

More than 60 people representing 32 different organisations, institutions and departments attended this second UN Security Council Consultations at Brassey House in Canberra. Twenty of these were from DFAT. DFAT anticipates that there will be a third consultation in the second quarter of 2014. The Minister is committed to civil society engagement in Australia and in New York and welcomes the input and the ideas this activity offers. **The meeting was held under Chatham House rules.**

The Minister sent her apologies. The meeting was opened by Deputy Secretary Chris Moraitis. There was a rehearsal of the success of the small arms resolution, the respect in which Australia is held on account of its sanctions expertise and, perhaps because of the number of women's organisations represented, the commitment to women and girls. Much of the morning was then given over to a briefing from the Head of UN Security Council Task Force and extensive time for questions and comment from the floor.

AusAid

Before this, and perhaps in anticipation of this issue being raised as a concern, there was a specific presentation devoted to the integration of AusAid into DFAT. A strong statement was made about the integrity of the aid program, the respect for AusAid's professionalism and the need for cultural shift that would be required for successful integration.

SC Year Two Priorities

For year two of Australia's role on the SC, Australia's focus would be on the implementation of mandates; addressing resource issues; operationalising principles for example assisting members carry out their obligations vis-a vis sanctions; strengthening the links between the SC and regional organisations, especially in Africa which gives rise to two thirds of the issues that come before Council; and on the need for Council to spend more time on post conflict issues/nation building. Noting the extremely conservative nature of the SC and its reluctance to take on new ideas, Australia would also make an effort to ensure that the SC uses the full suite of tools available to it, for example by discussing emerging issues before they become problems.

In comments and questions there was some concern that this agenda seemed to be reactive or process driven: had no effort been made to use the opportunity of membership of the SC to identify an issue of importance to pursue? The response suggested a look at Minister Bishop's statements where common themes are: economic diplomacy, regional issues such as maritime security/protecting Australia's interests on the high seas (though not maritime disputes) and continued focus on opportunities to promote the rule of international law. It was noted that Australia needed to keep its powder dry in order to be able to respond to the unexpected.

A related issue that came up more than once in the course of the day, and was not resolved, was the opportunity presented to Australia from the convergence of its presidency of the G20 and its position on the UN Security Council. Participants wondered what Australia planned to do with the opportunity for initiative this synergy represented.

Afghanistan

The only specific suggestion for the use of Australia's UN SC position in year two came from a recent visitor to Afghanistan, who is very gloomy about the situation there and particularly about the situation for women and girls. (There was an additional lunchtime session on Afghanistan.) Another view was more optimistic and pleaded that we take the long view of the situation of women and girls in that society, noting that expectations are now irreversible given that 70% of the population is under 25 and these have been exposed to globalisation and the fact that 30% of children in school are now girls. It was argued that Australia should use its position on the SC to focus on the forthcoming elections in Afghanistan in the hope of making them at least more free and more fair than they otherwise will be.

Syria and the Central African Republic

These are the issue that will continue to dominate the SC for the foreseeable future. Australia is playing a leadership role on the humanitarian front in Syria where there is huge need, highlighted further by Baroness Amos's recent visit, and there was considerable discussion arising from the floor. On CAR, Australia would like the UNSC to play a leadership role in this

cyclical crisis which should not have been allowed to go this far. France was championing the CAR cause in Council and has sent in troops preparatory to the establishment of a UN African peacekeeping force.

Women, Peace and Security

There was no presentation and, unfortunately, no summing up of issues arising from this separate thematic issue session. Rather it was an interactive discussion with a miscellany of issues being raised by participants. Among them was the importance of ensuring that women were involved in peace making arrangements and dismay at the extraordinary resistance on the part of the UN to being proactive about issues such as sexual violence in conflict. A useful role Australia could play would be to get the language in the relevant resolutions and then work to get the resources to implement them. There was discussion of R2P (Libya) and where that has gone in the last twelve months, and some comparisons drawn with POC (Kosovo). They were described by one participant as two new norms in the same normative space.

Extractive Industries

This issue was put on the agenda by DFAT in the above session and again raised in their summing up at the end of the day. Clearly it is an emerging issue, oligarchic monopolies causing huge inequities and ultimate conflict, but the issue does not yet appear to have been seized on by participants.

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