Concluding observations by Bibi van Ginkel

Change always starts somewhere. When discussing new narratives for UN Security Council (UNSC) Reform, it is impossible to immediately decide what these new narratives should become. What we have been able to do however is explore new thoughts for improving the effectiveness and the legitimacy of the UN on the peace and security agenda. Two terms, that when taken as main goals to which UNSC Reform should be measured, seem to be hard to reconcile, but when applied to the UN system as a whole, set a goal, which is and should be attainable, just by living up to its potential.

To give the negotiations for reform any chance, the suggestion was made that the topics on the reform agenda need to be split. Taking the negotiations on working methods out of the reform negotiations, might speed up the process on improving working methods, and bring some quicker results.

An important observation that was made by panellists and participants alike over the course of two days, was the possibility of merely improving the practices of the different UN agents, for instance in the area of peacekeeping. Living up to the promise the UN makes and the potential it has, is moreover of tremendous importance for its image and reputation, and hence its legitimacy. Because, as Thomas Franck argued: Legitimacy is the pull to compliance of international law. But this could just as well be said about other kind of international commitments. And when there is compliance, there is effectiveness.

If other actors and specialised organisations of the UN System work harder, and step up their efforts on the prevention and the peace and security agenda, the competition from within the system might even trigger the UNSC in performing better.

This same kind of competition can come from regional organisations, or intergovernmental non-organisations, such as the G20 or the G77. But well-organised campaigns of civil society, could also call for more engagement and accountability as well as for more effective action by the UN on peace and security concerns and issues of reform. This should at least trigger a better outreach service on the 'service delivery' done by the UNSC on the issues on their agenda. If the number of 'likes' of the UN Facebook page are only one million, compared to some famous persons, the UN should definitely step up its efforts there. The perception that it is an elite club that not only has the prerogative to take the decisions, but moreover hardly can be held publicly accountable for its actions and in-actions, is bad for its image, yet far easier to repair than going through a complete reform process. More engagement with youth on peace and security themes either through youth leadership programs or capacity programs or otherwise is furthermore felt by participants as an important avenue for outreach that can be done by the UNSC as well as by other actors. Youth and other civic movements can furthermore call for better leadership on these important issues, and align their actions for instance with the 1 for 7 billion campaign that advocates for a new Secretary-General that can show the leadership the UN needs.

In the same realm, youth and civic movements in each of the P5 countries could organise themselves to influence the public opinion on the role the governments of the P5 countries play in the UNSC, and through bottoms-up approaches warm the public opinion to the need for reform, which is otherwise still mostly blocked by the P5 countries.

Important to realise that also recent history has shown the revolutionary power that can be rallied up by civic movements in order to change the social and political order within countries. However, follow-up and good strategy planning for next phase in many cases is missing in order to prevent social structures from crumbling down. The challenge is therefore to support civil society organisations that can play such a crucial role in societies as a whole, also on security agendas. As much as the UNSC could profit from more engagement with civil society in order to be better informed, called to accountability, because of the early-warning capacity, and their capacities is
state building, peace-brokering, conflict prevention, human rights etc., civil society organisations could profit as well in order to be better prepared for phase 2 in case of highly sensitive and insecure situations of reform of national societies.

Improving the working methods of the Security Council, by better engagement, and more open consultations, public motivations of vetos casted, voluntary abstentions instead of vetos in case of mass atrocities (French proposal), or a gradual reduction of the use of the veto all together, would also improve legitimacy and effectiveness, even though it still does not repair the need for better geographical representation. Another observation was made to amend article 23 (2) of the UN Charter, by taking out the sentence that renders it impossible for non-permanent members to be re-elected immediately after their term. Introducing a permanent re-election of big states like Brazil and India on non-permanent seats.

Finally, as contradictory as it might seem to be called the United Nations, while the first words of the Charter read: *We the peoples*, yet its working approach is very state-centric, we need to realise that the UN is much more than the UN. It is more than the system. It is the mothership of universal values of peace and human rights and human dignity. As human beings we own these values, and it is not something that any state or organisation can give us. These values are absolute.