

# Speech: “Peacekeeping should exist alongside both conflict prevention and peace-building work.”

Thank you Madam President – I warmly welcoming the Secretary-General’s briefing and I agree with his nine point plan for reform and with every other word that he said.

I’d like to pay tribute to the brave men and women serving in UN Peacekeeping missions. For many around the world, they are all that stands between stability and chaos. Over 3,500 peacekeepers have lost their lives holding that line, including nine this year. We are humbled by their sacrifice.

We have a duty to those peacekeepers, to all those risking their lives today, and to all the people they protect, to ask tough, fundamental questions about peacekeeping deployments.

Peacekeeping is one of the best things this organisation has ever created. Peacekeeping is the jewel in the UN crown. Peacekeeping is the UN’s unique selling point. Peacekeeping is also a good investment. In human terms, UN peacekeeping saves lives. In terms of peace, it significantly increases the survival rate of peace agreements. We should continue to invest in this crucial tool that answers the call to help when no one else is coming. But like all investments, we should examine the market. In the first place, we must think long and hard before deploying missions, about whether peacekeeping is the right tool at the right moment.

Horizon scanning and early warning give us the opportunity to use other tools; preventative diplomacy, conflict prevention, mediation.

Early action to prevent conflict and mass human rights abuses remains vital. But that must start long before peacekeepers may be required.

Too often, that moment is missed so when a peacekeeping mission is required we must ask: does this mission have a clear objective, and does it have a clear exit strategy? Does it have the right mandate? The next question is: will the host government cooperate?

Now there’s at least two elements to that question. First, when a government opposes the very deployment of a mission, and secondly where the government hinders the mission’s ability to fulfil every part of its mandate once it has been deployed.

History has given us enough tragedies to support the deployment of peacekeepers when host governments are unwilling or unable to protect their own people. With or without the government’s consent.

Where the host government does not cooperate, this Council has a crucial role to play. We must ensure that States shoulder their primary responsibility to

prevent conflict, minimise suffering and ensure that cycles of conflict are not repeated.

Where there are spoilers to peace, including host governments who seek to stifle missions, we must use all the tools at our disposal to change that behaviour.

But time after time, the message sent by this Council is one of disunity and confusion. We had a chance last year to bring pressure to bear on the parties in South Sudan, but at the crucial moment we failed to deliver. We cannot complain now about the tragic status quo in that country if we aren't prepared to act ourselves.

Once deployed, we must recognise when a peacekeeping mission is no longer the right tool for the job, where other parts of the UN system are better placed to support development and peacebuilding needs, as in Haiti, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire.

We know that peacekeeping is but one tool available to the UN. It cannot deliver every aspect of the UN's response to conflict; peacekeeping should exist alongside both conflict prevention and peace-building work.

And, where military force is necessary, the UN is not the only organisation capable of delivering it. We need only look to West Africa, where ECOWAS has demonstrated regional leadership through deployments in both Mali and in support of the political transition in the Gambia. Or in Somalia, where the African Union mission is degrading the threat from the terrorist group Al Shabaab.

But military operations can only create the space for the political process to progress. So we must redouble our efforts to address the political challenges to peace, not only the security ones, if we are to deliver the Secretary-General's agenda on sustaining peace.

My final point, Madam President, is that, if and when we deploy peacekeeping missions, we must make sure that they are effective.

This means better mission planning, more pledges of troops and equipment, and stronger mission performance.

Mandates must be limited, realistic, prioritised with a clear end goal and the benchmarks for getting there, building on and complementing the work of other parts of the UN, so that we can measure the impact of their activity and hand them over when peacekeeping's task is complete. We must robustly review missions regularly to establish where current situations sit on the spectrum of conflict, and ensure that we are responding and resourcing them appropriately.

Pledges of troops and equipment need to meet specific shortfalls identified by the UN, including the deployment of more women. We need to develop a greater breadth and depth of capabilities, so that the UN can deploy the most appropriate tools to deliver mission mandates.

But ultimately, peacekeeping must perform better. That means high quality training, appropriate equipment and medical provision, and skilled and courageous leadership. Missions are the human face of this organisation to so many people in the world, and they have to act to uphold the principles that we all represent, holding peacekeepers to account for underperformance or misconduct, including crucially, any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Peacekeeper's successes save lives, and we owe it to them and the people they protect to ask these tough questions and find the right answers.

Thank you.