

In the context of threats to international peace and security, the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Our Common Agenda, is a high-quality document containing useful proposals for progress, particularly the New Agenda for Peace.

France commends the quality of the work by the Secretary-General and the Secretariat's staff and would like to add its observations and several proposals on these issues, with three focuses:

- 1) Enhancing the authority of the collective security system;
- 2) Modernizing means of action to support collective security;
- 3) Preventing and reducing strategic risks.

1) Enhancing the authority of the collective security system

1. Enlarging the Security Council

France shares the aim of the Secretary-General and many Member States to make the Security Council more representative. France's position is long-standing. It supports expanding both membership categories – permanent and non-permanent – in order to reinforce the Security Council's legitimacy and authority while preserving its ability to make decisions. France supports the members of the G4 (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) in their advocacy for a permanent seat, as well as greater presence of Africa among both permanent and non-permanent members.

We now need to move forward tangibly, on the basis of a negotiating text and schedule. France underlines the fact that the previous enlargement of the Council in 1963 was widely supported, without the need to reach a consensus.

2. Suspending the veto in the event of mass atrocities

France advocates suspension of veto use in the event of mass atrocities. The initiative launched by the French President in 2013 would involve the five permanent members of the Security Council voluntarily and collectively undertaking not to use the veto where a mass atrocity has been observed. This voluntary initiative would not require revision of the Charter of the United Nations.

In 2015, France undertook to apply this conduct itself and presented a political declaration in support, alongside Mexico. The declaration was well received within the United Nations and is supported by 106 Member States. France intends to continue its efforts in support of governing veto use by encouraging new members to join the initiative, including permanent Security Council members.

France has made tangible proposals for a mechanism to determine cases of mass atrocities and thus trigger the suspension of veto use. France envisages the possibility of a central role for the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in the spirit of Article 99 of the Charter, either on his or her own initiative or at the proposal of the High Commissioner for Human Rights or of a certain number of Member States representing the geographical diversity of the United Nations (France proposes 50).

3. Improving the efficiency of the Security Council's work and expanding its scope

France is in favour of transparency and inclusiveness of Security Council work while taking care to maintain its efficiency, such as by rebalancing the time dedicated to public sessions and that used for negotiation and compromise-building.

We need moreover to take care, in accordance with the Organization's stated aims, to promote multilingualism, ensuring that interpretation is systematically available at the Security Council's meetings. That is a requirement for pluralistic and inclusive debate.

France is in favour of the Security Council addressing cross-cutting themes in order to enhance its prevention actions. When it comes to climate change, for example, the effects in terms of threats to international peace and security are well documented.

4. Stepping up the role and autonomous tools available to the Secretary-General of the United Nations

When it comes to international peace and security, the moral authority of the Secretary-General and the means at his or her disposal are unique assets to help prevent and settle conflicts.

This role should be increased, without prejudice to the prerogatives of the Security Council, including as regards anticipation, good offices and establishment of facts. This would involve strengthening the autonomous tools available to the Secretary-General and a form of prior general agreement, or at least a *nihil obstat*, from the Security Council, particularly its permanent members, as regards their use.

In the same spirit, the appointment of Representatives and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General should no longer require Security Council approval.

2) Modernizing means of action to support collective security

1. Redesigning a comprehensive approach to peacekeeping

Peacekeeping continues to make an essential contribution to international peace and security and France commends the dedication and spirit of sacrifice of the 70,000 peacekeepers currently deployed worldwide.

The New Agenda for Peace should be an opportunity to redesign a comprehensive approach to peacekeeping, in line with the efforts undertaken under the “Action for Peacekeeping Plus” initiative.

a) The lack of dynamic political processes undermines the prospect of credible exit strategies for peacekeeping operations. We need to creatively consider means of restoring these political processes by making the political will of host States central to the implementation of mandates, by strengthening the role of Representatives and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, by ensuring greater integration of peacekeeping efforts with those of regional partners and by encouraging international donor involvement.

b) The challenging of peacekeeping mandates by host countries is concerning, be it in terms of freedom of movement of the force or of prerogatives for protection of civilians and human rights. While consent remains one of the cardinal principles of peacekeeping, it cannot lead to a challenging of the decisions of the Security Council and the very foundations of peacekeeping. In the face of this trend, the United Nations should show firmness in condemning obstacles to the fulfilment of mandates and, at the same time, rebuild a bond of trust with these countries, their authorities and their people. In the most serious cases, the possibility of suspending certain peacekeeping activities should not be excluded, particularly where there is a risk of contravening the strategic aims of the Security Council.

c) The operations of private military and security companies (PMSCs) can run counter to the strategic aims of peacekeeping operations. This is the case for example when mercenaries commit atrocities against civilians, loot natural resources and are an obstacle to political settlement of crises. In this context, the Security Council needs to shoulder its responsibilities so that the host country must stand by its choices and in no case enjoy the support of both peacekeepers and mercenaries with contrary aims.

d) In this context, it is particularly important for peacekeeping missions to have the critical capabilities they require to fulfil their mandates (including air, counter-IED, intelligence and strategic communication capabilities). To that end, all countries with these capabilities should contribute to peacekeeping operations in proportion to their means. That is the approach of France that deploys almost 750 peacekeepers. Innovative initiatives, such as associations of public and private stakeholders, should also be developed in order to provide swift responses to the most urgent needs of peacekeeping operations.

e) Lastly, in order to ensure peacekeeping operations are fully capable of robustly fulfilling their mandate, the practice of undeclared caveats must end. It is no longer acceptable that a head of mission or force commander might discover when the time comes that a contingent cannot be deployed. Full prior transparency of caveats is essential.

2. Renewing the approaches taken by UN mediations

Greater use of the available levers should be made in order to ensure the success of United Nations mediations, including through partnerships with other international actors like regional organizations and international financial institutions. The aim should be to create more robust systems of incentives and disincentives with regard to parties in order to bring peace processes to fruition. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has to be able to make proposals in this sense and the Security Council should shoulder its responsibilities.

UN mediations should also draw more strongly on local mediation capacities and address the various factors of instability, including gender inequalities, in accordance with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Women must be associated with each dimension of the negotiation processes in crises resolution.

3. Contributing to the financing of African peace operations

The Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace calls for predictable finance to be secured for peace support operations delivered under Chapter VIII of the Charter governing regional arrangements. It also calls for examination of means of deepening UN support to regional capacities. France has long supported this principle, particularly for the African continent where the United Nations needs to be able to contribute to the financing, under assessed contributions, to peace enforcement operations, which are complementary to peacekeeping missions.

Negotiations between the UN Security Council and the African Union need to resume and swiftly produce a clear, flexible mechanism enabling strategic control of operations and compliance with international law.

4. Investing in the Peacebuilding Fund

France supports the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen the Peacebuilding Fund, which has proven to be an effective, swift and flexible tool. In particular, France supports the principle of financing the Fund through assessed contributions and wants negotiations on this subject to come to fruition soon. France has already increased its contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund to almost €6.5 million per year, representing a six-fold increase in three years.

The Peacebuilding Commission, meanwhile, plays a useful role addressing recommendations to the Security Council and mobilizing donors. It also needs to act as an active contact point for stakeholders in conflicts, supporting the efforts of the Representatives and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General.

5. Strengthening the efficiency and legitimacy of sanctions regimes

Sanctions are an essential part of the peacekeeping toolbox, as a third way without either inaction or the use of armed force. When targeted, they are a means of applying pressure to actors whose actions are a threat to international peace and security. In the form of an arms embargo, they help avoid fuelling conflict.

However, sanctions are not an end in themselves and need to be considered alongside the other tools available to the United Nations, such as mediation and peacekeeping. **They need to be reversible and adaptable once their aims have been achieved**, highlighting the need to support dynamic political processes.

The efficiency and legitimacy of sanctions should be reinforced. Firstly, their unwanted side-effects need to be mitigated, as the Security Council has decided to do by creating a standing humanitarian exemption. Secondly, the full effectiveness of sanctions needs to be assured and sanctions-busting must be fought.

Lastly, the role and independence of the expert panels that provide useful information for the Security Council's work need to be strengthened. From this point of view, appointments to expert panels by the Secretary-General could be considered without Security Council approval.

6. Strengthening respect for human rights and supporting good governance efforts

France considers that lasting peace is impossible without respect for human rights and dignity. The New Agenda for Peace needs to maintain the key role of human rights, as do the mandates of peacekeeping operations and Special Political Missions.

Investing in good governance and state capacity building is also essential to prepare exit strategies for peacekeeping operations while taking particular care to establish professional security forces that uphold human rights. The new United Nations Programme of Action on Security Sector Reform and Governance for 2022-2025 should be supported.

7. Strengthening treatment of cross-cutting threats

Organized crime is a constantly evolving threat and a major challenge. The New Agenda for Peace should recall the importance of fighting all forms of crime, including trafficking in drugs, arms and human beings, migrant smuggling, corruption and environmental crime.

Environmental crime is of growing concern. This issue needs to be addressed to a greater extent, using appropriate legal frameworks and coordinated action. This growing problem is one of the most lucrative and least risky forms of crime. It is a major source of finance for several criminal networks and contributes to destabilization of many world regions.

The New Agenda for Peace needs moreover to propose a coordinated response to the lasting terrorist threat, tied in with the upcoming update to the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Respect for human rights and international law needs to remain central to our approach. In addition, terrorists take increasingly elaborate steps to recruit, communicate and promote their actions on the Internet. The fight against the financing of terrorism has become more complex with the use of new financial technologies and ties with criminal organizations using opaque financial circuits.

3) Preventing and reducing strategic risks

1. Promoting a positive nuclear disarmament agenda

France promotes a positive agenda for nuclear disarmament based on the reaffirmation of the authority and primacy of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); continued mobilization for the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) and, pending its conclusion, the implementation of a moratorium on the production of these materials; nuclear disarmament verification efforts; and the definition and implementation of tangible measures to reduce strategic risks. These measures should be considered, in addition to and in support of other disarmament measures undertaken in the framework of the NPT, as the mechanisms dedicated to avoiding the risk of nuclear-weapons use, which include dialogues among nuclear-weapon States, and between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. In addition, France reiterates its commitment to both positive and negative security assurances granted by nuclear-weapon States and with which compliance is imperative for all. France also advocates for transparency of all nuclear-weapon States regarding their nuclear doctrine and arsenals.

These elements are the best base for creating the conditions towards a world without nuclear weapons, using a progressive and realistic disarmament approach. On the other hand, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is incompatible with the NPT and weakens our collective security architecture. International arms control and disarmament instruments should be preserved and protected.

2. Continuing work on lethal autonomous weapons systems

France considers that it is important to further identify possible paths to ensure that potential lethal weapons systems integrating autonomy are developed and used in full compliance with international humanitarian law.

Accordingly, the New Agenda for Peace should encourage continuing work under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Group of Governmental Experts (GGE on LAWS) in order to deepen and step up efforts to meet the challenges posed by the potential development of these systems.

3. Stepping up efforts with a view to combating and eradicating trafficking in small arms and light weapons (SALW)

Preventing and combating trafficking in SALW should continue to be one of our priorities. Efforts in this area will help achieve the different objectives of the New Agenda for Peace. In addition, since SALWs play a significant role in violence against women, the inclusion of the gender dimension in SALW control, to ensure its effectiveness, should be encouraged. Generally speaking, the New Agenda for Peace should support the intensification of multilateral, regional and local coordination and cooperation to prevent and combat these types of trafficking.

4. Contributing to securing cyber space

To reduce the impact of malicious cyber activities on peace and stability in cyber space, it is important to continue and deepen discussions on the application of international law (including international humanitarian law) and norms of responsible state behaviour, within the framework of competent bodies of the United Nations General Assembly First Committee (for example, the Open-ended Working Group established for the 2021-2025 period). In this regard,

France has asked under what framework the UNSG's new proposal for a ban on cyber attacks on civilian infrastructure should be placed.

In addition, the ongoing work to establish a United Nations Programme of Action (PoA) could help support the objectives to reduce strategic risks in cyber space. This work would provide a permanent institutional framework to support States in their efforts to implement norms of responsible behaviour in the use of cyber technology, continue discussions on the development of these norms, and further cooperation with all stakeholders (private sector, researchers, civil society) who may contribute to preserving the security and stability of cyber space.

5. Supporting work on outer space

France is pleased to see that outer space is specifically addressed in the joint Programme. As a space nation, it supports the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), especially through the implementation of the 21 Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities. It also supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, with an approach that gradually and pragmatically builds trust among space actors. This approach could be highlighted in the joint Programme.

The joint Programme should accompany these efforts as effectively as possible. It is with this in mind that France's attention has been drawn to several points:

- The discussions conducted in this framework and any political agreement discussed must comply with the prerogatives of the existing bodies and build on them, in order to avoid duplicating or bypassing ongoing work. In this regard, the standpoint from which space will be addressed should be better defined, because this area is developed in several sections of the Programme. The objectives should be clarified;
- The objective of the political agreement on the issue should be clarified, especially its coordination with the principles set out in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty: principles for the future governance of space activities should be consistent with those already enshrined in space law and particularly those set out in the Outer Space Treaty, which remains fully relevant today;
- Although France recognizes that there is an urgent need to address the multiplication of objects in orbit and that this could affect the sustainability of space activities, it considers an international regime for coordinating space traffic as being premature in light of ongoing discussions within States and regions across the world. This refers back to the effective implementation of the 21 Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, which are imperative to the future development of this work.