

Security Council Open Debate on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations
Friday, 6th August 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador Ebner, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations

Austria strongly welcomes your initiative, Sir, to organize the present debate, which allows the Council to interact directly with United Nations force commanders.

I should like to thank Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for his introduction. I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Force Commanders present here today and to thank them for their very interesting presentations. Austria would like to thank all force commanders of the United Nations for their commitment and important work in the field. We also appreciate the presence of Lieutenant General Obiakor. In recent discussions in the Security Council on United Nations peacekeeping, one of the key recurring issues has been the need for the Council to provide peacekeeping missions with clear, credible and achievable mandates oriented to a desired outcome and matched with adequate resources for the fulfilment of all mandated tasks. Benchmarks and a clear prioritization of tasks have proved useful for the Council to better track progress made in the implementation of peacekeeping mandates. In order to be able to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to developments on the ground, the Council needs to have all relevant information at its disposal. Briefings by force commanders and military experts provide accurate information on the real-life challenges peacekeeping missions are facing, and thus are indispensable to the decision-making of the Council. We also welcome the fact that troop- and police contributors are participating in today's discussion. The success and credibility of United Nations peacekeeping will also depend on how far missions can effectively discharge their mandates and thus live up to the expectations raised within the population. With the growing complexity of tasks entrusted to peacekeeping missions and the scarcity of resources, we are confronted with serious capability gaps, including in terms of civilian support capacities. These gaps may jeopardize the success and reputation of United Nations peacekeeping.

More consistent information on mission-specific capability gaps and the impact of those gaps on the implementation of the mandated tasks can help to effectively utilize the gap lists of each peacekeeping operation and to mobilize Member States' support to address them. We therefore appreciate the efforts of Japan as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations in this regard. Equally, we support the capability-driven approach outlined in the New Horizon non-paper, which concentrates on skills, capacity and equipment, with a special focus on potential resource gaps. This is not only in the interests of the effectiveness of missions, but is also essential to the safety and security of peacekeepers.

Strengthening early warning and crisis prevention capacity is another aspect that deserves more attention in our work in the Council. Both mission leadership and the Council need to receive all relevant information and assessments on early warning, which would allow for a response to emerging crisis situations in a preventive manner. Missions have come up with several inventive approaches, including the joint protection teams in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), designed not only to provide information-gathering and analytical support, but also to facilitate context-specific civil and military measures to protect civilians and liaise with local authorities. Such outreach activities foster interaction with the local population and yield valuable information for an accurate assessment of the circumstances on the ground. We would be interested in hearing more from the field about the potential to strengthen missions' capacities in this regard. We welcome the fact that protection mandates increasingly include all activities aimed at ensuring the safety and physical integrity of civilian populations, securing humanitarian access and ensuring full respect for the rights of individuals by all parties to conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

The ultimate goal of any peacekeeping mission with a protection mandate must be to help restore an environment in which the host State is able to fully exercise its primary responsibility to protect its own population. Creating a favourable protection environment goes beyond the protection of civilians from physical violence and must be complemented by activities in the fields of security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the

rule of law; transitional justice; human rights; and the empowerment of local societies. This would also facilitate the transition to sustainable peacebuilding and State-building.

Early coordination of these activities and a common strategy among all actors involved, including civil society, will be crucial for success. The untimely drawdown or premature downscaling of peacekeeping missions can seriously endanger a country's stability and the safety of the civilian population. Mandate adjustment or the drawdown of missions also needs to be conditioned upon the fulfilment of benchmarks relating to the protection of civilians, and we encourage the further development of such benchmarks.

Armed groups attacking the civilian population, in particular **women** and children, do not respect international borders, which have become porous over years of conflict and due to the lack of control. The cross-border cooperation of United Nations peacekeeping missions in adjoining of responsibility is required in order to effectively tackle these threats. For instance, we believe that the problem of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) needs to be addressed further by drawing up a comprehensive strategy that includes Governments in the region and all relevant United Nations missions, including MONUSCO, which is mandated to ensure the protection of the civilian population in the LRA-affected areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We would appreciate hearing more about synergies and potential further cooperation in this regard. Equally, we would be grateful for suggestions as to how missions can contribute to the fight against the impunity for perpetrators of such violence.