SPEECH

Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) Annual Meeting 2024: Tokyo, Japan: 19 – 22 June 2024: Roundtable – Assessing institutional capacities to deliver in a changing world: Panellist remarks by Daryl Swanepoel, Chief Executive Officer, Inclusive Society Institute, South Africa

I would like to approach my introductory remarks in two parts: First a prognosis from an African perspective as to the effectiveness of the UN in dealing with global peace and security issues and the probability of effecting reforms within the UN – specifically the Security Council. And then an assessment of the African Union's ability to deal with security on the African continent and its effectiveness within the multilateral order – more so how Africa can ensure for its people a more just and inclusive UN system.

I think it is pretty clear that the Security Council cannot effectively deal with wars and conflict. Gaza is the prime example. The Russia / Ukraine war another. And this is all to do with the P5 veto right. If a resolution, despite the overwhelming majority of countries supporting it, doesn't fit with the foreign policy of any of the P5 nations, it is doomed to fail. And it is outrageous that a P5 country can exercise a veto when it itself is the subject of a resolution – what has happened to the principle of recusal when there is a conflict of interest.

So if we were to grade the UN in its ability to effectively deal with wars and conflict, I am afraid, we have to give it a **failing grade**. And therefore, UN reform in general, and UNSC reform in particular, is of high importance, if we wish to secure the credibility of the UN.

What I have just said, is nothing new. The international community has been discussing the abolishment of the veto right for decades. In my opinion, the prospect for the abolishment of the P5 veto right is non-existent. The P5 are not going to voluntarily give up that right, at least not in my lifetime.

But that does not mean to say the veto right cannot be reformed. I believe we need a new approach to it: One, accept that it here to stay and look at the possibility of broadening the veto right to other players within the Security Council. An outcome that should be more inclusive by ensuring that the Global South is also adequately represented therein. Two, look at writing rules as to the exercising of the veto right. For example, by making recusal obligatory when a P5 member is itself the subject of a resolution; and by building in an appeal mechanism when a veto is exercised. There may be others. And for this I believe the time it right for a dialogue as how to ensure a more measured approach to the exercising of the veto right.

And then, how does one ensure a more inclusive Security Council. By adding a few countries is not going to make it more broadly inclusive. Possibly the approach should be to add the regional multilateral bodies as non-voting member organisations of the UN – this will require a charter change. And then the regional organisations can be accommodated within the Security Council, preferably

with a veto right. Technically, if the veto right is granted, one of the regional organisation's member states may have to exercise it, but that's detail that can be addressed.

Maybe such an approach is a more practical solution. The AU's Ezulweni Consensus, for example suggest that the Security Council be expanded and that Africa be given two seats on it. But there is no consensus as to which countries those two will be.

Which leads us to the African Union, and its capacity to deal with conflicts on the continent.

On paper, all is good. AU mechanisms for promoting peace, security and stability in the African continent include the Peace and Security Council (PSC) - the main pillar of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture. Other pillars are The Panel of the Wise, Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), African Standby Force (ASF) and the Peace Fund. In reality, the continent is a mess: Full-scale war in Sudan, then there's the Ethiopia Tigray war, conflict in the DRC, military coup in Niger, terrorism is gaining ground in Nigeria, and we can go on and on. Are these mechanisms ending the conflict: No. Do they get a passing grade or a failing grade, clearly they are **failing**.

Part of the failure is due to poor leadership, but materially it is due to a lack of funds and thus capacity. The international community must ensure better funding, not that they must assume responsibility for bringing order to Africa – Africa needs African solutions to African problems – but they must ensure that Africa is empowered to implement those solutions. It is after all in the interest of the West to ensure a stable Africa lest the effects of war come knocking at their backdoor in the form of largescale immigration and economic disruption.

In short: The conflicts around the world is tearing humanity apart. No country can by themselves solve the problem. We need an effective and functioning global multilateral order. We do not have it, we are failing. We need urgent and radical reform. Whilst the ruling elite diddle dawdle, ten of thousand are been killed and banished to a life of suffering.

There is a better way, we must find the courage and just do it. If we don't, the credibility of the UN will be undermined and a multipolar world promoted.