

**Opening Remarks for USG Jean Pierre Lacroix
Chief of Defence Conference
6-7 July 2017**

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my turn to wish you a warm welcome to New York. This is the second conference of its kind, and a unique opportunity for all of us gathered here today. For us in the Secretariat, it is an opportunity to share our analysis with you on the challenges and needs of peacekeeping. For you, our Member States, it is the moment to share your perspective – your challenges, constraints, and of course, what is working – with us on deployment to UN operations. For all of us, it is the chance to build on existing partnerships, forge new relationships, and ultimately strengthen collective ownership for our peacekeeping tool. This second Chiefs of Defence conference marks another milestone in the Organization's effort to project UN peacekeeping as a core part of national foreign and security policy. We have, since the first Summit in September 2014, worked towards building cross-regional consensus around a progressive vision of peacekeeping. We have held a number of high-level meetings since then, here in New York, London and Paris, and will be following this conference with the Defence Ministerial hosted by the Canadian Government in Vancouver on 14 and 15 November this year.

It is fitting that we gather together here today. With the completion of our mandate in Cote d'Ivoire, we now have 15 peacekeeping operations and some 112,000 uniformed and civilian personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations around the globe. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to our peacekeepers, and to express my gratitude to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace. May I ask us all to rise for a minute of silence.

[Minute of silence]

Ladies and gentlemen,

In early April, the new Secretary-General presented his vision of peacekeeping. It is a vision that places politics at the centre of our operations, deploying with a flexible and variable geometry of mandate and mission design. We are now working towards realizing this vision of peacekeeping as a tailored, agile, and adaptable tool – one which blends the right skills and capabilities in response to the specific needs on the ground.

Realising the Secretary-General's vision has become all the more significant in the context of the 8.5 per cent cut to the peacekeeping budget, equivalent to some 700 million dollars, authorized by the General Assembly just last week. There is no doubt that this budget cut will have a significant impact on how we do business. It will require greater prioritization, and greater focus on the efficient use of resources, particularly at a time when the Security Council has also authorized a 6,600 troop and police increase. Together with my colleague Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, we will in the coming weeks identify

the most effective way to apply the cuts in each mission, preserving as much as possible their ability to fulfil their mandates.

Continuing to ensure that our operations remain fit for purpose under these circumstances means several things for our current and future operations, and I will outline three.

First, we will need to strengthen the planning and management of our operations. This is not only about the fiscal rectitude demanded by the budget cut, but ultimately, the strategic intent of our operations. A key challenge in today's fragmented geopolitical environment is identifying clearly what may realistically be achieved with the political will available.

Questions have been raised – legitimately – over the longevity and direction of some of our operations. We intend to conduct a series of reviews of our larger missions, in order to assess where we have defined the right goals, and are pursuing the right strategies to achieve them. Meanwhile, I have begun a reflection within my department on concrete steps that can be taken to improve our work and complement the Secretary-General's vision for peace operations.

Second, the outcome of our reviews notwithstanding, peacekeeping operations will still need to deliver on complex mandates, many of which involve the protection of civilians in conditions of instability or even open conflict. This means that we – contributors and the Secretariat alike – must continue to reinforce our collective efforts to prepare peacekeepers to deliver on protection mandates. By this I mean our efforts to bring the right skills, capabilities and – most importantly – mindset to the task for protecting civilians. Used judiciously, with credible intent and in a professional manner, force lends credibility to the political track and becomes its best ally. In contexts where civilians are being deliberately targeted by parties to conflict, it is critical. This will not change.

Third, it is clear that the future will be one of partnerships. We have seen that conflict is increasingly internationalized – both in terms of the increase in military involvement of external actors in civil wars, and in terms of the involvement of regional actors in brokering or supporting a resolution to the conflict. Nowhere have we seen the significant political and operational role of regional actors more than in Africa. For the United Nations, this means that we must strengthen our partnerships, with a view to ensuring strategic coherence, operational complementarity and responsible support where others are conducting peace enforcement and counter-terrorism operations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Recent developments – whether geostrategic shifts, the spread of new threats or large budget cuts - do not lessen our ongoing efforts to modernize peacekeeping. Rather, they add urgency to our collective efforts to strengthen the performance of our operations. Now, more than ever before, peacekeepers need to be up to the challenge of the mandates they are given.

The pledges of capabilities and training support made during and since the Leaders' Summit in September 2015 are crucial to our ability to achieve this objective. We have made tremendous progress in registering and deploying these pledged capabilities, and will

continue to engage all of you as pledges units are preparing for deployment, sometimes within a few weeks or months, and sometime over the course of several years in the case of new and emerging contributors. From the outset, the Leaders' Summit process has been about quality and performance, not about quantity. It has also been and will continue to be about broadening the base of our contributors, as well as allowing us to deploy more rapidly. Thanks to your steadfast support, we have been able to advance towards all of these objectives. I particularly want to highlight the pledges we received last year for the Rapid Deployment Level of the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System, and encourage you to consider making new pledges to this level for the 2017/2018 period.

As part of these efforts, we are moving away from the assumption that contingents already deployed will continue to rotate and remain until a mission withdraws. Together with all of you, we will engage in a deliberate and well planned effort to deploy units in levels 2 and 3 of the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System that best match the unique requirements in each mission area. This will require a detailed and long-term planning process for each mission, and it will take time, especially in an environment of declining troop and police numbers. But I have no doubt that our operations will benefit from these new capabilities, whether they come from our most established or newest contributors.

In addition, we have set in motion a series of initiatives aimed at creating a clear framework of performance standards, including on military capabilities and field support. We have developed training and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that a virtuous feedback loop ensures continuous improvement on performance. We are working with you in a number of areas to strengthen force protection measures, particularly in response to asymmetric threat environments, as well as to strengthen casualty and medical evacuation measures. Much of this remains a work in progress, and you will hear more about these from my colleague Atul. Allow me here to highlight two areas which are critical.

The first is on sexual exploitation and abuse. Our operations have been brutally undermined by the heinous acts of a few. The success of our missions depends upon the confidence and trust placed on us by the populations we serve. When this trust is broken, our credibility is indelibly damaged. I call upon you put in place the checks and balances required to ensure that you deploy only those with impeccable backgrounds, and take rigorous and consistent measures to render those responsible accountable for their acts.

The second is on gender. Together with you, during the last Defence Ministerial meeting in London, we established the goal of deploying women to 15 per cent of our staff officer positions by the end of the year. This is a modest goal, and I trust that with your support, we will be able to reach and build upon it. We have seen across our missions that female peacekeepers bring solidarity and accessibility to the populations they serve – qualities which help us sustain peace.

Allow me to make a final and very simple point: the strength of peacekeeping operations lies in its dynamism. We experienced a surge in the early and late 2000s. Today, we are seeing the closure of our missions in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Haiti, where a minimum of stability

has been achieved, enabling us to leave. The future may involve an entirely new model that coexists with older generations of operations. Ultimately, UN peacekeeping will do what it has done since its creation in 1948: adapt. Because versatility is what has made peacekeeping the unique and enduring tool that it is today.