

Briefing by the United Nations Secretary General on priorities for 2019

Extempore Intervention made by Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, Permanent Representative

16 January 2019

I extend my condolences to the government, the people and friends from Kenya including from the Permanent Mission of Kenya for the deaths suffered while countering the recent dastardly terrorist attack in Nairobi. They have been the latest victims of scourge that all of us have faced.

2. I would like to thank the Secretary General and his team for the eloquent manner in which they have laid out what they have achieved last year and what are their plans for this year. However, as they say, yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose. Hence, I am particularly grateful that the Secretary General has kindly indicated what are the issues that will define this year.

3. It is no surprise that as a country which has immensely benefited from global cooperation, India fully supports the Secretary General in his endeavours - whether it is in felt-needs related to peace and security, climate action, digital technologies or SDG implementation, including for those who should not be left behind. I don't need to say that that ours is a country which has benefited from global cooperation and helped millions, tens of millions, maybe hundreds of millions of people come out of poverty in the last couple of decades. We fully support your efforts in this direction. That said, sometimes when you speak last you have little say, but there are two issues that I would like to seek from you, your views on.

4. One is the agenda is ambitious, but we also need to plan for difficulties. So, If I may ask from you what you think would be the greatest challenge to fulfilling this agenda. We would appreciate your views on the one challenge that you think could undermine efforts in moving towards fulfilling this agenda.

5. The second issue is a comment and perhaps it is linked. It is a perception, it may be correct may not be correct, maybe you could clarify. It relates to the recent letter that you had sent on 11 January 2019 about the financial situation of the UN. As was said previously by my colleague from Bangladesh, it is very disconcerting that the UN has only perhaps two months of cash available to undertake its activities. But equally disconcerting is what is not said in that letter, but it is alluded to. It refers to the way that Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) are being impacted. You did mention that TCCs are being impacted. I asked one of my young colleagues to do a quick check of how TCCs are impacted and some of the figures are stunning.

6. If you look at the top 5 TCCs, there is one TCC, which was owed 100 times its annual contribution to the UN. 100 times - it is not only peacekeeping but all contributions. If it was only peacekeeping, probably it would be 200 or 300 times more. There is in the top five TCCs, one TCC which was owed 100 years of contributions that it should ordinarily make to the UN. This is an enormous burden for a TCC to bear, in addition to what they are doing in terms of providing people and personnel, equipment etc. to the UN. But it doesn't end there. I looked down the top five TCCs and found there is another TCC, which was owed 200 years of its annual contribution. The UN now owes two TCCs and let me clarify this is not about my country. We are a big TCC, we have been contributing to peacekeeping operations but I am giving you these examples for the simple reason that its arrears are now a scourge.

7. Under our financial rules, there must be some way that these are limited. Otherwise, all that we are witnessing is that the Compact in terms of the arrangement for peacekeeping has broken. I would like to have your views on this and solutions to this because this undermines our entire philosophy of leaving no one behind. We are leaving TCCs behind, even as we fulfil contractual obligations to those who give business. After all, TCC arrears also need to be addressed. We are all responsible because we have created this situation. We need to start addressing solutions to this and we would appreciate if you have any thoughts.

8. If a country does not pay two years of its contributions, it loses its vote but the UN is not paying 100 years equivalent to one TCC and 200 years of

contribution to another TCC and this certainly is not a sustainable proposition going forward. We would like to have your thoughts and views on this. These are challenges we should not shirk from answering. It impacts on many people who may not want to speak but I think the factual situation requires us to address these candidly and try to see if we can resolve these issues.

Thank you.