

**Remarks by USG Lacroix at the 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial**  
**Session I: Capabilities for mandate delivery and ensuring effective operations**  
6 December 2023

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and great pleasure for me to chair this session on capabilities for mandate delivery and ensuring effective operations, focusing specifically on safety and security, protection and technology.

At these events, we gather to show unified, high-level political support for UN Peacekeeping, and to generate capabilities to make our missions stronger and more effective. By that metric, the Ministerials have been very successful. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the challenges we face require renewed commitment from Member States, including to supply critical capabilities.

We are looking forward to the pledges many of you will make during the this and the other two sessions today.

**Protection**

First, let me speak to protection of civilians.

It is central to the mandates of our multidimensional peacekeeping missions, and it must be implemented through an integrated, comprehensive, whole-of-mission approach. This requires leveraging the full capabilities of missions, including the use of armed and unarmed approaches by civilians, police, and military components.

During the preparatory meeting in Kigali, Rwanda Member States discussed in detail what is most needed for more effective protection of civilians. We need to step up our efforts to enhance our situational awareness and early warning. This requires know-how and capabilities, including aviation, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities and increased mobility to quickly deploy to remote areas. Capabilities that support community engagement are equally crucial, including mixed engagement teams and an increased number of female peacekeepers, including in leadership and operational roles. We must also recognize the critical importance of ensuring all peacekeepers work in an environment that enables them to thrive, and that women are able to fulfill a range of roles and responsibilities, including at the highest level.

**Safety and Security**

Threats to security of peacekeepers are constantly evolving, and so are the capabilities needed to counter them. Bilateral and regional partnership can help to equip and train many T/PCCs that may need assistance to deploy modern capabilities.

The IED threat has been a major challenge for UN peacekeeping operations, as evidenced by the loss of five peacekeepers killed in MINUSMA this year alone out of a total of seven in all of our missions. This threat is increasing and evolving in MINUSCA and MONUSCO.

We must ensure that our uniformed units and personnel are properly trained and equipped to stay safe. This requires vehicles with improved blast protection, as well as electronic counter measures (jammers), and specialized tools and equipment such as advanced hand-held detectors for search and detect teams. These are necessary, but not sufficient given that the rapid evolution of this threat. For this reason, there must be an equal focus on the pre-deployment training of personnel to induct them in field proven operational protocols and disciplined procedures that minimize their exposure to danger and to endure they arrive ready for the challenge.

Furthermore, training must be at all levels, beyond the C-IED specialist units to the Convoy Commander who needs to be able to identify vulnerable points and to the soldier on a cordon who may be exposed to a secondary device. Additionally, we need units with specialized skills, including for example, forensics, serious and organized crime, or cyber security.

While we have come a long way in enhancing the safety and security of our staff, we have much more to do. Our efforts will have to evolve and adapt on the basis of the threats we face. I also want to underline that ensuring the safety and security of our personnel has been mandated to us by the Security Council in resolution 2518 (2020).

### **Technology**

We also need to leverage technology to enhance mandate implementation and the safety and security of our peacekeepers. As part of these overall efforts, we have been implementing the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping, with the support of Member States. This initiative is not only about incorporating new technologies; it encompasses a fundamental shift in our organizational culture towards greater collaboration, a data-centric approach, and fostering innovation. We aim to empower our peacekeepers with enhanced capabilities to analyze, plan, and adapt to evolving conflict landscapes, ensuring timely and effective responses to threats against civilians and our personnel, as well as overcoming challenges to mandate implementation.

I want to underline that for a digital transformation to take place, new technologies are one piece of the puzzle. We need to make sure that our uniformed and civilian personnel are sufficiently trained to use them. One of the biggest challenges we are facing is simply having enough positions focused on the management and utilization of data. Such responsibilities often fall on our staff, such as mission planners, that may not have the data literacy needed to engage in quantitative analysis. In the near-term we hope to establish more posts for this, but in the meantime are requesting staff officers, JPOs, UNVs and XB funding that can enable us to have such personnel.

### **Conclusion**

The challenges before us are great, and peacekeeping must evolve to meet them. We will require strong commitment from all of you to generate and sustain the capabilities that will help us deliver on our ambitious mandates.

And we need your ideas on how we can best address the challenges we are facing in these three areas.

With that said, I would like to invite our panelists to offer their perspective. Let me briefly introduce them.