

Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Group of Friends of Solidarity for Global Health Security  
25 June 2020, 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Draft remarks by ASG Alexandre Zouev

- On behalf of USG Lacroix, I thank all Member States for your support to DPO amid a global pandemic and the range of challenges it has accentuated.
- COVID-19 continues to spread and almost all peace operations are in countries assessed as Very High or High according to OCHA's COVID-19 risk index.
- COVID-19 has exacerbated the already challenging environments facing peacekeeping. Malicious attacks against our peacekeepers continue but we remain committed to implementing the Secretary General's Action Plan on Improving the Security of Peacekeepers, despite this pandemic.
- DPPA and DPO are cooperating closely with partners including host countries, troop and police contributing Member States to effectively implement our mandates, support national COVID-19 responses all the while protecting our personnel, who are increasingly impacted. As of 23 June, there have been 379 confirmed cases, 126 active cases and sadly, eight related deaths in peace operations. Despite this, the number of confirmed cases among the more than 115,000 UN field personnel remains relatively low. Currently there are 2,596 (including uniformed and civilian) in quarantine across PKMs and SPMs.
- Our efforts to enhance personnel safety include COVID-19 guidance, distribution of protective equipment, training on COVID-19 prevention, reduced community engagement by patrols, suspension of troop rotations, quarantine arrangements, testing capability and mission medical facilities enhancement.
- Guidance for quarantine of uniformed and civilian personnel travelling back to duty stations remains in effect. All missions have adequate supplies of PPE in addition to increased stockpiles of life support.
- DPO and DPPA in cooperation with DOS as well as Member States including Host Nations, are now implementing a system-wide COVID-19 MEDEVAC and treatment framework around designated regional locations for UN patients.
- On 17 June, a letter to all Permanent Missions sought support to increase the medical diagnostic capabilities of the United Nations in the field. We count on your continued in this regard.

## **Mandate implementation**

- Special Political Missions and Peacekeeping Operations continue to find innovative ways to implement their mandates despite COVID-19 challenges.
- As highlighted earlier, multidimensional peacekeeping operations, in coordination with national and local counterparts have adapted programming to support national COVID-19 responses while ensuring alignment with mission strategic objectives.
- MINUSCA intensified joint border patrols with the CAR armed forces, and supported rehabilitation of health facilities such as storage and isolation centers.

MONUSCO strengthened logistical and security support to facilitate the DRC Government's response, and UNMISS continues to support the education on COVID-19 with the communities, including through its radio station.

- From Headquarters, DPO including my Office – the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions – has provided immediate assistance to Member States and re-oriented activities in the field to enable the continued implementation of core mandated tasks in peace operations.
- For example, at the outset of the pandemic, the Justice and Corrections Service developed tools and guidance to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in prisons, including through decongesting and holding virtual court hearings. This has resulted in the release of low risk prisoners in many countries; law enforcement agencies adjusting arrest and prosecution strategies; and an increased use of non-custodial judicial measures.
- Similarly, guidance was developed to support national police and other law enforcement institutions in their COVID-19 response, and comparable efforts are underway for the security sector at large. DDR and CVR programmes have been adapted with ex-combatants producing medical supplies as part of their reinsertion activities benefitting the communities. UNMAS, together with UNOPS, is developing COVID-19 related guidelines and scenario planning.
- While COVID-19 has impacted all of us and in many cases, exacerbated the already difficult challenges we face in volatile settings, we remain resolute, agile, flexible in fulfilling our peace and security obligations including through amplifying the Secretary-General's call for global COVID-19 ceasefires and in support of inclusive national responses.
- I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.