

Opening Remarks
Chiefs of Defense Conference: “The Changing Nature of UN Peacekeeping”
7 July 2017 – 9:55-10:10AM

Excellencies, generals, admirals, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here with all of you today. We are very grateful for your presence, which demonstrates your strong commitment to United Nations peacekeeping. Peacekeeping is a partnership among countries contributing uniformed personnel, the Security Council and us in the Secretariat, and it can only thrive if this partnership is strong. This is also true in the area of field support, and I am pleased to note that my Department—the Department of Field Support—has concluded partnership agreements with many of the countries represented here today which enhance the capabilities of the United Nations in critical areas. Your personal efforts in further strengthening such arrangements and, in turn, the broader peacekeeping enterprise, is crucial.

I am also very pleased to be here with USG Lacroix this morning. A special thanks also to colleagues in the Office of Military Affairs for organizing this important event.

We have a very full programme today, so I will keep my remarks brief.

Peacekeeping is the largest and most visible activity of the United Nations, and today it is at a critical juncture. The nature of peacekeeping itself is changing. The volatile environments in which we operate present new challenges in executing mandates and providing field support. Peacekeepers are deployed in increasingly hostile and dangerous environments. Many have fallen in the line of duty, and we honour their sacrifice in the service of peace.

Given these challenging contexts and the high visibility of peacekeeping operations, it is incumbent upon us to deliver, to improve service delivery, to produce better value for money and to achieve more effective mandate implementation.

DFS has strengthened the competition for rations contracts for troops and police which has improved the quality of rations while reducing costs. We have also introduced a new model for rotation flights which has reduced lead times by 75 per cent and reduced the costs per-passenger by 12 per cent. We have also developed an environmental strategy to guide our efforts to deliver support in a responsible manner. DFS has also taken steps to improve medical support to peacekeepers to prevent the avoidable loss of lives. But we need to do more together. We simply cannot accept that 30 of the 287 military medical facilities in peacekeeping missions either have not deployed or are deployed with sub-standard equipment.

Looking ahead, DFS remains committed to finding innovative solutions to our common challenges.

One area in which we can do much better is in the representation of women in our global workforce—in DFS, we see the difference they add. When I was the Special Representative of

the Secretary-General in Timor-Leste over a decade ago, I personally witnessed how well women military liaison officers were received by the local population. As such, I am disappointed that we continue to provide such a predominantly male “face” to peacekeeping. I urge you to redouble your efforts to contribute more women to serve in peacekeeping missions.

More broadly, we must continue to work together to ensure that uniformed contingents deploy rapidly and with the equipment and training required to carry out the tasks that they have been entrusted to perform. Yet today, some 59 of the 318 units deployed have significant equipment gaps. We also continue to have gaps in critical enabling capabilities in our most challenging missions, such as MINUSMA.

One way we can improve capabilities is through sustained investment by Member States in training and capacity building through partnerships. In recent years, these partnerships in the areas of engineering and technology are starting to bear fruit. I encourage you to use this Conference to explore how you can best partner with other Member States.

All efforts to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping, however, are meaningless if any peacekeeper abuses the trust of the vulnerable populations they are deployed to protect. The support of Member States is critical for the implementation of the United Nations policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. The Secretary-General has laid out a comprehensive approach to addressing sexual exploitation and abuse that places the rights and dignity of victims at the centre of our efforts and focuses on ending impunity through better reporting, transparency and accountability; maximizing the collaboration with Member States; engaging civil society and key actors at the international and national levels; and strengthening outreach and communication. I would like to publicly record my appreciation to five troop contributing countries- Bhutan, Cyprus, India, Japan and Norway, none of whose uniformed personnel in our missions have pending cases against them- for their voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. I look forward to your continued engagement and commitment to end this scourge.

The importance of partnerships with Member States is particularly important in the intergovernmental process. In January of this year, the Secretariat and Member States took the opportunity of the triennial meeting of the Working Group of Contingent-Owned Equipment to consider the changing context and requirements of peacekeeping and identify ways to make field support more effective. I’m pleased to report that the recommendations of the Working Group were approved by the General Assembly last week.

Distinguished generals, admirals and delegates,

Together, we must focus on the needs of our peacekeepers in the field and the civilian populations that look to the United Nations for protection. Together, we must seek to strengthen our operations in the field. In this regard, I look forward to today’s Conference and pledge the full support of my Department to your deliberations.

Thank you.