



S L O V A K I A

**Statement by His Excellency
Ambassador Michal Mlynár**

**Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to
the United Nations in New York**

**at the High-Level Open Debate of the UN Security Council
on “Pandemic and Security”**

New York, 2 July 2020

Thank you, Mr. President,

First of all, I would like to thank the German Presidency of the United Nations Security Council for organizing this timely debate on security challenges related to the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. This debate could generate more focused attention and serve as a call for common action to help the most vulnerable countries and populations.

Mr. President,

It is clear that the transboundary nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has strongly reminded us of the interconnectedness of the world community. This is the reason why we need to reinforce the common understanding that only together we will be able to overcome the negative consequences of this unparalleled global health crisis.

In this context, we consider very important the UN Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire and protection for the most vulnerable groups. We believe that no one should be left behind in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, we have to recognize that combatting the COVID-19 pandemic will require concerted international cooperation. We all have to try to do more and stay committed to working together and sharing experiences, best practices and information in a transparent and timely manner in order to decisively and effectively control the spread of the pandemic. This should be done while helping to meet vulnerable countries and populations' needs, safeguarding people's well-being and security and maintaining socio-economic stability.

This pandemic is unprecedented in many ways, but some issues related to it are very familiar to us. We remember very well the negative effects of the past epidemics (SARS, Ebola, etc.) on the stability and security of the affected countries. Nowadays, we are witnessing again that countries most vulnerable to disease outbreak are those in the midst of or recovering from conflict, where health systems have deteriorated and lack of security can hinder prevention measures.

Mr. President,

At the launch of the global humanitarian response plan on 25 March this year, UN Secretary-General rightly pointed out that the pandemic threatened to divert international attention and resources from resolving ongoing conflicts and supporting peace processes.

Unfortunately, the spread of the coronavirus pandemic has already forced United Nations peacekeeping missions to reassess their activities in order to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. UN peacekeeping missions have had to adapt their operations to minimize the risk of spreading the coronavirus to both the people they are tasked to protect and to the peacekeepers themselves. They have been forced to take unavoidable steps to cope with the new situation. However, full extent of the impact of COVID-19 on the mission setting is yet to be ascertained, but undoubtedly the pandemic has the potential to reverse hard-won gains towards achieving sustainable peace and reforming the security institutions. Going forward, it

will be important to continue to emphasize the importance of further investing beyond political commitment.

It seems that some of these new unprecedented measures are specific to the COVID-19 pandemic and will change over time in response to the development of the situation. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that some others are likely to be more lasting.

In this regard, we will need to discuss how to adjust the current structure and operating procedures of UN peacekeeping missions to the complexities of the post-COVID-19 era. We will need further substantial debates on how to achieve this objective, especially how to ensure long-term reliable and predictable resources for UN peacekeeping operations, as well as on how best practices and lessons-learned in confronting COVID-19 during these challenging times can be systematically incorporated into the work of UN peace operations.

The best news for all of us is that despite shift of attention we managed to keep our key security tasks and UN missions up and running. We did it collectively, not individually. Not everything is and can be multilateral, but it is our conviction that multilateral solutions are the best in a world where global power competition comes with new faces and more cunning tentacles.

I would like to highlight that the security sector is a key component in government response to the COVID-19 public health crisis in many regions. Armed forces and police services play a critical protection role. They are often involved in sensitizing the public about these extraordinary measures, as well as enforcing social distancing measures. They also support the health services in terms of logistics and transportation. The armed forces medical personnel have reinforced the civilian health services. Trust and only trust of the people in the government and the security sector is essential to stop the transmission of the virus.

Mr. President,

Even at the time of a global pandemic it is of paramount importance to support women's participation in peacebuilding and their full and effective participation in all peace efforts. The need for urgent crisis responses often push gender considerations to the side, but maintaining focus on the women, peace and security agenda is very important.

We also need to uphold human rights standards and make further efforts to better integrate human rights considerations into the work of the United Nations peacekeeping missions while ensuring that they deliver on their security commitments. At the same time, individual countries have to prevent the deterioration of human rights situations related to emergency measures. The COVID-19 presents new challenges to our societies, but fighting the coronavirus shouldn't mean abandoning human rights.

Thank you, Mr. President.