

**Briefing to the Security Council Open Debate on the
Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict**

22 November 2010

Mr. President,

1. Thank you for the opportunity to update the Security Council on DPKO's efforts to protect civilians in the eight missions in which we are currently mandated to do so, and more generally on the improvements that we have been endeavouring to make in the implementation of this challenging mandate.

2. Recent tragic incidents, notably in DRC, in which the lives and safety of civilians have been so grossly disregarded by armed militias are a tragic reminder of both the importance of protecting civilians where we are mandated to do so, and the immense complexities that this entails. Peacekeeping missions must exert every effort to protect civilians, using all their available capacities. Yet we must recognize and communicate that peacekeeping operations cannot protect all civilians at all times, especially when they are deployed in very vast areas, amidst ongoing conflict. Both the international community and those whom we endeavour to protect must understand that peacekeeping operations cannot be regarded as a substitute for state authority. In the final analysis, the protection of civilians will depend on stable and legitimate state institutions. Peacekeeping operations can augment their capacities and help to build them, but cannot, and should not, replace them.

3. That being said, over the course of 2010, DPKO and DFS have been undertaking a very detailed examination of how we can improve our performance in protecting civilians. With the Operational Concept that we developed earlier this year, we have been focusing on five principal tracks to improve our planning and implementation of POC mandates. These include the development of:

- (a) A strategic framework, which provides guidance for missions to elaborate comprehensive POC strategies;
- (b) Pre-deployment and in-mission POC training modules, which include a range of scenario-based exercises for all mission components;
- (c) An evaluation of the resource and capability requirements necessary for the implementation of POC mandates, and;
- (d) A thorough examination of POC planning processes, both pre-deployment and within the mission.
- (e) Our capability development efforts is also addressing capability standards for military units, to better articulate the performance requirements to meet this task as the other modern mandated peacekeeping tasks.

4. Our efforts in these areas have already had an impact on the ground. In addition to the three missions that had previously developed protection of civilians strategies, four missions are in the process of doing so based on the draft general guidance that is being developed here at Headquarters. This guidance assists missions to undertake a systematic analysis of the relevant threats facing civilians in their areas of operation, so as to better orient their efforts towards

addressing them. This includes identifying the capacities that are required to ensure effective implementation of protection of civilians mandates. We see this as a very positive development.

5. One of the most prominent examples for the implementation of such strategies is certainly MONUSCO, which has already developed and continues to implement a number of innovative and practical approaches. Recent efforts have focused on further enhancing the situational awareness of MONUSCO troops and on improving communication between them and the population. Such measures must of course be accompanied by the ability to respond when and as necessary – and this is where capacity shortages, especially in terms of aviation, are felt most acutely. In the Sudan, in the crucial period leading up to the referendum, UNMIS has finalized, in consultation with the country team, a strategy for the protection of civilians, which strengthens the coordination between the mission’s civilian and military components and envisages joint mapping processes of protection needs, actors and potential emergencies. In Darfur and Côte d’Ivoire, missions are finalising comprehensive strategies that include an analysis of current and potential protection threats, and vulnerabilities that civilians face, as well as risk mitigation measures. For UNMIL in Liberia, the primary threats to the protection of civilians are civil disorder and violent crime, including sexual violence. UNMIL and the Liberian National Police are working to develop clear and practical procedures for community members to alert the mission or Liberian authorities in the event of an emergency or major incident.

6. As we look at protection of civilians planning and implementation in greater detail, it remains clear that the efforts that we have undertaken thus far constitute only the beginning of what will necessarily be a continuous process. Peacekeepers in the military, police and civilian

components continue to request more detailed operational guidance on the contributions they can make to protection of civilians. While we have made progress in bringing clarity to how peacekeeping operations implement protection of civilians mandates, we still require a more detailed articulation of how key functions within the missions can more effectively protect civilians in their day-to-day work. This operational guidance will be a critical part of the protection toolkit that we are developing.

7. It must be reiterated that our efforts to improve the implementation of protection of civilians mandates in UN peacekeeping operations is not a job for DPKO/DFS alone. It is critical that our key partners, particularly the troop and police contributors that ultimately deploy to protect civilians in the mission area, are fully engaged. Ensuring that they are aware of the protection of civilians expectations placed upon them, and prepared to meet them, is a shared task that will require a strong and focused partnership moving forward. Likewise, the support and engagement of the Council will be critical, particularly in ensuring that missions with protection of civilians mandates are fully resourced for the task, as we endeavor to bring greater operational clarity to some of the mandate language typically used to mandate missions to protect civilians, and in bringing political leverage to bear on the parties to conflict.

Thank you.