



International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations

Welcome and Opening Address

The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support

Acknowledgements

- Challenges Forum Patron and former Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations, Mr Jean-Marie Guehenno
- Challenges Partners (all 17 countries), the Challenges Secretariat, and all Forum speakers, chairs and panellists
- Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors, military and police officers
- Queanbeyan City Councillors (who have provided these excellent facilities)
- United Nations officials
- United Nations Association of Australia (led by the President, Robert Hill, our former Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York and Minister for Defence)
- Regional and national representatives
- International Committee of the Red Cross, and representatives of international and non-government organisations
- Australian Government representatives
- Forum Chairs, Speakers and Panellists
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour this morning to welcome you on behalf of the Australian Government to the *3rd International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations*.

I am particularly pleased to have been asked to open this Challenges Forum, having attended the 1st Forum in Paris in 2008, and because of my long association with the *Challenges* process since soon after it started in 1996.

Australia attaches high value to being a Challenges Partner because, like many of our fellow Challenges Partner countries, we have a proud history of supporting peacekeeping operations.

Indeed, since 1948, more than 90,000 Australians have served in more than fifty United Nations and multilateral peacekeeping missions.

The Challenges Partnership and the Theme of this Forum

The Challenges Partnership has a history of sustained engagement with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). In 2006 and 2007, the Partners were actively involved in organising and facilitating a series of workshops to

help develop the “Principles and Guidelines for UN Peacekeeping Operations,” commonly known as the Capstone Doctrine.

Since 2008, the Challenges Partners have sought to understand the scope, nature and challenges for contemporary peace operations, and in particular, their impact on the protection of civilians.

I am particularly pleased that through this Forum not only are the Challenges Partners continuing their close association with DPKO, but also extending the Partner’s engagement with other critical departments of the UN Secretariat and UN agencies. This reflects the multidimensional nature of peace operations and the critical linkage between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

This linkage is particularly evident in the theme of this Forum – *The Challenges of Protecting Civilians in Multidimensional Peace Operations*. The tragic reality is that civilians - innocent men, women and children - are the vast majority of casualties in conflict zones. Moreover, if the past decade is an indicative assessment of future conflict trends, then we are likely to see an increasing requirement for the United Nations to undertake protection tasks as part of peacekeeping mandates.

Participants and Purpose

As Challenges Partners and observers, we are here this week to pursue a common purpose of fleshing out the issues that may assist the United Nations in addressing the challenges to better protect civilians under threat. Not only is it important for UN missions to try and prevent such threats occurring, but also to respond appropriately when they do, and to work with the affected host government and other actors to help lay the foundations for sustainable protection measures after the mission departs.

This Forum has brought together some of the world’s most experienced “protection” experts - practitioners, policy makers and scholars. Many of you have travelled across the world to be with us in Australia, despite the uncertainty for many of you in getting here because of the Iceland volcano crisis that has disrupted international air services. There are some legendary travel tales for some of you to tell in making it to Queanbeyan, which demonstrates your commitment to addressing this critical issue of protection of civilians. I hope that our weather and hospitality, in addition to your deliberations, will have made your journeys all the more memorable and worthwhile.

Global State of Peace Operations

For this Forum we have all received an excellent and comprehensive background paper, prepared by the Stimson Center, on the challenges of strengthening the protection of civilians. Early in this Forum we will also receive an update on the global state of peace operations. Both of these assist our understanding of how far the United Nations has progressed in peace operations, and how much more the Member States still have to do to assist the United Nations in its ambitious reform program.

There is a growing body of literature on peace operations, analysing the broad spectrum from peacemaking to peacekeeping to peacebuilding. It is clear that traditional peacekeeping, while still relevant, has transformed to tackle the challenging demands of international security – including intra-state conflict and international terrorism. These developments could not have been perceived by the

founding fathers of the United Nations after World War 2, but the United Nations is being asked to deal with many of these problems. When I was in Somalia in 1993, issues such as the rule of law, policing, security system reform, protection of civilians, and peacebuilding were not prominent on the UN's agenda. Much has changed, particularly since the Brahimi Report on Peace Operations in 2000. But as we all know, much more lies ahead and, sadly, demand is likely to continue to outstrip supply.

As we all know, the challenges of maintaining peace and security are enormous and daunting, and while there have been demonstrably successful UN missions, others have been less effective. One important aspect that UN missions are being mandated to address is the protection of civilians, but the UN and its member states are only at the early stages of addressing this critical issue systematically, despite protection having been included in mission mandates for more than 10 years now.

Since the 1999 mission in Sierra Leone there have been 10 UN missions with a mandate to protect civilians. Over 50 percent of UN Security Council statements and resolutions in 2008 contained reference to protection. As well, there have been numerous reports calling for more action on protection, both within the United Nations and from outside. Despite all these calls, it remains true that no UN mission to date has had a clear operational definition of the 'protection of civilians'.

There are, however, encouraging signs of activity. In July 2009, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Services issued a Non Paper on "*Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping*" which identified protection as one of three main cross cutting challenges of UN peacekeeping operations. And in November 2009 the UN commissioned independent study, *Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges*, was released. The UN is building on these initiatives, and this Forum will also contribute to international efforts to enhance the protection of civilians in conflict zones.

The Program

The Program for this Challenges Forum concentrates on the protection of civilians but also includes a range of perspectives on peace operations that will undoubtedly generate stimulating debate.

I do not want to single out specific sessions, they are all important, but I will be particularly interested to learn the outcomes from the important session tomorrow morning on *Considerations for Senior Leadership in UN Peacekeeping Missions*, which some of the Challenges Partners have been working on over the past year. Australia is committed to assisting the United Nations to enhance mission effectiveness through continuous improvement in mission leadership.

I also think that your six parallel Working Groups on Thursday morning, which focus on specific protection issues, and your reports back to plenary, will be important for future developments in the protection space. Given my own experience in field protection matters in a number of missions I particularly look forward to learning the outcomes of this session.

Overall, the Forum has a particularly rich program of discussion and activity. I am sure that everyone here will leave with an enhanced understanding of the issues surrounding protection of civilians.

The strength of Challenges rests on the willingness of its Partners to robustly discuss and debate issues to improve our collective understanding. The fact that Challenges has no executive authority or policy mandate adds to the integrity and usefulness of its deliberations. I am sure that the panel chairs will do all they can this week to encourage and stimulate the airing of different views.

Protection and the Need for Partnerships

As most of you will know, the Australian Government has contributed to enhancing the protection of civilians in conflict zones. With Uruguay we have co-convened two seminars in New York, and more recently we have assisted the African Union develop draft guidelines for protection. We are conscious of the sensitivities of member states and the valid concerns of some countries about sovereignty issues, as well as the demands that protection places on troop and police contributing countries. Accordingly, we think it essential that effective protection mechanisms will only be realised through collaborative partnerships. The Challenges Forum provides another form of partnership.

Partnership is about dialogue and it is about action. This Forum is a practical example of partnering dialogue. Through your discussions this week, a greater shared understanding of the protection dilemmas will hopefully emerge. Shared understandings are the basis of any partnership, and it is no less so in the United Nations. Shared understanding helps inform policy.

The strength of Challenges has been reinforced by continual interaction between Partners' Forums, linking international agencies, government departments and research centres. These interactions reinforce the partnership relationships and ultimately help enhance the conduct of peace operations.

The Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence, the hosts of this Forum and for which I have portfolio responsibility, has as its mission *to support the development of Australia's civil-military capability to prevent, prepare for, and respond more effectively to conflicts and disasters overseas*. The Centre can only achieve this through developing active international partnerships. Consequently, the Centre is developing an impressive program of partnership development to ensure that Australia can both learn from, and contribute to, international efforts to make the protection of civilians more effective. This effort, of course, is within a range of wider activities designed to ensure that international partnerships are effective across the whole spectrum of conflict and disaster response.

Close

On behalf of the Australian Government, I wish to acknowledge the Challenges Partnership for their commitment to regional and global peace and security, and thank the Challenges Secretariat for their hard work. I wish to acknowledge the dedication of Mike Smith, the Executive Director of the Centre, and his hard-working team, for their commitment in supporting the development of Australia's civil-military capabilities.

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I commend the efforts that have gone in to developing the program for this Forum, and the impressive cast that has been assembled. I hope that the photo that will shortly be taken will stand as a reminder to a purposeful week of deliberations, and a strengthening of the Challenges partnership.

My thanks also to the Council and people of Queanbeyan who are very happy to be playing a small but not insignificant part in hosting the Forum in this excellent facility. I am sure they are delighted to be having so many distinguished guests in their town this week.

To you, our participants and guests from overseas, please make the most of your visit to Australia. I hope that you will leave Australia having enriched your knowledge of the challenges of peace operations and with fond memories of the land Down Under.

I look forward to attending the Forum dinners and continuing the discussion of these important issues more informally, and to returning to this meeting on Thursday for the concluding session.

Thank you.