



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF CANTERBURY



, opening a debate on mediation and conflict resolution.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, addressed the UN Security Council in New York today on the subject of mediation and the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Archbishop Justin, who has an extensive background in reconciliation and has made it one of his personal priorities for his ministry, was making his first speech to the Security Council. [He sits on the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation.](#)

The Archbishop opened a debate entitled: 'Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Mediation and the Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts'.

Read the text of the Archbishop's speech as delivered:

Thank you, President, Secretary-General, Excellencies,

Let me put on record my sincere thanks to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Her Excellency Dame Karen Pierce, for her invitation to address this body during this open debate on the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is also a great honour to speak under the chairmanship of Lord Ahmad. He is an outstanding representative for the British Government.

I would also like to express my sense of loss after the death of one of the greatest servants of the UN, and indeed of peace, Kofi Annan. His life was lived with a vision of reconciliation, and with a personal integrity that will earn him lasting renown.

It is a privilege to follow the Secretary-General's words. We could not have asked for a better opening briefing to set the context of this debate. I greatly look forward to hearing from our civil society representative.

I am honoured to be here with you today speaking in a dual capacity: as a member of the High Level Advisory Board, and also as a religious leader within a global church.

Anglicanism is a global Church in which the average member is, poor, a woman, living in a conflict or post conflict setting, who has the aspirations of all vulnerable people – above all, a longing for peace.

The church and other faith communities are intimately present where there are conflicts. We cannot and will not walk away from them.

For example, in the South Sudan, church leaders – including the leader of the country's Anglican Church, Archbishop Justin Badi – are playing an increasingly important role in moving the whole peace process beyond the current roadblocks you so well know.

However, mediation can only be effective when it is in the context of structures of reconciliation. Where mediation is about resolving conflict,

reconciliation is the process of transforming violent conflict into non-violent co-existence where communities have come to terms with history and are learning to disagree well. Mediation by itself, however skilled, is like using a garden hose to put out a forest fire, when what you need is rain over the whole area to let new life grow and sustain itself.

We therefore need to complement mediation – in fact the whole conflict cycle – within the framework of reconciliation.

The vision of the UN's founders was no less than to abolish conflict. Many of them were responding to the words of Jesus Christ, applicable to all parts of the earth, in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God". Jesus' very life was given in the cause of peace with God, with oneself and with others.

There are and always will be profound differences amongst and within nations – but the terms on which those differences are dealt with look very different today to 70 years ago. We have avoided global, nuclear war, yet not its continuing menace. Yet today the international rule-based order is struggling, national interests are still too often allowed, even in this chamber, to overcome the wisdom that those who had lived through global war had learned. Without dealing with even passionate disagreement peacefully, no national interest can prevail. Short-term advantage for one interest leads to long-term destruction for all, through great wars and through small conflicts.

Reconciliation is not an act that comes at the end of the conflict cycle. It must become the framework that enables us to sustain peace and avoid conflict cycles repeating with ever-increasing destructive force.

A British football coach – a manager of Liverpool FC – once famously told his team to "get their retaliation in first". If we are to transform conflict, we need instead to "get our reconciliation in first".

I ask you, are the approaches to reconciliation currently adequate, especially using local, religious and traditional sources of peace making? Even in this time of uncertainty, and renewed international rivalry, for the sake of future peace we must invest in reconciliation and learn how to support transformation in human relationships better.

The role that an institution like the church plays here is significant. Religious institutions are often the only functioning institution in a fragile or pre-conflict situation. They are present before, during and after conflict. They provide early warning for signs of conflict in communities. Working with and through religious and other institutions to provide 'pre-emptive' reconciliation frameworks can stop conflict becoming violent or returning to violence – it can set it on a different path. Their work is done by young and old, by women and men, by rich and poor. It seeks a peoples' peace.

If we can learn how to set conflict transformation in a framework of reconciliation – including at the grass roots, and not only by elites in

conferences – we open ourselves to working together in new and more effective ways as we strive for peace, as the Secretary-General has just said. We enable mediation to be orders of magnitude more effective. As I have already said, the United Nations is the most extraordinary example of a framework of reconciliation – but this framework needs to be embedded in current ways of working and analysis.

A cross-agency and cross-departmental reconciliation strategy, supported by the necessary resources, will open up current ways of working to new and innovative ways of negotiating strategies for peace, offering more options in an increasingly complex international system.

There is already much good work taking place.

The work of the Mediation Support Unit – which also provides excellent secretariat support for the High Level Advisory Board – is vital.

The Advisory Board itself is an important and innovative step towards a new way of approaching conflict transformation.

Partnership between UN offices and groups such as the Network for Traditional and Religious Peacemakers helps build shared understanding.

The work of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide – particularly the production of a *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes* – offers an important framework for how religious communities need to contribute to preventing escalation of conflicts.

I also want to acknowledge the important work of UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development.

It is, however, overdue for the UN to move beyond these still fragmented efforts. Enabling transformative reconciliation must be at the core when we build UN partnerships with faith communities.

Let me pledge my support to you, Mr Secretary-General, in this work.

I have the privilege of having assembled a team in my office that is already learning from past experiences. Many of them worked with the UN. Together we can reach out to counterparts from other faiths to encourage their involvement and support, as they are already doing.

This is our collaborative offer to you in this time of global pain.

Large tracts of territory around the world are violently contested, in situations where government has failed. They are 'differently governed space', where no official government rules. Even there the Church and other faith groups – sometimes existing precariously – provide a form of hope and mediation in these extraordinarily difficult contexts.

As we think about new and innovative approaches to conflict prevention, this is an example of how the UN, member states and faith actors can

be allies, with the potential for transformational results.

Women's and youth participation – as you have said, Mr Secretary-General – in mediation and conflict transformation is especially essential to success.

We are in the Anglican Communion developing a programme called Women on the Front Line, which offers support and equips women in their contexts. It has already been in several places of severe conflict. It will need to be complemented by youth on the frontline, as this Council emphasised in the year 2000 in Resolution 1925.

Earlier this year, I hosted an 'Emerging Peacemakers Forum' in London – bringing together 50 young Christians and Muslims from around the world in pre-emptive reconciliation to learn about leadership in peacebuilding. My colleagues' superb work liberated participants to inspiring visions of peace. They will serve peace for many years.

In closing, I again want to thank the United Kingdom for the opportunity to address the Security Council in this open debate.

I am grateful to the Secretary-General for his leadership on this issue and his willingness to take innovative steps to seek out new ways of working. At this time of the UN having pointed to the horrors in Myanmar, we are reminded that conflict destroys dignity, hope and all our best dreams, and is often intractable.

So while I want to thank all those who will speak today on behalf of their states, I urge you to commit yourselves to the ongoing transformation of violent conflict into non-violent disagreeing well; to a truly inclusive approach to participation in mediation and reconciliation, now and in future generations.

Thank you.

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