



International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations

Scope and Challenges of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

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Please let me begin - on behalf of Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping - by passing on his best wishes for a very productive few days here in Queanbeyan, Australia. He sends his regrets that he is unable to be here owing to pressing demands in several of our Missions at this time. The protection of civilians is an issue that Mr. Le Roy has been very eager to promote, including through DPKO's New Horizon effort. Together with the whole Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Le Roy is committed to moving forward on this issue in the context of United Nations Operations and is very much looking forward to hearing of the progress we make here in Australia.

The ANZAC day, which we commemorated on 25 April together with our hosts, is a reminder of the world's demands and dangers. I would like to thank the Government and the people of Australia for your major contribution to United Nations Peace Operations.

I have been asked to open this first panel by setting the scene on the scope and the challenges of UN peacekeeping operations and through that brief *tour d'horizon* identify some of the linkages with the wider DPKO policy agenda and, in particular, the protection of civilians.

Current operations and protection challenges

Today, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support are managing 16 field Peace Operations (15 peacekeeping operations and one special political mission). Recently, we surpassed the 100,000 mark of uniformed military and police personnel deployed in DPKO-led operations. The United Nations now have a total peacekeeping strength of 124,000, comprising nearly 88,000 military, 13,000 police and some 20,000 civilian personnel deployed in the field as of April 2010. 115 countries contribute personnel to this vast global partnership. The DPKO/DFS manage over 270 aircrafts, almost twenty thousands vehicles, and moves around one million passengers each year. By any measure, this is a complex and multidimensional undertaking on a grand scale. Only one country has a comparable operational platform.

And yet, with the prospect of missions downsizing or even closing in the near future, both the peacekeeping budget and the number of personnel in the field may have peaked. In Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the pressure is on - to start drawing down operations. We have handed over the United Nations Mission in Burundi to peacebuilding partners. In Timor-Leste, the United Nations will proceed with a careful drawdown schedule as police functions are handed over to the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL), and the UN has already handed over most of its operational functions in Kosovo to the European Union.

Despite this new trend towards transition and consolidation, UN peacekeeping is far from slowing down or diminishing in its significance. In fact, our operational tempo in 2010 is likely to remain very high, while important adjustments are made to the focus and composition of several major missions. For example, greater focus will be given to better implement mandates and plan effective transitions to self-sustaining peace. In this broader context, in my own area of responsibility – rule of law and security institutions – our emphasis is on a more effective entry, reliable implementation and earlier exits as well as smarter bridging peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. As the United Nations Secretary-General stated in the Security Council on 16 April: “Peacekeepers themselves are, in an important sense, early peacebuilders”.

However, the nature of our business is more operational than we would want it to be, and the complexity of running 16 major operations in high risk environments will always dictate the pace for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support.

The international community has learned time and again that in volatile settings - in a matter of days, if not hours - an operational landscape can be transformed. The horrific earthquake in Haiti on 12 January was a shock for all, and placed unprecedented stress on the whole UN structure and system. It was a disaster that, along with more than 200,000 Haitians who perished, took 101 UN staff members from us. Among them were several dear friends and colleagues, including the Head of MINUTAH Hedi Annabi and Luis Carlos Da Costa, his Principal Deputy.

Much of the Department’s energy in the past months has been focused on support to the Haitian people and in bringing MINUSTAH - our Mission in Haiti - back up to its full capacity. MINUSTAH is deeply involved in designing a strategy to address the new vulnerabilities and protection challenges facing the Haitian people. The last report of the Secretary-General clearly indicated the long-term commitment of the United Nations to play a considerably enhanced role.

Allow me to touch briefly on the other current and upcoming challenges facing other UN Missions today. Each of these operations is confronting a wide range of daunting mandated tasks, including important but quite different protection of civilians issues, which is a difficult balance to strike.

In Afghanistan, the security situation remains the top priority, while a busy electoral calendar lies ahead. The Mission's new leadership is working closely with the Government and international partners to chart a way forward as well as to prepare for a major re-alignments in 2011. UNAMA's protection mandate relates only to monitoring and reporting. But even this has proven a delicate and demanding assignment. The targeting of civilians by anti-Government elements has continued, and the intensity of the conflict has resulted in significant loss of life among civilians. At the same time, good governance, accountability, and the fight against corruption will remain key elements of international and national efforts.

In the Sudan, the first electoral process has just been completed, but not without political and technical complications. The timelines for preparing that country's referenda in 2011, including on the status of south Sudan, are diminishing rapidly. The United Nations Mission in Sudan is revisiting its strategies for supporting the country's electoral calendar while at the same time planning for contingencies, including possible upsurge in violence against the civilian population. An enhanced pre-and post-referendum strategy is therefore in order. In south Sudan, it will be critical to build the local capacity to take on this important protection responsibility and lay down the sustainable foundations for good governance and the rule of law.

In Darfur, there have been some advances in the political process, but political commitments must be backed up by real agreements and action in the field. In support of the immense camps that have been established in Darfur and across the border in Chad, the United Nations Missions on both sides of the border are working closely with humanitarian colleagues. But our space is already diminishing in the case of Chad.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUC has made progress in helping to stabilize large parts of this country of 65 million people who live in a densely forested area approximately the size of Western Europe, but without any road linking West with East or South with North. Discussions – at times tense – have been underway with the Government about the future of MONUC. We in the Secretariat, remain concerned that any drawdown of MONUC may undermine the security and should be conducted against critical, realistic benchmarks. With the remnants of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and other rogue factions as well as the absence of a viable security and rule of law sector in the difficult terrain of eastern DRC, MONUC remains committed to its protection objective, and is ready to strengthen its training of the national police, support to the justice sector and other indispensable elements of a reliable security system.

Elsewhere, we are seeing important transitions from UN Missions or peacekeeping-led interventions to operations that have their centre of gravity in peacebuilding activity, good governance, respect for human rights and institution building. Through its activities in the areas of police, justice, corrections, mine action, DDR and SSR, DPKO is actively contributing to this effort.

For example, in Liberia, progress has been achieved in advancing the reform of the security sector and the creation of economic opportunities. In Timor-Leste, which I just visited, UNMIT has started handing over primary policing responsibility to the national police. However, this is a delicate process, which should enhance - and not diminish - security and protection. In each of these settings, the task of protecting of civilians has evolved: from one of providing area protection and deterring armed groups, to that of fostering both the capacity and the sense of responsibility within State institutions, promoting good governance and rule of law. This is a long term and resource intensive activity requiring commitment of all involved.

To sum it up, whether in the deserts of Chad or Darfur, or the transitional settings of Liberia or Timor-Leste, the jungles of the DRC and Southern Sudan, UN peacekeeping operations will continue to face complex and growing protection challenges.

New Horizon policy agenda and protection of civilians

Confronted with the operational demands described above, accompanied by often unrealistic expectations and pressures from the Security Council and host governments, DPKO and DFS decided to make the protection of civilians one of the key features of our “New Horizon” agenda. This agenda also focuses on building dialogue among the UN partners on one of the most formidable issues ever facing peacekeeping. The results of this dialogue will have a major impact, well beyond peacekeeping – in the humanitarian community, national armies, non-UN operations and also in international law.

The New Horizon agenda promotes several simple, yet, important messages most of which are relevant to the protection of civilians:

First, deploying UN uniformed personnel is often a vital but not a sufficient response. Peacekeeping can only succeed in a lasting manner if it is part of a wider political strategy to end a conflict and with the will of the parties. The international community needs also to find better ways to encourage donor countries, regional arrangements, or troop/police contributors – to invest in the overall delivery of mandates – including through the deployment of adequate, prepared, equipped and fully integrated civilian staff.

Second, we need greater clarity on the critical roles and expectations of modern-day peacekeepers, amidst the growing complexity of our mandates. Critical to this effort is achieving greater clarity on the protection of civilians mandate. But there are also important issues – such as clarity of the peacebuilding tasks entrusted to peacekeeping missions. Also, the limits of peacekeeping, and of the use of force, are part of the equation. Here again, it is vital to have adequate and timely resources for early peacebuilding tasks, including if necessary, the rapid deployment of police, justice, corrections and other civilians capacities.

Third, we must ensure that the necessary capabilities are actually in place to implement any clearly stated tasks, together with performance frameworks, and that all international partners are rallied around the peace processes delivery. Delivery as one for the whole UN system and beyond should be translated into operational reality.

Fourth, DPKO and DFS must have comprehensive, adaptable support systems to enable effective performance in the field.

Fifth, peacekeeping must be served by effective integrated planning, management and oversight mechanisms and command and control arrangements that give confidence and provide a framework for today's higher tempo of operations.

And sixth – we should have contributions from the capable and experienced nations. In addition, it is becoming more and more difficult to obtain for peacekeeping – critical capabilities – from helicopters to hospitals and specialists in the areas of police, justice, corrections and institution-building.

Turning to the protection of civilians, it has long been recognized that UN peacekeeping missions play a major role in the protection of populations. Over the years, we have also seen that attacks against civilians are not incidental. Regrettably, they have become very much a part of modern conflict and are used tactically - and even strategically - to destabilize a peace process, undermine the legitimacy or credibility of a new Government or a UN Mission.

The international community has also learned the challenges and pitfalls of getting things wrong in this crucial area from the tragic experiences of the mid-1990s, including Srebrenica and Rwanda.

Despite all this in 1999, the first specific protection mandate was given to a UN peacekeeping operation, following horrific crimes committed during the civil conflict in Sierra Leone. Since that time, we have witnessed a decade with ever growing the protection mandates. Today, at least eight Missions have such explicit mandates - in Sudan, Darfur, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and Chad. And in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Security Council unequivocally prioritized protection as the Mission's core business.

In parallel to these mandates, the Security Council has built a strong thematic policy framework around the issue of protection of civilians in armed conflict through a series of resolutions, including the humanitarian and human rights law: This contributed to the existing normative framework within the UN, and has been providing guidance to UN peacekeeping on the task.

10 years ago, the Brahimi Report emphatically restated the basic rationale for peacekeepers playing a protective role. It stated that: *“Peacekeepers – troops or police – who witness violence against civilians should be presumed to be authorized to stop it, within their means, in support of basic UN principles and ... consistent with the perception and expectation of protection created by its very presence.”*

However, the panel also went on to express its concern *“about the credibility and achievability of a blanket mandate in this area [...] and the potentially large mismatch between desired objective and resources available”*.

These words from the landmark report remain fully relevant for us today. In the coming days, I hope this challenges meeting will explore the key elements of our protection dilemma.

In our view, there are several important issues identified by Lakhdar Brahimi 10 years ago:

First, peacekeepers must do what they can to protect civilian populations, and yet, we cannot protect everyone and be everywhere. How can we achieve greater clarity on the responsibility by host Governments, local authorities, regional organizations and the UN - and what they can reasonably deliver? How can we best elaborate a protection doctrine and protection capacity-building that is realistic for UN peacekeeping and that is really proactive?

Second, the challenge of expectation management is real and the public’s judgments of presumed of real “peacekeeping failures” are often swift and harsh. We must ensure that the peacekeeping mandates do not continue to set UN peacekeeping to fail.

Third, the dangers of mandating protection mandates without adequate human, material, and over-the-horizon resources have often been recited. But are we faring much better today than in 1999? Also, what sorts of new techniques, strategies and comprehensive resources could be pursued?

And above all, efforts to protect civilians must contribute to the strengthening of the world peace and security architecture. Do not forget – this architecture is under severe pressure. Visionary leadership is required to strengthen it. In addition, there are new and ever growing threats to address. The United Nations is not keeping pace with their asymmetrical and highly technological and profound nature. Therefore, while exploring the New Horizons, we should anticipate new challenges that may require new studies and strategic recommendations, including from the Challenges Forum.

In conclusion, let me once again say that DPKO very much welcomes the opportunity to meet with our friends and colleagues in the Challenges Forum, in order to study the pressing issues that go to the heart of our institutional credibility. Let me also thank all our partners in the Challenges Forum and the Folke Bernadotte Academy for the continued and precious support to my own Office, the Office of Rule of Law and Security

Institutions. Also, I have to mention that Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, DPKO's Policy Evaluation and Training Director, will share more details on our way forward. And let me stress that DPKO looks forward to your inputs in the coming days, in addition to the excellent background paper on "Challenges of strengthening the Protection of Civilians in Multidimensional Peace Operations" prepared by the Henry L. Stimson Center and the Challenges Partners Study on "Considerations for Mission Leadership in UN Peacekeeping Operations".

Thank you.