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**AT THE GENEVA PEACE WEEK TOWN HALL MEETING:
TAKING STOCK ON “SUSTAINING PEACE”**

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Excellences...Honourable Guests...Ladies and Gentlemen...

I am very pleased to have the floor during Geneva Peace Week and talk about sustaining peace. Because this topic is very personal for me. As the PGA of the 72nd Session, right at the beginning I chose to put primary focus on the peace dimension in the work of UN. Because that is what's central to the UN. That's why it was founded – as a reaction to the horrors of Second World War. And that's the tricky word here: reaction.

For many decades, UN was in a reactive mode in the peace agenda. It focused on peacekeeping, though many times in environments with no peace to keep. Honestly, I always thought it was not quite enough. Because while UN was born as a reaction, it said in the very first sentence of its Charter: save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Save the next generations. Protect them from yet another conflict. So in other words – prevent it.

And in 2016, UN very rightly decided to take on a new approach. With the adoption of the two resolutions of Security Council and General Assembly on *Sustaining peace* in April 2016, it decided to act earlier and better, and to make a significant move from reaction to prevention.

Sustaining peace encompasses the full conflict cycle - in which armed clashes are only the most extreme category. This approach builds on a long-term view of conflict - rather than just addressing imminent crises, or simply managing conflict to avoid escalation - it takes seriously the value of development, human rights and humanitarian aid for political and social stability.

Some call it a ground-breaking shift. Personally, I think that 70 years on, we simply came back to the beginning. We returned to that first sentence of our Charter. Because while UN of 1945 might have been good to go in the era characterized by coming out of conflict, to “react” in 2018 is always too little too late.

So, we are 2 and half years in since the twin resolutions. *Where do we go from here?*

So let's start with – as the title of this event instructs us – taking stock.

During the 72nd General Assembly, me and my team had a goal to bring sustaining peace to a greater attention of world leaders and with the 2 resolutions 2 years in – renew their momentum.

So we set up a roadmap, which took us to many regions and culminated last April, when I hosted the first High-level meeting on Peacekeeping and Sustaining Peace, which brought to New York the highest level of representation since the General Debate. 125 Member States, 6 heads of states, dozens of ministers and 150 civil society agents discussed Sustaining peace for 2,5 days.

And we heard powerful responses from the delegations. Many put their weight behind this new approach to peace. Many put forward their concerns and voiced the challenges we need to overcome. Many put on the table the best practices and new ideas. I think I can say we have all put more light on Sustaining peace. We adopted a consensus resolution to follow up on Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and created a promising momentum.

Now – we can't lose it.

To help us utilize and maintain the momentum, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present an interim report on progress during the 73rd session and detailed report for the 74th session. So, we turned a once-off event into a process, assessing the progress on this important agenda on annual bases. And events like this one add a great deal to it. So I very welcome this Town hall meeting and I am very pleased to join.

Today, I would offer 3 key ingredients I consider crucial to take this agenda forward:

1. First, change of mindset.

How does that old saying go? You can't teach an old dog new tricks?

Well, our 73 year old Organization is learning new tricks. So - it's not going to be completely smooth.

But that is no reason to get discouraged. I know that frequently, processes at the UN evolve slowly. But they evolve. And this process – it is a fundamental one. Because this is not a bureaucratic exercise. UN cannot not settle for an inert, technocratic approach, focused only on building capacity. At heart – sustaining peace is a drive for transformative change.

A change of mindset:

- a) [Change of mindset] which puts a greater emphasis on prevention.

Because our job is not to just react and resolve. Put out fires. It's to act soon enough – before the outbreak, escalation or recurrence. We need to tackle the roots of conflict. Instead of waiting till it turns deadly.

b) [Change of mindset] which looks ahead and around.

It makes a great difference whether we think about the next election or the next generation. We need to set our visions much more ahead. Not plan in short-term frames. Look far beyond the peace deal and make sure it last for generations, not just an election cycle. And we can't keep looking in just one direction. Instead, we need to look around. Look at security, development and humanitarian work all together, and not in 3 different tracks. We need to see peace in the mosaic of development and humanitarian action.

c) [Change of mindset] which recognizes that peace is a responsibility of us all.

Not just those who hold power. Politicians. Diplomats. Soldiers. Men. For decades, we only saw women as victims. We only saw the youth as bystanders. We are changing that, seeing them for what they truly can be – champions of peace.

I know it's never easy to change the old ways. To learn new tricks. But we have to. Because we keep asking more and more from the UN. We keep asking UN to deliver in new agendas.

To deliver in new areas. To bring new ideas. But we cannot expect old ways to bring us new solutions.

So how to do this?

For human being - to change a mindset – we need a strong will. For the UN – to change a mindset – we need a political will.

So the second ingredient is a

2. Real political will.

Even the best concept imaginable will fail without political will. It is easy to talk a big game. But if we really do believe in this concept, in this new mindset, we cannot leave it there. To remain just a concept. Just an aspiration. It needs to guide the real work UN does on the ground every day.

We need to take our commitments further. Sustaining peace agenda needs a massive increase in support – perhaps achievable by scaling back the record-level investments in fighting war – and increasing efforts in supporting peace.

You know that Secretary General proposed a “*quantum leap*” in investments into peacebuilding.

Investing in conflict prevention is first and foremost - a matter of moral duty. Isn't that quite outrageous, that the human capacity for innovation and creativity, taking form in ever more sophisticated technologies, is more often used for pursuit of war, rather than pursuit of peace?

But investing in prevention is also - a matter of financial prudence. Investment in building peace save lives. So it's a right thing to do. But it's also a smart thing to do. Because it opens doors and possibilities for development and human thriving. So necessary to accomplish our sustainable development goals.

You've already heard me say it many times before and I will say it again – the World Bank and the UN estimate that for every 1 US dollar spent on prevention, up to 7 dollars could be saved.

We need to take this beyond the resolutions and to the field. And I know some of you have concerns. It is normal, because changing the old ways always brings reservations. We heard some of these concerns also during the HL event in April. And most of them revolved around issues of sovereignty (1) and divisions of competences (2).

And these concerns are sincere. We heard many of them also upon adoption of SDGs. Especially Goal 16. But let's actually use the example of SDGs for reassurance.

SDGs were developed through a uniquely consultative process and agreed by consensus. A shining example of multilateralism. And 2030 Agenda gave us a global development goal calling for peaceful, just and inclusive societies (16).

And also back then, there were concerns about intervening with state sovereignty. But SDG16 was not imposed. It was not a plot of the "North" against the "South". It was a result of understanding, response to global call for peace, supported by G7 and African Union alike.

Just like that – Sustaining Peace - if we add these ingredients I am talking about - is a recipe for less intervention. Not more. So let's not be afraid.

Others are concerned about the clarity in division of responsibility between UN pillars, or even between UN General Assembly and Security Council. And here, we must be clear. Maintenance of international peace and security remains the primary domain of the Security Council.

But this is about prevention. Not intervention. It's about coherence, not substitution.

This agenda is impossible without strong coherence both inside the UN and outside its walls, because prevention must be integral to all UN efforts. But the Secretary-General and the UN agencies will only be successful in that, if we, the Member States, let them and equip them.

And that is the third ingredient I want to talk about.

3. Effective multilateralism with UN at its core.

As the former PGA, trust me, I am not oblivious to the internal challenges to the UN and multilateral system. But every international organization is only as strong as we, the Member States let it and equip it.

We can't keep asking the UN to deliver more and more – to fundamentally change its understanding of peace - and not match our demands with support. Or even worse. Signal direct threats to the multilateralism and to the UN.

Unfortunately, the truth is that *we see* some of its fundamental principles eroded from beneath us.

We see the Organization undermined – by unilateralism, exclusive clubs, attempts to resolve disputes by force - economic or military. By erasing rules that have guided us for decades. Returning to rules of power. Leaving agreements.

We see the Organization misrepresented - blamed for our own shortcomings.

We see the Organization misused - flooded with bilateral agendas. Many, instead of constructive dialogue, take out bilateral disagreements on multilateral platforms.

The UN can only be successful in pursuing the objective of *sustaining peace* if we all recommit to the founding principles we set for ourselves many years ago. By deeds. Not just words. We all.

Not just those of us, who are living with conflict. *Not just those of us*, who have vested economic or social interest. *Not just those of us*, who have time – or money.

National, regional, international actors. Private sector. Civil society. Every one of us, working together in partnerships. We must keep the promises made in 2016.

We all.

It is our joint political and moral responsibility. And I hope it will be the legacy we leave to future generations.

Thank you for your attention.