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Witnesses: Mr Edward Hobart, Mr Paul Williams and Mr Matthew Findlay

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe

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Members present

Lord Howell of Guildford (Chairman)
 Baroness Coussins
 Lord Grocott
 Lord Hannay of Chiswick
 Baroness Hilton of Eggardon
 Lord Inglewood
 Lord Jopling
 Lord Purvis of Tweed
 Lord Reid of Cardowan
 Baroness Smith of Newnham
 Lord Wood of Anfield

Examination of Witnesses

Mr Edward Hobart, Migration Envoy, **Mr Paul Williams**, Director of Multilateral Policy, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and **Mr Matthew Findlay**, Deputy Head, International Organisations Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Chairman: Good morning, gentlemen. Thank you very much for joining us this morning in our search for a formulation, from a UK point of view, of the agenda that might shape the priorities for the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, when elected. We are extremely grateful to you for being here. This session is in public. Please could each of you say who you are before we start the exchanges?

Paul Williams: Thank you very much, Lord Chairman, for inviting us here today. I am Paul Williams. I am the FCO's director of multilateral policy. On my left is Matthew Findlay, who is the Deputy Head of our international organisations department, which includes the UN in its remit. On my right I have Ed Hobart, who is the FCO's migration envoy.

The Chairman: I presume that all three of you have the United Nations, our relations with it and our affairs with it, at the top of your agenda.

Paul Williams: I certainly do have the United Nations at the top of my agenda, yes.

The Chairman: Thank you. You will have seen some suggested questions, which the secretariat has told you about, but I would like to start with a somewhat more general approach so that we can understand the framework in which we are discussing things. I think it was Dag Hammarskjöld who said that the purpose of the United Nations was not, "to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell". That was 60 or 70 years ago. This is a 70 year-old organisation. It started with 15 members and now has upwards of 200 and counting. The world is awash with violence and refugees as never before. I believe more refugees are now swirling round the world than ever, even than during the Second World War. To what extent do you feel that the new Secretary-General, when in place, must look around and ask himself or herself whether this organisation is set rightly to meet all these entirely new problems in a totally new world landscape? I am sorry that it is a general question but it will lead on to our narrow views about the precise priorities. Mr Williams.

Paul Williams: Thank you very much. It is a very good question, and it is a question that we are asking of the candidates to be Secretary-General when they pass through London and when we see them in New York. In many ways, the UN is fit for purpose. It does very good work across all its three traditional pillars of peace and security, development, and human

rights. It is active in many parts of the world, doing good work, for example, in Somalia—a country that matters to us—with the African Union, in restoring peace and stability and helping to move that country forward. On human rights, it does very good work to hold countries to account, in the Human Rights Council, for example, with the universal periodic review process; three times a year the sessions of the Human Rights Council pass resolutions. On development, just last year we had an historic milestone of the Sustainable Development Goals—new targets to take development forward. The UN remains active across all three of its pillars, and very relevant in the 21st century.

I understand what lies beneath your question and I think that the UN needs to adapt to the new challenges of the 21st century. It needs to do that in a number of ways. First, there are challenges that go across all three of its pillars. Extremism, for example, is an area where there are angles about development and stability, there are angles about peace and security, and there are angles about human rights, each of which can be a contributing factor to or can help stop extremism. The UN needs to get better at co-ordinating its work across those three pillars to be able to cope with issues that are not single country-based, which are cross-country and cross-regional. I also think it can look—as it is doing already but more so—at becoming more efficient and effective as an organisation. Obviously, these remain times of constrained financial resources among the major donors, and the UN, like every other organisation in the world, can look at becoming more streamlined, getting better IT and better technology, using modern management practices, and making itself fit for the 21st century in that way.

The Chairman: In short, the new Secretary-General will be able to say, “We are rising to these challenges. Obviously, we are not solving them”—because if you look at end results they are not at all good. But you feel that the UN leadership is rising to these new challenges?

Paul Williams: I certainly think that Ban Ki-moon is making every effort to do that. For example, I mentioned extremism. He came out with a report on preventing violent extremism just a few months ago. Within that was an effort to co-ordinate the system better and to recognise that a lot of the action on preventing extremism needs to be at the member state level. He has been able to use two of the functions of the UN, as a convenor, as a global voice, but also as a norm setter, potentially. On the efficiency and effectiveness point, he has certainly tried to do something about that. I mentioned IT. He has been instrumental in trying to get what is called an enterprise resource planning system in the UN, to try to get better management of data from all bits of the UN into the centre. He has been instrumental in trying to get more movement of people between jobs to try to refresh thinking in the UN; he calls it mobility. He has certainly made every effort to do that and we are on a course, I think. But there is still much for the next Secretary-General to do and we will certainly encourage them to do it.

The Chairman: That conveys your feeling that the organisation can address the challenges but, going back to my original remark, of course for many people in the world hell has indeed arrived, on a scale and with an unbelievable quality of atrocity many people in the UN never dreamed could happen. The intentions are there but the results are not good. I want to get out of the way a local, European question, which I will ask Lord Reid to put. This is obviously very much on our minds.

Lord Reid of Cardowan: Thank you for coming, Mr Williams. As the Chairman said, we have a little local issue with much wider, possibly global implications—the decision of the UK electorate that we should withdraw from Europe. Will you comment on what you see as

some of the implications of the United Kingdom withdrawing from Europe for our role at the United Nations or our membership of and responsibilities in the P5¹?

Paul Williams: Thank you, Lord Reid. Obviously it is hard for me to comment in detail at this point but I would point out that the UK is of course a member of the United Nations as a country in its own right. We are a member of the P5 in the Security Council as a country in our own right. We are very active across all three pillars of the UN as a country in our own right. I expect all of that to continue under the next Government. As an example of that, come September we will host a conference on UN peacekeeping here in London. It will be an MoD-hosted event. It is something that we promised to do last September when President Obama held a summit to try to get more pledges and more momentum behind UN peacekeeping. That is a good example of us continuing to be very active in the peace and security sphere. At the same time, in the human rights field, we are standing for re-election to the Human Rights Council. That election will take place at the end of October or the beginning of November, I think. That is another sign of our commitment to that pillar of the United Nations. Of course, we have our 0.7% GNI commitment on development and we have played a very active role in developing the Sustainable Development Goals, and remain a very major voluntary contributor—in fact, the second largest contributor of all, when you combine assessed and voluntary contributions—to the UN system. All that shows that we, as the UK, are a very major player at the heart of the UN in our own right.

Having said that, of course, while in the Security Council we do our work as the UK, in other parts of the of the General Assembly, we caucus with other EU partners. We will continue to do that fully while we remain in the European Union. Once we come out of the European Union, in however many years' time, the Government of the time will need to take a decision on how we work with the remaining EU 27. It is not for me to say anything about that at the moment but I would say that in an area I know well—the finance area of the UN—we work as a member state, as the UK, but we also work with EU partners. We also already work with a wider membership that we call the like-minded—countries such as the United States, Japan, South Korea and so on. So whatever decision the Government take on how exactly we interact with the EU 27 once we leave, I think we will remain a very important player in the UN—right at the heart of it, in fact—and in many ways we will have the same values as our EU 27 partners on things such as efficiency and effectiveness and many country issues, I am sure. I will leave it there.

Lord Wood of Anfield: Do you think in the medium term there will be diminishing support for our continued position as one of the P5 as a result of Brexit?

Paul Williams: No, I do not think so.

Lord Wood of Anfield: You do not think there are any implications for that whatever?

Paul Williams: No, I do not think so. We are a significant player on the world stage. Our P5 status is enshrined in the UN Charter. We are very active members of the P5. As I just mentioned, we are having this peacekeeping conference but that is actually part of a commitment to double the number of UK troops we send to be UN peacekeepers. Not only are we very active in the peace and security sphere, we are increasing our work in it.

Lord Grocott: You mentioned the caucusing, which those of us who have been involved in politics for many years are very familiar with, among which is a caucus of the EU members. You emphasise the importance of Britain in its own right, irrespective of which other groups it may or may not be a part of. The fact that we are a permanent member of the Security Council, presumably, would mean that in any meetings with any group of people at the UN

¹ The five permanent members of the UN Security Council

we would be quite an important and useful player. I am simply putting it to you that it would be in the interests of EU members, whoever they are, to talk to and work with the UK Government as a permanent member of the Security Council, whatever other group the UK might be in.

Paul Williams: Thank you for the question. I do not want to get into what the next Government might want to do about how closely we work with the EU 27 but it is absolutely right to say that as a P5 member we are at the centre of peace and security in the UN. But that P5 status also dribbles out to the rest of the UN. While the General Assembly is made up of 193 members, each of which has a single vote, however big or small they are, nevertheless the P5 have an influence by way of their status, it is true.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: I wonder whether you are not slightly underestimating the problems that lie ahead. Of course, we will still remain a permanent member of the Security Council but since we have not, if I remember rightly, used our veto for a very long time, the likelihood is that other groups outside the European Union will want to talk about resolutions with the United States, China and the European Union before they talk to us. Do you not think that it would be wise for what you describe as the new Government—although it seems to me that it would be the same Government—to factor that in rather carefully to the work they will be doing over the holidays?

Paul Williams: By the new Government obviously I meant the new Prime Minister—I understand that. I am not sure that I do agree with that, Lord Hannay. The UK has, since the start of the UN, been at the heart of the Security Council. We are absolutely engrained into that. As you will know from your own experience, we work very closely, particularly within the P3—the United States, France and the UK—but also with our P5 partners and the rest of the 15. When talking about Security Council resolutions in the future, that will still be the case. The fact that we have not used our veto since, I think, 1989 I do not see as a sign of weakness. That veto is there and could be used if necessary. The fact that we have not needed to use the veto in that time shows in part how engrained we are into the negotiations of the Security Council.

The Chairman: But do you think that for the new Secretary-General, facing the many problems of the world, the fact that the P5 is still frozen in the 1945 pattern and the EU's much largest member, Germany, is out of it, this might start blowing open the whole issue of the P5 structure, which we have debated over the years and have seemed to make no progress on?

Paul Williams: There is certainly a question within the UN about the size of the Security Council. The question of Security Council reform has been out there for many years. The UK supports Security Council reform. We support an enlargement of the Security Council, including to Germany, the country you mentioned. However, that reform has not happened because it has not commanded the support of the General Assembly to the extent it would need to in order to get the vote through to change those numbers. But we are not against enlarging the Security Council.

Lord Purvis of Tweed: Morning, Mr Williams. To follow up the question about the EU caucus, am I correct in thinking that it is just not in the General Assembly but in the UN agencies that the UK is part of a combined policy, planning and financing agreement with that EU caucus, and that the implications of the decision down the line for part of that caucus are not just in the deliberations of the General Assembly but across all the different UN agencies? It is quite a fundamental relationship that we have across all the agencies.

Paul Williams: It is true that UN central, if you like—the secretariat and the main bodies—and then the funding programmes and the agencies all work in slightly different ways. The extent to which we co-ordinate—you use the word “caucus”, we use the word “co-ordinate”—with EU partners varies across all of that, to a greater and lesser extent. The Security Council is probably at one end and I am not quite sure what is at the other. I do not think that fact changes what I said earlier, but you are correct that the extent of co-operation varies according to the body and the membership of that body.

Lord Inglewood: As somebody who knows very little about the UN, listening to your response my immediate reaction was: is this not a bit smug? You are telling us it has been all right in the past and will go on very nicely in the future. What is your reaction to that comment?

Paul Williams: My reaction to that comment is to apologise. I did not in any way mean to be smug. I am sorry if that is how I came across. All I am trying to say is that I think the UK has always had a place at the heart of the UN—which of course was before we joined the European Union, as the European Community, in 1973—and I think that it always will have a place at the heart of the UN, even after it leaves the European Union. All I was trying to do was give some examples of how I thought we were still very active. My sincere apologies.

Lord Inglewood: I do not dispute the activity—it is the position in the overall scheme of things that is partly affected by this recent Brexit vote—but my concern is that it is also affected by myriad other things around the globe.

The Chairman: Baroness Smith, I want to get on to the Secretary-General’s in-tray, as it were, so this is the last question on this theme.

Baroness Smith of Newnham: Following up on the points made by Lord Inglewood and Lord Howell, I am not sure that you sounded smug as an individual but is there not a danger that the United Kingdom sounds smug and complacent, and that one of the issues about the whole Brexit debate was a complacency among those who should have been taking a lead? Is there not also a danger of assuming that somehow the UK’s place in the world is as it was in the 1950s, when the UN structures were set up? In practice, the world has changed. Globalisation has changed the dynamics. It is all very well for us to say, “We’d be happy to have Germany as a permanent member of the Security Council as well”, but actually the dynamics are rather different and having three western European states is not necessarily the way it would go.

Paul Williams: I think you might be broaching a wider question about the UK’s wider place in the world, which may go a bit more broadly than the UN and therefore my remit, but what is related to my remit is that, even when we leave the European Union, we will still be in the G7 and the G20. We are spending 2% on defence and we are spending 0.7% GNI on development and so on. Therefore, I think that Britain continues to have a very important place in the world.

The Chairman: Let us turn to the slightly narrower question of the new Secretary-General and how they arrive in place—what the procedure is. I will ask Lord Hannay to lead on this.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Yes, I wonder if we could do some of these process questions. There are two groups, the first relating to the appointment of the Secretary-General. Can you confirm what you currently believe to be the timetable and the process for election, and perhaps say a word about the initial judgments on the candidates who have come forward and how the UK is engaging in that process? Perhaps you could also say something about how the transparency approach, which I personally congratulate the Government on having played a leading role in getting as far as it has got, can be sustained in the next stages?

Secondly—this is a completely different process question—when Professor Woods briefed us, she stressed that good leadership is critical at all the UN agencies but is often lacking. She suggested that some kind of annual review might be a good idea, about how the agencies and the UN as a whole fit together. She talked a good deal about stovepipes and the problems there. Among the priorities for the new Secretary-General, would the Government be trying to get hold of this whole issue of stovepipes? I know there is some UN organisation, whose acronym I now forget, which puts the Secretary-General together with the heads of the agencies once or twice a year but in the past has proved to be completely useless and in fact the agency chiefs all treat themselves as medieval barons who run their own show. We saw the consequences of that in the case of Ebola in Africa, where the first response both of the agency concerned—the WHO—and the UN as a whole was grossly inadequate. Can you say what the British priority would be for the Secretary-General in getting a better handle on that?

Paul Williams: Thank you for that question. There is a lot in it, so if I forget bits, do come back. On the process, the basic process is set down in the Charter, of course. Article 97 says that the Security Council recommends to the General Assembly who to appoint as Secretary-General. I am sure that the Security Council will try to reach consensus on a candidate. A process for starting to try to do that will begin later this month and the first straw poll that the Security Council will hold will be on 21 July, in which Security Council members will be able to encourage, discourage or give no opinion on each of the current 11 candidates. I expect there to be further straw polls in the months that follow. There is no set end to the process, except 31 December 2016, which is the last day Ban Ki-moon is in office. But we hope very much that the process will not go that far, obviously. I hope that it will end around September or October so that the new Secretary-General designate has time to prepare his or her portfolio and ideas ahead of starting on 1 January 2017.

On the selection process, thank you very much for what you said about the UK's position. It is true that we have tried to get a bit more transparency and predictability into the process. As part of that, all the candidates so far have declared themselves and are publicly available on the website—you can look and see who they are. All the currently declared candidates have come to hearings in the General Assembly, which have been public hearings, and they have been asked questions about their platform and manifesto and what they would do in the job, and so on. That is quite a lot of new transparency being injected into the process, and the timetable that I just set out has a measure of predictability in the process as well.

Moving on to transparency later, which I think was the next point in your question, we are now moving into the Security Council process and then we will move back into the General Assembly. The General Assembly bit will be transparent, I think. The Security Council bit, by its nature, will be less transparent. There will be straw polls but they are not public. A reason for that is Security Council process but also so that the candidates themselves—who will be told about the results of the straw polls—can see whether or not they are getting support and can consider whether they should carry on in the process or withdraw. The idea is not to embarrass candidates but to come to a consensus decision in the Security Council.

Leadership is something that we have talked about. We are after a Secretary-General who is a leader. As you are well aware, Lord Hannay, there is a spectrum of people who think that the Secretary-General should be at one end of the scale a secretary and at the other end a general. We err towards the “general” end of the spectrum. We think a strong Secretary-General is good and can provide leadership on the kinds of things I was talking about earlier—pulling the system together and using their voice in that, greater efficiency and

effectiveness, and so on. However, what might lie beneath your question is something that I also agree with, which is that there needs to be leadership throughout the system and at various levels within the system. As Lord Wood pointed out earlier, the Secretary-General has varying degrees of authority over different bits of the UN system. It is partly up to member states to hold leaders to account throughout the system. We try to do that in various ways. For example, together with my US colleague, I chair a group of the top payers to the United Nations called the Geneva Group and we meet at my level, director level, twice a year and bring in heads of agencies and so on and talk to them, and try to caucus between those meetings in Geneva and New York about better working, more efficiency and effectiveness, and better leadership in the UN.

My colleagues from DfID also occasionally review the way in which all the multilateral agencies to which they give money function. One of those reviews is ongoing at the moment and may report soon. The previous one was in 2011, and that is another way in which we hold them to account. Then, of course, we sit on the executive boards of funds and programmes and the assemblies of agencies, where we can also hold leaders to account. It is partly the Secretary-General and the Secretary-General's authority over that top central leadership that he or she can exert, and as you dissipate in the wider system it is partly member states, but I wonder whether the body you are thinking of is the board of the chief executives which Ban Ki-moon chairs with the agency heads. That is a good body, and I hope that we have a strong Secretary-General next who will be able to use that as a voice and a forum for getting better co-ordination in-country between the different agencies, funds and programmes, which as I said should all be tackling together these issues of the 21st century.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: You did not say anything about the candidates. It has been the unflinching practice of the British Government, which I have known for a long time, never to reveal who they are supporting. How do you reconcile that with transparency?

Paul Williams: I am afraid that I am going to have to disappoint you again on that one. It remains the Government's position not to reveal who we are voting for. That is not irreconcilable with transparency—I see critical faces. Transparency in who the candidates are, what they stand for and so on is important, and I can tell you what I believe is important in a candidate, but over a number of elections we have had a long-term policy of not revealing who we vote for. That is partly because we want to work closely with the winner of the election and we do not want the Secretary-General to think that they do not have the support of one of the members of the P5, which would be a mistake in the long term.

The Chairman: Can you not even give us any tips on the likely winner?

Lord Jopling: I have two questions. First, following on from what you have just been saying, we are told that there is a movement of opinion that it might be a good idea to have a Secretary-General who comes from Eastern Europe. Looking at the list of names, quite a number of them do. My question is this. Do you not feel that that puts an artificial hobble—in the way you would hobble a horse—on the choice before us, and to what extent do we subscribe to the business of Buggins' turn, which is what this sounds like? That seems to be rather a foolish approach. To what extent do you believe that it is written in stone? Is there a history—you may or may not know this; you can write to us if you do not—of the vote going against the feeling that it is the turn of one geographic group? It seems to be a negative way of going about it.

My second question is about the process of this inquiry. You will have had sight of the full questions that we want to ask, so you will have some ideas in your head of the outline or skeleton of our eventual report, which at the moment we propose to produce at the end of

October. It would seem that the decision is likely to be taken in September. I am not sure whether we could do anything about it, but do you feel that it would be unfortunate for our report to come out after the selection has been made, and do you think that our report might have more impact or indeed any impact on the people who make the choice if we could bring it out earlier: that is, before the final decision is taken, which we are told is likely to be in September? You have said that it will be September or October, but I do not know which it will be.

Paul Williams: I, too, do not know exactly when it will be. I do not know for sure that it will happen in September or October, but that is what I expect. On Eastern Europe, it is right that a number of countries believe that it is Eastern Europe's turn, and that is partly because as a regional area it has not had a Secretary-General before. We do not agree with that. We believe that it should be the best person for the job, whoever that person is. We have said that all things being equal it is time for a woman to be elected, because there has never been a female Secretary-General, and we have been encouraging female candidates—and there have been some female candidates. But ultimately it is all about the best person for the job, whoever that person is. It is true that there are a number of eastern European candidates, but nationality is not a factor for us.

On whether October is too late for your report, I would not want to advise you on that. I think that your report will be about the priorities for the next Secretary-General, so if it came out just as the new Secretary-General was elected, that may in fact be a good time to influence their thinking about what they want to do in the couple of months that they hopefully have to prepare for the job.

Baroness Coussins: Picking up on Lord Hannay's image of medieval barons across the agencies and what you have already said about efficiency and effectiveness, do you agree that one of the priorities for the internal process once the new Secretary-General is in place should be for him or her to get hold of the budget process and exercise some leadership and innovation in order to streamline it? That is one of the real structural weaknesses of the organisation that brings into question its fitness for purpose because of the potential for overlap and duplication. There is a great opportunity to achieve much more effectiveness and efficiency. Even looking just at the issue of refugees and migration, which we will come on to in detail later, at least six different parts of the UN have a remit on that, but I am not aware that there is any co-ordination over budget allocation. Could the UK make it one of its priorities to press the Secretary-General to take action on this?

Paul Williams: Thank you for that question; it is a very good one. The short answer is yes, I think we should do that. My slightly longer answer is that the Secretary-General has some authority over the budget because he or she proposes the regular budget, which is the core budget of the core UN, if you like, and they can therefore propose a lower or higher budget if they want to. However, they are guided on that by a resolution of the member states in the previous year. So as with everything UN, it is the member states that ultimately decide and guide, and the Secretary-General initiates in that respect. I would certainly encourage the new Secretary-General to look for efficiencies, and in fact through numerous resolutions we do that every year. We say, "Please look for greater efficiencies when you come with your budget next time".

Baroness Coussins: It is not just efficiencies, it is the co-ordination and streamlining of the process, is it not?

Paul Williams: I agree with that, too. Of course, we are looking for not just efficiencies but effectiveness in the UN and part of that can come from better co-ordination and less

duplication. Part of the answer is, again, member states. Part of it can be co-ordination by the Secretary-General of the system, to the extent to which the Secretary-General can co-ordinate the whole system—we talked about that earlier—and part of the responsibility lies with member states. I mentioned the Geneva Group earlier. That is one forum in which a group of 15 or 16 countries can hold UN leaders throughout the system to account for what they are delivering. Again, I highlight the Multilateral Aid Review that DfID is carrying out because part of that is about how bits of the UN work together and deliver on the UK's priorities—to what extent do they do it and to what extent do they not? Last time, funding decisions were taken based on a graph of importance to the UK and the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. That is, if you like, us putting our money where our mouth is and saying, “If you want UK money, please become more effective and please try to work on not having overlapping priorities and on matching priorities to what we think needs to happen in your agency”. I agree with that, too.

Matthew Findlay: I have one very small point to add, which is that at both the central level of the UN and at the field level sometimes you can get efficiencies by bringing together the multiple UN offices that are located in the same country or the same city. There are quite a few countries where there are more than 10 UN offices. There was a report called *Delivering as One*. That is something we also very firmly support.

Paul Williams: Another part of it is about getting information management right, the thing I talked about earlier. It sounds a bit tech-y, but getting the right IT in place so you actually know what is happening in various bits can be important.

Baroness Hilton of Eggardon: In relation to openness about candidates, I was wondering whether, instead of trying to pick a winner, you would feel brave enough to say that some people were totally unsuitable—

Paul Williams: I am afraid that would break my taboo as well.

Baroness Hilton of Eggardon: —and whether we could get together with the European caucus while we are still a member to agree on that.

Paul Williams: I am afraid I am not in a position to comment on any candidates.

Baroness Hilton of Eggardon: Just an idea.

Lord Purvis of Tweed: Following up Baroness Coussins' question, if I understand what you say about better cross-cutting priorities and the need to be more efficient and effective, it really does sound as though you want somebody with managerial skills. That is on the scale of being a secretary, it is not a general. It sounds as if the UK does not want someone who can be a real champion of changing the agencies and institutions to meet the huge challenges that the world faces. While you say that the UK is more on the general rather than the secretary side, everything I have heard so far makes me draw the conclusion that you simply want somebody who is a better manager than Ban Ki-moon.

Paul Williams: I do not think that is quite what I am trying to say. I want someone who can be a leader for the world—for 7 billion people; a leader for the system and all the really important things that the UN does and will continue to do in the future; and a communicator, in that sense of leadership. I want someone who has suitable experience, integrity—all those qualities. I want them to be committed to the greater efficiency and effectiveness of the UN. I do not necessarily expect them to lead that process themselves. I would expect them to put in place managers to lead that reform and change. But I would hope that they had a vision for the UN that would include that aspect of greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Lord Grocott: My question is on a related point—your neat little phrase about “secretary” and “general”. It seems entirely reasonable to me that you would want to move towards more of a general and less of a secretary. Presumably that can happen in a meaningful way only if the big players, particularly the Security Council and even more particularly the United States, are happy to have a “general” striding the world stage without feeling in any way inhibited. Is there any indication that the permanent members of the Security Council are in a mood to do that—to stand back—particularly the United States?

Paul Williams: The Secretary-General can never be entirely insulated from global power politics. That is not the way it works. The UN is a member-driven organisation, so it is important to have a Secretary-General who knows how to navigate that system in order to be able to deliver what they need to deliver. While we would like a person who is at the “general” end of the spectrum, I do not think you can have someone who just barks orders and ignores member states, because they would not achieve anything in the system. They have to be canny with it. I am saying that I would not want someone who just does whatever every member state tells them to do, at the secretary level, because then you also achieve nothing. You need to be somewhere in between and I would say more at the general end than the secretary end. I do not think you can ever be 100% general in the system.

The Chairman: Coming to the in-tray itself, I suspect at the top of the pile will be the appalling problem of refugees, which the UN is deeply involved in. Baroness Smith.

Baroness Smith of Newnham: The question on the exam paper is not quite what I am going to ask. The official question is: is there a role for the UN in managing the challenge of refugees and migration and, if so, what is that role? I would like to take this back—we have already been back to the 1940s—to the Geneva Convention on Refugees. In 1951, the world was a very different place. The size of the population was very different. Is that Convention fit for purpose? If not, what needs changing? Do we need to go back to the drawing board? Should that be set by the Secretary-General or should members such as the UK be setting the agenda?

Paul Williams: If it is okay, I will hand over to Ed. Before I do so, I will say a couple of things. It is actually quite a significant year in the UN for migration. We had the World Humanitarian Summit recently and we are building up to two high-level meetings at the UN General Assembly—UNGA—in September, one hosted by President Obama and one a high-level Ban Ki-moon event. The idea is for the world community, if you like, to come together and look at what it can do on refugees—and migration, in the case of the Ban Ki-moon event.

The Chairman: Mr Hobart, before you answer Baroness Smith, could you explain exactly what you are the envoy to?

Edward Hobart: Ah, well, sometimes to Whitehall. One of my responsibilities is migration aspects outside the European Union, so not freedom of movement but how we as an EU member or as a UN member respond to the crisis that Lord Howell was referring to. I have been in the role for about eight months. I represent the FCO’s part in that, working alongside the Home Office, which has the lead on much of the international approach. It has the expertise, for example, on the 1951 Convention. Obviously, DfID does a lot of the actual response in the field. It is a holistic cross-government response.

Is the 1951 Convention fit for purpose? I suppose that is half of what the 19 September high-level summit is addressing. It is looking at mass movements of people across borders: both refugees and other forms of migration.

On the refugee side, we think that, yes, the 1951 Convention is fit for purpose. We do not think it should be changed, and I think that will be the consensus across the UN, but it does

need to be applied alongside other commitments and other parts of international and humanitarian law. So it is more about the affirmation of what that 1951 Convention says about genuinely protecting people who are fleeing from persecution as well as looking at how we respond to other forms of mass movement, be they forced or out of choice—a lot of the people who are moving are doing so out of choice, a choice that we may understand but that may or may not be covered by conventions or rights. We expect the 19 September summit to reaffirm the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol that was added to it, and call on all states to apply the 1951 Convention and share those responsibilities globally.

The Chairman: Before we finish, can we look at the priorities even more closely? We have looked at the management and organisation of the whole gigantic system itself. You mentioned refugees just now. Bearing in mind that we want to talk about the connection between all the states involved, the world is extensively populated by divided states and minority groups within those states creating gross instability and generating refugee problems of an unbelievable horror and size as never before in history. In terms of priorities for the new Secretary-General, is this not going to create entirely new and very challenging issues?

Edward Hobart: Yes, but a lot of those causes are causes of other forms of global crisis and instability, so our first action not only as the UK but also through the UN has to be to address the root causes. That is why last year we spent £0.5 billion in sub-Saharan Africa on trying to develop stronger economies and economic livelihoods, and £0.5 billion on addressing the humanitarian causes driving migration. We need to address the creation of economic opportunity in countries and create the economic opportunities to move between countries within regions so that you do not have mass displacement from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, for example, or from south Asia to Europe. You create economic opportunity and mobility within the region, of which ECOWAS² is a good example in Africa. You address the causes of instability and fragility, be they climate change or security. If you can stop people moving by creating opportunity locally, that is actually where most people want to be, which is at home.

There is the secondary response that nevertheless people are moving and have moved, and we want to protect them as close as possible to the place from which they have moved. The UK has shown leadership on that this year at the Syria pledging conference, and that continues through what we are trying to do on 19 and 20 September in the margins of the UN General Assembly, which is to support people who are going to be displaced for a long period of time. We call it protracted displacement; people who are displaced in Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, or for that matter Kenya, Uganda, Iran and Pakistan, are now often there for many years. So we want to try to bring together—this is also part of the UN reform agenda—the development of humanitarian spend to look at how the whole country functions and responds to the people who have arrived there, and then how we can support them and try to make it a positive experience for both the migrants and the host country.

We are seeking to tackle protracted displacement in a different and far more joined-up way. This is now at or near the top of the UN Secretary-General's agenda, hence the conference on 19 September, and no doubt unfortunately will still be a priority in January 2017. We have the two events in September that will help to shape that. They follow the Syria conference held here, which created some new models for response, and there was the World Humanitarian Summit, which also looked at some of the things that Paul has already referred to: how can we be far more joined-up in our response in-country and have the

² Economic Community Of West African States

different UN agencies working in a coherent way against a single plan. We call this the grand bargain. Donors provide money in a way that the UN finds it easier to use and deal with, provided that they are working in a joined-up and more effective way. That is done by having a single, multi-year plan to work to. So a lot of thinking is going on, as well as a lot of work, and some action is taking place, particularly around Syria and the Horn of Africa, and there is an opportunity to implement that more through these summits and beyond into the new Secretary-General's period.

The Chairman: Presumably the related area to touch on will be to review the plethora of UN missions and peacekeeping operations around the world, some of which are going well and some of which, frankly, are not going well. Will that be equally at the top of the agenda for the new Secretary-General?

Paul Williams: It is certainly very important, Lord Chairman. It is one of a number of priorities for the next Secretary-General. We have mentioned a few already. Migration is obviously one and peacekeeping is another. I spoke a little earlier about how we are trying to increase our own contribution to peacekeeping. There were a number of reviews from September last year to a month or so ago on peacekeeping, peacebuilding, women's role in peace and security and how the UN does policing. All those reviews are important and will need to be implemented under the next Secretary-General as well as under this Secretary-General, in addition to things like the climate change deal and Sustainable Development Goals. There is a long list of priorities. The point that I was trying to get across earlier in my answers to the initial questions is that when we leave the European Union, the UN is going to become an even bigger part of our world view than it was before. What I am trying to say is that we already had a plan to invest in the UN as much as we can, and obviously we will now look at that again. The point is that we have a list of very important issues that we want the Secretary-General to deal with, because we believe in the UN and want to remain a very important player in it.

Baroness Coussins: What more can the new Secretary-General do to ensure a more consistent and effective implementation of Resolution 1325³ on the role of women in post-conflict reconstruction and peacekeeping? It has been very patchily observed up till now.

Paul Williams: Women, Peace and Security is a very important issue for us. Part of what the next Secretary-General can do is keep it in sight and continue to emphasise how important it is. It is the voice and the convenor role that the Secretary-General can use. I say that partly because the implementation of Resolution 1325 also needs to come through member states, because it was the member states that made pledges on that at the Security Council meeting held last October on the anniversary of Resolution 1325. We did so too. I think the Secretary-General has a role in holding member states to those pledges.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Do you think that the Secretary-General and the Security Council have sufficiently got to grips with the problem of sexual violence yet, particularly by peacekeepers? There have been some bad cases in the Central African Republic, but they are not the first, and it looks to some of us as though they will not be the last unless the action is a bit more drastic. I am sure you are aware of the report produced by the House of Lords on sexual violence in conflict. What sort of priority should the new UN Secretary-General give to this, and should we be pressing him to find some way of bringing people who are accused of

³ Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict

these crimes to account before an international instance or tribunal, given that the troop contributors have proved to be totally and pathetically useless on this, although obviously you cannot hand people over to a country where the legal system has completely collapsed?

Paul Williams: I think that the next Secretary-General should make this a high priority. The incident reports that we have had recently are horrific and everyone recognises them as such, so the UN definitely needs to get to grips with the issue, and I think that Ban Ki-moon is trying to do so. He has appointed a special co-ordinator, Jane Holl Lute, whose job is to co-ordinate the response. She is going to come up with a report on what she thinks should happen. It was good that the Security Council passed Resolution 2272. It is quite a landmark resolution that talks about the importance of this issue and the ways of getting to grips with it.

There are multifaceted ways in which we need to approach it. Again, we are putting our money where our mouth is on this and providing around £1 million in total to various things, such as supporting Jane Holl Lute and the Conduct and Discipline Unit in its work. There are various aspects: training, performance on the ground and, as you say, holding people to account. I admit that I am slightly sceptical about an international court. I fear that it could be expensive and take a long time to set up. I am not sure how many countries would willingly submit their troops to international trial on these issues, but I recognise the problem of delays in perpetrators of these crimes being held to account, and we need to look at that.

There are issues to do with the processes in the UN, and we can work on those, but there obviously also needs to be pressure on the home countries of the troops concerned to have trials, which could happen more quickly.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Don't you think that most of the doubts that you have expressed are not really impediments to the British Government championing this approach? They are things that would have to be solved for that approach to be made to work.

Paul Williams: My view is that we should champion what will work best. As I say, I have some doubts about whether an international court is the way to go on that. There are a lot of practical things that we can do at the moment that we should be doing, together with Jane Holl Lute. I remember the Committee's report on an international tribunal. As I said, I have concerns about it.

Matthew Findlay: There is just one point that I want to add to that, thinking back to the wider work on peacekeeping. A big part of that is to get more countries to put forward pledges regarding peacekeepers. The more you can increase the supply of high-quality peacekeepers, the less the UN Secretariat is reliant on peacekeepers of lower quality. The problem at the moment is that sometimes the UN does not have a lot of offers and so has to go to countries whose troops have committed some of these appalling crimes. By improving that supply and getting more and more countries to put forward peacekeepers, we think that we can raise standards across the board.

Paul Williams: We have a big agenda on peacekeeping reform. We like to talk about the three Ps—pledges, planning and performance—and we will cover those three aspects at our conference in September in various forms. Pledges were made at the summit last year. We pledged, and of course I hope that British troops will be a very good example of what troops can do in a UN context. They are starting to deploy. Planning is about getting the right overview of what the UN has and what it will need, as well as where and when. Performance is about the effectiveness of troops on the ground—their training and so on. It also includes the point about sexual exploitation and abuse, which is vital.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Could the Committee be given the three Ps that you describe on paper so that we can get a full view of the Government's policy?

The Chairman: There are many more questions we would like to ask but we must move on. A sense of crisis has gripped many parts of the world, including the Middle East, and we must hope that the new Secretary-General is up to these challenges. We must not forget that UN personnel are put in great danger and that there have been quite a few fatalities. We admire and respect the brave people who put their lives at risk. Perhaps there will be a later opportunity to come back to this, because we have been round only parts of what we want to examine. You have been extremely helpful. Thank you, Mr Hobart, Mr Williams and Mr Findlay. We will leave it there.

Examination of Witness

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe, Executive Director, United Nations Association UK

The Chairman: Natalie Samarasinghe, thank you very much for coming before us this morning. I will not ask you who you are, because we know perfectly well; you are executive director of the United Nations Association and are therefore in a very good position to help us with our aims and inquiries, which are to try to formulate and develop UK views on what priorities the new Secretary-General, when he or she is in place, will take.

I begin with a general question. You are at the heart of these matters, and it must occur to you that, as Dag Hammarskjöld said 70 years ago, the purpose of the United Nations was not to lead mankind to heaven but to save humanity from hell. Hell of an indescribable kind has arrived, at this moment, for millions of people. Do you feel that under the new Secretary-General, the United Nations will be able to rise to these new conditions, and what priority should the new Secretary-General give in facing up this very turbulent and disorganised world?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: Thank you very much. I am delighted to be here. If I may, I will start by saying that I am really pleased that this Committee has been established. We at UNA-UK were delighted to hear it. We feel that it is long overdue and that it will really support our work and the work of many other NGOs that work on international issues. Your question is very wise. We will be looking for the new Secretary-General to set out a vision for the UN that matches its goals but is tempered with a lot of realism. The idea that in the current context the UN is always the solution to every problem and can do everything by itself is no longer feasible.

The UN retains some unique characteristics. It is the only truly global platform. It can convey unique legitimacy, so it is a great place for international negotiations to take place, such as a climate agreement and the setting of global development goals. Those things can happen only at the UN. The UN will remain an important setter of global norms when it comes to human rights laws and humanitarian principles. Those are the sorts of areas where the UN will continue to need to play a great and strong role. However, there are lots of other areas where we need to think about whether it should always be the UN that is front and centre. When it comes to peacekeeping and development operations, there are times when we need to look at whether the UN can actually provide what is needed or whether it needs to work more creatively with different partners.

If there is one priority area that the UNA-UK would pick for the next Secretary-General, it would be development reform. That has eluded the UN for the best part of its life, although incremental progress has been made. It is hugely important and pressing now. It was the

elephant in the room when the Sustainable Development Goals were being determined. It goes to the heart of the UN's call for prevention. We talk about prevention and how we can prevent crises escalating. We can do that by improving the development and humanitarian system.

The UN has not really moved on from the time when it was the only actor on the ground. There are now many actors that work on direct delivery—local NGOs, the many more funders and so on—so we need to look at where the UN still adds value, which I think is in the areas of transition and surge capacity, when a crisis hits and when expertise is needed. On the day-to-day direct delivery side, there are other actors that can probably take a much more prominent role. That means very difficult questions. It means perhaps merging some agencies and some mandates, downsizing some agencies and scrapping some agencies. That is a very difficult and political thing for a Secretary-General to get into, because there are vested interests on the part of donor countries, beneficiary countries and officials, but if there is one fight that it is worth the Secretary-General picking, it would be this one. That would be the top priority. There are others that I can get into.

The Chairman: That is very clear. I have an initial question, and I am sure that others will wish to come in. People talk nowadays about development and prevention. First, they talk about prevention so far. There are many crises which the UN has clearly not prevented. The conditions globally are worse—for some, not for all; we must not be too pessimistic—than ever before, and others are talking about a new development model, in that the development efforts of nations and supranational efforts at the UN have not delivered as much of the promise of keeping people in their own countries and bringing prosperity as was hoped. Do you think that the Secretary-General will think about reshaping ideas about what causes development and how to bring security and prosperity to nations that simply do not have it at the moment?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: There is limited scope for the Secretary-General to overhaul the development system by herself or himself, although there is certainly scope for providing thought leadership; and in resurrecting some of the very good proposals that have been floating around the system for nearly 50 years, going all the way back to a capacity study produced by Robert Jackson in 1969, many of those recommendations are still relevant today. However, it is politics that prevents them being implemented, so the Secretary-General will have a role in bringing those out by providing thought leadership, as I said, and by encouraging countries to see this as the missing piece of the Sustainable Development Goals project that we have now embarked upon. But that will require support from countries, such as the UK, that are important aid donors and that have a lot of influence in the multilateral system as a result.

Baroness Coussins: Sticking with your focus on the need for development reform, to what extent should that include some sort of renegotiation of the UN's relationship with the private sector? Allied to that, can you comment on the UN guiding principles, which are often known as the Ruggie principles, on business and human rights, which I know the UK has taken a very strong lead on? Can you also comment on how the UK can continue to press for the implementation of these guiding principles as one of the new Secretary-General's priorities, and even on whether there is any scope for them to be upgraded in some way? It has always struck me that calling them guiding principles makes them sound a bit optional, and I wonder whether they could be hardened up within the UN system.

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: I suppose they are optional in some ways; the clue is in the name. I think the UN has become a lot better at working with all sorts of partners in the

private sector and with NGOs, but there are still barriers. In some parts of the system there is a mindset that NGOs are probably “good” but not easy to work with, and there is scepticism about the motives of the private sector and so on. I think that has changed a lot, and initiatives such as the guiding principles on business and human rights and the UN Global Compact are really helping to break down those barriers. I think we need to find a balance by which the UN can embrace those partnerships and regulate them at the same time. That is very much what I was trying to get at by saying that we need to look at who is working on the ground in certain areas and who can do what best. It sounds an unrealistic ideal to strive for: the idea that the UN in effect becomes a co-ordinator, a body that opens up space for others to operate in, a big capacity-building system that over the next few years tries to train up others to be able to do the jobs that it will not have the capacity, and currently does not have the capacity, to do. But actually that was in the Secretary-General’s report this year ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit, when he spoke about states and others actors being the primary responders on the ground, with the UN as an enabler and a provider of surge capacity as and when needed.

With regard to UN reform, I have picked on development reform as something that has been languishing on the shelf for too long. It is probably slightly different from the answer I would give about what the Secretary-General himself or herself should focus on, which is very much to do with Dag Hammarskjöld’s vision of saving us from hell: that is dealing with big power politics going wrong, banging heads together and being the mediator and negotiator behind the scenes.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Do you think that in giving a very high priority to development, as you suggested, there is a need for the UN Secretary-General to try to get greater flexibility into the DAC⁴ guidelines so that when the UN is trying to prevent a fragile country sliding into chaos, actions that perhaps do not fit precisely the rather old-fashioned DAC rules could be recognised as a real contribution to development? Should the new UN Secretary-General have a good look at that and perhaps give a bit of a lead?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: I think so. Again, I picked this as a priority because I believe that Secretaries-General have a certain scope and room for manoeuvre at the beginning of their term. They cannot do everything, and this is the topic on the UN reform side that they should pick. On your question, there is a lot of misplaced scepticism within the system and within NGOs about more money being spent on what was traditionally badged as peace and security-type work. When you look at the countries that are languishing at the bottom of the Human Development Index—which countries are expected to make the least progress, which countries have had their development progress set back by due to conflict, such as Syria where it has been set back by more than 30 years—it is indisputable that we need to focus on that area.

On the question of what the Secretary-General himself or herself can do, they can build on what Ban did, which was to commission a lot of reviews, get a lot of experts involved but then leave the implementation to member states and the next Secretary-General to deliver. The new Secretary-General could also do that on the development side, because it is about changing how we think about development, seeing it more as part and parcel of prevention in other areas, but also changing the conversation from the north/south, donor/beneficiary paradigm to what the Sustainable Development Goals are supposed to be which is a universal agenda. That means drawing the emerging economies and different sets of countries not just into giving aid but into providing expertise. It is really about setting out a

⁴ Development Assistance Committee

new vision for development. That is one of the areas where the Secretary-General can take a lead in stimulating those conversations.

The Chairman: Lord Hannay, would you like to ask some questions on process and institutions?

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: On the process of appointing the new Secretary-General, which will probably be completed before we publish our report on the priorities that he or she should have, how do you think the process has gone so far, and how do you think it will continue? I think we all recognise the work that the UNA has done in the wonderful 1 for 7 Billion campaign, which I strongly applaud. Do you think that that greater transparency is going to be sustained right the way through the process?

The other issue of process that we have focused on is: how can the new Secretary-General get a better grip on the stovepipe arrangements under which UN agencies set their own priorities, raise their own funds and then quite often fail to rise to the occasion simply because the UN system as a whole is not brought in soon enough, Ebola being a classic example?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: On the process, we are delighted by the developments that have happened so far. We have gone from a secretive process in which the permanent members of the Security Council—the P5—effectively held all the cards and the wider UN membership was not involved in any meaningful way, to a much more inclusive process. It is not everything we called for, but it is a very different process this time. We have a broad timetable. We have a public list of candidates. We have—I would not really call them selection criteria but guiding principles on what kind of person we might want in this role. We have the opportunity for candidates to engage with the wider UN membership. The list of candidates being public has enabled civil society, including UNA-UK, to organise debates with candidates. We have much stronger language on encouraging women to be put forward for the role. We have moved away from one of the most limiting conventions that sprung up around the selection process, that of regional rotation. Crucially, a General Assembly resolution last year moved away from the words “regional rotation” to taking account of “geographic balance”, which may sound like semantics but is pretty big in UN terms, and a focus on merit as the ultimate decider. We have come a very long way. Of course, we have now seen candidates from outside the supposed next region, Eastern Europe, come forward—some very strong candidates indeed.

Lord Hannay, you mentioned that the Committee might not report before the decision has been made. Last time round, the decision had already been made in May. So progress has been very good, but we could do better. It has been interesting that we have had this very transparent, public process at the General Assembly, where civil society has been able to ask questions and everything has been publicised, so I think it is right that we now go into a period of closed-door deliberations with the Security Council—crucially, with all the Security Council members. That needs to happen at some stage. But how do we tie these two processes together?

There has been a lot of effort to try to feed the views of the wider membership into the Security Council process in a more formal way. That is very difficult. There have been calls for the President of the General Assembly, who has been very good on this, to conduct a survey and to try to transmit the top three or five names. That has run into difficulty, so the question, which we have put to the UK, remains: how do you now make sure that the momentum and the involvement are sustained when everything moves behind closed doors? We would like to see regular communication between the President of the Security

Council and the President of the General Assembly: some public statements, at least on who has been knocked out, even if they do not want to talk about the favourites who are emerging. Last time round, even states on the Security Council who were not permanent members did not know who had been knocked out and who was being considered. Some public updates would be good.

We still need to push for the next Secretary-General to be appointed for a single term. That is the one thing that would give her or him the ability to operate with more freedom, to tackle difficult issues such as: what do you do with the rest of the system where countries are on governing boards and have their own priorities? That would give the next incumbent a lot more flexibility and scope to carry out a more independent, progressive agenda, free from the constraints of re-election. That is the sort of thing that we want to see happening.

The big question is: will transparency lead to a better outcome? I am not sure. It has been excellent that the process has raised so many issues. The candidates may come and go but the issues and ideas that have been generated as part of the process will remain, which is fantastic. I think it would be difficult to try to back down from that process, so I hope that we have got the ball rolling for future appointments of Secretaries-General but also for other areas of the UN. It has been quite incredible to see the states standing for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council engaging in debates. That has never happened before. Candidates for President of the General Assembly have done that too. So the Secretary-General selection process has had a good knock-on effect. Ultimately, there is such a strong feeling among the wider UN membership for a more inclusive, independent Secretary-General who is there for all member states that it would be very difficult for the Security Council to pick someone without taking that into account. So we might not end up with the best possible person, but we certainly will not end up with the worst possible person. That is probably as much as we could have hoped for when we started this process.

Lord Wood of Anfield: Do you think the criteria for the job are clear enough to the world: what kind of person we are looking for, what skills do they need? Is there anything approaching a consensus on the sort of CV, character and skills that we need?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: That is a very good question. It is a question that we asked ourselves when we started the campaign, and we came up with a list that I do not think would surprise any member of the Committee: proven leadership skills, managerial experience, experience of international organisations, integrity, diplomatic skills, communications skills. We came up with quite a broad list and some of that was reflected in General Assembly Resolution 69/321 last year on the process. But the important thing is to look at what we need the UN to do in the next few years, and within that what specifically the Secretary-General can and should do.

Even though I have said a lot when campaigning on this issue about the need for someone who can communicate and be inspirational and so on, I am not sure that a Secretary-General can be all those things at all times or that that is desirable. I do not think that you can use the bully pulpit all the time and then be an effective negotiator behind the scenes, or spend your time giving nice speeches and inspiring people when you also need to work on management reform. This is all about finding other people in the system who can do that. It is about looking at the Secretary-General and what only she or he can do as the figurehead and what the Deputy Secretary-General and Under-Secretaries-General can do.

Going to your question, as I think I mentioned before, from a UNA-UK perspective the Secretary-General really needs to have the rather undefined quality of presence or gravitas. They need to be able to walk into the Security Council and be seen as someone the P5 will

listen to, who can visit a Government when things are not going so well and be taken seriously, and who is an effective negotiator and mediator—someone who can deal with big power politics and repair some of the relations between the P5. We in the UK, like most of the permanent members of the Security Council, are going through some form of identity crisis at the moment and are redefining our role on the global stage. That is something the Secretary-General will have to deal with. Of course, that person should be able to use their moral voice when it is needed, but for UNA-UK it is about first managing the role as the world's premier diplomat and then looking at a team that can fulfil the other functions.

The Chairman: What happens if the Security Council as a whole cannot find a consensus? Do they have a majority vote then, or do they put forward more than one candidate at the General Assembly? What actually happens?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: The UN Charter is actually very vague about the appointment. It has only one line on it: that it is made by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. Initially there were plans to have more than one candidate and a vote by secret ballot, but that was scuppered from the very first appointment. In 1946, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the General Assembly thought, "Let's go for stability here", and it adopted a resolution that said that the Security Council should put forward only one candidate for it to decide upon. It also said that any discussion on the appointment should be avoided and minimised in the Assembly, so in effect it did itself out of a role. That remained the case, by and large, until very recently.

Our proposals for more than one candidate to be put forward have not really gone anywhere or got any traction, so if there is disagreement in the Security Council on particular candidates, which I think is quite likely, it will look for a compromise candidate. I think that the Security Council has been willing to some extent to accept the changes that have happened. I hope that comes from a recognition that by opening up this process, it has demonstrated that it can change and listen without actually giving away any power, but I think it will do its best to maintain most of the conventions and consensus that have guided this process in the past. We will therefore see a compromise candidate go forward to the General Assembly. Some states have said that if that compromise candidate is just not good enough, they might be willing to kick it back. I think that everyone will do whatever they can to avoid that, which is why I am confident that we will get a better-quality candidate than we might otherwise have expected at a time when relations within the P5 are not very good.

The Chairman: That sounds rather different from the Conservative Party.

Lord Wood of Anfield: Or the Labour Party.

The Chairman: Can we turn to another issue? China was one of the original members of the P5 in 1945, but China today is a completely different proposition from the China of 70 years ago, and a dominant force in the world that is not committed to our model of liberal democracy but that is of course highly influential across all the continents. Baroness Hilton will pursue this.

Baroness Hilton of Eggardon: You have pre-empted most of what I was going to say. I have been to China several times, but that is irrelevant. What is relevant, of course, is that it has become enormously powerful, it has feelers out in Africa and most of Asia, and it is creating new communications links and so on. However, it retains a rather semi-detached view of most large international organisations, and for the future of the world it is obviously very important that it be more engaged. How do you feel a new Secretary-General will cope with that situation? It rather depends who that is, of course. Are there mechanisms that could

involve China more directly in the development goals, for instance, that you were talking about?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: I think that China, especially in recent years, has become a lot more engaged. It has become more involved not only by giving bilateral aid but in UN peacekeeping. It now provides many more troops, and it is more active on a wider range of issues in the Security Council. I am told by colleagues that the quality of Chinese senior individuals appointed to roles at the UN has risen quite substantially. I think that Chinese incumbents have held the economic portfolio at the UN for some time, so I do think there is evidence that China is becoming much more engaged.

The key to involving China more fully touches on what I said earlier not just in relation to China but in relation to other emerging powers. Of course, China is already quite special because it is on the Security Council and is necessarily involved in lots of discussions. It is also engaging with India and Brazil and so on. The way to involve it and other emerging powers, certainly on the peace and security side, involves recognising that some of them are already major troop-contributing countries and therefore need to play a much bigger role in mandate-setting, training and looking at the goals for missions. The UN in general needs to set some lines of success for peacekeeping missions and play a role in changing the conversation on development. This is not just about having the OECD-type system on a global level but about trying to create something new whereby all countries, not just the big emerging economies but other stronger middle-income countries, are encouraged to contribute financially to the system and are asked to provide advice and support to not just their developing-country colleagues but on occasion to rich countries, on the great work they are doing on climate change adaptation and humanitarian assistance development projects for example. A lot more can be done to make development a very consensual project and system in which whoever has the expertise helps whoever needs it, rather than what we have now. That is the key to engagement.

I know that people always focus on what can be done to increase representation in various UN bodies, but I am not sure that we will see major changes in Security Council reform or the World Bank and so on any time soon. What we can do, and what the new Secretary-General can do, is insist that appointments be made on merit and that the key appointments are not just the preserve of certain P5 countries that have always had them because they engage in all sorts of bargaining and put pressure on the Secretary-General during the appointment and the reappointment process, which, by the way, is not really an appointment process but just another chance for states to apply pressure. Raising the quality of appointments to ensure that there is a meritocratic process for all of them will also encourage the greater engagement of other countries.

Lord Purvis of Tweed: The phrase you used before was “the world’s premier diplomat”. Between whom does the UN think diplomacy is likely to be required in the future? The recommendations to the Security Council come from countries where the populations will be either static or declining over the next generation, whereas other countries, whether China, Asia or Africa, have populations that over the next generation will double even on conservative forecasts. Is the method of choosing coming from an inaccurate perspective where the reality of world population growth and the challenges and opportunities for the next generation are still very skewed towards a post-war declining mentality?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: That is a very good question and one that has inspired us to push for a more open process. If you have a process that is defined by the interests of the five permanent members, that is where the emphasis will lie—on their priorities and their

interests—whereas you can see from the debates in the General Assembly that so much emphasis has been put on development this time. That is because the wider UN membership has been involved.

You are absolutely right about diplomacy and mediation. The Secretary-General needs first of all to be the premier diplomat but also someone who is leading a corps of people from lots of different countries. If there is a smaller UN reform area, which I think the Secretary-General should push for, it lies in strengthening the UN's mediation unit and the roster of people who are called up, because at the moment there is not only a north/south imbalance but a gender imbalance. A lot more can be done to find people from lots of different parts of the world. That is ultimately what we need when going in to mediate a situation and to negotiate. You need people who understand the context and have some sympathy with it. It is about creating a team that will be able to support that new kind of approach. Whether that will filter through this time, I do not know. We have certainly been pushing very hard for wider voices to be included on an ongoing basis.

It is interesting to note that these issues were raised in the General Assembly dialogues. It was not the typical split of countries that we expected to raise certain issues, it was countries such as Thailand talking about senior appointments and how they should be made fairer. We have had NAM⁵ and the G77⁶ talking about sexual abuse by peacekeepers, and there has been whistleblowing. The questions came from across the board in what could be described as a bizarre group therapy session for UN member states, finally able to talk about all these issues. That has been very important. It is now a question of trying to capture the questions and feed them into the Security Council process. Ultimately, if the new Secretary-General is appointed in a process in which she or he feels that the wider UN membership has had a real say, their constituency and mandate will be broader and they will need to reflect those concerns. That penny is beginning to drop, actually. The new Secretary-General will have to do something towards fulfilling the vision statement that they have released, which of course has been designed to appeal to a much wider set of constituents than previously.

Lord Grocott: You have been so clear about it being an objective or a principled objective to talk about development, and that is helpful. We understand how that can impact on all sorts of other improvements that might come about if development takes place. There is a “but” coming and it is simply this: as well as having these longer-term goals, is it not of fundamental importance to the United Nations that it can react quickly to dramas as and when they arise? Big organisations will always have difficulties in that respect, and it is often how they are judged by the wider world. But it is when something dreadful happens somewhere that the UN needs to be seen to be doing something, particularly in the area of peacekeeping. I am sorry that this question has gone on a little. You said that peacekeeping was something that other agencies might be able to help with, and that realistically the UN is not always the body that is best able to deal with it. Can you respond to this more general point?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: I did not want to give the impression that it is all about development, although I thought it would be helpful to pick one big priority. If I was going down the list, I would have first tackling reforms for development, as I have mentioned, and second, responding to things happening—crisis situations—which is about mediation and negotiation. There is a need for a Secretary-General who can anticipate problems and

⁵ Non-Aligned Movement

⁶ A loose coalition of developing nations, designed to promote its members' collective economic interests and create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the United Nations

hopefully try to prevent them escalating. When they do escalate, there are still situations where I cannot imagine a coalition of countries being as accepted or being able to do what the UN can do on the peacekeeping side. Peacekeeping operations have generally worked in situations involving a smaller country; and when there has been sustained support and agreement from all the Security Council permanent members—I am talking about situations like Sierra Leone.

Peacekeeping has worked less well in the more fragmented context where there is no real peace to keep. UN peacekeeping troops as they are now are not that well equipped to deal with those types of situations. The peacekeeping review carried out last year tackled this big question: should the UN get into difficult operations? Should it be more robust and should it deal with extremism and so on? The view of the panel that put together the review was no, it should not. The UN should be cautious because it is simply not geared up to do those things. When it is on the ground, inevitably these things happen and the UN needs to be able to respond, which is where partnerships come in. We have seen France do this in Mali, and we have seen it elsewhere. They come in and stabilise a situation so that the scene is set for a peacekeeping mission. Is there a case for UN peacekeepers to be there for some time and then hand over to, say, a regional African Union-style force when things have reached a certain milestone? There needs to be better planning and phasing of who does what at certain points in a conflict, but I do not think that really happens at the moment because, as you say, we expect the UN to step in when things go wrong.

However, going back to the Lord Chairman's point at the beginning, the UN needs to move away from trying to take us to heaven. On the one hand it is gratifying that people still look to the UN to provide all these solutions, however much we might malign and criticise it. The UN does a fantastic job in all sorts of areas, particularly on the development side, but it cannot go on because it is so overstretched and underfunded. We cannot always say when something happens that the UN should deal with it. What is the UN anyway? It is its member states coming together and deciding to do something. Sometimes the operational delivery mechanism is the UN, but at other times it could be for other forms of regional organisations or member states. It is about looking at and being much more circumspect about what the UN actually gets involved in, and saying no to things.

Baroness Smith of Newnham: You have mentioned development and conflict prevention, but what links the two that could be another pressure on the UN is obviously refugee flows. Do you think the 1951 Convention is fit for purpose? If not, is it a priority of the Secretary-General to look for new ways of dealing with this issue?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: It is definitely something that the UN needs to be involved with. As I said, it remains the body to which you would go to get agreement on global norms and on any new instrument. In the current climate it would be really difficult to try to change the Convention, because if you open up these instruments for amendment you may well get something that is a lot worse. I know that there are split views in the UN refugee agency and other bodies as to whether doing that would be productive, but there is clearly a need to address the gaps. That means looking at the definition of someone who is displaced as the result of a disaster or extreme poverty because they have had no proper Government for ages – when they cannot prove individual persecution but there is clearly a need for them to leave.

Then, of course, there is climate displacement. That is going to become a huge issue. Some initiatives are already trying to look at it, and it was mentioned but not really engaged with at the Paris conference on climate change. It will be a key issue, and I think that the new

Secretary-General can say, “Look, we need to start paying attention to this”. It is another area where we need to change the conversation, because what is quite surprising for some of us who do not have an entirely western background is that this is not a new problem and it is not a “European” crisis. Many developing countries have been hosting several hundred thousand if not a million refugees for a number of years, and we expect them to do it. You do not hear western countries saying, “Are you sure they’re really refugees?” We say, “Thank you very much. We’re glad that you’re hosting them and they’re not coming over here”. There is a need to create a different conversation around that. Inadvertently, the UN has insulated us from the consequences of crises that may have spilled over and affected us and could have prompted a response. Now that the UN agencies are struggling to deal with the flow of refugees, we see the impact and we think of it as a crisis. Again, it is about changing that conversation. There is a summit coming up in September at the UN. I very much hope that the UK will demonstrate that it is still globally engaged and open for business in that sense by making some concrete commitments and contributions at that meeting.

Lord Jopling: Can I go back a little bit? You were talking about the possibility of regional support for the United Nations in various aspects. I suppose you would argue that NATO is one of the key organisations that are prepared and capable of coming to support the Secretary-General if he wishes it. I am old enough to remember a parallel organisation—SEATO⁷—being set up in South-East Asia, with much the same intentions, but that collapsed. I am not for a moment suggesting the recreation of SEATO but could you enlarge a little, with examples perhaps, on how you think the Secretary-General might encourage regional support to evolve to be available to him or her if it was needed?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: It is a really interesting question and one that is embedded in the UN Charter. There is a whole chapter on working with regional organisations. It is something that is talked about an awful lot but I am not sure we have got very far yet. The UN has entered into lots of agreements with different regional organisations, including NATO, but in practical terms it has been difficult to really embed these organisations into the UN system. For example, one of the recommendations that the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations made last year was that regional organisations that help on peacekeeping missions should get some of the assessed contributions to help them provide that support. That disappeared very quickly when the report was translated by the Secretary-General into something that could be put to member states. It has now completely disappeared from the conversation. It is not just about burden-sharing, it is about integrating organisations into the system. Peacekeeping is the obvious one, where the African Union and ECOWAS do so much, but I think it could be done in development terms as well. Is there a way that countries such as South Korea, which is a really big development contributor now, and other countries that are playing a greater role in development but are outside the OECD, can do that via their regions and create possibly a much more comfortable approach and a different ethos around development aid? There is much more that can be done.

The UN itself works very much through regional blocs and organisations which come together on different issues. Within that system it should be possible to talk about how regional organisations can play a greater role. Unfortunately, whenever it comes down to the specifics, so far we have not been able to make any headway. The UN is struggling in terms of cash and resources to deal with some situations. There are peacekeeping missions that go on for ever and you think, “Where is the measure of success here? What needs to

⁷ Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation

happen now? Where is the legitimacy?”—the longer they stay without seeming to make a difference, the more it hits the legitimacy and the perceptions and expectations of the local population and their willingness to tolerate a mission there. Those are the sorts of things that are pushing the UN into looking at this issue afresh.

Lord Inglewood: My question is a general one. We are interested in the priorities of the next Secretary-General. Do you think the structure and politics of the UN are such that it is possible for a Secretary-General to deliver on his priorities?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: The short answer is no, not at the moment. There are certain things the Secretary-General can do. She or he can start conversations, provide some thought leadership, give priorities to certain issues and give air to certain issues. In very practical terms, the Secretary-General can work on negotiation and mediation—that is a huge priority—and appointments. There is a lot that can be done by having good people appointed throughout the system. The UK can be as much part of the solution as it is part of the problem. I hope the UK will focus on ensuring that these appointments are made on the basis of merit. It is quite a serious problem at the moment. I think about 20% of staff are going to reach mandatory retirement age in the next three to five years, including a huge proportion of senior staff. Where is the emphasis on improving recruitment and getting talent in at the middle and junior levels? There is a lot that Mr Ban tried to do in improving the recruitment system. That has not gone anywhere because some of the most political parts of the UN, as I am sure Members of the Committee will know, are recruitment and budgeting. Those are the most difficult areas to make any progress on. But that is something the Secretary-General can do.

Again on the appointments side, the Secretary-General can do a lot to progress things such as Resolution 1325 on gender equality by making more female appointments. Ban Ki-moon always says he has appointed more women to senior positions than any of his predecessors. That was true a few years ago, when the top humanitarian official, the top human rights official, the top cop and the top lawyer were all women. That is not the case now. Women head just five of the 16 peace operations. Only eight out of 39 special representatives of the Secretary-General are women. Most disappointingly, of the 23 EU nationals who have been appointed to senior positions in the last two years, only one is a woman. Among the Africans it is a quarter. The UK’s last seven senior appointments were all men as well. Those are the areas where the Secretary-General has room for manoeuvre. The rest of it is trying to encourage states to find ways to support him or her.

On development reform, that is one area where the Secretary-General can change the conversation and put this on the table. On issues such as peacekeeping, we have good reports. The recommendations are all there. But they are very political. The best thing the Secretary-General can do in that regard is to get the permanent members of the Security Council on board to say, “Look, we need to make some headway”. Again, the UK can play a really strong role, starting with the defence ministerial it is hosting in September, in pushing forward these agendas. There is a danger now that the system will just wait for the new person and not do anything. It is about doing what we can now to set that person up with the best possible platform. The politics will always be there. The Secretary-General needs to be someone who can deal with those politics and leverage and use them. She or he will not be able to do that on everything so will have to pick very carefully what it is they really want to make headway on and then try to encourage powerful states to push in some of the other areas. That is the only way I think it can happen. As I have said before, a Secretary-General who does not have to worry about reappointment, who is free from those constraints, will

be able to do that much more effectively, so if we can have a single term, I think that would make a huge difference.

The Chairman: Lord Hannay has the final question.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: On appointments, do you agree that the easier part of it ought to be the appointment of special representatives and force commanders for peacekeeping operations? There have been some very good ones, there have been some terrible ones. The process is neither transparent nor likely to produce a terribly good result because it depends a huge amount on lobbying the Secretary-General personally. Would it not be a good thing if the Secretary-General were assisted by a panel of former force commanders and special representatives who would filter nominations and test them for their ability to do the job they are being asked to do rather than their ability to command the support of the Government from which they come? That would be easier, I think, than dislodging some of the positions in the secretariat itself which have belonged to a particular country, although I strongly support your desire to do that as well.

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: Absolutely. It is about continuing to try to move away from the system of certain posts being naturally allocated to certain countries but we also need to be practical about it. That means encouraging countries, including the UK, to put forward good people for posts—to put forward good shortlists of names, which should include women. It is appalling that the UK and the EU in general are falling behind other regional groups in that area. I think the idea of a panel is excellent. It is one that UNA-UK has recommended for other senior positions at the UN as well. At the moment there is not a transparent process. A lot of work was done on creating a process but it is not implemented uniformly at all. Sometimes posts are advertised, sometimes they are not. Sometimes there are shortlists, sometimes there are not. It is especially bad for SRSG⁸ posts in missions.

A panel would be good. We have also suggested that the UK Government create a roster of its own nationals. Is there not an informal body which can advise on who the UK is putting forward and do we not want to do more on finding good candidates? Other countries do quite a bit more on that. They maintain a database, they actively search for individuals, and they look not just at the senior level but at who is coming up in the middle ranks who could take over those positions, because obviously recruiting from inside has its benefits as well. There is a lot more that we can do. A starting point—while not losing sight of the bigger picture of making all UN positions based on merit—would be taking those practical steps in the meantime, encouraging good appointments and doing what we can to improve the process through mechanisms such as a panel.

The Chairman: A final, final question, if we may. Obviously, UNA-UK is a strong supporter of the United Nations and wants to see a strong new Secretary-General. Is there public support in this country for what you want to see?

Ms Natalie Samarasinghe: The UK public are generally quite favourable towards the UN. That seems to be borne out by surveys, et cetera. There is definitely a closer relationship with agencies such as UNICEF, which people engage with and understand. There is a difference between those agencies where people think of the UN providing development and humanitarian support, of which the British public are broadly supportive, and what we see the Security Council doing, which I do not think plays out well in any country. We did an interesting survey with Ipsos MORI a couple of years ago, where the Security Council seat was considered to be the factor that contributed the most to Britain's global influence. The

⁸ Special Representative of the Secretary-General

public might be sceptical about the performance of the Security Council but there is value placed on that role.

In the context of the EU referendum and what has just happened, the UK's role at the UN becomes much more important as a result. Certainly we have had a lot of people get in touch with us over the past few days saying, "How is Britain going to define its role on the world stage and does this mean more attention will be paid to the UN?". Before the referendum we collected some statements from both the Remain and Leave campaigns on what impact the referendum might have on the UK's global role. One of the statements from the Leave campaign was that the UK would now be more engaged internationally, not less, through all the things that it does through the UN: peacekeeping, development, human rights, et cetera. I think there will be more interest in what the UN is doing, we have already seen that. It is part of an identity crisis that a lot of the permanent members are going through at the moment. We have certainly seen that reflected in the interest the public have displayed in issues such as peacekeeping, protecting the 0.7% aid commitment, and the UK leading by example on things such as human rights and arms control. We have noticed an uptick in the attention that is paid to that in not just the past few days but the past few years, really.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed for sharing your extensive knowledge and experience with us. That will help us greatly in our inquiry. We are most grateful.