

**CLOSING REMARKS DELIVERED BY THE HON. FOREIGN
MINISTER, SHIRLEY AYORKOR BOTCHWEY DURING
THE UN PEACEKEEPING MINISTERIAL MEETING
HELD ON 5TH AND 6TH DECEMBER, 2023**

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

Yesterday, at the start of this Ministerial, I outlined the expected outcomes of the conference with a sense of optimism about the prospects of the meeting. Today, I am extremely excited to witness broad consensus on the need for urgent action to close the gaps in peacekeeping. The positive outcome of this meeting has reinforced my confidence in our collective will and readiness to provide specialised capabilities for UN peace operations in the face of new, daunting and cascading challenges.

The concrete pledges that have been generated by this historic event will provide the cushion UN peace operations require to execute complex mandates in complicated environments. It is particularly encouraging that each of the themes selected for the conference has received significant attention by way of pledges, signifying the importance of the issues of protection of civilians, strategic communications and the inclusion of women in peacekeeping as well as safety and security and mental health of the men and women who make huge sacrifices in pursuit of lasting peace for communities torn apart by protracted conflicts.

Excellencies

There is a reason for such an inspiring outcome – The preparatory meetings in Dhaka, Islamabad and Kigali as well as the online preparatory meeting convened jointly by Ghana and the Republic of Korea on mental health of peacekeepers have been instrumental in framing our conversation in this Ministerial and providing context and momentum for the pledges mobilised today.

The issues we have addressed in this meeting are some of the most important challenges Peacekeeping needs to address to remain a relevant and effective tool for the maintenance of peace and security in our world. The targets for the insertion of women in the peace continuum are critically important, but not the end in themselves. Our ambition cannot be limited to how many women you can count in Peacekeeping. We must consciously accelerate efforts to eliminate barriers to women's participation in decision making in order to harness the peculiar strengths of the brave women involved in peace operations.

The discussions we just had also underlined to the importance of protecting vulnerable populations caught up in war, a mandate which is well grounded in international law. The protection of civilians is a responsibility which includes all parts of a peacekeeping mission, civilian, military and police functions and intersects with several other mandated tasks. The effectiveness of our response to threats of physical violence against civilians within deployment areas defines the nature of the relationship between Missions and host communities. At a time of increasing hostility against Peacekeeping, strengthening Mission's capabilities to protect civilians must remain a top priority. This charge does not absolve host governments of their primary responsibility to protect their respective populations.

There is little to add to the ideas that have emerged from the discussions on prioritising the mental sanity of uniformed personnel. The difficult operational environments create hidden psychological challenges that are often given less attention because of the fear of stigma. I am glad that the scope of our discussions on the topic was broad enough to emphasise the importance of pre and post deployment screenings, which are needed for early detection of traumatic stress disorders.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Beyond the expression of support for efforts in improving peacekeeping, it is pertinent for us all to demonstrate political will at the highest level in order to help translate the noble ideals in improving peacekeeping into implementable action. Now more than ever, we need to put into action all the bold commitments made in the Accra Ministerial.

As we wind up on this two-day event, I wish on behalf of the government and people of Ghana to thank you sincerely for coming to Accra for the first Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting to be held on the continent of Africa.

The President of the Republic of Ghana has asked that I convey his appreciation and that of the people of Ghana to all those behind the history we just witnessed. The UN Department of Peace Operations and the Co-Chairs of the Ministerial deserve particular mention for the constant engagement leading to the Ministerial Meeting. We also appreciate the support of the United Kingdom, Denmark, Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Germany, Norway and the UN team in Accra.

As a top troop contributing country to UN Peacekeeping, Ghana remains resolute in her commitment to support efforts aimed at making UN Peacekeeping effective. The

takeaways from the Accra Ministerial should feature in future engagements to help address the gaps facing modern day peacekeeping in various fora.

On that note, I wish to congratulate Germany on her nomination as host of the next Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting in 2025. Your task is challenging one, but no country is more prepared to shoulder the burden of hosting such a high level event. Please rest assured that Ghana will be to share ideas and lessons learnt at a more appropriate time.

I thank you!
