

**Speech by the Netherlands Minister of Defence drs. Ank Bijleveld-Schouten at the '2019 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial on Uniformed Capabilities, Performance and Protection', 29 March 2019 New York, the United States**

Dear Secretary-General, Your Excellencies, colleagues and fellow delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Yesterday it was exactly one year ago that the Secretary General launched his Action for Peacekeeping Initiative. He did this during the open debate on the modernisation of UN Peacekeeping in the Security Council under –at that time- the chairmanship of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Even though we are no longer a member of the Security Council, the Kingdom of the Netherlands remains committed to UN Peacekeeping and to improving the performance of Peacekeeping operations and missions.

Last January, the Netherlands organized a *preparatory conference*, together with our esteemed Rwandan colleagues. This conference focused on performance and protection of civilians. I was happy to present to USG Lacroix, the Buddy First Aid Course App: a smart phone application for our soldiers in the field. The Prepcon provided many insights: proper training and capacities and good use of intelligence are key ingredients for successful UN Peacekeeping.

But we still have a long way to go to improve performance. We need to continuously develop clear standards that fit the circumstances. And we should all participate in the *Action for Peacekeeping* initiative.

We should also improve by doing!

One thing is to get rid of bureaucracy and red tape. We've all seen how slow-moving logistics, for example, can frustrate our military operations... and they deserve better.

An example where we have made progress is intelligence.

The intelligence capability that Dutch units have built up in Mali could serve as an example for other existing and future UN missions. The right information can prevent a wrong decision. Therefore we intend to contribute financially in the near future to peacekeeping intelligence policy phase 3 and continue our training efforts in this matter.

I also want to mention that we need to prepare troops before they go on mission to be able to operate under difficult circumstances. This means: protect civilians when threatened. Better preparation leads to better operational readiness, it enhances the safety and security of our peacekeepers and directly impacts performance in the field.

Better preparation is also necessary in preventing and addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in peace operations. I believe we need to eliminate Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment by peacekeepers. For this we all need to promote transparency and accountability to ensure access to justice by survivors.

We welcome the establishment by DPO of the Light Coordination Mechanism on Training, to coordinate the supply and demand of training for all UN civilian and uniformed troops. We are supporting it with 400,000 US dollars.

Together with my Irish colleague I have been encouraging European countries to participate in UN peace operations by creating rotation schemes in which countries take turns. We hope that with this initiative European countries will be able to provide more critical enablers like helicopters, intelligence and medical capacities to UN peacekeeping operations. I believe a transparent marketplace can help us in connecting supply and demand on UN peacekeeping capacities in a more sustainable and predictable way.

And last but not least, we need more women in uniform! The Netherlands has been supporting the Canadian ELSIE initiative from the start. I've just announced at yesterday's ELSIE event that the Netherlands will contribute 3 million euros to the Trust Fund. This will help to make our peacekeeping operations more inclusive and more effective.

Thank you.