

Statement at the Fourth Committee Opening Debate

Under Secretary-General for Field Support, Ms. Ameerah Haq

28 October 2014

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

I appreciate this opportunity to meet with you, once again, with Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous. Peacekeeping relies on the professionalism, courage and dedication of all the men and women - military, police and civilian - who serve in our operations. Its success depends on the support of all Member States. For these and many other reasons, we value this interface with the Fourth Committee, and look forward to your insights on how best to move forward in this shared endeavour.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to our peacekeepers - our uniformed personnel and civilian colleagues in the field. They serve far from home, often in extreme circumstances, to guard fragile peace processes, to help build and strengthen national capacities, to protect civilians – and increasingly in the face of armed adversaries. Far too many of them make the ultimate sacrifice. With still two months left in the year, we have already mourned the loss of 104 peacekeepers. It is a tragic toll that reminds us of the solemnity of our collective pursuit.

At the outset, I would also like to acknowledge the commitments made at the recent Summit on Strengthening International Peace Operations, including those from new and returning contributors. Equally, I would like to recognize commitments made with regard to trilateral cooperation efforts involving troop contributors, the United Nations, and the providers of equipment and training. Clearly, the peacekeeping partnership grows and deepens.

Today, I will outline the strategic context in which DFS undertakes its work and some of the challenges we face; I would also like to highlight some of our key operational priorities and the progress we have made in pursuing them.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Let me briefly touch on the Secretary-General's review of peace operations. When Mr. Brahimi led the Panel on UN Peace Operations almost fifteen years ago, mission support was often seen as a simple derivative of the substantive components of a mission; there were few questions asked about how to make it more timely, how to improve its quality, or whether it could be made more cost-effective.

Since then, we have made significant progress. In 2010, DFS initiated a process of transforming the way we do business through the Global Field Support Strategy, the GFSS. The goal was to become more strategic, efficient and effective – with improved quality and more timely support.

As we complete the strategy, which is to conclude by July 1st next year, we should take stock of progress, draw lessons from the experience, and define the way forward.

The new peace operations review therefore comes at an opportune moment. We must ask ourselves how fit we are for purpose, given the changes in mandates, deployment and operating environments in the past fifteen years. DFS supports both DPKO and DPA missions. It is in charge of UNSOA and is also able to support other unique missions such as the OPCW-UN Joint Mission, which completed its work on 30 September, and UNMEER which is being rapidly deployed as we speak. I am confident that the Secretary-General's review will be a valuable contribution to our shared knowledge of what the United Nations can and must do in the pursuit of peace. We look forward to consulting with you on this important endeavour.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Over the last fifteen years, the conditions for peacekeeping have grown more complex and difficult, as Hervé has outlined.

In these more hazardous environments, we are being asked to take on increasingly demanding tasks, such as sheltering civilians inside our bases or confronting civil breakdown. Under the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front programme, peacekeepers are now at the forefront of taking action to prevent or stop human rights violations. All too often the UN itself is seen as a target.

These more complex and dangerous operating environments pose new challenges for mission support. Our peacekeeping operations currently deploy nearly two and a half times more uniformed personnel than at the time of the Brahimi report. DFS is currently supporting some 127,000 deployed personnel¹ in more than thirty countries, including AMISOM and special political missions.

And of course, there is the security challenge. In July 2014, the Department of Safety and Security assessed that more than 40% of our areas of operation were substantially, highly or extremely dangerous - three years ago, the figure was only 25%. The threats have grown more diverse and include terrorism, transnational crime, natural disaster and epidemics. This past month has been one of the most difficult on record in terms of the number of peacekeepers lost.

The high-risk environments into which UN uniformed and civilian personnel are being deployed significantly increase the need for fast and flexible support. Lives are at stake in what we do - there are ways to balance this reality with the cardinal importance of transparency and compliance with administrative rules and regulations. Reconciling the need for speed on the one hand with that of procedural compliance on the other will take determination and creative thinking; the two are not mutually-exclusive.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Under the framework of the GFSS, the Department's focus on innovation, reform and improvement has enabled us to make significant progress in recent years. In 2013/14, our

¹ 127,000 are currently deployed. The number of authorized personnel is 176,900.

operational costs across UN-led missions were some 500 million dollars, or 20% lower, than in 2009/10, despite similar levels of uniformed deployment. Shared services have enabled us to create economies of scale in finance, human resources and transport. Through regular reviews of mission staffing, we have contained civilian personnel costs and eliminated more than 3,000 support jobs in UN-led missions since 2008/09, in addition to similar reductions on the substantive side. As a result, spending per deployed peacekeeper has dropped 16% in 5 years.

Implementing such a large-scale reform programme is not without challenges. There are areas where we need to do better. In this context, we have recently conducted a large scale survey across our missions. The results indicate that more than 60% of civilian and uniformed personnel are generally satisfied with the quality of support services, and most recognize recent improvements. Nonetheless, we are committed to further increasing client satisfaction.

In the next months, we will begin discussions on how to expand upon the principles, methods and achievements of the Global Field Support Strategy beyond 2015. Our goal is to become even more responsive to client needs and to deliver services that are faster and more flexible, more cost efficient and effective, and more accountable and transparent. We are eager to hear your views and we look forward to collaborating with you going forward.

With regard to personal and institutional accountability, DFS remains fully committed to preventing and addressing misconduct by personnel deployed in field operations, bearing in mind the zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. We also continue to be fully engaged in advancing the enhanced programme of action introduced by the Secretary-General in his last report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. The number of overall allegations received, including of sexual exploitation and abuse, has continued to decrease during the past two years.

Hervé and I have recently issued joint statements to uniformed and non-uniformed personnel to reiterate the zero tolerance policy and to remind all those associated with UN peacekeeping of the highest standards of conduct that they are expected to uphold. This process of sensitization also includes manager-led discussions with all personnel regarding the Organization's position regarding sexual exploitation and abuse.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Looking ahead, we must focus on the immediate priorities for peacekeeping, including improving safety and security, enabling more rapid deployment, encouraging the use of appropriate technology and innovation, and strengthening core internal processes.

First, Hervé and I have both spoken about the serious threats facing our missions. DPKO and DFS are working to ensure the safety and security of our peacekeepers, but we can and must do more. Our peacekeepers need capabilities that match the challenging contexts they face, including robust situational awareness, updated standards and manuals, and effective equipment.

Hervé has mentioned the capability development agenda that both DPKO and DFS have embarked upon. Peacekeepers must be prepared, trained and equipped, not only for IEDs and other terrorist threats, but also for natural disasters and other threats such as Ebola. "Boots on the

ground” must be accompanied by key “enablers” such as engineering companies, medical services, and air assets that allow our peacekeepers to carry out their work. Too often, the imperative to deploy has taken priority without due regard for the equipment, self-sustainment, training, and capabilities that catalyse the ability of troops to function effectively – and safely. Too often, the absence of synchrony between deployment of troops and the mobilization of enablers has put the troops themselves in difficult circumstances.

We have learned from experiences in Mali and the Central African Republic, among others, when planning the establishment of UNMEER. Just over a month after the authorization of UNMEER, we already have dozens of staff on the ground in four countries actively coordinating aid efforts and assisting in the fight against Ebola.

Regional organizations clearly also have an important role to play in ensuring rapid deployment. In Mali and in CAR, we have seen both the challenges and successes of re-hatting troops from preceding regional deployments. While re-hatting regional forces as blue helmets could well become a more regular feature of mission start-ups, we have much to do to ensure that re-hatting proceeds smoothly and, in particular, that re-hatted troops meet UN standards.

It is encouraging that Member States are increasingly trying to support those troop and police contributing countries that do not have the requisite enablers. I would like to encourage strengthened triangular partnership between Member States that can provide the troops, Member States that can provide the enablers and training on their use, and the United Nations.

Secondly, we need to use technology better. Technology, applied appropriately, can help our peacekeepers do their jobs more effectively and efficiently; it helps us do what I call “smarter” peacekeeping. To that end, Hervé and I have established an Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation to make recommendations about where peacekeeping can leverage technology and innovation to maximum effect. We look forward to receiving their recommendations in December. Hervé has mentioned the important deployment of unarmed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in MONUSCO in the DRC. Beyond UAVs, we are committed to exploring technologies that improve our ability to keep peacekeepers safe and protect civilians.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Recent months have seen key decisions by the General Assembly come into effect, reflecting an ongoing evolution of our frameworks for the reimbursement of costs for troop- and police-contributing countries. Indeed, we had a unique opportunity this year in that the review of the personnel reimbursement framework, which should take place every four years, coincided with the triennial meeting of the COE Working Group.

All Member States will be aware of the importance of the agreement on the new rate of reimbursement for personnel, following many years when the rate was essentially unchanged. In addition to updating the rates of reimbursement for both personnel and COE to reflect the costs to Member States of their participation in peacekeeping, the membership has agreed on a number of measures that will allow us to better respond to the challenges of peacekeeping. The General Assembly authorised two premium payments to be paid for operational “risk” and the rapid

deployment of important enabling capabilities. These innovations will incentivise efforts to respond to many of the needs that I have elaborated upon today.

The General Assembly also linked the payment of personnel reimbursement to the existence of the contingent-owned equipment that is essential for military and police units to carry out their work. I am confident that the new regime agreed by the General Assembly to meet costs of the transport of COE to replace aging items in the field will help us with the challenge of maintaining capabilities in the face of harsh conditions and heightened operational tempo.

Through the work of the COE Working Group, the General Assembly has also agreed to a number of important additions to required COE. These new inclusions will enhance medical support for our peacekeepers and strengthen the crowd control capabilities of police units.

While I am on the subject of reform initiatives, allow me to briefly mention our Enterprise Resource Planning System, Umoja, which is helping to improve the planning and management of our missions. While the roll-out of Umoja has not been without its challenges, its deployment has already demonstrated its tremendous potential to help mission leadership in managing our operations based on reliable, real-time data. We continue to work with our partners to bring about a seamless network of information management that involves the field and HQ entities.

Looking ahead I would like to stress the importance of appropriately delegated authority that empowers mission leadership. The governance structures for peacekeeping operations must enable success in the field, in particular through allowing speed and flexibility alongside efficiency and accountability. The failure to align accountability for delivering with the authority to do so can create obstacles. The degree to which authorities, accountabilities and responsibilities are aligned – or not - impacts the ability of the United Nations to deliver on its political and operational commitments. I hope that the Peace Operations Review Panel will look at this challenge.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

As many of you are aware, this will likely be my last opportunity to participate in the opening of this Debate. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to engage with you and for your strong support throughout my decade-long affiliation with UN peacekeeping. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Hervé for our close working relationship during my tenure at DFS. Let me also join him in once again recognizing, with sorrow, those who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Allow me to end my remarks by repeating my strong belief which you have heard me say on a number of different occasions. “When our peacekeeping partnership has the necessary resources to deliver in the field, when it is empowered by its Member States to be flexible and responsive, and when it is energized by political will, UN peacekeeping has proven to be and will continue to be a powerful tool for conflict management and peace consolidation.”

I thank you and look forward to our interactive exchange this morning.