

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

Remarks by

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at the United Nations Chiefs of Police Summit (UN COPS)

3 June 2016

UN Headquarters, New York, General Assembly Hall

INTRO

Mr. Deputy Secretary-General,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Police Executives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, I would like to begin by saying how pleased we are to host you all in this historic room. It is only fitting that we are gathered in the Hall of the General Assembly, where all nations have sat as equals for the past 64 years.

But our constituent Member States have never yet gathered to discuss the topic on hand today. At long last, policing is – quite literally – taking centre stage here in New York. This is as it should be, as the United Nations deploys the largest expeditionary police service in the world.

This conference is a rare occasion to discuss with you – police executives and decision-makers from more than 100 Member States – how we can better support the police officers you so kindly lend to the United Nations.

REALITY IN THE FIELD

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On more than one occasion, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has emphasized why the rule of law matters. He has said, and I quote, “[it] is one of the foundations of progress in virtually all

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areas of our work. It is an essential thread in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” [End of quote]

The role of the police in the rule of law is essential.

Police officers are the gate-keepers to justice. They are the guardians of public safety.

In many of our societies, people see the police as impartial providers of community safety. They see police as servants of justice, law and order.

But as Mr. Ladsous mentioned earlier, the perception of the police in post-conflict environments – to which United Nations peace operations deploy – is often much different.

Host-State police have often been involved in conflict – in one way or another. Their police infrastructure – both physical and institutional –has usually been destroyed. Morale is low, and basic equipment and support systems often non-existent.

Meanwhile, the failure by the host-State police to provide public safety and establish legitimacy in the eyes of the public can result in resentment and fear.

This can give rise to a climate in which extremism and criminals can both flourish and prosper.

The world of today’s peacekeeping is drastically different from the one we witnessed in the 1990s.

The enemies of peace are often invisible.

They operate behind the scenes, corrupting weak police agencies and judicial systems – and smuggling weapons, drugs and humans across borders.

Criminals are nothing if not innovative and motivated. Transnational organized crime is quickly becoming a strategic risk to sustaining peace.

HOLISTIC CRIMINAL JUSTICE CHAIN

In such environments, United Nations Police efforts have to take place in parallel with improvements in the justice and corrections areas.

It matters little how many suspects the police arrest, if courts or prisons are dysfunctional.

Any confidence in the rule of law will be quickly lost if criminals return to the streets in a matter of days – or if suspects are locked up for months and years without trial.

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In the end, people need to see tangible improvements in public safety and in their interactions with the police.

They need to see the return of law and order.

They need to know there is someone to report their grievances to.

They need to feel protected, in order to start planning their futures.

This is our end goal.

NEW BUSINESS MODEL FOR POLICING

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we bear witness to unprecedented expansion of international police peacekeeping, we recognize that the United Nations Police must evolve.

We can no longer live in the 21st century of United Nations Police peacekeeping and rely on 20th century thinking and technology.

I am grateful that our Police Division has embarked on a major overhaul of our business model, tackling both doctrinal and capacity gaps.

In our field missions, police components often make do with the skillsets that are available, rather than the ones most needed by the host-State.

The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations delivered a sobering verdict: “A *significant change in approach is needed*”.

Indeed, we must depart from supply-driven police peacekeeping to a demand-driven one. Otherwise, we will let our national counterparts down.

The Police Division is doing all it can to turn the tide. We have started issuing specialized vacancies. We are encouraging Member States to second specialized police teams.

We hope you will consider this innovative secondment option upon your return from New York. One area of particular importance is criminal intelligence specialists.

BENEFITS OF UN POLICE DEPLOYMENTS

At the same time, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations understands that skilled police officers are assets needed at home.

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However, while deployed to Liberia or Guinea-Bissau, your police officers will – in fact – be helping to disrupt drug supplies to your countries.

While deployed to Mali and Kosovo, your police will be helping disrupt transnational, illicit networks with deep ties to the criminal underworld.

And while deployed to South Sudan and the DRC, your police will be learning how to protect civilians, in the most challenging of circumstances.

PARTNERSHIPS

We know that a peacekeeping operation has a finite life span.

Essentially, we are there to stabilize the patient.

The long-term rehabilitation of national rule of law institutions, (including police) often takes decades – up to 41 years on average for the top twenty performers, as the World Bank has calculated.

This is why we so clearly need partnerships. One model for coordination is the “Global Focal Point for police, justice and corrections”.

Over the past 4 years, the GFP has reinforced partnerships with UNDP and other members of the United Nations family, including UNWOMEN, OHCHR and UNODC.

Let me give you just a few examples.

In Somalia, GFP partners are helping the Somali Police Force complete biometric registration of its officers. They are working to re-establish the Benadir Regional Court Complex. And UNSOM is supporting the deployment of Somali Police officers into areas beyond Mogadishu, places which have recently been recovered from Al-Shabaab.

In the Central African Republic, the United Nations has provided joint support for the establishment of the Special Criminal Court to combat impunity for serious human rights violations.

Meanwhile, in Darfur, Haiti and Liberia – where United Nations peace operations are scaling down – GFP partners are working together to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities.

We are working better, together, because of the GFP, not just on policing, but the entirety of the criminal justice chain.

KEY ASKS

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me quickly recap our key ‘asks’ from you, Member States.

First, we need your continued engagement in developing a solid doctrinal foundation for United Nations Police, which we can align with the guidance of our regional partners like the African and European Unions.

Second, we need quality pre-deployment training.

Third, we need officers with specialized expertise; our motto is “fewer in number but stronger in skill sets”.

Fourth, we need your support in giving United Nations Police the latest technology and equipment.

Fifth, funding for joint programmes, in the GFP context, will ensure the sustainability of United Nations Police work.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We know that this is a world historic event. But we also know that it will not solve all police issues in a day.

But it will help us mobilize international support for United Nations Police.

It will build on the momentum created by the first-ever Security Council Resolution on United Nations Police (resolution 2185) and the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

We have a unique chance to move the agenda of international police peacekeeping forward.

I appeal to you to be bold, strategic and straightforward in sharing with us your vision for United Nations Police.

Thank you for coming, and thank you for your attention.