Secretary-General António Guterres urges surge in diplomacy for peace

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United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appealed to the Security Council to "commit to a surge in diplomacy for peace", during an open debate on the subject of conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

The debate, convened by Sweden which holds the presidency of the Council in January, marked the first time that the Secretary-General had addressed a formal meeting of the Council since taking up his new post at the helm of the United Nations on January 1st 2017.

Outlining his vision of action before the Council on Tuesday, the Secretary-General insisted that the prevention of conflict must be "the" priority and that conflicts cannot be resolved alone but that by working together solutions can be found.

"We need a whole new approach," the Secretary-General told the Council. He said that the UN's approach was fragmented and that peace and security needed to be integrated with sustainable development and human rights.
The Secretary-General said that more was being spent on responding to conflicts than to preventing them. He called for a rebalanced approach in which early detection and action would have a role to play.

Member states were told that the work of prevention lies with them. "War is never inevitable. It is always a matter of choice," the Secretary-General said. "Prevention is not only a priority. It is the priority," he said.

Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström told the Council that the member states should heed the Secretary-General's call for a surge in diplomacy, include women in peacemaking and improve collective planning to achieve peace.