

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. MIROSLAV LAJČÁK, PRESIDENT OF THE 72ND
SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AT HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE
ON SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND SUSTAINING PEACE
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Good afternoon – Madame Deputy-Secretary-General, President Xanana Gusmão, Ambassadors Matjila and Mlynár, Excellencies, Dear Colleagues and Friends,

This week, leaders and decision-makers will come together, in this building. Their aim is to move closer, to a world of Sustaining Peace. And, Security Sector Reform can help to make this happen. That is why today's discussion is so crucial. And, I want to thank Slovakia and South Africa for bringing us together, this afternoon. To start us off, I will make two main points.

And, my first one is very simple: Security Sector Reform is key to Sustaining Peace. For years, the United Nations has been doing good work on the ground. But, we came to see that there were gaps. We placed too much focus on responding to conflict – and its effects. But not enough on prevention. And, that is why we are working towards a new approach. We are trying to do more – to grab onto peace, before it slips away. And to make it stronger, after conflict, so it won't break down again.

This, in essence, is Sustaining Peace. And, armies, police and other security actors can play a major role, in making it a reality. They can maintain stability, during periods of high tensions. They can work to build trust with – and even among – communities. They can step in, to protect people from violence and intimidation. But, their role can also be a very negative one. Security actors can become politicised. They can widen divisions. They can stoke fears and tensions. And they can abuse their positions, to target and persecute one group or one community.

So, security actors have many powerful tools, at their disposal. This goes beyond guns and handcuffs. Instead, they hold the tools which can pull societies back from the brink of conflict – or push them over the edge. And, this is not down to chance. From our experience, over the last decades, we can point to firm indicators: Effectiveness. Accountability. Professionalism. And quality of governance. If these elements are present, a security sector is more likely to promote Sustaining Peace.

So, what role can we play, in making sure security sectors can drive peace – and not conflict? I will touch on a few areas, as my second point.

First: National engagement. And, I mentioned this first for a reason. Because, no Security Sector Reform effort will work without national ownership. And, this means true ownership – from security actors, to the people they serve. I am particularly glad to see that our first panel, today, will focus on this issue. Please be as frank as possible. We all stand to learn from these national experiences.

Second: Just as crucial, however, is regional engagement. Many regional organisations have their own capacities and policies for Security Sector Reform – for example the African Union (AU) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). We need to complement – and not duplicate.

Third: Major work is also needed in the area of gender. How can we build a security sector for

an entire society, if the needs of half of this society are ignored? But, gender is – actually – overlooked, a lot. We need more participation of women in Security Sector Reform. And we also need more gender sensitisation and training.

Fourth: Another main issue is financing. It must come from national sources. And it must come from the international community. But, let us be frank: Security Sector Reform is not cheap. It costs a lot of money. But it is far cheaper, than responding to an outbreak of conflict. And it is far cheaper, than rushing back in, after we have withdrawn, because peace had been too fragile to last. And, this is the risk – if we don't invest properly in Security Sector Reform.

And, fifth and finally Coherence, and cooperation. They say too many cooks spoil the soup. And, there are, indeed, a lot of actors working on Security Sector Reform. But that does not mean we cannot, all, meaningful contribute. We just need to be careful; we need strong coordination mechanisms – and clear roles.

We also cannot see Security Sector Reform as a standalone activity. It is a crucial ingredient of Sustainable Development. In fact, we cannot achieve Goal 16 without it. And, like I said initially, it is absolutely crucial to our wider efforts to prevent conflict, and sustain peace.

Here, I want to mention the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections. It is run by the main United Nations' entities dealing with peacekeeping and development, respectively. It brings different strands of the United Nations' work together. It supports Sustaining Peace. And it shows that coherence can happen – in real time - on the ground.

Excellencies,

Security Sector Reform is not, merely, “important”. We use that word too freely at the United Nations. In fact, Security Sector Reform can be difference between peace and conflict; between life and death. That is why, in 2014, the UN Security Council dedicated an entire resolution – resolution 2151 – to it. That is why it is a main component of many United Nations' missions around the world – from Libya to Central African Republic. That is why we have a dedicated Group of Friends on Security Sector Reform. That is why we met, last year in New York and Bratislava. And that is why we are here today. So, let us use our time wisely. Let us share our experiences. Let us come up with ideas, and proposals. Let us focus on how we can make Security Sector Reform stronger – and more capable of supporting Sustaining Peace.

Thank you.