

In Vancouver, UN peacekeeping chief outlines 'very serious challenge' facing Mali operation

15 November 2017 – The “very serious challenge” facing peacekeepers with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)) makes it vital that additional efforts are made for the four-year-old operation to fulfil its mandate, the UN peacekeeping chief has said.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations made this assessment Tuesday as he addressed a packed Working Meeting for Member States, on the sidelines of the [UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference](#), which is taking place from 14-15 November, in the Canadian coastal city of Vancouver.

Top military personnel and leading defence ministers – together with organizations and groups from more than 80 countries involved in peacekeeping – have joined UN officials to discuss the increasing challenges faced in the field, and how to address crucial funding gaps in equipment and expertise.

Of the 170 peacekeepers killed while serving in UN missions since the beginning of 2013 up to the end of September this year, 86 were with MINUSMA.

A June 2015 Peace Agreement was signed between the Government and various armed groups which it was hoped would bring a lasting ceasefire to the country, whose northern region was over-run by militant extremists in 2012.

Mr. Lacroix told the meeting of mostly uniformed men and women, looking out onto Vancouver’s picturesque waterfront, that there were key gaps in equipment such as helicopters and robust armed personnel carriers.

He appealed for other troop contributing countries (TCCs) to come forward to help staff one the UN’s most dangerous peacekeeping missions.

“We need to do more in terms of training, how the force is organized, and modalities of how we protect ourselves and better-protect the population as well, against the threats they are facing,” said the Under-Secretary-General.

UN Field Support chief Atul Khare told the meeting that while challenges remained, MINUSMA has made “significant achievements in terms of protection and training,” and was fulfilling its mandate.

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MINUSMA Force Commander, Major General Jean-Paul Deconinck of Belgium, gave the meeting a frank assessment of the operational difficulties and deficiencies that he faced with deploying blue helmets and equipment, but in an interview with *UN News* after the 90-minute session, he said he was “confident but realistic” and if given the tools he needs, the mission “will

succeed.”

Overcoming the threats of continuing extremist violence against civilians was not only about MINUSMA he stressed, but about durable partnerships with the Malian army and international missions deployed in and around Mali, such as the regional counter-terrorism force known as the ‘G5 Sahel,’ which comprises Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania, along with Mali.

The full plenary meeting of the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial takes place Wednesday afternoon, with sessions on “smart pledges” and pledge announcements; innovation in training and capacity building; protection; early warning and rapid deployment; and the Women, Peace and Security Chiefs of Defence Network.

We will have more from our news team in Vancouver later today.