

UN Peacekeeping Ministerial 2021

**Intervention by Mrs Sophie Wilmès, Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs**

7 December 2021

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to deliver this message on the occasion of this Ministerial meeting on United Nations peacekeeping. I would like to thank the government of South Korea for hosting this virtual event. Even though I would have preferred to meet you in person in Seoul, I am glad we can share views through this format on such an important topic as peacekeeping.

I wish to begin by paying tribute to all women and men who made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting the lives of others. It reminds us that our engagement for peace and security needs to be defended every day and everywhere.

The challenges that peacekeepers face today are complex ones. They are often deployed in theatres where there is very little peace to keep. They are sometimes the target of violence. Their mission mandates are multidimensional, ranging from support to political process to security sector reform.

I therefore reiterate Belgium's full support to the Action for Peacekeeping Initiative of Secretary General Guterres aiming to address these current challenges.

In this regard, let me stress 3 key elements:

First, the **protection of civilians** must continue to be at the center of a majority of peacekeeping operations..

Among civilians, women and girls are disproportionately affected during armed conflict. They have not only to be protected but their voices need also to be heard at every stage when we talk about conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

I am pleased to see how central the Women, Peace and Security agenda is during this Ministerial. Belgium is working on its fourth national action plan Women, Peace and security, concentrating on Sahel and the DRC. We are also supporting this agenda through our very recent contributions to the MINUSMA Trust Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund.

Equally important to Belgium is the issue of children in armed conflict. It was one of our priorities during our mandate at the Security Council. We contributed to increase their protection in peacekeeping missions' mandates.

Secondly, Belgium pleads for **an enhanced coordination between humanitarian, development and peace and security actors**. Such a **comprehensive approach** is crucial if we want to achieve a lasting peace. Joint risk and context analysis as well as information sharing on respective interventions and strategies are to be promoted. In the Sahel region, Belgium implement this approach. We contribute with troops and voluntary funding to MINUSMA. It also goes hand in hand with support to development, humanitarian aid as well as police and judicial support in order to strengthen the rule of law.

Lastly, peacekeeping operations have to be **efficient and flexible**. To reach this objective, missions need sufficient and flexible human and financial resources. Belgium is the 22nd largest contributor to the peacekeeping budget. As candidate chair of the 5th Committee (in charge of administrative and budgetary management), Belgium pledge to continue to contribute to an increased predictability in the financing of peacekeeping operations.

I thank you.