



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SECURITY COUNCIL – OPEN DEBATE

**MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY: WAR, ITS LESSONS, AND THE SEARCH
FOR A PERMANENT PEACE**

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President

Today's discussion deals with an essential aspect of long-term reconciliation and thus ultimately of conflict prevention, which puts it squarely within the competence of this Council, but also of other UN bodies. The Human Rights Council in particular has done related work, through its resolutions on the right to the truth. Indeed, the Council has created a mandate on the promotion of truth and justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

Mr. President

There is no doubt that the way we deal with the past has a significant impact on how we shape the future. It has been said that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. But the question you are placing before us is a more complex one: How do we make sure that there is a history to learn from in the first place? A common narrative that brings together those who have engaged in a conflict? We are confronted time and again with the difficulty of creating such a common narrative. One prominent example is the outbreak of World War I, the seminal catastrophic event of the 20th century. The 100th commemoration of its outbreak this year has already led to an enormous production of research, articles, books and analysis – and to the conclusion that, after a full century and enormous resources and brainpower dedicated to the topic, we are still lacking a common narrative on an event that has had far-reaching consequences that are still with us today. A full century certainly is a very long time – but we have seen conflicts where historic events from several centuries ago have played a role, sometimes a critical one, in the rhetoric and dynamic leading to the outbreak of hostilities or

the inability to solve a conflict.

Mr. President

Reconciliation certainly is an essential element of ensuring that a peace agreement leads to more than the mere absence of armed conflict – or, to use your words: a permanent peace. Peace agreements should always contain mechanisms which allow for the necessary reconciliation efforts among the conflict parties, where necessary and helpful with outside help. Such mechanisms should be part and parcel of any peace-building effort that we put in place. These efforts usually require a long-term commitment, they always require time. Establishing a common narrative can be a complex, painful and time-consuming undertaking. Promoting such a narrative and ensuring that it is processed and embraced can be the work of generations. History is written by humans and as such the product of interpretation and judgments of individuals. It can therefore be argued, of course, that there is no such thing as “the truth”, but rather that truth is an agreement on the interpretation of and the way of giving meaning to historical events and facts. Only a historic narrative agreed to by those who have been on opposing sides in a conflict can therefore serve the purpose of reconciliation and therefore creating and ensuring a permanent peace. Competing historical narratives can have quite the opposite effect and be an important factor in the recurrence of conflict.

Mr. President

One element of establishing such a joint narrative is individual criminal accountability in conflict situations where the most serious crimes under international law have been committed. In ensuring that there is no impunity for such crimes, we achieve two goals: First, there can be no closure for those involved in a conflict, be it as victims or as participants, unless those who bear the largest share of responsibility for such crimes are brought to account. An international consensus has therefore emerged that there can be no amnesties for these crimes. And second, there is no way a community traumatized by such events can move on unless the story of what actually happened has been told. So for the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica it is essential that those who have criminal responsibility for this crime are held accountable at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as it is that the story of the actual events, immensely painful as they are, is told. The Security Council has slowly, and somewhat reluctantly, played a role in this respect, while only a limited one. The International Criminal Court and the role the Council can play under its founding treaty, the Rome Statute, give the Council the opportunity to engage consistently and effectively in the effort to ensure accountability. But in most cases so far, it has passed on this opportunity. The perhaps starkest illustration of this fact is the refusal of the Council to engage in a meaningful discussion on accountability for the crimes committed in Syria, some three years into the conflict. Even though a very significant number of States have formally asked the Council to make use of its competence to refer this situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), it has not responded either by doing so or by discussing alternative accountability options.

Mr. President

If individual criminal accountability is key, it is in many cases not enough in and of itself – in particular it will not automatically lead to the creation of a historical narrative that is embraced by all parties to a conflict. A joint effort by those who were divided in conflict to establish the facts, to ensure that the story is told, to create that joint narrative is the perhaps more important component in bringing the conflict to a solid end, in creating a permanent peace. Often, such efforts take the form of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. There are in fact examples where the work of such Commissions alone has been very successful in bringing societies together, most prominently perhaps in South Africa. This is also an area where the UN can make a meaningful contribution and has done so many times in the past, in Guatemala, in El Salvador, in Timor Leste. The United Nations can assist by offering expertise and the experience it has made in connection with other situations. But the key element of success will always be ownership by the parties, the willingness not only to participate in such an effort, but also to promote the joint narrative, to educate future generations and to make sure that the narrative is embraced.

The most important lesson we have drawn, collectively, is the one reflected in the Charter of the United Nations and repeated many times since: that war is a scourge and creates incredible suffering, in particular among those who bear no guilt and no responsibility. The UN has been a very successful organization – both in ending conflicts and in creating peace. But we are as far as ever from our goal to prevent armed conflict. An essential element in this respect is outlawing war – while the Charter achieved this goal, it did not create criminal responsibility for individuals who violate this law. This gap can be filled by all of us by giving the ICC jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. We therefore hope that as many States as possible will ratify the Kampala amendments to allow for the activation of this jurisdiction in the year 2017

I thank you.