

Statement by Argentina at the Open Debate of the United Nations Security Council

Maintenance of International Peace and Security:
“War, its lessons, and the search for a permanent peace”

29 January 2014
(Unofficial Transcript)

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened today’s open debate. I would also like to thank you, Sir, for the concept paper (S/2014/30, annex).

The proposal made by Jordan for today’s debate leads to a discussion on how we can put into practice the purposes and principles of the United Nations, the Organization that was established as a result of the tragic and traumatic experience of the Second World War, its main objective being the promotion of peace through the prohibition of the use of armed force. As the concept paper states, today there are different types of conflict and situations that, without fitting into the traditional concept of war, still present threats and risks to international peace and security. We are living in an era that is almost completely dominated by internal conflicts, an era where we have seen the commission of serious human rights violations, including genocide.

We say that we live in a world without wars, if by that we mean the brutal configurations of wars between nations or groups of countries of the twentieth century, such as those we saw in the First and Second World Wars. However, we do not live in a world without conflict or confrontations or fights over interests.

We believe that the attainment of a world without wars in the sense of traditional wars is due to the creation of military technology of terrible destructive power. Indeed, contemporary weapons are capable of destroying humankind many times over, so war between great Powers has become nonsensical and improbable, although not impossible.

However, we can also describe our era as being one that is intensely destructive and marked by the proliferation of indiscriminate violence that strikes, terrorizes and kills innocent men and women, young people, children, contradicting the ethical principle that no one should be used for others’ purposes. Why do I say that? It is clear that today the interests of power centres with greater economic and military might in the globalized world and the objectives of circumstantially based and flexible alliances of power between different Powers to control or condition the fate of certain countries or regions, generally those of developing countries, are alien to the peoples and communities that need, desire and crave a life of dignity and a world of peace. Proof can be seen in the exponential increase in the number of civilian victims in conflicts — from 20 per cent during the First World War to 50 per cent in the Second World War to 80 or 90 per cent in contemporary armed conflicts, destroying thereby the basic principle of personal responsibility and the exclusion of responsibility for external factors that are part of modern life.

It is important to point out that there are new scenarios, new actors and different dimensions where new forms of violence appear in relation to powerful but age-old economic and military structures of domination and discipline or new threats that come from the actions of non-State actors. We are talking about acts of terrorism, the globalization of organized crime, savage and predatory struggles for natural resources, and various forms of authoritarian fundamentalism. But we are also talking about ethical and political violence that generate and compound hunger, exclusion, discrimination and inequality in order to protect the privileges of powerful or affluent minorities in the light of majorities that are devastated by poverty and uncertainty. The actions and decisions of the globalized financial power centres, for example, show that today war can be done through other means.

Before the Charter of the United Nations, there were humanitarian norms on war, such as The Hague Convention of 1907, but only with the United Nations did the principle of peace become a supreme standard of international law and the relations between nations. However, we know that there is a great gap between what is said in the Charter and reality. We know that we have contributed significantly in the Organization to the objective of containing the deepening and expansion of conflicts. But we also know that we have not been extremely coherent and effective in preventing them.

It is crucial that the rule of law and the effective exercise in equal conditions of all peoples of the right to sustainable development and the harmonizing of the goals of justice and peace through the strengthening of national capabilities but also through international mechanisms that fight against impunity, such as the International Criminal Court, be recognized as some of the most important challenges we have to take on.

To conclude, I believe that it is crucial that we put into practice regional and universal early-warning mechanisms to prevent atrocities, an aspect in which regional and national scope becomes essential to cooperation and dialogue in order for the rule of law to be strengthened. I would like to highlight the Latin American and Caribbean region's commitment to observing and strengthening the rule of law, in particular through the adoption of democratic instruments.

We face a number of challenges — economic, social, environmental, political, ethical and cultural in nature. One of them entails leaving behind the vestiges of old imperialist vices, which emerge as colonial anachronisms that persist in the twenty-first century itself. To do so, we must redouble the Organization's efforts for the eradication of colonialism, which was one of the United Nations founding goals, taking into account the particularities of each situation. My country believes it appropriate to highlight the need to resolve conflicts through dialogue in order to contribute to their peaceful resolution. Among the means for peaceful resolution at the disposal of the Organization and its States Members is the role of the good offices that the Organization can entrust to the Secretary-General. Good offices missions or any other means for the peaceful resolution of conflicts will achieve their desired result if parties to the conflict fulfil their responsibilities in good faith in those processes.

Ensuring peace was the clear purpose of the Organization's founders, but to ensure that it is lasting, not only is the Security Council required to act, but also all United Nations organs and the different Member States as well, to build true multilateralism in full equality, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter.