

**Security Council Open Meeting on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security**  
**Thursday, 23 September 2010**

***Statement by Ambassador H.E. Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations***

I thank you, Sir, for your initiative to convene this meeting so that we might consider together the ways in which we undertake the United Nations most essential mission — that of maintaining international peace and security.

We must be clear-headed. Peacekeeping operations are often criticized, even rejected, by host countries, as we have witnessed recently. Sometimes, they struggle to fulfil their mandates. They are expensive. They are not always as responsive as they should be. And we were all appalled by the impunity with which, even very recently, mass rapes were perpetrated in the Kivus, despite the deployment of a United Nations operation with significant assets. All of this is true. But do not let the trees hide the forest. What would we do without peacekeeping operations?

No other international organization enjoys the legitimacy, the capacity and indeed the will to do what the United Nations does on a daily basis throughout the world. Clearly, even if all of us clearly favour prevention, and despite the system's imperfections, we have not yet found anything better with which to assist and strengthen nascent and therefore fragile peace processes; to assist States in need to restore their capacities, administer their territory and thus avoid a return to conflict; to guarantee the international community's vigilance and ensure that the most vulnerable are not left all alone in facing the hangman — in a word, to involve the entire international community in the settlement of crises from which we do not want to avert our eyes.

This mission is extremely bold, perilous and, some would even say, utopian. If the United Nations does not meet this challenge, no one can do it in its place. It is thus imperative that the Council — which bears, I repeat, the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — learn from both its successes and its failures and adapt its decisions accordingly.

You, Mr. President, rightly voiced the hope that this meeting would cover all aspects related to the maintenance of peace, whether it be the prevention of conflicts, or peacekeeping or peacebuilding when they have ended. Indeed, increasingly, we need to consider all of this together.

At the very heart of this process, we have peacekeeping itself. Of course, we are especially wedded to this, because this is one of the major responsibilities of the United Nations, and because the lives of millions of women, men and children depend on peacekeeping operations. Thousands of French soldiers and over 150 gendarmes and police officers serve as Blue Helmets — as Hillary Clinton said earlier, thinking of our berets — and my country contributes to the tune of \$585 million to the budget for peacekeeping operations.

We have experienced failure. We have experienced success. In certain cases, we have reached the limits of what we could expect of the missions. We have also witnessed tragedies: in Rwanda, in the former Yugoslavia and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We must remember these. We have learned those lessons.

We are now striving to ensure that peacekeeping operations be based on specific, clear and prioritized mandates, with a clear timeline when possible, and that they be supported by appropriate and sufficient financial, human and technical resources. I am looking across the Chamber at the head of peacekeeping operations, who is looking at me dubiously.

We have also adapted the United Nations actions to ensure better protection for vulnerable populations and achieve lasting results. Have we been successful? Not always. Today, the success of the United Nations must be gauged by the yardstick of the protection of civilians. Our credibility is at stake here.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) illustrate the challenges we must

face. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the protection of civilians remains the priority for the Blue Helmets' mandate. But the situation is not under control, as the Council is well aware, particularly in the east, as shown by the recurrence of terrible violence against civilians, of which I just spoke — in particular against women, since it is easier.

The training of the police and army must lead to law enforcement forces being redeployed to liberated areas, without a security vacuum, and to the authority of the Congolese State, including in the judicial field, being lastingly restored throughout the Territory.

In Darfur, attacks against civilians do not take place by chance. They are organized and have been described as crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. In the climate of impunity that prevails in that battered region, UNAMID is repeatedly exposed to attacks, which prevents it from protecting civilians sufficiently, even in the camps. The Security Council should reflect on how to respond to that situation.

Apart from the primary need to protect civilians, it is also necessary to draw up strategies for emergence from crisis that ensure a lasting return to peace, in particular with regard to the economic, social and political recovery of communities often ravaged by conflict.

In line with those developments, we have taken steps to restore the effectiveness of the Security Council. Change is under way. We must welcome that and welcome the commitment of the Secretariat, which was able to adapt to the new modus operandi and the new relationships that the Council wished to establish among all actors. However, there remains much to do.

I thank you again, Mr. President, for having organized this meeting. We must continue our work to ensure a stronger chain of command in operations, which has started, in order to improve cooperation among troop-contributing countries and also to ensure stricter political, military and financial supervision of peacekeeping operations. We should improve our work on resources and implementing budgets, as Celso Amorim has just said, by ensuring that when it takes decisions, the Council has a sound understanding of their operational and financial impact and of their future. We should also regularly review the strategy, balance, composition and size of operations.

Peacekeeping operations are the expression of the international community's commitment. I pay tribute to all those who are in charge, involved and sometimes victims. Such operations must establish lasting peace. That is easy to say, but they are not meant to last forever. It is necessary to then secure those achievements and ensure the implementation of a true transition strategy.

That is why it is critical that we learn to better manage the transition and withdrawal phases in peacekeeping missions. At that level too, considerable effort has been made in recent years and there have been successes, seen in the gradual transfer of responsibilities to national authorities and the orderly withdrawal of several peacekeeping operations. I am thinking of Burundi, Sierra Leone and Cambodia. Faced with legitimate criticism, we forget the successes.

However, we need to make more progress. We are counting on the Peacebuilding Commission, which has been mentioned, to come up with a response to the need to ensure better coordinated activities of the international community in the phases of emerging from a conflict. One thinks that once the operation has ended, the problems are over. They are just starting.

The stakes in peacebuilding must be taken into account from the first stages of crisis management in order to anticipate the conditions and mechanisms to emerge from the crisis. That compels us today to assess the risks associated with new threats, such as drug and human trafficking, organized crime and even corruption, which are very likely to destabilize fragile countries.

Finally, it must be said, the efforts undertaken by the international community in mandating a peacekeeping operation require resolute commitment by the host State. The political contract entered into must be severed only once lasting peace has been restored. It is never acceptable for a Government to give notice to a United Nations mission or decide on its withdrawal without consultations, in particular without providing credible

assurances that it is capable of taking over. I know that it is not easy and that we are faced with similar situations.

This debate, which you, Mr. President, have taken the initiative to organize and which will be complemented by an outstanding statement, affords us another opportunity to reiterate our commitment to peacekeeping and our desire to further improve its effectiveness. Rest assured that France will spare no effort in advancing the implementation of our common road map.