



Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix

Chiefs of Defence Conference: Chair's Note

UNHQ Conference Room 2

7 July 2017

1. The Chiefs of Defence and senior military officials from over 100 Members States, the Chair of the European Union Military Committee, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, four current UN Force Commanders and other senior UN officials met in New-York on the 7th of July 2017 for the second-ever Chiefs of Defence Conference. As the political and financial context around UN peacekeeping operations continues to evolve, it was an important opportunity for top military leaders to better understand the operational and strategic challenges facing peacekeeping, as well as to weigh in on the course moving forward.
2. In video-recorded remarks, the **Secretary-General** welcomed the participants to New York and stressed that the peacekeeping partnership had never been more pressing and relevant than today. He explained that listening and integrating the voices of women in our work increases the chances of sustaining peace and reduces the chances of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). He urged Member States to contribute to the UN's objective of increasing female participation in its operations, and to integrate a gender-sensitive perspective in all their efforts.
3. The **Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations** paid tribute to and requested a minute of silence for those peacekeepers that have lost their lives in the service of the United Nations. Touching on the challenges presented by the changing nature of conflict, as well as the recent peacekeeping budget cuts, Mr. Lacroix highlighted three priorities: strengthening the planning and management of peacekeeping operations; continuing to improve on the delivery of protection of civilian mandates; and pursuing partnerships with regional and other counterparts. He thanked Member States for their pledges to the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS) and emphasized that the goals of the strategic approach to force generation kick-started by the Leaders' Summit are to improve quality and performance, not necessarily quantity. He also highlighted the utmost importance of enhancing the contribution of women to peacekeeping and preventing SEA. Mr. Lacroix also briefed on the reform process, underlining two key components in particular: the reform of the management of UN departments and the reform of the UN's development pillar. He noted that both will have an impact on peacekeeping, as the efforts to enhance the overall effectiveness of our operations continue.

4. Emphasising that it was incumbent upon the Secretariat to improve service delivery, produce better value for money and achieve more effective mandate implementation, the **Under Secretary-General for Field Support** highlighted a number of initiatives aimed at supporting peace operations more effectively and efficiently. He urged that gaps in critical enabling capabilities, as well as in the equipment of units deployed, be bridged. He suggested increased and sustained investment by Member States in training and capacity-building through partnerships and encouraged participants to use the Conference to explore new partnerships. He also called on Member State support for the implementation of the United Nations policy of zero tolerance for SEA, and recalled the Secretary-General's comprehensive approach to addressing SEA. Finally, he informed participants that the recommendations of the Contingent Owned Equipment Working Group on measures to make field support more effective had been approved by the General Assembly.
5. The **Military Adviser** addressed a number of key challenges facing the military components, including the significant financial pressure that will impact on the overall size of forces deployed. Operationally, he noted the tendency of some contingents to remain fixed to static bases, as well as some that are unable or unwilling to act quickly and robustly when required. In dangerous security environments and with limited resources, the UN will only have room for units that act positively, robustly and with determination. He also appealed to the Chiefs of Defence to help repair the damage that has been caused by SEA through better communication on follow-up to allegations and all efforts to prevent future cases. When a TCC fails to take appropriate action, the recommendation will be to repatriate the entire unit. An Aide Memoire has been developed by OMA detailing the expectations of military commanders with regard to SEA. Finally, the Military Adviser touched on the critical need for more women peacekeepers and for enhanced intelligence, requesting the Chiefs to bring these messages back to capitals. The **Deputy Military Adviser** followed with an update on efforts to measure and improve the performance of deployed units, highlighting the Operational Readiness Assurance and Performance Improvement Framework, including the regular use of performance evaluations of subordinate units by Force Commanders.
6. The panel discussion on Women Peacekeepers and Operational Effectiveness began with remarks from the **DPKO/DFS Chief of Staff** who emphasised that military commanders require the best possible situational awareness and a 97% male military component is ill-suited to a peacekeeping environment in which women and children are disproportionately affected by conflict. She cited as ground-breaking the experiences of Zambia and Kenya, who both deployed women to create mixed patrols and employed the women peacekeepers to conduct women-only dialogue. The **DPKO Military Gender Officer** highlighted her own experience deployed to MONUSCO when a detachment of female troops from Tanzania engaged a specific community to enhance the force's situational awareness and ultimately improve the Protection of Civilians strategy in that area. To help achieve the UN's goal of 15 per cent women staff officers and military observers, the Office of Military Affairs will now accept women Warrant Officers and Lieutenants with five years' experience in the role of Military Observers. It is also looking at offering six month tours to mothers of young children and is working with peacekeeping training centers to provide Military Observer training for women officers from the medical, human resources and other non-combat branches. Finally, as a last resort, the Office of Military Affairs is willing to reassign posts from Member States who, for whatever reason, are unable to deploy

women officers.

7. A panel discussion on challenges from the “provider’s perspective” followed, informed by the experiences of a Chief of Defence, an SRSG, a Force Commander and an Assistant Secretary-General representing the Secretary-General’s Office. The panel discussed the changing nature of threats facing peacekeeping operations (transnational and asymmetric). They emphasised that peacekeepers have to be prepared to deal with these sophisticated and emerging threats and this includes accepting a higher level of risk and an expectation that peacekeepers will be lost. They noted that there is a need for clear and credible mandates and Rules of Engagement and increased use of new technology (e.g. drones). The **MINUSCA Force Commander** also stressed that micromanagement of peacekeeping missions should be minimised to increase flexibility and responsiveness on the ground. All speakers stressed the need for an increase in women deployed to peacekeeping operations in various military capacities.
8. The Secretary-General’s **Special Coordinator on Improving United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** reminded Chiefs that SEA is not just a military problem, but exists across the UN system. She outlined four areas of focus of the Secretary-General’s recent report: 1) putting the needs of the victims first, 2) working with Member States to end impunity, 3) engaging civil society, and 4) strengthening strategic communication. She called on Chiefs to set an example themselves, to hold personnel to account, and to employ a variety of tools at once to prevent these crimes.
9. A final panel focused on peacekeeping challenges from the “recipients’ perspective” and highlighted some of the important linkages to the work that humanitarian and development actors undertake in the same space. The panel discussed their experiences working with TCCs, noting that peacekeeping operates in environments with a variety of actors and there is a need to work better together. A common understanding must be forged of the political, security and military contexts, as well as of the expectations and the needs of the population. Chiefs were reminded that humanitarian workers need to operate under principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity, and when these are compromised, it can shut off access to communities, and affect staff safety and reputation. It was highlighted that there is no real contradiction between the peace and security agenda and the humanitarian and development agenda, but there is a need for a deeper understanding of each other’s mandates and closer communication.
10. The **Chiefs of Defence** exchanged their analysis regarding the evolution of the operational and tactical context of current peacekeeping operations. They expressed their determination to ensure their peacekeepers have the capability to meet the challenges and acknowledged the need to better address asymmetric threats. They expressed the requirement for the appropriate training and equipment, as well as intelligence capabilities and proper language capacity. It was reinforced on several occasions that national caveats with regard to the use of military capabilities have a detrimental effect on operations. They also stressed the importance of gaining and maintaining the support of Host States, without which peacekeeping operations are considerably constrained.
11. The **Chiefs of Defence** expressed the need to recognise the potential problem of SEA in all militaries and not settle into a state of denial. They argued that commanders should be held to account, not just the troops. They emphasised the need to learn lessons from past experience

and some recommended incorporating psychological, not just medical tests, before deployment. One TCC suggested employing the tool of telling the stories of the victims to troops, which would be one powerful way to make the issue felt on a personal level by all troops and officers.

12. The **Chiefs of Defence** agreed that greater visibility and mobility of peacekeepers improves implementation of the mandate, especially protection of civilians. It was reiterated strongly that women likewise increase the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping. Some argued that the key issue for greater engagement and deployment of women is a question of leadership. Barriers to women joining the military must be studied and women should be involved in the development of the solution. Additionally, numbers are only part of the problem; there needs to be greater institutionalization of a gender perspective in all militaries and all peacekeeping missions.
13. The **UN Deputy-Secretary General** closed the conference by thanking the Chiefs of Defence for their participation and commitment to the UN. She highlighted the need for integrated approaches to face contemporary crises, explaining that unifying the work of the UN's pillars will be a key feature of the Secretary-General's reform efforts. The need to continue and deepen the ongoing reform in UN Peacekeeping that will strengthen capabilities and performance was also highlighted, including strategic force generation, the development of military capability standards, and new training curriculum. She further called on Chiefs to deploy personnel with spotless backgrounds and to pursue accountability for those who commit acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. Finally she called for Member States to deploy more female peacekeepers, explaining that the strength of peacekeeping lies in its ability to engage and understand the people we are deployed to help. Women, therefore, must play a far more active role in peacekeeping operations -- as troops, police, staff officers and civilian staff.