

Remarks by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield at the 2021 Seoul UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Announcing the United States' Pledges

Thank you, Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong and National Security Advisor Suh Hoon, for hosting the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial and for your leadership on the Seoul Initiative. Thank you also, Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, for chairing this session.

The United States is a steadfast supporter of UN Peacekeeping. The work of UN peacekeepers is critical to maintaining international peace and security. And we are thankful to troop- and police-contributing countries for everything they do. All of us at this Ministerial have a solemn responsibility to ensure the safety of both civilians and peacekeepers. That is our charge.

To that end, this year, the United States has made a serious and sizable investment in peacekeeping through our two primary capacity-building programs: the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative and the International Police Peacekeeping Operations Support Program. Peacekeepers are capable of doing more to serve local communities – especially when we empower them – which is why the United States is focused on addressing persistent capability gaps, including gaps in aviation, peacekeeping intelligence, and medical units.

The United States has invested heavily in long-term capacity-building partnerships because better trained, better equipped, and more capable troops and police are better at protecting themselves and the people and the populations they serve. We are the largest financial contributor to UN peace operations and the largest provider of peacekeeping capacity-building support. And the United States is proud to continue taking concrete actions to ensure peacekeepers are safe and better able to protect the vulnerable populations they serve.

During my travels, I have been able to see firsthand the important work of UN peacekeeping operations and the obstacles they face in carrying out their missions, most recently when I traveled to Israel and met with UNIFIL leadership.

Today, I have the great honor of announcing the following twelve pledges on behalf of the United States:

One: We are supporting efforts to fill persistent gaps in airlift capacity. Increased airlift capacity empowers peacekeeping missions to respond rapidly to threats against civilians, move freely to monitor and report on human rights abuses, and support medical and casualty evacuations for peacekeepers. Our pledge includes specific investments in airlift capacity for El Salvador, Uruguay, and Rwanda. We will also explore opportunities to support other troop-contributing countries interested in contributing aviation units to UN peacekeeping operations. This includes possible funding for a joint pledge between the Republic of Korea and Kenya to build a new helicopter unit.

Two: To help peacekeepers operate safely in higher-risk environments, we will continue to invest in armored personnel carriers. We are procuring approximately 35 armored personnel carriers to support Uruguay, Burkina Faso, and Niger in their capacities to train on, deploy, and operate these vehicles. We are also expanding the provision of counter-improvised explosive device training for select troop-contributing countries, including through a UK-Ghana-U.S. partnership.

Three: We will invest in building the medical capabilities of partner nations. That includes two Level II hospitals to support Tunisia's pledge, as well as thousands of buddy first-aid kits for Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger – all of which serve in MINUSMA, the most high-risk mission for peacekeepers.

Four: We will provide training, equipment, and subject matter expertise to enhance the peacekeeping intelligence capabilities of UN missions. That includes a pledge to more than double U.S. funding support, to approximately \$30 million, for Bangladesh's pledge to build a new, deployable unmanned aerial system capability for UN operations. We will also provide a long-term advisor to help sustain this system.

Five: The United States will ensure peacekeepers have the training facilities that they need to more sustainably and effectively prepare for mission deployments. In fiscal year 2021, we

invested more than \$15 million in the development of partner troop-contributing country facilities, and we intend to sustain those investments. That includes constructing peacekeeping training sites and classrooms in Burkina Faso – also in Niger – in partnership with The Netherlands. We are also expanding peacekeeping training centers in Rwanda, Kazakhstan, and Morocco. Many of our investments facilitate increased training and deployment of women peacekeepers through gender-specific facility projects.

Six: We are investing in police peacekeeping capabilities. Specifically, we will continue to support the UN's efforts to create and disseminate updated training materials for UN police, including through a workshop and a train-the-trainer course.

Seven: We are advancing efforts to increase the number of women leaders in UN peacekeeping operations. This is a need that we have heard over and over. We will explore opportunities to provide funding to the UN Senior Women Talent Pipeline, which focuses on recruitment, retention, and mentoring of women candidates for senior-level civilian posts in UN peacekeeping operations, and we hope these women will be selected for posts in the future.

Eight: We are encouraging peacekeeping missions to consistently incorporate the effects of climate change into their planning and implementation. That specifically means promoting energy efficiency and reducing the climate footprint of peacekeeping missions. For example, energy inefficient generators contribute to long-term environmental damage. This is why the United States will work with the UN and Nepal to explore opportunities to pilot the deployment of more energy-efficient hybrid generators. This will also improve the UN's data on fuel usage and cost impacts.

Nine: We are engaging with UN leadership and missions to address the needs of survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse. Sexual exploitation and abuse have no place in peacekeeping. We must root it out completely. To that end, we are expanding existing SEA-prevention training in U.S. capacity-building assistance. We also serve as the primary partner with the UN on coordination and delivery of training courses which seek to improve accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse. And we recently provided funding to the UN Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. We encourage all Member States to support the Trust Fund and to promote a survivor-centered response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Ten: We are focused on helping missions maximize impact to protect civilians from violence. To do that, the U.S. government will seek opportunities to fund monitoring and evaluation specialists in a UN peacekeeping mission. These specialists would help the mission assess its civilian protection activities so that it can strengthen its impact.

Eleven: The United States is also focused on countering the misinformation and the disinformation that threatens UN peacekeepers and has led to direct attacks against peacekeepers. This is unacceptable. The U.S. government will explore funding for a specialist in a UN peacekeeping mission to counter misinformation and disinformation, enabling the UN to manage this serious, emerging threat. This would also help strengthen the strategic communications capacities of peacekeeping missions by allowing them to better engage and build trust with the populations they serve.

And finally, twelve: The United States will help develop innovative and practical approaches to improve peacekeeper performance. We will consider embedding U.S. military advisors with interested partner troop-contributing countries in a peacekeeping mission, at their request and for short durations. These embedded advisors would reinforce tactics, techniques, and procedures to help meet the challenges faced in today's peacekeeping environments. These in-mission partnerships would pilot a practical, field-focused partnership model which can strengthen and build on more conventional pre-deployment training.

Ladies and gentlemen, these twelve pledges address a wide variety of needs in UN peacekeeping. Yet they all serve a singular purpose: safety – the safety of our peacekeepers and the safety of the communities they serve. We must not lose sight of the purpose of peacekeeping missions. Ultimately, they are responsible to the communities they operate in. Our peacekeeping efforts should always make people the priority. This is our overarching pledge this Ministerial. I hope other Member States will join us in this commitment: to focus on what really matters in UN peacekeeping – the people these missions serve.

Thank you, Under-Secretary-General Lacroix.