

Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

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Agenda Item:

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Dear Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

I am deeply honoured to have been appointed the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping. It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you and to address the Fourth Committee for the first time and to address you on UN Day. Your deliberations and collective leadership are vital to the work of all men and women serving in UN peacekeeping operations around the world.

As I take up my responsibilities, I am aware of the long and varied history of UN peacekeeping -- from the first operation in 1948 – UNTSO - to the UN Missions in South Sudan and Abyei approved in 2011. In South Sudan, the UN is assisting the newest, 193rd Member of the United Nations, the government and people of South Sudan.

I am aware of the men and women who have sacrificed not only their comforts and homes but their very lives in the cause of peace. This year alone 86 men and women have lost their lives while serving in missions far from their countries and loved ones, for a total of 2,941 since 1948. I honour their service today.

I would like to underscore from the outset that the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel – civilian and uniformed – will be a top priority for me. To this end, I will work closely with host countries as they bear the primary responsibility for safety and security on their respective territories. I will also spare no effort to ensure that our missions have the level of resources – human and material – that provide the best possible levels of security.

I am particularly mindful of the contribution that you, the Member States, have made to UN peacekeeping over its history of more than 60 years. Every Mission relies upon a call to Member States for uniformed personnel and enabling capacities but also for unified political direction and support. During the past 12 years in particular, the demands of UN peacekeeping have grown both in scale and complexity. You have responded accordingly with uniformed personnel, capacities and resources.

UN peacekeeping rests on a global partnership that draws together the legal and political authority of the Security Council, the personnel, equipment and financial contributions of Member States, the support of host countries and the accumulated experience of the Secretariat in managing operations. This global partnership is at the heart of UN peacekeeping. It needs to be nurtured and supported. I will be keenly interested in hearing your views on how we can continue to strengthen this partnership. Our common obligation is to ensure unity of purpose and unity of support for the more than 120,000 personnel of the United Nations serving in challenging and harsh environments.

I have had the opportunity for exchanges with some of you on the Senior Advisory Group that is now being established to address troop costs and related issues. Susana will be speaking to this issue in more detail. We are aware of the great interest in the work of the Senior Advisory Group and of the complexity of the issues before it. Let me just say that DPKO looks forward to working with DFS and the Department of Management to support the Panel in whatever way needed.

Finally, this global partnership involves regional and international organizations such as the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), just to mention a few.

The evolving operational context

I want to turn now to the most urgent challenges facing these missions today. As part of my in-briefings, Susana and I have now held videoconferences with the leadership of a number of the 16 missions currently led by DPKO. I have been struck by the diversity of ground realities and mandated tasks but also by the recurring challenges, constraints and requirements for their implementation.

A key current area of work relates to developments in Sudan and South Sudan. In July 2011, a new mission (UNMISS) was established in the Republic of South Sudan. UNMISS is mandated to help build the capacity of the nascent State in the areas of rule of law and governance, while also working to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian aid. Strong, coordinated international support to the Government of South Sudan and to UNMISS will be important to ensure progress on the implementation of its mandate. In light of the situation in Abyei, the Security Council also established UNISFA, a mission with a protection of civilians mandate. UNISFA's deployment is now ongoing. The mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was not renewed, and the Mission entered liquidation. Meanwhile, UNAMID, the largest peacekeeping operation at the moment, continues its work in Darfur, having reached near complete deployment of troops, police and civilians. The Mission has contributed to a decrease in overall insecurity levels. The consolidation of peace in that region will, however, continue to require significant efforts. As requested by the Security Council in its Resolution 2002 (2011), we are embarking on a review of UNAMID in order to ensure the most effective and efficient use of its resources.

In Afghanistan, the difficult security environment continues to pose significant challenges to the work of UNAMA, as evidenced by the attack on the UN office in Mazar-i-Sharif on 1 April. The attack claimed the lives of seven of our colleagues. Looking to the future of the Mission, preparations are underway for a Security Council-mandated Comprehensive Review process of UNAMA.

Turning to the wider Middle East, we have yet fully to assess the political and security impact on our peacekeeping operations (UNIFIL, UNDOF, UNTSO and MINURSO) of the recent or ongoing major changes in some countries in the region. With regard to the DPA-led mission in Libya, DPKO is exploring with the Libyan authorities how it may assist in the areas of public security and community-based policing, as well as mine action and transitional justice.

The past year has also seen watershed events in West Africa. The violent post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire has put to test our ability to continue implementing peacekeeping mandates under extremely adverse circumstances. Assisting the Government in stabilizing the security situation, strengthening the rule of law, reforming the security services, as well as disarming and demobilizing ex-combatants, are topmost priorities for UNOCI now. UN peacekeeping can feel proud for helping this country successfully to overcome a major political crisis and challenge to constitutional order. Cross-border issues also remain a key challenge in West Africa, including between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, where the presence of mercenaries and militia elements continues to pose a serious threat to regional security. UNOCI and UNMIL are working with the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to address these cross-border challenges, in close collaboration with ECOWAS and other partners.

In Liberia, despite new humanitarian and security challenges associated with the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, undeniable progress has been made in consolidating peace, with the support of the international community. In the past year, continued progress has been made towards a steady state of security, as well as the gradual build-up of national capacity in the security sector, which is one of the pre-conditions for an eventual handover of functions from UNMIL to national actors. Significant challenges remain, including in the area of rule of law, and addressing them will require our concerted efforts and support to the Government. UNMIL is closely following developments related to the electoral process that is currently ongoing.

In Timor-Leste, UNMIT is anticipated to depart by the end of 2012. UNMIT will continue to work closely with the Timor-Leste Government and other relevant stakeholders to ensure an effective joint transition process. A plan has been developed jointly with Timorese authorities to work toward a smooth handover of responsibilities and continuity in longer-term capacity development efforts across key institutions and functions.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO will provide logistical and technical support as well as good offices for the organisation and conduct of national, provincial and local elections from 2011 to 2013. This is a tremendous operational challenge in light of the scale of the country, the more than 18,000 candidates running for office, and the large number of national and international partners engaged in this effort. The mission will also continue to focus on its key priority, ensuring that civilians are protected throughout this and other critical milestones.

In Haiti, with the formation of a new Government after five months of political gridlock, the country can now focus on rebuilding itself after the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010. As MINUSTAH prepares to return to its pre-earthquake troop and police levels, the Mission will focus on fostering political dialogue and consensus and strengthening the capacity of Haiti's institutions to ensure good governance and uphold the rule of law as key conditions for its eventual withdrawal.

The diverse challenges of peacekeeping

UN peacekeeping is a global instrument that, through the support of Member States, has been able constantly to evolve and improve. One area of clear and continuing progress is in the stronger representation of women in UN peacekeeping. I am happy to report, as I take office, that four out of our 11 SRSGs are women. Thirty percent of our civilian staff are women. I remain committed to this agenda across all areas of peacekeeping, including our global effort to increase the share of women among UN Police to at least 20 percent by 2014.

The history of UN peacekeeping tasks and missions has also been one of evolution and diversity. Traditional peacekeeping, consisting of cease fire monitoring, started in 1948 with UNTSO. Through the 1990s, peacekeeping mandates dramatically expanded. Missions were charged not only with supporting implementation of comprehensive peace accords but even transitional administration, as in Timor-Leste and Kosovo. Today, in addition to traditional and multidimensional peacekeeping operations, there are missions that are largely focused on the physical protection of civilians, such as UNISFA. Within a given country, as we see looking across DRC, for example, different parts of one country may be at very different stages of stabilization or reconciliation requiring a differentiated presence or support.

These challenges highlight the need for systems in support of United Nations peacekeeping that are flexible, agile and responsive to changing conditions on the ground. They demand strong leadership in the field coupled with clear strategic direction from headquarters and from United Nations legislative organs. These complex mandates have to be matched by specialized skills and personnel of the highest caliber. Delivering on our mandates will increasingly depend on our ability to reliably deploy police and other civilian capacities such as rule of law and security sector reform experts, and ensure that Formed Police Units have adequate training and equipment.

The single greatest comparative advantage of peacekeeping is that it offers a unique, common platform to blend political, rule of law, human rights and other expertise with military, police, and logistics operational capabilities. It also brings to this platform a universal legitimacy that no other organisation does. But in order fully to realize this potential on the ground requires that we further improve our efforts to plan and manage missions in an integrated manner so that they, in turn, may better respond to the complex demands of countries and populations emerging from conflict.

The reforms we pursue must also be seen within the broader array of peace, security and development actors. The World Development Report on security, conflict and development echoes this call for visible efforts that can build momentum around the interconnected challenges of citizen security, justice and jobs.

From reforms to results in the field

In 2009, my predecessor, Alain Le Roy, and Susana drew from the unfinished reforms of the Brahimi panel, the evolving demands of peacekeeping and the challenges to the global partnership to inform the “New Horizon” initiative launched in 2009. We will issue a second progress report on the New Horizon initiative in the coming weeks. It is essential that we build on the momentum of these reforms particularly in light of the demanding financial climate and ensure that they are yielding clear and concrete impacts on the ground.

Meanwhile I will summarize key developments and convey my appreciation for the active engagement and strategic direction provided by this Committee and, in particular, by its Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations on many of the issues discussed. I will touch on the four priority areas of: (i) mission management and oversight; (ii) policy consensus on critical roles; (iii) field support arrangements; and, (iv) capability development.

With the aim of strengthening the first area - mission planning and oversight, it is now established practice for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to brief not only the Security Council but also the troop- and police-contributing countries before the renewal of mandates, as well as before and after Technical Assessment Missions are undertaken in missions. This, in turn, has strengthened triangular cooperation between the Security Council, Secretariat and troop- and police-contributing countries. We stand ready to work with you to further improve strategic cooperation. To strengthen oversight and leadership accountability, compacts and performance assessments are now in place for all Heads of Mission, SRSGs, and Deputy SRSGs.

With regard to integrated planning, all nine applicable peacekeeping missions and United Nations Country Teams now have in place Integrated Strategic Frameworks that identify common strategic objectives and a clearer allocation of key roles across the United Nations system. Finally, I am aware that command and control has historically been an area of concern for troop contributing states. UN peacekeeping has come a long way since the tragic experiences in Srebrenica and Rwanda in the mid nineties. But we continue our efforts. A new internal evaluation of command and control is under way, drawing on the views of Member States in the Special Committee, force commanders from troop-contributing countries, and extensive engagement with field missions. We will brief the Special Committee on the findings of this evaluation early next year.

Building consensus on critical roles of United Nations peacekeepers has, by its nature, required deep engagement by Member States. We have undertaken a number of initiatives over the past three years to improve our implementation of protection of civilians mandates in the field. Some of that work has focused on bringing greater clarity to the protection of civilians in UN peacekeeping, while other initiatives have centered on helping missions to orient themselves towards the task. The development of a framework to inform the preparation of mission-specific POC strategies, as requested by the C-34, is one recent example. In the year ahead, our efforts will focus on assisting the eight missions with a mandate to protect civilians to achieve practical results on the ground, including through the use of the tools that we have developed, or are in the process of finalizing. Last week, we briefed the Special Committee on a major new package of POC training materials, including scenario-based training, which we are now in the process of rolling out; this package is available to Member States, training institutes, and our missions. Our work continues on our analysis of resources and capabilities required for the implementation of POC mandates, which we intend to have finalized within the first quarter of 2012. National governments bear a sovereign responsibility for protection of civilians. Building their capacity to do so, through security sector reform, police reform, and other efforts is essential.

A second area for policy consensus is the role of peacekeepers in peacebuilding. There is recognition from Member States that peacekeepers help authorities to set out priorities, enable efforts in areas where others lead, and implement directly a select set of peacebuilding tasks. DPKO and DFS have finalized a strategy on how to prioritize and sequence their own early peacebuilding tasks which will be discussed in the Peacebuilding Commission tomorrow. While the strategy represents an internal guidance document and is based on our experience, it is not a fixed template. The focus in the coming year will be on applying the considerations offered by the strategy to help missions target their activities and shape their partnerships. Once again, we are attempting to focus peacekeeping activities on immediate priorities and not to expand them into the whole spectrum of longer-term peacebuilding tasks. Additional work is under way in two additional areas related to peacebuilding: transitions and examination of the socio-economic aspects of peacekeeping.

A third area has been “effective” peacekeeping, as it has been called by the C34. Since the New Horizon paper was issued, DPKO has worked with Member States to better define and build a shared understanding around this issue. We organized three regional conferences focused on dialogue among military experts examining a number of key practical aspects: deterrence, use of force as agreed under long-standing principles of peacekeeping, and operational readiness. Collective efforts in these areas could contribute to the enhancement of effectiveness in peacekeeping and improve the safety and security of personnel. It is my intention to work with interested Member States to organize a meeting here in New York to ensure all interested Member States are fully informed of these regional discussions. Furthermore, I am keen to work with you toward a comprehensive dialogue and a common understanding of the concerns we are working to address.

Moving from policy development to field support, the Global Field Support Strategy is entering its second year of implementation. Susana will be outlining both strategic reform efforts as well as some practical application to current challenges facing our missions today. In the face of global financial constraints, the requirement to maximize the efficient use of resources is great. I assure you this is a shared commitment and a common effort. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that UN peacekeeping has been and remains a highly cost-effective tool of international peace and security and a unique instrument for burden-sharing. Indeed, the total expenditure on peacekeeping from 1948 to 2010 is estimated at USD 69 billion. By comparison, while exact figures are difficult to obtain, some estimates indicate that the defense expenditure for 2010 of the 15 top spenders alone amounted to approximately USD 1.6 trillion, or 23 times the cost of peacekeeping since its inception more the 60 years ago.

The fourth area is capability development and the coming year will be a critical one for shaping a comprehensive approach to capabilities going forward. Regarding military components in UN peacekeeping, three pilot initiatives are on schedule for completion by the time of the formal sessions of the C34 next year; these pilots have helped to identify common baseline operational standards for the Infantry Battalion, Staff Officers, and Military Medical Support, as well as providing the basis for substantive training materials. These materials will make a major contribution to enhancing the preparedness, effectiveness and interoperability of these critical components.

We also need to work with you, the Member States, to address critical and systemic gaps in our capabilities and particularly in military utility and attack helicopters. Both departments are working to improve our communication with the Security Council and the TCCs on identified gaps and to address the ways helicopter assets are generated, utilized and reimbursed. We have also evaluated the impact of gap lists circulated periodically to Member States as well as the proposal to establish a clearinghouse for Member State contributions and are now considering options for improving our efforts in each of these areas. Finally, efforts to expand the base of contributors to peacekeeping is an ongoing need and this will require efforts both on the part of potential contributors as well as a more strategic approach to force generation on our part within the Secretariat.

The past year has seen innovative steps to improve intermission cooperation to allow a regional response to regional conflict dynamics. It also can be a means to optimize the use of deployed peacekeepers, particularly where temporary reinforcements may be needed in a post-electoral or other high-risk period. However, this approach should only be a bridging measure and is not a substitute for the full and adequate provision of capabilities to address longer-term or open-ended requirements of missions. For rapid reaction, better access to strategic reserve capacities remains essential to safeguard investments in missions. The standing capacities in the areas of police, justice and corrections have demonstrated the considerable value of rapidly deployable capacities.

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

There have been important developments in the past year with regard to civilian capabilities including recent reports of the Senior Advisory Group and of the Secretary-General. Susana has a system-wide role and will say more. As far as peacekeeping is concerned, it is essential that reforms focused on civilian capacity bolster both the quality and ready availability of critical capacities which were described two years ago in the New Horizon paper and remain perhaps even more applicable today. We will be working in the coming year to ensure that peacekeeping reforms are in sync with wider UN reforms that the Secretary-General has launched or may launch, such as the civilian capacity review.

One particular need is the area of policing where demands continue to grow rapidly. A forthcoming Secretary-General's report on policing requested by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations will discuss evolving roles and requirements. There is a growing demand for more specialized capacities to fulfill mandates related to the protection of civilians, as well as in creating or strengthening national capacity to address challenges, particularly related to community-oriented policing, transnational organized crime and border management. Support for national police development is often central to our ability to hand over security tasks to national authorities. Related areas of growing demand for specialized support include security sector management, law reform that acknowledges the appropriate role of traditional or customary justice, Islamic legal systems, military justice, prosecution services, witness protection, prevention, investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, corrections, community violence reduction, ammunition and stockpile management and collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons.

I am also personally committed to upholding the highest standards of conduct for all our UN peacekeeping personnel. Just one incident of poor conduct can overshadow the otherwise exemplary behaviour of all peacekeepers. A constant vigilance and zero tolerance policy has been instituted and are being applied. In this, I also rely on the example set by troop- and police-contributing countries to ensure that such incidents are met with swift and decisive action at national level. I also look to our contributors to ensure that the personnel they contribute arrive in our missions with assurances that their previous conduct has been of the highest standard with regards to their criminal or human rights record. What is at stake is the credibility and reputation of UN peacekeeping, but also of its contributors in uniformed personnel.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge my debt to my predecessor, Alain Le Roy, who worked tirelessly on behalf of our missions and, with Susana, set in motion many of the issues and initiatives described here today. I also thank the full management team you see here today but, in particular, Edmond Mulet who guided the department during the change in leadership.

At my first press conference as Under-Secretary-General, I was asked whether I had seen any differences at the UN since I was posted here in my national capacity in the early 1990s. While I will not make any rush to judgment on the complex matters that lie before us, I will venture to remark that I do see changes from the "creative amateurism" of peacekeeping, as Brahimi called it, to a more professional approach. The fourfold growth in UN peacekeeping globally and the lives and resources we oversee demands no less. Peacekeeping has become a major instrument for peace and security. I will work, with your support, to further strengthen it. But perhaps our greatest asset is this creative spark and extraordinary spirit that motivates those who serve in peacekeeping operations. Our responsibility and our privilege is to bring the highest ideals of the United Nations to the service of people who, having endured conflict and war, still fight to grasp the promise of peace, security and prosperity.