

Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous
Statement to the Fourth Committee
30 October 2015

As delivered

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Introduction

It is a pleasure to be here with you today, in what is a pivotal time for UN peacekeeping. In keeping with the exceptional nature of this year, I will focus on a forward-looking overview of DPKO's [Department of Peacekeeping Operations] plans, in light of three major initiatives that will shape the future of peacekeeping.

The Secretary-General's peace operations review has generated wide-ranging recommendations on all aspects of our work. I can speak on behalf of both Atul [Khare] and myself when I say that our two departments have embraced the report of the High-Level Panel, as well as the Secretary-General's agenda for action, set out by [Deputy SG] Mr. Eliasson today. We have also heeded the relevant recommendations of the SG report on Security Council resolution 1325, and have carefully studied the report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture.

In March, for the first time, the Secretary-General hosted the Chiefs of Defence of 105 Member States. The meeting served to build awareness and collective understanding of the challenges facing peacekeeping today. Building on this historic meeting, and four regional preparatory conferences, last month, the Secretary-General co-hosted the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping. An extraordinary number of pledges of much-needed capabilities were made by a group of 53 geographically diverse national leaders, including 37 heads of state or government.

Combined, these three initiatives – the review, the Chiefs of Defence meeting and the Summit, have re-energised global efforts to improve UN peacekeeping. We must now turn this robust international commitment into tangible action. We in DPKO and DFS [Department of Field Support] count on your continued engagement and support, including through the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, as we set out to implement our ambitious agenda for change. We must, together, keep the political momentum alive, and maintain sharp focus on our shared objective to strengthen and modernise peacekeeping.

Challenges of operating effectively in new environments

This renewed attention on peacekeeping comes at a critical juncture. New peacekeeping contexts are more challenging than ever before. While overall casualty figures per deployed peacekeeper have gone down over the past 15 years, those resulting from hostile acts in the least permissive peacekeeping environments -- particularly MINUSMA, MINUSCA and MONUSCO-- have risen sharply. The number of hostile acts targeting peacekeepers, including by small arms fire, IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices], which let me say those devices are not improvised but

increasingly sophisticated with intention to kill or to hurt, and ambushes, has more than doubled each year over the last three years. This has been reflected in greater casualty numbers. Over the past 12 months, the total number of fatalities has increased by 50 per cent over the previous year. The number of peacekeepers injured as a result of hostile acts has increased threefold. I would like to pay tribute to those colleagues who have been killed, we owe them every respect.

These figures reflect a sobering reality. Peacekeeping today deploys into theatres where armed groups proliferate – some with extremist worldviews, others with links to transnational organised crime. Many of these non-state actors are not readily drawn into a negotiated political solution. Pockets of fighting may be ongoing. Political processes may be incipient or faltering. The State and its institutions are often perceived to be partial, non-representative, and weak. Consent for the presence of a peacekeeping operation may be uneven amongst the parties to the conflict, and may shift over time. Peacekeeping operations must continue to help the main parties advance political solutions, with Member States and regional support, yet be ready to face such heightened challenges.

In such environments, the safety and security of peacekeepers, and their ability to implement their mandates, will be compromised unless we put in place measures to protect them, drawing on all the tools available to us today. In fact, I would note that the considerable increase in injuries compared to fatalities is likely a function of the robust mitigation measures that we have put in place, including more use of armoured vehicles, and counter-IED operations. But clearly more must be done. This means adapting our capabilities and our field support to allow Missions to act in an agile, mobile, robust and pre-emptive manner.

Towards robust and effective capabilities for better performance

The Peace Operations Review and the Secretary-General's reports made a series of welcome recommendations to improve the speed, capability and performance of peacekeeping operations, building on efforts already under way by DPKO and DFS. We are developing a concept to establish a single capability and performance framework for uniformed personnel, in line with the Panel's recommendation that we link our ongoing capabilities development agenda with a strategic approach to performance management of uniformed personnel.

Ultimately, our goal is to better support troop and police contributors to ensure that they can perform to the best of their abilities. This means being clear in defining our expectations of the skills, capabilities and specialised capacities required, and supporting contributors in achieving defined standards.

We have developed a range of tools to support our collective effort to improve military unit effectiveness and performance. DPKO has produced a body of guidance and military standards which set out the baseline requirements on matters ranging from infantry battalion functions to the implementation of protection of civilian mandates. We are also finalising an Operational Readiness Assurance (ORA) policy, which sets out clear procedures for military units, from pre-deployment preparations, to the delivery of mandated tasks and lessons learned. The aim is to better define the respective responsibilities between troop contributors, Secretariat and field missions. This policy will be complemented by a series of standard operating procedures

ensuring a systematic, evidence-based and transparent approach to the performance evaluation of Force Headquarters and units.

Similarly, to improve and streamline procedures and guidance related to police selection and deployment, we are reviewing standard operating procedures to assess the operational capability of formed police units as well as for the selection and assessment of police specialized skills. This comprehensive doctrinal framework will build stronger, more effective cadres of peacekeepers.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)

In the context of performance, I must reassert our commitment to stamp out sexual exploitation and abuse. The ORA policy I have mentioned includes SEA as a key operational readiness criterion. We have seen, in recent months, renewed attention to the unacceptable record of SEA cases in our peacekeeping operations. Just one case is enough to undermine the Organisation's noble efforts, and have lasting damage on our efforts to protect and support conflict-affected communities. I would like to express my personal commitment, together with that of the Department I lead, to work with utmost rigour to implement the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy. I call on troop and police contributors to do the same. We must eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse from our operations, which is a shared responsibility with Member States. Throughout, we must ensure that victims have better confidence that justice will be served. I count on Member States to ensure accountability, including by conducting requisite investigations and ensuring that due process is applied within domestic jurisdictions. I, for my part, will spare no efforts in remedial actions, including repatriating units when necessary.

Strategic Force Generation

Our efforts to ensure that UN peacekeeping can draw on the best possible capabilities received a welcome boost by the Leaders' Summit of 28 September. The Summit resulted in the pledges of over 40,000 police and military personnel, as well as critical enablers, including helicopters, engineering, logistics and transport units, hospitals, and specialized police teams and units. These pledges will go a long way to fill current gaps. They will also create a reserve pool of contributions, allowing us to do two very important things: first, enhance critical enabling capabilities such as high readiness and mobility, and second, pursue, in a more consistent way, high standards of performance and conduct.

My own pledge to you today is that the Secretariat – through DPKO and DFS – will strive to support troop and police contributors in a coherent and transparent manner, to help you shape, prepare, train and enhance your contributions to our operations.

The recently established Strategic Force Generation and Capabilities Planning Cell, created to ensure a more coherent and strategic engagement with troop and police contributors, will play a central role in this endeavour. We have developed the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS), replacing the United Nations Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS), which will serve as a comprehensive platform for us to collaborate with Member States on their

commitments. I encourage all existing and prospective troop and police contributors to register their contributions on the PCRS, ideally by the end of November.

Going forward, we will hold events next year to strengthen our engagement with police contributors, and follow up on the Summit. We plan to hold a United Nations Chiefs of Police Summit – aptly initialed UN COPS – next year, which will strengthen awareness of police peacekeeping challenges and opportunities, contribute to broadening the base of police contributors, and strengthen a common understanding of the steps required to participate in our operations. A follow up meeting to the Leaders’ Summit will be hosted by the UK, with the broad objective of ensuring sustained follow-up and implementation of the commitments made in September; reviewing new pledges and gaps, and assessing progress on strategic force generation.

The use of technology for situational awareness

There is one tool that cuts across all our work and enhances our ability to deliver that requires mention: technology has the great potential to act as an enabler, by saving resources, simplifying work processes, and allowing us to have a deeper grasp of the environments we operate in. The Peace Operations review and Secretary-General’s reports also made this point. In addition to improving safety and security, new technologies can support substantive mandate areas, including on early warning and the protection of civilians, as well as human rights and humanitarian work.

As peacekeeping faces new threats posed by transnational organised crime and violent extremism, we must leverage the technological tools at our disposal to support greater situational awareness and analysis. Ultimately, we must seek to have reliable, actionable intelligence to guide our actions and take informed decisions at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. It is time to de-mystify the term “intelligence”. Without it, we will not be able to protect ourselves and others.

We have taken exploratory steps in this direction, including through the All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) in Mali, and the use of Unarmed Unmanned Aerial Systems (UUAS) in the Democratic Republic of Congo and we are in the process of procuring long range UAVs for Mali and Central African Republic. Making full use of these tools is still a work in progress, but it is clear that equipping missions with the expertise to acquire a deeper level of knowledge is critical.

We have an ethical responsibility to use technologies if they can save lives. But we also have a responsibility to use available technologies in an ethical manner, upholding human rights and UN principles. As we roll out our strategy on Technology and Innovation, we will have this in mind. We will also, going forward, associate Member States to our work in this area.

Political support and tailored peacekeeping operations

Strengthening capabilities and tools alone are not enough to make peacekeeping effective. As recalled by Mr. Eliasson today, peacekeeping first and foremost remains a political instrument. Peacekeeping missions have the greatest impact when they are deployed in support of a political

roadmap enjoying broad international support, shapes their mandate, while informing their exit strategy.

A central challenge is defining a viable political strategy when missions are being created, and when they are winding down. We have seen in recent years that humanitarian or security imperatives may require deployment before a negotiated settlement has been reached, or in parallel to fragile political processes. At the same time, we have also seen that Missions supporting stabilisation or peacebuilding tasks beyond the completion of peace agreements lose the political rudder that gave them direction, and the leverage that helped them succeed. In both, Missions struggle to define their political identity.

Devising viable political strategies and implementing them is never straightforward, as we have seen in peacekeeping and non-peacekeeping settings alike. But one aspect is clear: the Security Council plays the central role in ensuring that peacekeeping operations have firm political backing, and in supporting them when they struggle. Where political processes are faltering, peace agreements unravelling, or indeed when peacekeeping operations stay beyond the completion of a peace settlement, it behoves the Council to step up its political engagement, and come together with a strong and unified voice.

The Peace Operations review has provided some pointers in this regard. The sequencing of mandates will help prioritise actions and maintain focus on the political track. DPKO has begun developing proposals for realistic, streamlined and prioritised mandates which are based on a thorough conflict analysis and respond to the specific needs on the ground. For instance, in South Sudan, for example, following the signature of the recent peace agreement, the Security Council gave UNMISS a two-month mandate which focused on support to the peace agreement and key protection, human rights and humanitarian tasks. This not only ensures that the Mission's attention is on immediate priorities, but also allows us to conduct an in-depth review to determine the strategic objectives and technical requirements going forward. We will explore further opportunities to adopt the approach proposed by the Peace Operations review, particularly in missions that are transitioning or drawing down, including Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Haiti.

Coherent responses to sustain peace

The Peace Operations Panel -- and indeed the Advisory Group of Experts -- reports have also spoken of the potential of compacts with host governments. I see the establishment of political compacts between the United Nations and host governments as a promising tool that could bolster both national ownership and consent for the presence of a peacekeeping operation, which we have seen can wax and wane over time. This is a particular challenge in Missions where the primary focus is supporting stabilisation or the extension of state authority.

A compact could serve three primary purposes. First, it could strengthen the mutual accountability of host governments and the international community, including peacekeeping operations, in delivering on early peacebuilding commitments. Second, in doing so, it could serve as a platform for coherence of international support. Third, it could leverage the political influence of the Security Council and/or the Peacebuilding Commission. As we look to better

integrate the aspirations of the populations we serve in our work, compacts could also reflect the expectations of communities, and integrate a civil society oversight role, and actually we have begun to explore the possibility of establishing such compacts, specifically in the context of the Central African Republic.

Peacekeeping operations play a key role in supporting the early peacebuilding tasks that build confidence, engage communities, and strengthen trust in and effectiveness of institutions that provide security and the rule of law. We do so by articulating peacebuilding priorities in support of national counterparts; enabling national and international actors to implement peacebuilding tasks by providing a security umbrella and monitoring commitments, and implementing certain early peacebuilding tasks ourselves. The Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections plays an important role in this regard, including through joint programme implementation. The High Level Panel also made important recommendations related to financing of key peacebuilding activities. We look forward to strengthening our work in early peacebuilding, together with our partners, including through a more strategic use of assessed funds for programmatic activities.

The peacekeeping partnership

Before I wrap up, I want to highlight one last point regarding our partnership for peacekeeping.

Against the backdrop of ongoing discussions on the peacekeeping principles, on which we have heard from Mr. Eliasson today, I would like to highlight that our common understanding of the purpose of peacekeeping operations can only emerge from a deeper, more meaningful dialogue between the Security Council, troop and police contributors and the Secretariat. From our perspective, we will continue to reach out to troop and police contributors, including leading up to the creation of new missions, in order to share our assessment of political and operational challenges, and the roles and capabilities required to address them. But it will be critical to strengthen the dialogue between the Security Council and the Member States that contribute the personnel on the frontlines. Peacekeeping is a common endeavour – as we deploy into more dangerous theatres, unity of vision and effort will be more important than ever.

Conclusion

Only a few years ago, when I began my tenure as Under-Secretary-General, the peacekeeping partnership was under severe strain, even crisis, according to some. There were deep cleavages between those paying the bill for peacekeeping, and those providing the uniformed personnel. But as we approach the end of 2015, we see a remarkable shift. The Summit was the heartening, geographically diverse and global expression of a new consensus around our partnership. The peace operations review has provided a renewed blueprint for UN peacekeeping. As we work together to strengthen peacekeeping, it is my hope that this momentum will be maintained and strengthened, for the benefit of the people we serve.

Thank you.