



UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for increased emphasis on conflict prevention at the start of the Annual International Retreat for conflict mediators and peace process actors in Oslo, Norway.

“There are very strong reasons for us to do everything to prevent conflict and to do everything to solve conflict,” Mr. Guterres told a press conference. “As a matter of fact the number of countries with violent conflicts is the highest in the last 30 years. If we compare with 2007 and consider the number of violent situations that can be qualified as war according to the number of casualties, they have tripled. If we consider low intensity conflicts since 2007, they have increased by 60 per cent.”

The Secretary-General also pointed out that the level of people killed in battle was tenfold today compared to 2005, when the lowest number of people were killed.

“That means that prevention is more necessary than ever, and the more difficult conflict resolution is the more important prevention becomes.”

The Secretary-General said there was a “dramatic lack” of women in mediation. “I have appointed 30 women and 11 men as special envoys and special representatives so far since I started. But even with these appointments we still have 63% of men in these functions.”



Yesterday, Mr. Guterres participated in the meeting of his High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation in Helsinki. He also attended the Kultaranta talks, an annual debate on foreign and security policy organized by Finnish President Sauli Niinistö. The theme of the talks this year is the future of the international system. In his closing statement the Secretary-General started out by pointing out progress that had been made in global well-being.

“Independently of other concerns that we have, I believe that we live in a better world than at any other moment in the past. Having said so I think we have a number of very dramatic challenges that we need to face.”

One of these challenges is that of building a fair globalization. “With all the benefits of globalization and technological changes, we see inequalities growing in the world,” the Secretary-General said. “Eight persons – by the way eight men – control the equivalent wealth as the poorest half of humanity.”

In order to face the world’s challenges, the Secretary-General stressed especially the importance of multilateralism and rules-based international politics.

“Even if we are moving towards a multipolar world, it is more necessary to have multilateral forms of governance and a clear set of rules to govern international relations,” he said. “And this is an area where I believe the European Union has an absolutely crucial role to play, and I feel the European Union missing in action in many areas of the world where the UN and the international community as a whole would really need a much more united and a much more intervening and effective European Union.”