

Security Council Open Debate on Peacekeeping Operations: New Trends June 2014,

Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ms. Murmokaitė Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the United Nations.

I thank you, Sir, for organizing this highly pertinent open debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing.

Lithuania associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union by the Head of its Delegation to the United Nations.

Since the inception of the United Nations, peacekeeping has developed to become an indispensable tool for the maintenance of international peace and security. Nearly 70 missions have been deployed over that time, and the experience and lessons learned from those missions continue to feed into the concept of peacekeeping as it evolves further, owing to the changing nature of conflicts and the requirements on the ground. While today's trends in peacekeeping can pose considerable challenges, they also highlight the inherent adaptability of United Nations peacekeeping, which remains one of its major strengths.

Today, let me focus on three issues: ensuring capabilities needed to implement peacekeeping mandates, inter-mission cooperation, and the use of modern technologies.

Former United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld once noted that "peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers, but only soldiers can do it". Owing to the multidimensional character of today's peacekeeping, the troops on the ground must be able to respond quickly to the multiple challenges at hand. Besides traditional peacekeeping tasks, they must provide effective protection of civilians and their human rights, humanitarian assistance, and, in cooperation with country teams and relevant regional and subregional actors, engage in early peace- or State-building. That raises new demands for the peacekeeping partnership of the Security Council, Member States, the Secretariat and the relevant regional organizations.

Highly mobile units and task forces with appropriate equipment and sustainability capabilities are increasingly preferable to traditional infantry battalions, which are best suited to operate in static configurations. Approaches that integrate infantry, police and gendarmerie, engineering and support structures are being tested in real time. The operational readiness of troops and their preparedness for rapid deployment are an increasing necessity. A capability-driven and qualitative rather than quantitative focus must be maintained in order to ensure the effectiveness and operational value of peacekeeping forces in the highly volatile and rapidly changing crisis situations in which peacekeepers carry out their missions today.

Such complex, multidimensional environments also raise new demands for peacekeeper training and readiness to perform an increasing variety of tasks. Being able to read the signals of and act accordingly to deal with gender-based violence, rape as a tool of war, and the abuse and recruitment of children is key for implementing protection-of-civilian mandates. Because of the increasing focus on civilian protection and humanitarian issues, human rights and gender sensitivity training is essential for peacekeepers to be able to carry out their tasks properly.

Predeployment assessment is critical for ensuring that peacekeeping contingents meet United Nations standards, including with regard to the protection of civilians. Even more importantly, all personnel must respect the values of United Nations peacekeeping and, first of all, the principle of "do no harm". All allegations of misconduct involving peacekeeping personnel, in particular those related to sexual exploitation or abuse, must be examined thoroughly, and those responsible must be brought to account. A zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual misconduct, wherever and whenever it occurs, must be strictly implemented.

Let me now turn to inter-mission cooperation. While the concept paper (S/2014/384, annex) notes

that inter-mission cooperation should not affect the implementation of particular mission mandates, we believe that such cooperation could in fact help their implementation and should therefore be an inherent feature of overall mission planning. As crises multiply and the United Nations peacekeeping budget keeps growing, we believe that peacekeeping should not be seen as a patchwork of separate missions, but as a global enterprise in which efficiency gains and synergies should be identified so as to provide added value and benefit for all mandates. Broader regional and operational theatre thinking and assessment of crisis situations and conflict trends should take place, possibly going as far as preparing contingency plans for inter-mission support, the involvement of regional and subregional actors, and options for emergency redeployment in crisis situations.

Emergency redeployment to tackle the situation in South Sudan, which has involved missions in volatile situations, can offer a valuable case study for the future. Cases of inter-mission cooperation in West Africa and the Middle East can also serve as examples, while opportunities for greater cooperation at the regional level are explored. At the same time, cooperation should also be strengthened on the global level, notably through the implementation of the Global Field Support Strategy and the use of the capabilities available at global and regional service centres.

Finally, let me touch upon the use of advanced technologies in United Nations peacekeeping. Lately, discussions at the United Nations have focused on unmanned aerial vehicles, whose added value was recently demonstrated at a Secretariat briefing on their use in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the range of advanced technology that is or could be used to enhance implementation of the complex peacekeeping tasks of today is much wider. Global positioning system technology in mission vehicles, infrared capabilities on aircraft and helicopters, the reduction of missions' ecological footprint through water-saving equipment, and the use of cellular or satellite communications as early warning mechanisms by civilians in conflict areas are just some examples.

Technology can be employed not just to enhance situational awareness and facilitate the decision-making process, but also to bring peacekeepers closer to the communities they are mandated to protect. It is also important to reinforce the deterrence element, shrinking the space in which perpetrators can act undetected and with impunity. Finally, the use of advanced technology could result in substantial resource efficiencies and would allow the United Nations to optimize the use of critical enablers.

At the same time, technology cannot replace troops and police officers on the ground and should be seen as only performing an enabling and supporting role. Situational awareness without adequate troop capability to act is of little use. The human factor remains crucial in peacekeeping operations. Besides helping to better protect civilian lives, a smart use of technologies in peacekeeping would also help to protect the lives of peacekeepers, as the toll of peacekeeper deaths is becoming unacceptably high.

Only a short while ago, on 29 May, the United Nations marked the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. Let me conclude by paying tribute and expressing our deep appreciation and respect for all the peacekeepers, who put their lives at risk to protect the lives of others and, at times, pay the ultimate price in the line of duty.