

Security Council Open Debate on UN Peacekeeping: A Multidimensional Approach, January 21st 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Araud, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your initiative in organizing this debate on one of the pillars of the United Nations work, namely, peacekeeping. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Peacekeeping operations have evolved in recent years. Their level of deployment is unprecedented today, with 14 operations currently under way, and the mandates are increasingly broad and complex. That complexity and diversity of missions make necessary greater cooperation with States and regional organizations and stronger synergies between those involved in peacekeeping and those involved in peacebuilding.

I would recall France's profound commitment to strengthening United Nations peacekeeping capacities. France is taking part in 7 of the 14 peacekeeping operations and contributes to operations mandated by the Security Council that are managed and led by the European Union or NATO, or in a national capacity. Lastly, it actively supports the participation of African States in peacekeeping operations through a regional network of national vocational schools, which provide technical and operational know-how adapted to the needs of officers of African armies. It is also participating, along with its European partners, in the EURO RECAMP programme.

Since the French-British initiative in 2009 on operations follow-up, we have advocated the strengthening of military expertise, improving the Council's cooperation with troop- and police-contributing countries and better management of the costs of peacekeeping operations.

While a number of recommendations from the Brahimi report (S/2000/809), which was published more than 10 years ago, are still valid, I would like to turn to three pivotal elements in improving peacekeeping operations: the implementation of strategies for transition between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the protection of civilians, and multilingualism.

First, obviously, we must draw up crisis exit strategies that ensure a lasting return to peace. Peacekeeping operations are not meant to last forever.

We must draw operational conclusions from the lack of barriers between peacekeeping and peacebuilding so that each stage of the United Nations presence prepares for the subsequent stage, in order to anticipate and forecast exit strategies. It is therefore essential that, under the leadership of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, peacekeeping operations be coordinated and that they cooperate closely with the offices of United Nations country teams so as to find any possible synergies and to avoid duplication of effort. We are counting on the Peacebuilding Commission to provide greater consistency in the activities of the international community in the exit stages of a conflict. We must take into account new threats, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, organized crime and corruption, which have the potential to destabilize fragile countries.

Secondly, the protection of civilians is one of the main objectives of the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. All the recent Security Council mandates contain a protection-of-civilians component, which is the priority in all circumstances. Peacekeepers must therefore be trained and their behaviour on the ground must be irreproachable. Peacekeepers must also provide a safe environment that supports the resumption of the political process. That requires the implementation

of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including for children affected by the conflict, and of programmes for security sector reform and the consolidation of the rule of law.

Women are one of the principal pivots in the transformation of a society. It is therefore vital to enhance their participation in decision-making. The integration of women into the police and the army will make it possible to enhance the fight against sexual violence and to promote human rights within those institutions.

I also recall the Secretariat policy to exclude non-essential contact with individuals who are the subject of an arrest warrant for war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

The third factor is multilingualism. Just over a year ago, in a similar debate, I underscored this issue and called upon the Secretariat to reform its approach to the problem. A year later, I note that nothing has been done.

It is necessary — I am not just defending the French language — for United Nations missions to be able to communicate with the populations in the countries where they are. That seems to be a matter of common sense. However, I see that in reality, the Secretariat's recruitment policy takes into account not the need for peacekeeping forces to be able to communicate with the populations, but rather their ability to send reports in English to New York. I am aware that sending a report in English to New York is important, but it seems that it should be more important to be able to speak French with French-speaking populations, who did not have the good fortune to have been colonized by the British and therefore do not speak English. That is what I said 18 months ago and that is what I said three years ago, and the Secretariat has changed nothing.

It is not surprising that recruitment committees, which are made up of English-speakers, do not assign priority to a knowledge of French. I can provide an interesting example of a young woman, who was not French but was a francophone, who was a candidate for all peacekeeping operations. Members may well guess where she was sent. She was sent to Abyei, where, of course, she must use her French every day. I am just making that side comment — which is perhaps not the norm in these surroundings — knowing well that it will have no effect on the behaviour of the Secretariat, which will calmly continue to send English speakers to French-speaking regions. I find that regrettable, but from time to time we must recognize the limits of the powers of a permanent representative.

In conclusion, we would like to recall that the success of any peacekeeping mission is the result of joint efforts by members of the Council, countries that contribute financially, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat. However, those efforts will amount to nothing without a solid commitment by the host country.

Before I conclude, my country would like to commend the commitment of Blue Helmets of all nationalities, whose dedication in the service of peace has cost some of them their lives — as you have recalled, Mr. President. I am thinking in particular of the seven Blue Helmets of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, the five Blue Helmets of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the four pilots of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan who have died over the past six months. France pays tribute to them — in French.