



Transcript

Is there an Arab Summer? The UN's Response to the Arab Spring

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27 June 2011

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Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

At last month's Leadership Conference of Ambassadors, the Foreign Secretary described the Arab Spring as the most significant event of the 21st Century so far – more strategically significant than 9/11 in 2001 or the financial crisis of 2008.

In one sense, it is a third wave of democratisation, following Latin America in the 1980s and Eastern Europe in the 1990s. But the Arab Spring is both more complex and more difficult than both of these earlier waves:

- It directly affects three continents: Africa, Europe and West Asia/Middle East. Indeed, its effects go much wider than that, with countries such as China watching developments very warily.
- It affects the global economy, not least through oil prices.
- It raises fundamental issues of stability versus democracy, especially given underlying concerns about the Islamist agenda in the region.
- It impinges directly on the Israel/Palestine conflict, which remains the poison in relations between the West and the Islamic world.

So it is not surprising that the Arab Spring has thrown up a bewildering range of challenges, including: how best can we support the demands from across the region for more open societies and politics? Can we logically distinguish between what is happening in Libya and Syria, from what is happening in eg Bahrain or Yemen? What is the proper role of regional organisations in supporting peaceful change and holding their members to account – or not? The Arab League and African Union have taken very different views of Libya. The Arab League itself has taken a different approach to Libya and Syria.

What are the relative influences of the European Union and the US in the EU's near abroad? Seen from New York (and with hindsight), the international community appears to have devoted inadequate attention and resources to the North Africa/Middle East region in recent years. Too much time has been spent at the UN on ritualistic debates about one issue – Israel/Palestine – and not nearly enough on the fundamental issues raised by the lack of political and economic reform in the region.

In fact, the UN Development Programme produced a series of reports between 2001 and 2005 analysing the strains in the Middle East/North Africa region and accurately predicting that unless political, economic and social reform was accelerated, there would be political, possible violent, upheaval. But these prescient reports did not lead to political action.

But in the last six months, the UN's response has been impressive. Politically, the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon saw immediately which side the UN should be on and has made a series of consistent and bold statements on Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. In doing so, he has shown strong leadership and been prepared to rise above the criticism he has received not only from those countries that he talked about, but from a number of other major UN powers.

The wider UN system has also taken some significant steps on protection of civilians and responsibility to protect. The General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have shown some welcome teeth, first suspending Libya and establishing a Commission of Enquiry and then effectively rejecting Syria's candidature for HRC membership. There has been practical support, too, as UN DPA [Department of Political Affairs] and UNDP offer advice, expertise and financial support for democratic change, constitution-writing and elections in Tunisia and Egypt.

Most significantly of all, the Security Council referred Libya to the ICC and adopted widespread sanctions in SCR 1970; and then established a no-fly zone and authorised military action to protect civilians in SCR 1973. Together, these constituted the most wide-ranging resolutions passed by the Security Council for more than 20 years.

In view of these developments, it is interesting to reflect on the composition of the Security Council in 2011. It is an unusually heavyweight Council, with India, Brazil, Germany, South Africa and Nigeria among the 10 elected members. At the beginning of the year, it was clear that, if this Security Council could speak with one voice and act together, it would do so in 2011 with even greater authority than usual. But we also assessed that it would be more difficult to secure that unity, especially for more coercive actions, such as sanctions or military intervention.

I should like to think that brilliant British diplomacy was behind the adoption of the two Libya resolutions. It is true that we drafted 1970 and co-drafted 1973. But there were other important factors which were decisive in bringing all Security Council members on board. For resolution 1970, the very public defection of the Libyan Ambassador at the UN, comparing Gaddafi to Pol Pot and Hitler, made it impossible for anyone to argue that the Security Council should not get involved in this 'internal matter'. Likewise, a combination of Gaddafi's extreme language about his own population and a strong appeal from the Arab League for the Security Council to impose a no-fly zone and create safe havens for civilians was instrumental in winning over the middle

ground in the Council – and particularly the African members – to support for the authorisation of military action in resolution 1973.

It is worth noting that, on the back of these decisions on Libya, the Security Council also authorised offensive action by UN peacekeepers in Cote d'Ivoire against President Gbagbo's attempt to remain in power despite having lost the election by widening his attacks on his people. This led to most unusual offensive operations undertaken by UN peacekeeping forces, in cooperation with national French forces.

Three months on from those historic resolutions, are we facing a backlash in the Security Council? The answer is yes. There is no denying that the scale of coalition action required to stop Gaddafi terrorising the Libyan people has surprised and discomfited many, especially in Africa. The African Union Summit last month called on NATO to stop the bombing campaign. These concerns are understandable, but I think they are misguided. It was made very clear during the negotiations for 1973 what the resolution would mean in terms of military action to protect civilians and implement the no-fly zone. Unlike Gaddafi, NATO has been incredibly careful and very largely successful in avoiding civilian casualties.

But the sentiment is there. And so far, it has prevented us from taking action in the Security Council on, eg, Syria and Yemen, where we have also seen shocking use of state force against civilian populations. We have proposed a Security Council response on both. We have clear majority support, but Russia and China have made clear that action would be vetoed. Unlike for Libya, the regional organisations are divided and the big powers have greater strategic interests. But in our view, morality and consistency argue for action – we should be supporting the aspirations of people for greater freedom and democracy across the region, not picking and choosing on the grounds of vested political or economic interests.

Despite this backlash, I am optimistic both about developments in the region and about the UN's role in addressing them.

There *will* be an Arab Summer. Events this Spring have changed forever the debate about the political future of the Arab world. Arguments about the compatibility of Islam and democracy have been laid to rest. It will be chaotic and it will be uneven, and it may take a generation to get from Spring to Summer, but it will happen right across the region.

The events are also hastening the demise of the Al Qaeda narrative. Osama Bin Laden was killed in Pakistan in May, but his narrative was critically wounded 3 months earlier in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Of course, the risks from

terrorism remain, but in time democratic Arab States will offer constructive outlets for youth to vent frustration and dissatisfaction.

The UN is back centre stage. A year ago, after the failure of the Copenhagen climate change talks and the re-emergence of the G20 as a global governance forum, some commentators wrote off the UN. But the UN is playing an increasingly important role in supporting democratic change in the Middle East/North Africa region, including in Sudan. The newly re-elected Secretary-General is committed to a UN leadership role. No one argues that UN support for elections in Egypt or Tunisia constitutes interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country. The Security Council is at the heart of the debate. We are not winning all the arguments. Important national interests are at stake, so it is not easy. But it is better to have a Security Council centre stage than see others – whether US, AU or EU – spinning off on separate tracks.

But I leave you with 4 key challenges that we need successfully to address:

First of all: Libya. Much will depend on how quickly, and with what level of violence, political transition takes place. The more protracted the need for direct NATO military operations, the more difficult it will be to heal the divisions opening up between some of the big powers.

Second: getting it right on Egypt. A sustainable and effective revolution in a country with almost a quarter of the Arab population will have a huge impact beyond its borders, making the excuses of the old strong men of the region seem anachronistic. Identifying the right mechanisms of support is not easy. The EU was far-sighted in providing a perspective of membership to newly democratising countries of Central and Eastern Europe. EU membership is clearly not on offer for North African states, but access to markets, soft loans and economic support are all crucial tools. That is why we have pressed for the European neighbourhood policy to be upgraded, including a new civil society facility and a European endowment for democracy. We also helped secure the G8 Deauville Partnership which will provide more than \$20 billion in aid to Egypt and Tunisia. And back in February, we set up our own British Arab Partnership to help promote civil society and democratic development in the region.

Third: the Middle East Peace Process. The Palestinian demand for statehood cannot be divorced from the Arab Spring. The current stalemate is a major drag on the potential for progress across the region. On the back of President Obama's bold speech in May on the foundations for Israel/Palestine negotiations, there may be scope for constructive UN engagement over the

next couple of months. Lack of progress on the MEPP was in no way the cause of the Arab Spring, but progress on it would help cement democratic gains across the region.

Finally: Iran. Iran has tried to claim ownership of the Arab Spring. But events have only gone to highlight Iran's hypocrisy, given the continuing internal repression of all opposition inside Iran. Furthermore, Iran's illegal nuclear ambitions and its malign role in supporting terrorism in the region both pose major challenges to the Arab Summer. But if change comes in Syria, that could have a dynamic impact in Iran.

In all this, I have no doubt that Ban Ki-moon knows where the UN needs to be. But if the organisation is to respond effectively, it needs more than a perceptive Secretary-General. How key players engage at the UN and see its role – not just the Security Council's permanent members, but also new rising powers like Turkey, Brazil and India – will determine whether the international community meets, or flunks, the challenges posed by the Arab Spring. The UN had a good start to the Arab Spring. We need it to maintain that momentum through the hot Arab Summer.

Xenia Dormandy:

Thank you very much for what is an incredibly wide-ranging discussion of the Arab Spring and hopefully Arab Summer, perhaps. First of all to say this is on the record and is open to the media. We have a couple of microphones, I think, around the room, so if you stick your hand up I will come to you. If you could stand up and say who you are and where you are from and then if you don't mind keeping your questions short so we can hear more from Mark and have them have question marks at the end where possible please.

I'm going to take the liberty of asking the first question as chair and then I already see a couple of hands up. I know we are going to have too many questions and not enough time. But I'd like to go back to something you said – a responsibility to protect – which is a concept that the UN has been putting forward now for I think almost a decade or thereabouts. But I think this is the first time that the UN has authorized action in another country in order to protect civilians, but it hasn't been able to in Syria. It has been able to in a number of other countries in the region that are treating their citizens in a way that would be of more concern to us. And so what does this mean for the UN, both for kind of two steps forward, but perhaps one step back at the same time?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

As I mentioned, responsibility to protect is a highly sensitive concept that has been developing over the last few years and it takes sort of three stages. The first is to suggest that every country in the world has a responsibility to look after its own citizens. That is broadly accepted. The second stage is to say that the international community is prepared to help you protect your own civilians. That is slightly more sensitive because it suggests that you can't do it yourself and you need help to do it. And there have been some examples of that where people request the UN to come and help. The third stage, which is what we did in Libya, was to say, we shall look after your civilians for you because you are clearly failing to do so. Not only are you not protecting them, but you are actually the problem in the first place. You're the ones who are attacking your own civilians. That was what was unique about one unique aspect of Resolution 1973 is it did authorize other member states – in this case, NATO took up the bat, but it could have been a coalition of member states – were going in to protect the Libyan population because Gaddafi was attacking it.

Now that concept, that is the first time it's ever been used. Of course, some will say, because of the way it's been used, that sets back the case for the responsibility to protect. But the reality is that it was always going to be so sensitive. All three stages are sensitive – certainly, the second and third stage – because the United Nations is a body of 192 sovereign states and it is founded on the basis that you do not interfere in the sovereignty of another member state. But what we found, as a result of the Rwandan genocide, for example, or Srebrenica in Bosnia, was that if you left it alone to individual governments to protect their civilians, sometimes they wouldn't do it and there comes a threshold – and of course that threshold is not defined anywhere and it's a subjective threshold – where the international community feels that it ought to step in. So, I think it's a concept that is here to stay, but it's a concept that will remain very sensitive for some time to come.

Question One:

My question also relates to responsibility to protect. In the drafting of the Security Council resolutions on Libya, to what extent this concept of responsibility to protect was useful to avoid the argument that this was a domestic issue?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

Well, that's a difficult question to answer in a sense because we drafted the resolution and we put in the responsibility to protect. It was in 1970 as we reminded Gaddafi of his responsibility to protect his citizens. It was in 1973 under the grounds that it was authorizing military action to protect civilians against Gaddafi. So it was present in both forms in 1970 and 1973. And that was understood by everyone although the concept itself was not discussed in a theoretical sense. It was only discussed in terms of what that meant for what could happen following adoption of the resolution.

Question Two:

Sir Mark, you said that you expected – that it may take a generation to get from spring to summer, but it happen across the region. Can you talk a little bit about Saudi Arabia in that context and what change there might look like, how long it will take and how will change come about without severe disruption to the world's oil markets?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

I'm not an expert on Saudi Arabia so I'm not going to comment on what happens in Saudi Arabia. My point was that there is a change in the mood in the region and that every country in the region is affected by that in different ways. Now, every country has responded in different ways. What happened in Tunisia was Ben Ali bowed to the inevitable and he and his family left. Mubarak bowed to the inevitable and he went into internal exile. Gaddafi has not done that. Other leaders in the region – I'm thinking of Morocco, I'm thinking of Jordan, I'm thinking of some of the Gulf States – have anticipated the wave and have introduced political reforms in order to meet the aspirations of the people.

In other countries, there is perhaps less pressure for reform. Saudi Arabia may be one of them. You saw one little side aspect of that with the women's demand to drive in recent days. That's hardly a protest on the scale of what's happening in the region, but nonetheless it is a part of the population asking for greater political space and social freedoms than they had before. And I think you are going to see that across the region. It isn't possible to have a single template and say there is a single answer. If you do X, Y will happen. Every country is different. Every country has a different history. Every country responds in a different way. Some countries are tribal. Some have a history of

more democratic governance. Some have monarchies. So I wouldn't want to try and make specific predictions about individual countries. What I will say though is that the genie that's out of the bottle if you like, that can't be put back in. There is a yearning for freedom and each time you see it in one country, it spreads and it's picked up in other countries, maybe in different ways.

Question Three:

Thank you for the talk. In the region that you talked about, there are two main subsystems. There is the Arab subsystem and the Arab-Israeli conflict subsystem. Both of them don't really have any opportunity for Iran to play any kind of leader role whatsoever yet we still hear about the fear that Iran might come to the fore to play some kind of a role. If a role is [inaudible], where do you see the opportunity arising from for Iran to be that really threatening actor in those two or any other really subsystems in the region? Thank you.

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

I think Iran has the ability to play a role for good or bad in a number of different areas. Firstly, Iraq, obviously which I didn't mention at all in the context of the Arab Spring, but has gone through a democratization process if you like and Iran has very significant influence and always has done over the polity in Iraq. Secondly, the relationship between Iran and Syria is very strong and there is clear evidence that Iran is advising President Assad in an unhelpful way about how to handle the upheavals that are happening in Syria.

Thirdly, the new government in Lebanon is obviously heavily influenced on the one hand by Syria and then by extension by Iran. Iran is involved with the Houthi rebels in Yemen which is obviously one of the issues of destabilization in Yemen. In Bahrain, with a majority Shi'a community, there is a strong Iranian influence in what is happening in Bahrain. In addition, Iran is funding both Hezbollah and Hamas, both of whom have an impact on the Arab-Israel situation.

So there are six or seven examples, very direct examples of how Iranian influence in the region is very significant and it is one of deep concern to countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and others who see, as we do incidentally, that Iranian influence can be deeply unhelpful.

Question Four:

My question is which way will we be voting on the question of Palestinian statehood in September?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

As they say, that's a decision above my pay grade. No, I think the... as I mentioned in my remarks, I think the drive for Palestinian statehood, whilst understandable, is something of a blind alley. There are 117 countries that already recognize the state of Palestine. We are not one of them, but many members of the European Union have already recognized Palestine. But that, in a sense, is a process. It's not substance. It will not lead to the establishment of two peaceful, viable states living side by side as we would like to see. That can only be done through direct negotiation between Palestine and Israel.

So the danger is that, borne out of frustration at the lack of progress on the substance, the Palestinians go for the process and, as I say, I cannot give you any suggestions one way or the other which way the British government if faced with that choice would go, but what we are trying to do is to focus on the substance, not the process. And the substance is to get direct negotiations started as soon as possible. Obama's speech gave an opportunity to do that. There is a quartet meeting on 11 July in Washington which we hope will build on the Obama speech and, on the back of that, it will be possible to get direct negotiations. Now, if there are direct negotiations going on, then I don't think the Palestinians will press for recognition at the United Nations. But if they aren't, then I think we will face that decision ultimately at some point in September.

Question Five:

I'm wondering, in view of the context you've outlined for the rest of the region, whether you could comment on how the UN and the international community have dealt with Bahrain. Over the weekend, we heard that eight of the protestors had been sentenced to life imprisonment. Is there something more that can be done from the outside or is this in the category of a domestic issue?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

The Secretary General of the UN has made a number of statements on Bahrain, calling for restraint, calling for the protestors to be dealt with humanely. But it's true that there are some dynamics in Bahrain that are a little bit different than other countries. I mentioned the Shi'a population. I mentioned the Iranian influence. And the fact that there is a political dialogue underway and there has been support for Bahrain from the Gulf region so there has not been the same request or pressure for the UN or for the Security Council to get heavily involved. But the Secretary General on our behalf is keeping a very good watch. He's offered his good offices if they are being required and is encouraging the implementation of the dialogue that the government has announced as a way of helping to diffuse the process.

Immediately after 1973 was passed, the airwaves were full of the NATO Secretary General and bedecked senior western military officers, bedecked with medals from Iraq and Afghanistan which was very unfortunate [inaudible]. Why wasn't a very senior UN envoy, someone of the stature and obviously not this person, but someone of the stature of Lahkdar Brahimi, not appointed to be the senior representative of the international community, demonstrating clearly to the world that the regional organization asked to do the bidding of the UN Security Council was very much the subordinate partner?

Well, the Secretary General has appointed a special envoy which is Mr. Al-Khateeb who is an ex-Jordanian Foreign Minister and he, on behalf of the UN, is conducting the sort of shuttle diplomacy. He's been eight times to Libya. He's been to Benghazi. He's been to Tripoli. And he is looking for the opportunities to put together a verifiable cease fire and a political process which would bring the conflict to an end.

So there is a special envoy and he is very active and he is speaking with the authority of the United Nations system. Now, there are other players involved. The Russians recently sent an envoy to Benghazi and Tripoli. The Turks have devised their own road map. The African Union have sent delegations to Tripoli as have individual European countries. Now that's not a problem provided they are all coordinated under the umbrella of the UN and Al-Khateeb is the man main on that. Not that the Secretary General himself has been inactive, but of course he needs someone doing it full time and the guy doing it full time is Al- Khateeb.

Question Six:

A rather naïve, layman request I think. In the light of recent UN achievements and also failure to achieve Security Council resolutions on other topics, would you comment on the veto system and the desirability and perhaps the possibility of change, particularly in the light of the strengthening of the Security Council by elected membership?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

I'm always very nervous of layman's questions. They turn out to be very difficult questions. The Security Council has always been hamstrung by a number of different factors. What you had for the first 40 years of the UN was a Cold War situation where America and the Soviet Union were on different sides and it was virtually impossible for the Security Council to meet and discuss anything serious at all. I remember one [inaudible] who arrived as the American ambassador in, I think, the late 1970s or early 1980s and he said that the Security Council didn't meet in his first three months when he was in New York. He'd now meet every day, morning and afternoon.

So after the end of the Cold War, suddenly there was an explosion of activity because the threat of the veto by the United States or the veto by Russia had gone. But inevitably, and the fact that the Security Council spent 70 percent of its time on African issues – that is not by happenstance. Yes, there is a lot of conflict in Africa, but also Africa is a continent in which the major powers that have vetoes don't necessarily have fundamental strategic interests and therefore it's easier to reach agreement on Cote d'Ivoire or DRC or even Sudan than it is on, say, the Middle East or Georgia.

So that is just a fact of life. The five permanent members that have vetoes do exert an influence and that means that the Security Council will not be looking at the question of Russian occupation of Georgia – at least, not with any success. Likewise, we've seen the Americans vetoing resolutions on settlements in the West Bank. Now, Security Council reform and we are strong advocates of Security Council reform because we believe that the permanent membership should be expanded to take account of recent development or not so recent developments, but developments over the past 30 or 40 years which is the rise of India and Brazil, South Africa, Germany, Japan etcetera have the right to become also permanent members. You then get into an argument about whether those permanent members should also have the veto and you can make a case either way, but one of the arguments against is you are then widening the number of issues in which a country has

a fundamental national interest which may make it even more difficult for the Security Council to take any decisions at all. So that's not an answer to your question, but I'm just trying to throw up some dynamics over the whole veto question. Of course, there are some countries in the United Nations, probably a majority, of the 192 members of the United Nations who say the answer is to get rid of the veto altogether. Now, the problem with that is that such a proposal would be vetoed by those who already have the veto. It's what you might call a Catch 22 situation, but I don't see any of the veto powers at the moment voluntarily giving up their veto powers.

Question Seven:

Can I come back on the inevitable Arab-Israel issue? You didn't use the words 'train wreck', but no doubt that is used around the corridors overlooking the East River. The problem for me about this is – I saw [inaudible] saying this is déjà vu all over again. We've been there in 1999 when it was previously a Palestinian threat to go for unilateral declaration of statehood and that was sort of seen off by a number of ways, including a sort of mutton [inaudible] between the Europeans and the Americans and also in the context of an election in Israel which of course we are not in the context of this year. Having heard the eloquence of Obama, I'm afraid I could only give it two cheers because he actually said a lot less on prescribing what might be the parameters for negotiation than Clinton did in 2000.

Then, I'm driven to ask myself what you're going to be able to do between now and then to make the Palestinians content with something other than what they are going to do which you usually say is likely to be a mistake. It's process. It's not substance. Is one of the ways around this perhaps not to be hung up on a UN General Assembly resolution, but some kind of a Security Council resolution and we've got good experience as the Brits with Resolution 242 on that. Maybe that could be something containing more parameters, a bit more detail for a settlement and that could be a way of at least getting off the nasty process into a more positive substance.

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

Yeah, good point, Robin. It is one of the options that we are looking at because if there is a successful quartet meeting in July, then one option is that you try and endorse that in some way as a Security Council resolution which would give both the Palestinians and Israelis something of substance

on the back of which negotiations could be resumed. So that's one of the options we are looking at.

Question Eight:

Wandering slightly off, you mentioned the three waves of democratization – South America, Eastern Europe and the Arab World – but let's not forget Africa where democratization has advanced so much. And now we see the AU – maybe it's a coming of age – dragged into talks in Libya and in Egypt. How is this been reflected actually in New York, bearing in mind the membership of the Security Council at the moment?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

You are absolutely right on democratization in Africa. I mean, there have been some very significant strides and the African Union itself has been rather more robust than many other regional bodies in suspending members who, for example, have unconstitutional changes of government in terms of coups so Madagascar is suspended from the African Union. Mauritania was after a coup there. Niger was temporarily after a coup. So they are now beginning to come of age in terms of their own democratization programme and the fact is they have their own Peace and Security Council.

When the Security Council made a visit to Sudan, we also went to Addis Ababa to a meeting which we have once a year with the African Union Peace and Security council because we do see it as in the UN's interest to build up the regional organization so that they can increasingly be the first response to major crises and conflicts in Africa rather than having to go to the Security Council every time. Now, we can't substitute them for the Security Council because that has a treaty bound responsibility for maintaining international peace and security but within the charter of the UN itself it says that regional organizations can play a role and take the leading role. So certainly we as a national government and in the European Union are trying to build the capacity of African countries to be able to do that.

At the Security Council, as it happens, and maybe this is always the case, the three African members of the Security Council are precisely the swing votes, if you like, in the Security Council this year and probably most years. So all three African countries voted in favor of Resolution 1973 and the fact that they are now split on Syria with two African countries supporting our draft resolution and one country not supporting it means that we aren't able to go

forward with adoption of it. So I think the African weight in the council is becoming significant.

Question Nine:

You talked about the benefits of hindsight and it's clear that the Arab Spring was not predicted by anyone, by the best experts in the diplomatic and international think tanks of the west. You mentioned on UNDP report that got it right, so you say, but not action was taken on it. My question is what changes would you like to see in the way that forecasting and analysis is made of the situation in the Arab World and indeed anywhere else which would lead to better preparedness on the part of governments, including our own for what we didn't foresee?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

On the forecasting and analysis, yes, I mean, more needs to be done. The UNDP reports really are worth reading because it was remarkably prescient that they came up with the sort of analysis that they did, but unfortunately there is just so much paper produced by the UN and particularly that part of the UN that you know no one really took it seriously. That's unfortunate. But we are trying to develop more early warning systems within the political part of the UN system. We have done it in our own modest way.

We introduced, when we were President of the Security Council in November, a sort of horizon-scanning event which was an open-ended, free-wheeling discussion between all the members of the Security Council at the beginning of the month where you could raise basically what you wanted to do. Now this was considered revolutionary, was strongly opposed, not the least by the Americans. In fact, in the six months since we introduced it, the only presidency that hasn't followed suit is the Americans because they were worried that at everyone would just talk about the Middle East and that would put them on the defensive. But it is becoming established into the system. Even the Chinese presidency did it themselves. So it gives us, for the first time, an event in the Security Council which - for those of you who know the Security Council, can be a very formal and stilted sort of discussion - a free-wheeling, interactive dialogue on issues of the day.

So that was a small part of it, but more fundamentally, we're trying to get the Department of Political Affairs to introduce, to put more resources into forecasting analysis going forward so we can be alerted in a conflict

prevention role rather than waiting and doing conflict management. Because I was shocked when I came to the UN 18 months ago to find that there was no conflict prevention going on. It was all conflict management and we are trying to drive the policy upstream so that we can get ahead of the curb in some of these big issues.

Question Ten:

I think you've broadly described Egypt as an opportunity and rightly pointed out the reasons for that opportunity and how important it was to try and address it. My question really therefore is what degree of resolve and consensus do you think can be achieved in the UN in supporting the democratic change process in Egypt? What tangibly might that look like in terms of initiatives that the Egyptians would see and who might you work with to that end given that some have greater interests than others and I'm thinking of work under the EU Revised Neighborhood Policy.

Question Eleven:

Just wondering how much discussion, if any, there has been about making sure that women have a place at the table during the Arab summer and, in particular, about the implementation of Resolution 1325, to achieve that?

Ambassador Mark Lyall-Grant:

Now, I mean the two questions are a little bit linked in a way because I made a remark in the Security Council the other day that it was very striking how many women were involved in the process in Tahrir Square in Egypt and how the fact that there are no women at all now involved in the political process as a result of the success of the protest in the street in Egypt. And thirdly, we actually lead in the council on the implementation of 1325, which is women, peace and security, trying to involve women more in every part of the conflict resolution, peace-building, mediation phase of conflict because what is very clear is that men and women come at conflict resolution in very different ways. There are whole essays that can be written about this, but basically men get together to decide what were the causes of the conflict. Women get together to see what can be done to restore practical life after the conflict has ended. Now both are important and valuable elements, but it shows a slightly different mentality in terms of how women are affected by conflict in society and we think it absolutely essential that women should be much more

involved in every single phase of this and it's striking that in Egypt, that is actually not the case whereas they were involved in the process.

On Egypt itself, again the big danger of the Security Council is that you deal with the conflict and when the conflict is sort of resolved or, not resolved, but leads into a different phase, then you forget about it. You go on to the next conflict. It is for the rest of the UN system to pick up the slack as it were because it is, as I mentioned, UNDP and DPA to follow political affairs, who are leading the UN system in Egypt, helping with the constitution writing, the preparations for elections in September, rule of law and capacity building, justice sector, etcetera. So all those issues, there is expertise at the UN. Not just at the UN. There is also the World Bank of course. There will be the IMF. There will be the EU, but the UN does have to play an important role in supporting what will be quite a traumatic and quite a difficult transition process, the success of which is critical to the region as a whole.

Xenia Dormandy: Thank you very much. Thank you for your willingness to answer all of our questions. Thank you all for coming.