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Ministra da Defesa Nacional

**Intervenção da Ministra da Defesa Nacional, Helena Carreiras, por ocasião da Reunião Ministerial da ONU sobre manutenção da paz**

**Session 1: *Capabilities for Protection and Safety & Security***

(Painel moderado pelo USG Lacroix, com participação do Ministro da Defesa do Ruanda e do Vice-MNE da Indonésia)

Acra, Gana, 6 de dezembro de 2023

Dear Jean-Pierre, dear colleagues,

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Republic of Ghana for its success in hosting this Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting.

Performance is one of the most important aspects of peacekeeping. To ensure that our performance remains at the highest level, it is paramount that we also hold ourselves to the highest standards. This includes of course, keeping the focus on the importance of proper operational planning and adequate capabilities to match mandated goals. But it also involves supporting environmentally responsible solutions, as well as ensuring an inclusive and meaningful participation of women in all stages of the peace process.

As an active contributor to UN peacekeeping missions for nearly seven decades, Portugal acknowledges the importance of these key areas. As such, I hereby announce that Portugal pledges to **deploy a renewable energy capacity to our Quick Reaction Force in the United Nations Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).**

Moreover, Portugal pledges to continue to **promote the meaningful representation of women in Defence, including all efforts to achieve the targets established in the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy** and to maintain national **mentoring programmes with women previously deployed to UN Peacekeeping missions.**

In addition, our Ministry for Home Affairs pledges to provide, through our Public Security Police, **specialised training teams in public order management.**

With these three concrete commitments, we reaffirm our role in the future of peacekeeping, in whatever form it might take, yet continuingly dedicated to the prevention or resolution of conflicts worldwide.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are all aware of the international context surrounding this gathering as well as the structural challenges that our traditional understanding of peacekeeping faces.

In that sense, we must begin our reflections by first acknowledging that improving peacekeeping operations requires adopting more ambitious standards, while ensuring proper accountability. This means we should also aim for more targeted and realistic mandates, which can only result from more inclusive processes, with the involvement of all stakeholders, including women. This is key to establishing trust, especially between mission commanders and soldiers on one hand, and local authorities and populations on the other. And this legitimacy, recognition and trust are not granted just by a formal document at the political level: this is built through constant dialogue and direct contact with local populations, this is the only way to co-produce security.

In that regard, Portuguese military are known for their tremendous adaptability, and for their capacity to relate to and integrate with the armed forces of host countries as well as to

collaborate closely with the armed forces of partner countries on the ground and especially with local communities.

We also make sure that Portuguese soldiers receive the best available preparation as well as thoroughly comprehensive training, and we have results to show for it. For example, we have assumed the role of Deputy Force Commander of MINUSCA on a permanent basis since 2018 – a total of five times. And our Quick Reaction Forces deployed to MINUSCA have been publicly recognized several times by both the UN and by Central-African authorities and population for their exceptional performance. I was able to attest this in person when I visited the country in February this year.

In fact, the lessons of our QFR model have been taken into consideration by the European Union in its Training Mission in

Mozambique, in a testament to its high effectiveness. I take this opportunity to salute the Minister of Defence of Rwanda, whose Defence Force is working together with Portugal and other partners for the return of peace to the Cabo Delgado region.

However, we should not overemphasize these and other similar achievements and instead be willing to recognize that UN peacekeeping missions need to be planned and deployed as part of a broader multilateral cooperation effort that requires constant support and vigilance, particularly when considering growing threats to peacekeepers, such as disinformation campaigns, that also need to be properly addressed. We must take into consideration how to best ensure the multiplication of our efforts on the ground by working together with other complementary organisations and partners while bearing in mind the need to ensure respect for international law.

We owe it to ourselves, and especially to the people we serve through operations of this kind, to ensure that we do our best with what we have. And we must do all that we can in order to support our peacekeepers by improving their working conditions wherever possible.

I look forward to our discussions today.

Thank you very much.