

## **DRAFT REMARKS BY THE FOREIGN SECRETARY ON UN PEACEKEEPING**

Thank you, Mr Secretary General, for inviting us here today.

This occasion provides an opportunity to reflect on 70 years of UN peacekeeping, to remember why we invest in these vital operations, and to consider how to make them more effective.

At this moment, over 100,000 personnel from 124 countries are deployed in 14 peacekeeping operations across the world. They are striving to protect civilians, monitor ceasefires, train local police forces, and allow the delivery of emergency aid. In countries tormented by civil war, they are trying against the odds to create the conditions for lasting peace.

No-one understood the perils and possibilities of UN peacekeeping better than the late Kofi Annan, whose death we all mourn. Before becoming Secretary General, he ran the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during four tumultuous years in the 1990s.

Despite all the wrenching dilemmas that he faced, Kofi Annan never lost faith in the noble idea of UN peacekeeping which he described as a “remarkable innovation in the service of world peace and international order”.

Like his successors, Annan knew that the UN requires constant reform and complacency is the greatest enemy of effectiveness.

As a steadfast supporter of the UN and the rules-based international system, Britain supports the Secretary General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Last year, Britain contributed £261 million and 650 soldiers to peacekeeping missions. We were the second member state to endorse the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations.

I would ask all member states to support these changes. It is not enough to offer verbal endorsement; we must put words into action in three specific ways.

Firstly, we must set clear and achievable objectives for peacekeeping operations, sequencing their mandates to provide the right resources at the right time.

Secondly, the whole UN system must work together. For example, there are 27 UN entities in Sudan's region of Darfur. That requires proper planning and coordination. We

support the Secretary General's proposal of an independent Resident Coordinator empowered to bring together the UN Country Team.

We also welcome the recent agreement on structural changes, which will create new UN Departments of Peace Operations and of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

As Member States we must play our part by keeping the promises we collectively made at the Defence Ministerial meetings in London and Vancouver, including 80 new pledges of personnel and capability. By coordinating our contributions, including on training, we can help to ensure that all missions are properly staffed and equipped, and that specialist skills are available when and where needed.

Thirdly, we must assess the performance of peacekeeping missions robustly and objectively, rewarding achievement and dealing with failure. We must be sure that our missions are fulfilling their mandates to protect civilians while safeguarding their own personnel. I welcome the progress made towards implementing the Secretary General's action plan to improve the security of peacekeepers.

We must also enforce the zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. The UK will host an international conference in October designed to improve the Safeguarding standards of the peacekeeping and aid sectors.

At the Defence Ministerial meeting in London in 2016, we agreed that progress was “dependent on cooperation and partnership built on mutual trust”. We should move forward together in that spirit.

It was the second Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjold, who was the intellectual architect of UN peacekeeping. During the crises of the 1950s, he saw how the UN could contain conflicts and prevent dangerous escalations by deploying a neutral force. The need today is just as great as it was in Hammarskjold’s time: the responsibility now falls on us to make good on his vision.

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