

Action for Peacekeeping

(Milad's Speech to the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC) Conference – Tue 02 Oct 18)

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is a real privilege to be here with you at the 24th IAPTC and I thank you for the invitation. This conference is a key event in ensuring UN-related training programmes delivered around the world are coherent, consistent and meet the needs of our Peacekeeping Missions. It is good to exchange ideas and lessons learned and I look forward to the discussion that will follow.

I would like to start with a tribute to you all for the contribution you make to world peace. Thank you for what you do for UN Peacekeeping and the sacrifices made by your soldiers and their families.

On the 28th of March this year, the Secretary-General launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, known as A4P. This program is influencing the way we operate, and a greater focus on proactive force protection seems to be having some positive results.

Comparing the first months of 2017 and 2018, violent attacks on our troops have decreased by eighteen per cent and fatalities due to malicious acts have reduced by twenty-eight per cent. We must be cautious about the cause and effect relationship between A4P and these encouraging statistics but the trend is certainly positive.

These reforms require strong collective action and cannot be achieved without the full support of our partners, including troop and police contributors, regional organisations such as the AU, and EU, as well as host governments.

The success of this initiative will also require action by every Peacekeeping Training Centre represented here today.

Last week the Secretary-General convened a high-level event in the margins of the General Debate in New York to launch the mutually agreed commitments for A4P. 131 countries have already endorsed these commitments. That is very encouraging – although endorsement is meaningless without concrete action by member states at the national and international levels. This is where you come in.

Peacekeeping has a positive record of conflict prevention, support to political processes and sustaining peace. Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Haiti are testaments to this fact.

But we are facing a multitude of challenges, and we are also feeling the pinch of significant financial pressure after a period of relative growth in peacekeeping. As we reduce costs we are reducing the number of troops deployed in the field.

The recent report into the safety and security of UN peacekeepers submitted by Lt Gen Santos Cruz lays bare a long list of challenges we face, including:

- A deficit in the quality and robustness of leadership;
- Ponderous operational behaviours;
- A tendency to be reactive rather than proactive;
- A reluctance to use force when it is clearly appropriate to do so, in accordance with the Rules of Engagement;

- A number of TCC caveats, hidden from the UN, that undermine the UN's chain of command and authority;
- A lack of basic training and pre-deployment force preparation;
- A shortage of key equipment;
- A lack of tactical information and intelligence;
- Overstretched forces, remote and isolated operating bases and inadequate force protection; and
- Limited logistics capabilities.

So, as trainers, what do we need to do to address this?

DPKO/DFS has a clear responsibility to define the standards and priorities for pre-deployment training in order to deliver peacekeepers with the capability to execute mission mandates.

In this regard, we have made a lot of progress in defining UN standards of performance. DPKO has published a comprehensive library of doctrine pamphlets, guidelines and SOPs. In addition, we have a capstone document called the Operational Readiness and Assurance Policy which speaks directly to the requirement to perform. I urge you all to become familiar with these publications and to use them. These publications must be the cornerstone of your training programmes, whether you are a TCC undertaking training, a peacekeeping training centre delivering training, or a partner country assisting a TCC. It does not help to have different doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures being taught – it confuses our troops.

So far in 2018, Member States have certified 98 per cent of all contingent rotations as being operationally ready; but evaluations by Force Commanders, the Inspector General and others note that there are significant training deficiencies in our contingents.

These deficiencies are overwhelmingly in basic military skills – poor training on issues such as weapon handling, first aid, communications, patrolling, and conduct and discipline are common. About 15 per cent of all staff officers lack the basic military staff skills to be effective. All of this impacts on our ability to protect civilians, which is our most important task.

It is essential that Member States meet the operational training standards which they themselves have endorsed – it is a basic requirement which all of us in this conference understand well.

To do otherwise is to undermine the security and safety of our men and women. It also puts at risk units that share their operational boundaries and makes mandate implementation impossible. Ultimately, the security of the people we are there to protect is at risk.

I am also taking further steps to address the 'close battle'. It is clear to me that we need to do more to rectify the standards of performance on the ground in the short term.

I have therefore initiated a project in the Office of Military Affairs which is designed to help some of the units in the field that require additional support.

First, I am in the process of assembling a Taskforce of Officers in OMA who will be focused on studying the data that comes from Force Commanders' Evaluation Reports and other sources to determine our top priorities for action.

Second, I am looking to generate small, forward-deployed training teams provided by Member States who are willing to work with partner TCCs in the field.

This is not something I am trying to impose. I cannot impose a programme of this nature, and it would not work if I tried to do so. Rather, I am appealing to TCCs who need help to recognise the fact and to seek help from its friendly partners and allies. Then, and only then, can their strategic partners step in.

I need support from partner countries who are willing and able to send small training teams into field bases to advise and assist on issues such as:

- Equipment support and maintenance;
- Information and intelligence preparation;
- Pre-operational orders;
- Briefings, mission rehearsals and pre-patrol checks
- and all the work that troops need to do after they return from an operation.

By linking the findings of our performance evaluation reports directly with the work of forward-deployed training teams, I believe we can make rapid progress in terms of raising performance standards where they are most needed.

CAVEATS

I must also say a word about caveats and the incidents I have observed when some units have been reluctant to perform duties in accordance with the mandate, without claiming exemption from certain tasks or refusing to serve in certain areas – often without informing UNHQ.

We are working hard to improve our capabilities and undeclared caveats tie the hands of the Force Commander. Refusing to do what is necessary not only places the lives of civilians at risk – it risks the lives of your fellow peacekeepers.

As someone who served in Rwanda in the immediate aftermath of the genocide in 1994, that is a protection of civilians' disaster I never want to see repeated.

This is not an easy issue to resolve. I understand well the domestic political and moral imperatives to protect our troops, but we should also consider if we are getting the balance wrong.

(MORE WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING)

When I assumed my role as Military Adviser in December 2016 I became aware that there is an invisible problem in the make-up of our military components – the force does not reflect nor think like the population it is meant to protect. We need to engage with women as well as men to effectively deliver protection to the communities we serve.

Women and girls are often the target of armed groups, and they have a keen sense of when and where the threats are present. We need to know what these women know so we can better protect them and their communities.

Peacekeeping needs more women. And I need you to train more women. Please run more courses that have fifty-fifty men and women students. When you sponsor a foreign student, offer that government sponsorship for two students if one of them is a woman.

And, please, recruit more women instructors.

The women you train will contribute to a comprehensive approach to planning and increase the engagement we have with the whole community in the towns and villages we support.

To assist with this, I am creating an 'Engagement Team' concept whereby each infantry battalion will deploy with an Engagement Team made up of at least fifty per cent women. These teams will go on engagement patrols into local communities to find out the protection needs of men, women, boys and girls. The information they gather will be fed back into the Assessment, Operations and Planning cells so we can increase our situational awareness and target our efforts to where it is needed most.

We will start developing the training requirements for Engagement Teams soon, and we would be grateful for your support in helping to launch this important capability, including through the provision of training.

DPKO has recently published its Uniformed Gender Strategy, which sets targets for increasing the number of women involved in peacekeeping.

We are on-target to have women in 15 per cent of our Staff Officer and Military Observer positions, as well as seconded military staff in UN Headquarters, by the end of this year.

We aim to have 25 per cent of these positions filled by women by 2028.

We have also set a target for women's inclusion in contingents – and here we need your assistance.

We currently have only 4 per cent of our contingents made up of women. We need to reach 15 per cent by 2028 and to do that we need every nation to increase the number of women they have in their national armed forces.

Member States voted to double the number of women in peacekeeping by 2020. The UN cannot achieve this without Member States doing their own work to increase women's participation at home. I know this is a complex issue and appreciate your ongoing support and action to help us achieve this very important goal.

(SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE)

My final point concerns the damage that has been caused to the name of Peacekeeping by poor conduct and discipline, and the evil practice of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

As some of you will know from events in one of our Missions, the UN is taking firm action against offending units.

We are interested to know how TCCs are responding to such incidents, and what they are doing to prevent it.

Where there is a pattern of severe misconduct, there will be poor leadership, and this will impact on every aspect of a unit's performance.

Where cases of SEA are found we expect follow-up action to be taken quickly.

When appropriate, we will discuss the removal and replacement of offenders together with their commanding officers who are equally responsible and accountable.

And where a Troop Contributing Country fails to take appropriate action, and does not communicate with us, I will recommend the repatriation of an entire unit.

We have produced a Commanders' Guide on the measures to combat SEA in the UN Military Component.

Hard copies have been distributed via the Permanent Missions and I would be grateful if you could make your armed forces aware of the UN's policies and practices.

We need your support to eradicate this very serious problem. SEA undermines the credibility of UN Peacekeeping, locally and internationally – and it destroys lives.

On that note, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention and I look forward to further discussions.