

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

Statement by Ambassador H.E. Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations

I commend the Security Council, the Turkish leadership and the Secretary-General for the important statement that will be issued at the end of this Council meeting, and for the emphasis placed on the centrality of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. I think we have heard today — and will hear from the rest of our colleagues — how important it is to improve these functions as both a humanitarian and a strategic imperative. I am pleased that the statement itself emphasizes reducing and resolving conflicts and also providing better protection to civilians from violence, including protecting women and children from sexual violence. And I am very glad that it is clear-eyed about the current limitations of the United Nations and that it recognizes that all of us, as Member States, have a responsibility to work together to improve this core function.

I have seen the good that the United Nations has accomplished all over the world, and I have been privileged to meet many of the dedicated men and women who work under the blue flag in troubled lands very far from their homes: places like Liberia, where United Nations forces have provided the space and security that that war-torn country needed to begin putting itself back together; Pakistan, where United Nations aid workers are assisting people whose homes and livelihoods have been washed away by the floods; and, of course, Haiti, where United Nations peacekeepers, led by Brazil, were immediately back on the streets after the earthquake, despite having suffered grievous losses themselves. Their presence has provided much-needed order, stability and hope in so many places, and we should never forget the sacrifices and service of these soldiers, police officers, advisers and aid workers who do the hard work and face the danger far from this Chamber that we are in today.

Last year, President Obama met with the leaders of top troop- and police-contributing countries to thank them and discuss how to make United Nations peacekeeping more effective. And I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our appreciation for the contributions of all of the nations that have made financial commitments. We will do our best to work together to improve every aspect of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

As the presidential statement says, these undertakings have become increasingly complex. It is no longer enough to just provide peacekeepers. That must be accompanied by effective mediation, peacemaking and peacebuilding. We are concerned about the growing gap between multifaceted mission requirements and the resources available to meet them. Too often, despite their ambitious mandates, United Nations missions lack key capacities. They do not have enough helicopters; they do not have enough medic units; they do not have enough police mentors or crisis response tools. And they are often hampered by inadequate efforts to improve governance and the rule of law. Sending out these missions without the resources and support they need undermines their effectiveness and jeopardizes the safety of United Nations personnel.

I also very much wish to associate myself with the comments of the President of Uganda, concerning the fact that we need to do more in cooperation with regional forces and with countries themselves. Ultimately, the countries we are trying to help stabilize and the civilians we are trying to protect, pay the price of our inadequate financing, organizing and executing of these missions. So improvement begins with clear, credible and achievable mandates for all United Nations missions — and, of course, that starts right here.

The United States also strongly supports operational reforms that would enable United Nations field missions to deploy more rapidly, with adequate numbers of well-equipped and well-trained troops and police, and with the quality of leadership and civilian expertise they require. We also support management reforms for improved efficiency, accountability and transparency. The United States is expanding its efforts to help other countries train and supply formed police units that have the skills and experience to fulfil these difficult missions. These police units provide a critical bridge between short-term security operations and long-term work on governance and the rule of law. And there should be a special focus on boosting the number of women police officers and peacekeepers, like the Indian women I met who were serving so well in Liberia.

The United States is also funding new United Nations efforts to integrate the protection of civilians into every facet of its missions, from strategic planning to on-the-ground operations. It is heartbreaking when we receive reports, either from the United Nations itself or through the press, that civilians near where United Nations troops are stationed continue to suffer horrific attacks and violence. One place where we need better coordination, and where it is absolutely urgent, is the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where sexual and gender-based violence against civilians has reached unimaginable proportions. Last year, after visiting the DRC and meeting with women who were brutally assaulted and raped, I chaired the Council's adoption of resolution 1888 (2009), to combat sexual violence in conflict zones. I regret to say we have not made progress. Today I am announcing that the United States will provide new funding to help implement that important measure of resolution 1888 (2009), including the establishment of a Special Representative's office and the ramping up of its efforts to support justice and accountability. We will also contribute to training and protection to those who work for accountability on the ground in the DRC, and to help the DRC develop and implement its own justice mechanisms.

The United States is, as we have been from the very beginning, committed to improving United Nations operations — not just because we think it is the right thing to do, and not just because the humanitarian imperative is so strong in our own value system — but because we actually think it is smart and strategic as well. These missions can help contain and resolve conflicts that would otherwise engulf nations and regions. They can help prevent fragile States from becoming failed States and sources of wider instability. And they can help struggling countries start on the road to becoming productive partners. I look around this Chamber and I see representatives from countries that have known war in the very recent past, that have been torn apart, and still are, by conflict. They have re-emerged, and they have sustained themselves, against great odds; and they are now nations contributing to solving their own and other problems.

So, Mr. President, I hope the discussion that you have brought to the forefront by chairing this summit here in the Security Council is not just another meeting, but that we will follow through and do everything we can to make one of the most important missions of the United Nations — peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding — more effective. The United States will do its part, but we must all do everything we can so that we are supporting those brave men and women wearing those wonderful-looking blue berets— when we see them we are proud of them — and not just sending them to do a mission that from the very beginning is impossible.