

December 21, 2010

Concluding Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Special Security Council Event for Voices of a New Generation, December 21, 2010

Okay, I'm going to try to address the question about cyber-terrorism in the context of some concluding remarks, speaking on behalf of myself and the United States.

And I wanted to begin just with what I've learned from listening to the videos that you saw [note: click to view videos by Fabiola Estrada (Venezuela), Gloria Ramazani (DRC), and Oussama Bessassi (Tunisia)], from the ones that you will see at the conclusion of our program in a few minutes, and from what I've heard from you all, as you have been kind enough to share your thoughts and questions with us.

On the Security Council, we have a pretty defined and traditional agenda. Our agenda is to focus on those things that immediately and directly affect international peace and security. And so much of the work that the Council does and most of the missions that we send out to different parts of the world, are either about preventing conflict, responding to conflict and therefore protecting people in the midst of conflict, or trying to build up societies and countries after conflict: what we call peace-building. And so the prevention work we do is diplomacy; it's sometimes behind closed doors; sometimes the Secretary General might send a Special Envoy; sometimes the Council as a whole goes out on a mission to try to support the preservation of peace – as we did a few months ago, when the whole Security Council went to Sudan. And Sudan is a big issue on our agenda. We're particularly focused now on the upcoming referendum, in which the people of Southern Sudan will make a decision about whether they want to stay part of Sudan or become independent. And this is an issue that has the potential to end very peacefully and smoothly or end in a violent way. And so the Security Council has been focusing a lot of its effort and energy on the kind of preventive diplomacy that we hope will help diminish the risk of conflict.

We've done that in places like Guinea and West Africa, where they have just come through a very difficult set of elections. We're doing it now on the ground in Haiti, where the UN peacekeeping mission is trying to not only help rebuild after the earthquake and help deal with the cholera epidemic, but also help to resolve the dispute that has arisen over the recent elections.

But the UN also responds to conflict and puts people on the ground to try to protect those who are in harm's way. And that's what the UN is doing in Darfur, and in Congo, in Eastern Congo, where we heard from Gloria. There are some 20,000 UN peacekeepers on the ground and in many other parts of the world. And then we also try to help societies rebuild after they emerge from conflict. And we have UN forces on the ground doing that in Liberia. We have smaller peace-building missions in

places like Sierra Leone, and support operations in places like East Timor. That's sort of the bread and butter of what the United Nations Security Council does in the realm of peace and security.

We also work to fight terrorism and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, prevent nuclear powers emerging outside of the framework of the non-proliferation treaty and to impose sanctions and other measures, as necessary, to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

That's the day to day work we do. It's very important, and we're all deeply committed to it. But what we've heard from you young people today, in your letters, in your videos, in your questions, is that you also want us to be very much focused on those conditions, those circumstances, those events that can give rise to conflict. We've heard about the importance of tackling poverty.

And let me just share with you for those who don't know. Poverty is a major driver of conflict. We've heard many people say that. Let me share with you just one statistic. In countries where the average person earns only 250 dollars a year – those are some of the poorest countries in the world – the scientifically proven risk of conflict, civil conflict, within a five-year time frame, is 15 percent – excuse me – is 15 percent. So where you have an average per capita income of 250 dollars a year, there's a 15 percent risk of civil conflict within a five-year period. Where you have 5,000 dollars a year annual average per capita income – that's a middle income country – the risk of civil conflict over the same five-year period is less than one percent.

There are huge gains for peace and stability to be won with development. And the young people understand that. I think members of the Security Council and the United Nations, I think you heard the Secretary-General say we are increasingly understanding that.

But you are asking us to look at those things, not just poverty but conflict over resources, water, competition for energy, climate change, intolerance, lack of education, radicalization, all of these as factors, that can fuel conflict or undermine peace and security. And to be very candid, there are many parts of the United Nations system that do those things every day. We have UNICEF on the ground providing health and education and shelter to kids who need it. We have the UN Development Program helping to foster sustainable development and good governance and democracy. We have the World Food Program delivering relief supplies all over the world every day. But in the Security Council we still take a pretty traditional view of what the promotion and protection of peace and security means.

And coming to the question of cyber security or cyber terrorism – to be quite candid, that is not an issue that is presently on the agenda of the Security Council. I think if we were candid and we discussed it, there would be some controversy or

disagreement on whether it should be. It's not become, in our estimation, a traditional issue of peace and security. But I am old enough to remember in 1999, under another U.S. Presidency of the Security Council, led by the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke – where the Security Council put on its agenda for the first time disease, and specifically HIV/AIDS, as a threat to international peace and security. In the year 2010 it doesn't take a great deal of imagination to understand that HIV/AIDS and other pandemics are a threat to international peace and security. And so, it may be before too long that issues like cyber security and cyber terrorism are equally well understood to be of the sort that perhaps merits the attention of the Security Council.

So I want to thank you for raising it and I want to thank all of you in closing for the really extraordinarily thoughtful, insightful, perspectives that you shared with us here in this room, via video, via email, via written note, I hope this is not the last time that the Security Council has the opportunity not just to hear from young people, but to work on behalf of young people, very consciously and very directly.

I think of this event as just the very beginning, a youth event with the Security Council version 1.0. We need to find more frequent and more meaningful ways to bring your perspectives, your voices, your insights to bear on the work we do. I have a dream that one day I will wake up and look at the table in the Security Council chamber where sadly we were not able to be today, and see it on occasion populated by people your age, talking about, debating, thinking through the most important issues of the day. And we would all learn and benefit from that. So, maybe we'll get there one day; this is a first step.

And I want to thank you all for participation, your patience, your flexibility. I want to very much thank my colleagues on the Security Council. And I want to thank the Secretary-General and all of the staff of the Secretariat who worked so hard to put this together after the upset we had of our original plan. So thank you all, and now I want to conclude by showing this video montage. It's about eight minutes, of some of the videos that we were not able to discuss but wanted you to see.

Thank you very much.