

Réception UNA-UK

22 octobre 2015

Mot d'introduction

Baroness Amos,

Sir Peter,

Lord Hannay, Sir Jeremy,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you here to the French Residence as we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations.

During my career as a diplomat, I have been lucky enough to be posted to all the permanent member countries of the Security Council – from Russia, as a young political officer, to New York, Paris, Beijing and now here to London.

I was in New York for the fiftieth anniversary of the UN, I was head of the UN directorate in Paris for the sixtieth anniversary; heaven knows where I will be for the eightieth!

As you can see, the UN is close to my heart. Even when I was Ambassador to the EU Political and Security Committee, working on the EU security strategy, my government and I strongly advocated keeping the UN at the heart of our strategy. I strongly believe that the

UN and its Charter are at the core of our collective security and are the pillars on which our peace and prosperity stand.

Very often, we hear of the shortcomings of the UN. Is it fit for purpose? Does it still work? Can it achieve anything? But we rarely hear about its successes.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed what a tremendous job the UN can do. And tonight I would like to quickly highlight four areas where change has been most dramatic:

1. Firstly, peacekeeping.

There have been huge changes in peacekeeping since twenty years ago. A typical peacekeeping operation then would have been like the one in Cyprus: a static UN presence overseeing a ceasefire or a line of demarcation between two parties.

China was not interested in peacekeeping at the time and UN intervention to protect civilian victims of conflicts was out of the question.

Today, the responsibility to protect is at the heart of UN operations and one of the first duties peacekeepers have. China has become the biggest P5 contributor to peacekeeping operations, and the UK is making a welcome comeback to peace operations after twenty years of near absence. I want to show my appreciation for this decision today.

It is important for the P5 to take an active part in peacekeeping. Drafting the mandates is not enough. We need to show that we are

ready to take part when it is needed. The legitimacy of the Security Council rests on such active engagement.

This is why France shouldered its responsibility when asked by the Malian government to come and help in the face of the very real threat of Islamist insurgents in January twenty-thirteen. This is why France also intervened in the Central African Republic when everyone could see a genocide was about to happen.

The P5 and Western countries in general can bring much-needed expert capabilities to peacekeeping operations, with enablers such as special forces, planning staff and airlift capabilities. All are essential to ensure the efficiency of modern peacekeeping operations.

2. Secondly, the defence and advocacy of universal human rights

The respect and observance of fundamental human rights is at the very core of the UN, in the preamble of the Charter itself.

The UN has been at the forefront of this effort to promote and defend human rights for the last seventy years. When I was head of the UN directorate in Paris, I witnessed the creation of the Human Rights Council, to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights, whose flaws were only too obvious.

The HRC:

- established the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, so no member state would escape universal scrutiny of its human rights record;
- it sends special rapporteurs on human rights to countries suspected of violations, it sets up commissions of inquiry on situations such as Syria, the war in Gaza, Sri Lanka and North Korea;
- it promotes the universality of the rights stated in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Every day, these rights are under threat from states and organizations such as ISIS which want to restrict freedoms or persecute communities. The UN bodies and agencies do their utmost to uphold these rights, from the UNHCR helping and protecting civilians fleeing conflicts to the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, ensuring that no situation remains unreported.

We cannot allow these rights to be threatened and their universality to be contested. Our duty as member states is to help the UN as best we can. Our collective commitment to the defence of human rights and the promotion of these universal values must not falter in the face of these challenges.

3. Thirdly, the protection of women and girls

The last twenty years have seen a realization that half of the world's population is being left out of decision making. Women and girls are often ignored when it comes to protection or to the role they can play in peacemaking and rebuilding their countries after a conflict.

The UN pushed for change. In October two-thousand the Security Council adopted the historic Resolution thirteen twenty-five, drawing attention to the differential impact of armed conflict on women, their exclusion from conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and the inextricable links between gender equality and international peace and security.

Fifteen years later, a lot still needs to be done but the issue is still very much on the agenda of the Security Council. No later than last week, Resolution twenty-two forty-two was unanimously adopted. It is an innovative and ambitious resolution, for instance urging the Secretary-General to double the number of women in peacekeeping operations in the next five years.

It is the first time a resolution has made the Women, Peace and Security agenda a central component of our efforts to address the challenges of the current global context, including rising violent extremism, climate change and conflicts.

4. And fourthly, the fight against climate change.

We often forget that climate change was first brought to the attention of the Security Council by the UK in two-thousand-and-seven.

This ministerial meeting was a wake-up call. It was one of the most successful ministerial meetings and helped foster collective action to combat climate change.

In December, in Paris, the world will be watching as we gather to agree on a deal that we hope will be a watershed moment, where the world will tackle climate change head-on and provide solutions.

I strongly believe we can all pull our resources together and turn this summit into a success.

To achieve success, Paris must see everyone mobilize: states, civil society, private businesses and local authorities. I am confident that, with the strong and tireless support the UK has given us from the beginning, we will find an effective response to the greatest challenge our civilization has ever faced.

Finally,

I would like to say one last word to Lord Hannay. You may not remember it, and I can't blame you for that, but I was posted in New York when you were the UK's permanent representative there. You were the star of the Security Council then, and everyone would turn to you in difficult times to look for advice. Sergei Lavrov was your Russian counterpart, so these moments would happen more often than

not. You were also renowned for your humour, in a setting, the UN Security Council, which is not usually very conducive to it.

You are still an example to us all and a strong advocate of the UN and what it stands for. It is a pleasure for me to host this reception at the French Residence today, when you will be receiving the Sir Brian Urquhart award for your service to the United Nations.

Thank you.