

## Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

### Statement to the Fourth Committee

3pm, 20 October 2016

Ladies and gentlemen,

#### *State of peacekeeping in 2011*

It is a pleasure for me to be here with you today, in what will likely be my final address to the Fourth Committee. Today, I will focus my remarks on the challenges encountered, on how we adapted to those challenges and on progress made in peacekeeping over the past five years. As the Organization enters a new chapter of its history, I would also like to provide an overview of what I see as the remaining opportunities and how to take these forward.

When I took the helm of DPKO in 2011, the global security landscape was undergoing unprecedented changes. The economic crisis and Arab Spring continued to have repercussions on peacekeeping. Member States demanded that we do more with less, while expecting the same level of performance. Terrorism and asymmetric warfare became part of peacekeeping theatres. Libya exposed fundamental disagreements in the Security Council, feeding mistrust and disunity. This had knock-on effects on peacekeeping mandates and the protection of civilians.

Peacekeeping was itself facing challenges new and old. Continued polarisation between the troop, police and financial contributors of peacekeeping, and between mandate creators and mandate implementers, had produced strains. The role of regional organisations complementing the UN in addressing peace and security issues had been to some extent, unexplored. Gains had been made in responding robustly to threats against civilians in Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire and in some instances in the DRC, but capabilities were outdated, and did not match the current and emerging operating environments.

#### *New approaches to peacekeeping*

Against this backdrop I endeavoured to take a pragmatic, field-focused and performance-oriented approach to the management and reform of peacekeeping. This orientation for peacekeeping was later validated by the recommendations of the High Level Panel on Peace Operations. It was – and still is – paramount to transform our operations into a modernized, more professional enterprise. The aim of the Secretariat has been to reinvigorate the collective commitment to peacekeeping around a forward-leaning interpretation of peacekeeping's role, including on the use of force.

On that point, I do not see the use of force and the pursuit of political solutions as mutually exclusive, but rather mutually reinforcing. Used judiciously, with credible intent and in a professional manner, force lends credibility to the political track and becomes its best ally. In

contexts where civilians are being deliberately targeted by parties to conflict, it is critical to meet the expectations of people whose last hope for security rests with the United Nations.

Today's conflicts cannot be resolved by the United Nations alone. We must maximize the political leverage and comparative advantage that regional players have and work with them in support of shared peace and security objectives. This is why, during my tenure, I have sought to deepen and broaden our collaboration with regional organisations. Our partnership with the AU cuts across all aspects of our work, from the political to the operational. Our efforts have also resulted in a stronger and more active involvement of the EU and its Member States in peacekeeping.

### *Key peacekeeping achievements*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Making this approach a reality has involved constant and close engagement with Member States to build cross-regional consensus in support of a progressive vision of peacekeeping. A number of milestones have marked the way. Our two Leaders' Summits in 2014 and 2015 gathered an historic number of Heads of State and Government to pledge new, more diverse contributions of uniformed units to peacekeeping missions. With your support, the UN convened its first ever meetings of Chiefs of Defence and Chiefs of Police, and the largest ever meeting of Defence Ministers in London last month. These multilateral encounters are helping to project UN peacekeeping as a core part of national foreign and security policy.

The building blocks for this progressive vision of peacekeeping have also been established. The Peacekeeping Capabilities Readiness System will allow us to proactively match capabilities with anticipated needs in the field. We are taking deliberate steps to increase uniformed women in peacekeeping. We have established standards and performance management tools, in consultation with Member States. Training stands are being revised and improved. We have modernised peacekeeping tools by introducing innovative technologies such as the UAVs. These cumulative measures inject rigour in the planning and management of peacekeeping operations. They also help build confidence that peacekeeping operations can deliver, even under difficult conditions.

Operationally, the past five years have been intense. Throughout, we have managed multiple planning, deployment and drawdown processes, often simultaneously. I oversaw the start-up of three missions during my tenure, in Syria, Mali and the Central African Republic, the latter two in close concert with the African Union as part of a rehatting process. Major reconfigurations of our missions in South Sudan and the DRC have also taken place and we have faced unprecedented situations in Haiti with a mix of natural disasters (hurricane 2016), security challenges and political difficulties.

We have accompanied Timor-Leste's trajectory to peace, and are doing so for Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. Stabilisation in Mali and the Central African Republic continues, despite very fragile political processes and deep-rooted conflict drivers. In the Middle East, our missions have

maintained and adjusted their presence despite tremendous insecurity, and amidst the wavering commitment of some troop contributors.

Each of these very distinct experiences have demonstrated the agility of peacekeeping operations and their capacity to adapt to changing environments. Along the way, DPKO and DFS have supported multiple field initiatives beside peacekeeping, including in Libya, Somalia, the OPCW-UN Joint Mission, the Special Envoys to Iraq, Syria and Yemen, Burundi, and now Colombia. Looking at the totality of these activities, it is clear that UN peacekeeping has adapted at a speed that is often not fully recognized.

### *Challenges encountered and adaptations*

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am immensely proud of our colleagues in the field and at headquarters, who have made these achievements a reality. But I would not be doing justice to them if I did not also point to the significant challenges that we have encountered. Today, I will focus on four in particular that I feel need to be highlighted.

**First, consent of host states.** During my tenure, we have seen acute tension between peacekeeping operations and their host authorities. Crises of consent have dominated much of our engagement in Sudan and South Sudan, the DRC, and Western Sahara, to which I will be travelling this evening. It is inevitable, for partners to sometimes disagree. But when there is a fundamentally different understanding between the Security Council and host governments, and within the Council, as to the objective and role of a peacekeeping operation in a conflict environment, we must acknowledge and proactively address this divergence.

Consent is a two-way street and must be constantly nurtured. Peacekeepers, who deploy under the authority of the Security Council, should not be seen as intruders and must acknowledge the sovereignty of the consenting State. Peacekeeping operations must always listen to the unique knowledge and rich perspectives that national actors bring. National ownership of the peacebuilding process is the mission's ultimate goal. But equally, peacekeepers deploy to environments in which perceptions of marginalization by some communities have led to violence, and therefore have an obligation to engage all parties. They have explicit mandates to support specific groups, in particular women and children. When peacekeepers are blocked from carrying out their tasks, the Security Council must act robustly to defend the mandates it has entrusted the peacekeeping operation, to implement. Disunity in the Security Council and between the Council and key regional stakeholders feeds the erosion of consent.

**Second, the protection of civilians.** Over my tenure, numerous crises have illustrated the gap between expectations and our ability to deliver. In Juba, women and girls have been raped in close proximity to peacekeepers. Villagers were hacked to death in gruesome attacks in Beni, just a short distance from MONUSCO bases. More than twenty years after Rwanda and Srebrenica, and despite 98 percent of our personnel carrying a PoC mandate, we are still struggling.

To be sure, we cannot provide full protection across vast areas with relatively small numbers. Expectations are always likely to exceed our ability to deliver, even if we manage and communicate them better.

I strongly feel that we need to deal with the underlying systemic challenges to this essential peacekeeping role. Equipping and training uniformed personnel with the right tools to act swiftly is crucial but not enough. We need to get better at understanding where threats to civilians lie. A proactive approach by peacekeeping personnel, both uniformed and civilian, in developing a close engagement with local communities is a step in the right direction and we must continue. We need to act with unity of purpose. Troops and police must demonstrate leadership and the will to protect. Failures to follow orders, hidden caveats, the sudden withdrawal of personnel when they are most needed – these all undermine the Organization and the nations we represent. I have had to take difficult decisions on this issue, which sometimes involved the repatriation of entire units.

Protecting civilians is an immediate goal, but resolving conflict is the only durable solution to reduce violence. The two should not be pursued in parallel, but rather together. Attacks against civilians are often a political act, and as such, should be factored into political efforts to cajole or compel parties to a negotiated settlement. This is what is meant by a cross-mission effort on protection. Nor can it be limited to the peacekeeping operation: all stakeholders involved in political processes – UN, regional and national – must signal their commitment to protection.

We have innovated on a robust approach to the protection of civilians. The creation of the Force Intervention Brigade in MONUSCO and the establishment of urgent temporary measures in CAR were emblematic of this approach. In South Sudan, we have taken unprecedented steps through the establishment of PoC sites – a moral and operational necessity.

These innovations have had varying degrees of success. The FIB was a bold step and contributed to the defeat of the M23 armed group. But it was less successful against the other armed groups in eastern DRC. The UTMs in CAR brought calm back to Bangui, but also raised questions on hand-over to the domestic jurisdiction. The PoC sites in South Sudan raised new dilemmas around sustainability, perimeter protection, and in-camp policing and associated responsibilities. Each of these initiatives has demonstrated that absent accompanying political efforts, protection – even where robust - will not be sustainable.

The third challenge is when **peacekeepers themselves become a threat against the people** they are mandated to protect. Peacekeeping has been shamed by abhorrent acts of sexual abuse, exploitation and violence. These acts are now linked to peacekeepers in the public conscience. My dear colleague Atul will tell you more of the determined action we are undertaking on three fronts – on prevention, on accountability, on victim assistance.

This is a collective effort with Member States. We must be forthright about progress and challenges. This includes speaking out in the face of impunity, within a mission, by the Secretariat or by Member States themselves. This is too serious a matter to allow bureaucratic interests or national pride get in the way.

Being a peacekeeper is about understanding the responsibility that comes with our freedom to act. Whether on SEA or on cholera, managing our presence responsibly means facing up to our shortcomings and fixing them.

**The fourth challenge relates to asymmetric environments.** It is right for us to be present in Mali and the Middle East. These are bellwether conflicts. They reflect the reality of current and potential future operating environments of peace operations. They should help drive adaption, creativity and innovation.

We have faced unprecedented targeted attacks, but we are becoming more resilient. New measures to protect our personnel, including IEDs risk mitigation, have reduced fatalities, proportional to incidents over the past 12 months. The deployment of combat convoy capacities will help us sustain supply lines and maintain our presence. The ASIFU harnesses Member State assets and intelligence capabilities for greater situational awareness. The use of new technologies, including UAVs is an essential component of modern peacekeeping and we must continue to be forward leaning in integrating new technologies as they are developed to further enhance peacekeeping moving forward. This is a work in progress, but cumulatively, these steps enable us to stay and deliver in the environments where we are most needed.

Going forward, we need to have a frank conversation about the scope of peacekeeping action in counter-terrorism settings. Peacekeeping and counter-terrorism operations have distinct and separate objectives. We have maintained, and I assert again, that peacekeeping cannot and should not be used as a military counter-terrorism tool. We are not configured, staffed and resourced to eliminate terrorist groups. Our strength lies in supporting negotiated peace settlements and in providing a modicum of protection for civilians.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that terrorism is a reality of contemporary conflict. Peacekeeping must have the capabilities to operate effectively and safely in environments where terrorist groups are present. This means breaking geographical silos and developing transnational strategies with UN and regional partners. We also need to be conscious of the impact that our mandated actions may have in environments where terrorist groups operate.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to end my remarks by sketching a few thoughts on the way ahead for peacekeeping.

In the multipolar world that we live in today, we must build new coalitions of support to address collective security challenges. We have seen the Security Council struggle to act decisively on some of the most staggering human tragedies of our time. The Council must find ways of reasserting its authority, and bring more collective pressure to bear on parties to conflict. This requires diplomacy, dialogue, and political engagement.

We must also adapt and acknowledge that the Council is not, today, the sole centre of political gravity and leverage. This implies stronger and more strategic and operational relationships with regional actors. It also implies the need for greater collective focus by relevant UN entities, Council members and regional organisations on prevention: on managing, mitigating and

reducing the risk of conflict. For, the success or failure of a peacekeeping operation also depends on the quality of the upstream work undertaken in order to prevent a conflict or limit its intensity.

Building a performance-oriented approach is a work in progress, and one that must continue if peacekeeping is to prove its worth in today's conflicts. But we must also go beyond uniformed capabilities. Civilian and whole-of-mission performance should be integrated into a broad and overarching framework for evaluating impact and building capacity.

Efforts over the past five years converge around making peacekeeping a nimble, flexible and modern tool that can be deployed in response to a range of specific challenges on the ground. The future of peace operations should involve the ability to deploy the requisite expertise rapidly, making effective use of modern technology, intelligence (or information) and being able to adapt and shift posture as the situation on the ground evolves.

Finally, I want to leave you today with an inconvenient, but undeniable truth. The administrative and management structures, rules and culture of the United Nations Secretariat and its oversight bodies today are set up to protect the Organization against financial risk, often to the detriment of efforts to respond to risks of serious violence. Structures that focus on administrative, rather than human results do not serve the principles of the Organization as well as they could. To realise the objectives, efforts to make field support systems more agile and field-oriented must be pursued and redoubled. Atul will speak about some of the priorities going forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The past five years have been about a practical adaptation of peacekeeping to the conflict environments of today. It is my hope that we have laid the foundational building blocks for a progressive evolution of peacekeeping operations. With Member State commitment, I hope that the Organization will continue to push forward efforts to improve the peacekeeping tool, one that has transformed the lives of countless men, women and children over the past six decades.

Thank you.