

**Remarks of USG Lacroix in Session 4 on Protection of civilians and Safety & Security at
the 2021 Seoul UN Peacekeeping Ministerial
8 December 2021**

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you all, and particularly the Republic of Korea as host, and the Ministerial co-hosts for bringing us together today.

The participation of over 80 nations worldwide in this year's Peacekeeping Ministerial demonstrates the deep, clear and solid commitment to peacekeeping across the world.

Three years ago, as part of the Action for Peacekeeping agenda, 150 governments signed up to the Declaration of Shared Commitments, which outlines our collective responsibilities to strengthen peacekeeping.

Through our collective efforts, A4P has yielded many tangible improvements in the delivery of our mandates.

But many challenges persist. New threats confront us. And more needs to be done – by all of us.

To address these the Secretary-General introduced A4P+ earlier this year as the implementation strategy for A4P for 2021 to 2023.

It is designed first and foremost to further improve the effectiveness and the impact of our missions.

But the United Nations alone cannot address the priorities outlined in A4P+.

We need your continued and sustained commitment, both in the form of pledges, as many of you have made these past two days, as well as through your political support.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A key priority of A4P+ is ***accountability to peacekeepers***.

Over the past four years, we made notable progress in improving the safety and security of our personnel.

While this has resulted in an overall reduction of fatalities due to malicious acts from 58 in 2017 to 13 in 2020, we must remain vigilant.

We are confronting an increase in the frequency and complexity of violent acts against peacekeepers, particularly in our missions in the Central African Republic, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This has resulted in an increase in fatalities to 17 thus far this year.

This uptick is unacceptable, and we must work together to address it. We owe it to the men and women we send in harm's way in some of the world's most challenging places.

We are continually seeking to strengthen the security of our peacekeepers, not least through reinforcing camp and base defenses and improving crisis management capabilities.

Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel also requires the requisite capabilities and mindset, another key priority of A4P+.

Enhanced capabilities for situational awareness, such as Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and Armed Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) with stronger blast protection remain critical. I am thankful to those who are pledging such capabilities during this Peacekeeping Ministerial.

But even the very best capabilities, advanced technology and training are not enough. We must have the right mindset to be effective, including a full understanding by our leadership – both military and civilian – of our robust mandates.

In the context of increasing attacks against peacekeepers, we must also ensure that we have adequate medical care.

This is why we are investing in medical training and casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) stress testing exercises in the missions that face the highest threats.

There is no debate over the need to improve the safety and security of our peacekeepers. It is our common duty.

And it is critical to enabling them to better fulfill their mandates, including to protect civilians.

As a first course of action, the protection of civilians requires us to support host countries to fulfil their primary responsibility. But where necessary, we must independently act – proactively

and robustly –at risk of physical violence. Mobility assets, specialized skill sets, and technology are all key enablers.

We will soon hear from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) about the immense challenges we face there, and the Mission's efforts to protect civilians.

In carrying out our mandate to protect civilians it bears repeating that our peacekeepers must uphold the highest standards of conduct. We must collectively do more, in partnership with Member States, to end sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel.

In addition to being intolerable and their impact on communities, these acts by a very small minority of our peacekeepers tarnish the reputation and accomplishments of their colleagues who serve with dignity and honour.

We must all play our part, including through training, accountability and support to victims.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our pursuit of durable peace requires that we continue to place political solutions at the heart of our collective efforts. All of our peacekeeping missions exist to support political solutions, and elevated support for such political efforts is greatly needed from Member States as we have articulated in A4P+

For political solutions to be durable, we must do more to ensure that women can play an active and greater part. This is one of the many reasons why the Women, Peace, and Security agenda is mainstreamed throughout A4P+.

Equally, while we have increased the number of women in peacekeeping, we still have work to do.

With the support of troop- and police-contributing countries, we are making critical gains. We are on track to meet all of the 2021 Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy targets, except the target for military contingents.

But UN peacekeeping needs not only more women but also an environment where they can fully, equally and meaningfully participate so that we can be more effective, meet the highest standards of professionalism and better protect the populations we serve.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Ministerial process is critical to obtaining the pledges and cooperation necessary to take forward A4P+ and to strengthen UN peacekeeping. Due to recent force generation requirements in several of our missions, the number of available units from all levels of the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System have been depleted.

I urge your governments to register your pledges in the PCRS and continue working towards materializing them.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for the pledges that have been made so far and look forward to hearing more from you in today's sessions.