. Here are some suggestions for a framework of long term measures:

Ø **Strengthening and spreading democratic governance:** Differences within societies on issues or policies are not only normal but a healthy sign of pluralism. The best way to manage these differences and protect and promote human rights is through democratic governance which encompasses free and fair elections, freedom of expression, rule of law and safeguarding basic liberties and freedoms. Sustained efforts by the international community and the United Nations towards promoting the democratic norm should be accorded high priority. This measure would promote healthy and cooperative intra-State relations. Subversion of democracy, either one's own or of others, should be unacceptable.

Ø **Removal of economic impoverishment:** Endemic poverty and the lack of economic development are widely acknowledged to be important causes fuelling conflict. Left unattended, economic hardship, absence of gainful employment, the stress of daily survival, a psychology of despair and deracination erode traditional and cultural bonds binding people and fertilize the ground for conflict. And the magnitude of the economic hardship faced by the world's people, as stated by the Secretary General in his Millennium report "We the Peoples", is truly staggering: nearly half the world's population, around 3 billion people, earn less than 2 dollars a day and over 1.2 billion earn less than a dollar a day. This is not the setting for social and political stability and harmony. There are diverse causes of conflict, but a full-scale and relentless international war against poverty and economic impoverishment will be a war against conflict. This imperative generally does not receive the required emphasis and this report is no exception.

- Ø **Respect principles of inter-state relations: Non-interference in internal affairs of states is an important principle of inter-state relations, as well as of the UN Charter. This should be scrupulously respected. Nation building is a task of reconciling variety within society into a harmonious and participative polity and all external actions should promote this and not exacerbate the situation.**

- Ø **Seriously address disarmament: The logic of the simple truth that armed conflict requires arms should be acted upon. The timing for stressing this is appropriate in the midst of the UN Conference to meet the menace of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Access of arms to non-State actors particularly fuels conflict. An answer to availability of arms and weapons in the hands of terrorists and insurgents, who operate impervious to law and outside its realm, is a major challenge in conflict prevention. It is imperative that states stop supply of arms to such groups; and take resolute action to prevent trafficking in arms and weapons. The ongoing Conference presents us with a historic opportunity to do so which we should not let slip away.**

- Ø **Commitment to peaceful negotiations: Between States, differences should be settled through peaceful negotiations carried out in good faith. This calls for patience, perseverance, and determination to stay the course in this spirit. Coercion and violence should be unacceptable as a currency of international behaviour.**

Mr. President,

Over the years, the General Assembly, as well as the Security Council, have adopted enough resolutions on the various issues covered in this report that are within their respective spheres and within the remit of the UN. What is required is pursuing these guidelines with prudence and sagacity.