

The Secretary-General's statement to Member States on proposals to strengthen the work of the Secretariat in the field of peace and security

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Madam President,
Excellencies,

I am glad to be back at Headquarters, and grateful at this opportunity to meet with all of you for the first time in my capacity as Secretary-General. Madam President, thank you for making it possible.

First, I am delighted to introduce to all of you the Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro. Many of you have been fortunate to meet her in her former capacity as Foreign Minister of Tanzania. Today, it is I who am fortunate to be able to call her my Deputy. I know she will bring to the task exceptional leadership, wisdom, and commitment.



I have just presided over a brief ceremony at which the Deputy Secretary-General took the oath of office, in the presence of my senior advisers. She will say a few words to you in a moment.

But first, I would like to take this opportunity to give you a brief account of my first overseas trip, from which I returned late last week.

My first stop was Brussels, where I had an opportunity to reaffirm the UN's partnerships with the European Union and Belgium. Then, I attended the International Donor Conference on Reconstruction in Lebanon, hosted by France. The conference was an important expression of the international community's commitment to helping the Lebanese people rebuild and create a peaceful, democratic and fully independent future. Almost eight billion dollars were pledged, but ongoing violence in Lebanon cast an alarming shadow over the event.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, I saw, at first hand, how the Congolese people are working hand in hand with the UN to build a peaceful, stable and democratic future. I had the opportunity to meet with UN peacekeepers and personnel in both Kinshasa and Kisangani. I believe the DRC is a successful model, combining credible political processes with an effective peacekeeping presence. I hope this model can be emulated in other post-conflict situations. But while I was encouraged by the progress I witnessed, I also saw how crucial it is to stay the course, and confront the many serious challenges that remain.

In Addis Ababa, I attended the African Union summit and held constructive talks with a number of leaders. Of course, Darfur was at the top of the agenda. President Bashir and I agreed to accelerate joint efforts by the African Union and the United Nations in support of the political process and in preparation for a peacekeeping operation, based on the Abuja and Addis Ababa agreements. He welcomed the joint mission of my Special Envoy, Jan Eliasson, and the AU Envoy, Salim A. Salim, to

Khartoum and Darfur next week. I still look forward to President Bashir's prompt and positive response to our plans for a hybrid UN-AU force.

At our duty stations and regional headquarters in Addis and Nairobi, I met with UN staff, and also participated in the special session of the Staff Management Coordination Committee. In The Hague, I visited the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Finally, in Washington on Friday, I met with the Quartet Principals for the first time since taking office. The Quartet pledged its commitment to the goal of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. It expressed its support for renewed dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, discussed US efforts to facilitate talks between the parties, reiterated its call for an immediate and unconditional end to all acts of violence and terror, and called for continued international assistance to the Palestinian people. I am keen to see the Quartet re-energized, so that it can have a greater impact on the situation on the ground, and help break the impasse in the peace process. I am pleased that we reached agreement to meet more often, possibly even again this month.

Throughout my journey, I was kept abreast of developments here at Headquarters -- in particular, the ongoing discussions about my suggestions for restructuring parts of the Secretariat. I have heard the views many of you have expressed, and I have taken them seriously. I shall speak on that subject in a moment.

But first, I invite the Deputy Secretary-General to say a few words.

[Deputy Secretary-General's remarks omitted.]

Thank you, Deputy Secretary-General.

Madam President,
Excellencies,

I am grateful for this opportunity to share with you my views on a topic of deep significance to all of us -- how we can collectively strengthen the work of our Organization in the area of peace and security.

Since I was appointed by the General Assembly last October, my team and I have held meetings on this subject with many of you in regional and other groupings, as well as individually. Today, it is time for me to speak to all of you, as I lay out my views.

As I have made clear since I took office, my objective as Secretary-General is to increase your trust and confidence in the United Nations. From the discussions I have had with you, I know you share this goal. And I am convinced that together, we can achieve it. We can build a stronger, more coherent and more effective United Nations.

For me, that means taking the first steps to make the Secretariat more efficient, more results-oriented and more accountable.

In recent weeks, I have worked together with Secretariat staff and Member States to identify current strengths and weaknesses. We have looked at ways to reinforce strengths, and remedy weaknesses.

Today, I will explain where I want to concentrate these first steps. They are two of the most fundamental areas of UN activity: peace operations and disarmament. Of course, these are but two of the many crucial areas of the UN's work for peace and security, but my consultations so far lead me to conclude that they are the most urgent.

Let me assure you: our informal dialogue on this subject to date has only been the first step in the process. I recognize that any proposals I make will have implications for the Secretariat as a whole. I myself will engage in consultations with Member States, and I will ask my senior managers to engage in consultations at expert level with a view to finalizing a set of proposals at the earliest possible date. I am sure you all agree with the benefits of moving forward with urgency.

Excellencies,

UN peace operations represent a unique contribution to international peace and security. One cannot overestimate their global impact. No other multinational actor deploys the same number of military and civilian personnel. No bilateral partner engages in multiple field operations of such scope and complexity.

Its unique nature, and its proven record on the ground, have led you, the Member States, to place ever increasing demands on UN peacekeeping. The number of peace operations is at an all-time high, with almost 100,000 personnel in the field. The figure looks set to rise still further this year. Last year alone, we started negotiations for Memoranda of Understanding with more than 100 troop contributing countries; transported more than 800,000 passengers and 160,000 metric tonnes of cargo by air; and operated more than 200 hospitals and clinics in the field.

Because of the surge in demand, and despite the diligent efforts of our colleagues in peacekeeping, our system is dramatically strained and over-stretched. This comes at a time when we can least afford it, as we plan and prepare for new peace operations in Darfur and elsewhere around the world.

How we strengthen the ability of the Secretariat to support peacekeeping is something in which we all have a stake. It is also a matter of life and death to millions of people who depend on us.

Distinguished Delegates,

The challenges are manifold. We must ensure that we have several crucial elements in place:

- A responsive capacity to meet the needs of the field;
- An integrated approach;

- Adequate management capability;
- Effective and accountable use of your scarce resources.

In addressing these challenges, I have been mindful of the mandates you have given us, and your positive response to the reform process initiated within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations a year ago. That process was part of the ongoing effort to fully implement the recommendations of the Brahimi Report of 2000.

One of the key aims of this reform process -- and a priority of mine -- is fundamentally consolidating, strengthening and integrating the Secretariat's capacity for planning, managing and supporting all peace operations.

As you are aware, today, many of the crucial components of mission support are scattered across the Secretariat. For example:

- Field personnel management and administration are the responsibility of field missions, as well as several Departments in Headquarters;
- A similar situation applies to procurement management;
- And financial management is likewise distributed across the Secretariat.

When responsibility and resources are dispersed in this way, accountability, authority and effectiveness are bound to suffer. Given the steeply growing demands placed on us, bringing these components together has become an imperative.

That is why I propose to consolidate the support functions of UN field personnel, procurement and financial management, into one single, dedicated Department of Field Support. I believe this will allow us to advance on three fronts:

- Supporting all field operations more effectively, coherently and responsively;
- Managing Member States' resources in a more efficient manner;
- And, most important, establishing a clear point of responsibility and accountability for field support.

This consolidation of support functions would allow a separate, concentrated Department of Peace Operations to focus on the work it needs to do: strategic as well as day-to-day direction and management of peacekeeping operations; new mission planning; development of policies and standards; and fostering partnerships with a broad range of UN and non-UN actors, including regional organizations.

This creation of two Departments would not only improve structural capacity. It would also give to peace operations desperately needed additional senior posts. It would strengthen the heavily overburdened senior management team of today's DPKO, which performs its task with outstanding commitment, but under relentless and unsustainable pressure.

Taken together, these measures would bolster and improve the assistance that Headquarters provides to field missions and to field personnel contributed by you, our Member States. It would mean more and better policy guidance from a dedicated DPO; more responsive support from a DFS properly equipped to address mission support needs; and, in sum, a better way to ensure the safety and security of personnel as well as the success of our missions.

By increasing capacity and designating clear responsibilities, we can also strengthen training and maximize oversight -- both of which are essential to ensuring the highest standards of conduct and discipline among UN peacekeeping personnel. I am, as you know, determined to ensure that we protect and uphold the sacred trust that needs to exist between us and the populations we serve, and implement our zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse and exploitation.

Clearly, these proposals can succeed only if we maintain the principles of unity of command and integration of effort. We know, from our experience over the past decades, how essential both principles are -- at headquarters and in the field -- if we are to make full use of our diverse capabilities and resources.

In upholding these principles, it is essential that we seamlessly link peacekeeping policy, operations and support functions. Therefore, the Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Peace Operations will be responsible for ensuring unity of command of all peacekeeping decisions, while the Department of Field Support will report to, and receive direction from, the Under-Secretary-General of DPO on all issues related to peacekeeping. To preserve unity of action and purpose in the field, and strengthen the chain of command with headquarters, heads of UN peacekeeping missions will report to me through the Department of Peace Operations. Existing reporting lines within field operations will remain intact. The overall authority of the SRSG in the field will remain the same. And existing command and control arrangements applicable to Force Commanders in the field will not change.

Day-to-day management of operations will require Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Field Support to work in an integrated manner at all levels. This can be facilitated by establishing integrated teams of representatives from both Departments, which would pool substantive expertise and support functions, under the direction of the Department of Peace Operations. Let me note that this concept of integrated teams, initiated as part of the peacekeeping reform effort, was specifically examined by OIOS, in its forthcoming report on DPKO management structures, because of its potential to improve management and oversight of UN peacekeeping operations.

I would, of course, ensure that the necessary checks and balances are maintained in overseeing the activities of the revised organizational structure. This would ensure that the policy direction set by the legislative bodies is implemented in a coherent and consistent manner across the Secretariat as a whole, with respect to human resources, procurement, ICT and finance, including budgeting and funds management. To fulfil the Secretariat's responsibilities in these areas, a thorough and substantive review and amendment of existing formalized procedures and delegations of authority would be undertaken expeditiously with respect to both the Financial and Staff Regulations and Rules. The consolidation of support functions for field operations would not result in duplicative structures at Headquarters. Rather, it would lead to clearer lines of accountability, and a more effective and targeted utilization of resources. Within that context, I am determined to align responsibilities with authorities and necessary resources.

On general administrative and management issues which do not apply directly to UN peace operations, the Department of Field Support would work together with the

Department of Management, under the guidance of the Deputy Secretary-General, to ensure system-wide coherence of management and administration practices.

Excellencies, what I have outlined goes directly to the question: what kind of peace operations do we want to see in the future? These reforms would enable us to meet the growing demands placed on us with strengthened capacity, consolidated support, and a system that is more effective, transparent and accountable.

Distinguished Delegates,

Today, the world is facing acute challenges in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Amid heightened global anxiety about weapons of mass destruction, States have been unable to agree on the way forward. Failure and deadlock have characterized major fora and instruments, such as the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the Conference and Disarmament and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty -- and the absence of any reference to disarmament in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

This deeply alarming situation makes clear the need to revitalize the disarmament agenda, through a more focused effort. I have listened to your views on how the urgent issues in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation affect all of us. Sustained and determined leadership at the highest level is required to address all these challenges. I am personally committed to making that happen. I therefore propose that the Department of Disarmament Affairs be constituted as an Office with a direct line to me, thus ensuring access and more frequent interaction.

With this reconfiguration, we would make disarmament an integral part of the policy decision-making process at the highest level. This would strengthen existing synergies across the field of peace and security, and, at the same time, would help us build more functional and effective cooperation with global and regional intergovernmental organizations.

The Office would be headed by an SRSG or High Representative, so as to maximize the flexibility, agility and proximity to the Secretary-General required to facilitate ongoing and new disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

An SRSG or High Representative would be able to operate with more flexibility in establishing cooperation and conducting dialogue with governments and other interested actors, including in country-specific situations. He or she would also act as a facilitator in finding solutions to issues of concern.

Proximity to the Secretary-General would allow for a strengthened advocacy role in mobilizing political will to overcome the stalemate in disarmament and non-proliferation. The SRSG or High Representative would also act as a catalyst with civil society organizations, which play a vital role in building and activating public opinion for disarmament.

The new Office would continue to implement existing mandates. But at the same time, we would re-energize our work for simultaneous action on both disarmament and non-proliferation. The two objectives are inextricably linked, and neither can advance without the other.

In this way, I intend to strengthen the functions of the new Office so that we can advance the priority issues before us:

- Working for universal adherence to international disarmament and non-proliferation agreements, and their full and effective implementation by the States Parties;
- Achieving more tailored dialogue, cooperation and assistance to Member States and sub-regions, in order to help States build capacity to counter WMD proliferation, as well as tackle the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Excellencies,

Please rest assured that over the past few weeks, I have taken account of your concerns. Every one of you has the right to be listened to, whatever the size of your country or budget, whichever hemisphere you call home.

I have sought to adjust my proposals in accordance with your concerns. And by speaking to you today, I hope I have been able to answer a few more of them.

As for senior appointments, I will be moving forward to fill existing posts as soon as possible. Decisions about appointments for any new entities would be taken at a later date, and would be done through an open consultative process.

Distinguished Delegates,

This Organization needs to act as one. We are confronted with so many grave crises around the world. At home, we face the challenge of management reform. Both should proceed together. If we are to meet the demands placed upon us, we need to put our house in order. There is no time to lose. I would be grateful for the General Assembly's approval of my proposals as soon as is practically possible.

Madam President, I thank you again for organizing this valuable opportunity for me to speak to all Member States. Above all, Madam President, I am grateful for your personal contribution in carrying forward the consultations with Member States. Excellencies, I thank for your kind cooperation, and look forward to hearing your reactions.

Thank you very much.