

E. The importance of mine action for peacekeeping operations

Initial proceedings

Deliberations of 13 November 2003 (4858th meeting)

At its 4858th meeting, on 13 November 2003, the Council included in its agenda the item entitled “The importance of mine action for peacekeeping operations”. The Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and the Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. All Council members made statements after the briefings.

In his briefing, the Under-Secretary-General elaborated on the remarkable progress that had been made with regard to mine action since the Council last took up the issue in 1996. In that regard, he drew attention to the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children’s Fund, which were the lead United Nations actors undertaking and coordinating mine action initiatives. Noting that United Nations mine action was helping to build peace and security in almost 20 situations of concern to the Council, the Under-Secretary-General highlighted, *inter alia*, United Nations efforts in supporting national mine action authorities, promoting mine risk education and facilitating mine survey and clearance operations. He observed that mine action had become a dynamic component of multidimensional peacekeeping operations, often involving early planning with mine action specialists and the inclusion of mine action coordination centres.

He also noted that the briefing that day provided an opportunity for the Council to call upon a range of actors to undertake specific actions to enhance mine action in the peacekeeping context. He suggested that the Council might wish to consider the following issues in their discussion: the possibility of a new legal instrument to address unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war as well as the rights of mine survivors; encouraging the parties to conflicts to incorporate mine action, where appropriate, into their discussions; the role of peacekeeping operations in information gathering on the scope and importance of the landmine and unexploded ordnance problem; calling upon troop-contributing countries to train their

peacekeeping troops to demine; the use of demobilized soldiers to conduct mine action; and the need for adequate and sustained financial assistance for mine action from Member States.⁷⁰

The Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining highlighted the areas of the work of the Centre that were particularly important to peacekeeping. To facilitate the standardized collection and exchange of information on the threat of mines, working together with the United Nations Mine Action Service, the Geneva Centre had developed the Information Management System for Mine Action, and was at that time providing both predeployment and post-deployment support for the System, which had been installed in 36 countries or programmes. He stated that the International Mine Action Standards had improved the quality of mine action, enhanced interoperability and mutual understanding among the various mine action actors, and improved prospects for smoother transitions by peacekeeping operations to the post-conflict phase. With respect to the appropriate role of the military in mine action, which had been the subject of debate in both civilian and military circles for some time, the Director presented findings from a study conducted by the Geneva Centre, at the request of the United Nations Mine Action Service. The study had found that military expertise in breaching minefields was not easily transposed to humanitarian demining, where nothing less than 100 per cent clearance was acceptable. While the military were able to provide warnings to civilians about the dangers of mines and unexploded ordnance, they were not well prepared to undertake ongoing community-based awareness education programmes. In general, military peacekeeping troops had not carried out large-scale survey, marking or mine clearance operations.⁷¹

All members of the Council expressed deep concern regarding the devastating humanitarian consequences arising from the use of landmines on affected populations, and stressed that mine action was a priority for the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard they welcomed the efforts

⁷⁰ S/PV.4858, pp. 2-4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

by the United Nations to take stock of the problem and the mainstreaming of mine action into the Organization's culture. They welcomed in particular the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Information Management System for Mine Action in ensuring the coordination of mine action throughout the United Nations system and the provision of support to multidimensional peace operations, as well as the role of other United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Members agreed that further progress was needed in mine action. They shared the view that there was a need to strengthen internal coordination among United Nations bodies, and between those bodies and other actors, including non-governmental organizations. They concurred that mine action was a new concept that went beyond the mere military and disarmament aspects, and consisted of a broad-based approach that included humanitarian aspects.

Members agreed that it was imperative that the Council include mine action in the mandates of its peacekeeping operations, and that it consider mine action requirements at the very beginning of the planning of those operations. The representative of Guinea held that mine action training should be included in the training of peacekeeping troops, and that a gender perspective should be included in mine-clearance programmes. Several members welcomed the existing mainstreaming of mine action into the mandates of peacekeeping operations, citing specific examples, which included the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁷² The representative of Bulgaria expressed the view that mine action in Kosovo could be used as a model for other operations.⁷³ The representative of the United Kingdom noted that mine action in the context of peacekeeping operations improved the safety of peacekeepers, the environment for the safe return of refugees, employment possibilities and income opportunities, along with many other benefits, such as a psychological gain for the population.⁷⁴

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9 (Syrian Arab Republic); pp. 11-13 (Cameroon); pp. 12-13 (United Kingdom); and pp. 18-19 (China).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

With respect to demining and its relevance to the respective mandates of the General Assembly and the Council, the representative of Germany emphasized that the Council's role was to ensure that such activities were considered and, as the case might require, included in peacekeeping mandates. The Assembly, on the other hand, dealt with mine action in all its aspects, thus responding to the report of the Secretary-General⁷⁵ on that matter.⁷⁶ Similarly, the representative of the Russian Federation highlighted that the Council's discussion of the question should focus on the specific tasks that arose when carrying out the mandates of peacekeeping operations. At the same time, he warned against the duplication of work by the various agencies and organs of the United Nations system. Since the Assembly considered the matter of assistance for mine-clearance activities on a regular basis, he believed that it would be a good idea for the subject of providing assistance to mine-affected countries to be discussed in that body.⁷⁷

The representative of Guinea, echoed by the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and France, emphasized the political role of the General Assembly in mine action.⁷⁸ The representative of Guinea highlighted that the Security Council, in contrast, had an operational role through its peacekeeping operations.⁷⁹ The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic maintained that a focus on mine action in peacekeeping operations in no way entailed a transfer of responsibilities from the Assembly to the Council.⁸⁰

The representative of Pakistan stated that unless there was universal acceptance and implementation of the principle of the responsibility of States that placed landmines or left unexploded ordnance in conflict situations, action to clear up landmines would continue to be slow and inadequate at the global level. In the context of the situations of which the Council was seized, mine prevention and mine clearance had to be included in its considerations.⁸¹

⁷⁵ A/58/260 and Add.1.

⁷⁶ S/PV.4858, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6 (Guinea); p. 8 (Syrian Arab Republic); and pp. 8-9 (France).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

Speakers emphasized that the adoption in 1997 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction indicated significant progress and reaffirmed the international community's commitment to the elimination of all mines. The representative of France maintained that the Convention could be used as a mobilization tool for mine action at all levels, including financing.⁸² The representatives of France and Mexico urged those States that had not yet signed or ratified the instrument to do so.⁸³ The representative of Mexico welcomed the fact that Kenya would host in 2004 the first review conference of the Convention, as African countries had been severely affected by the scourge of landmines.⁸⁴

**Decision of 19 November 2003
(4864th meeting): statement by the President**

At the 4864th meeting, on 19 November 2003,

⁸² Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

the President (Angola) made a statement on behalf of the Council,⁸⁵ by which the Council, inter alia:

Expressed its grave concern at the harmful and widespread impact of landmines and unexploded ordnance on civilian populations, especially children, and on humanitarian workers and United Nations staff;

Urged all Member States to respect relevant international law that addressed landmines and unexploded ordnance;

Urged all parties to armed conflicts to abide by their mine-related commitments and to cooperate with mine-risk education and mine-clearing activities;

Called upon the Secretary-General to provide information on the scope and humanitarian impact of the mine and unexploded ordnance problem;

Urged Member States to provide adequate and sustained financial assistance to support mine action, and to increase their contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action.

⁸⁵ S/PRST/2003/22.

48. Peacebuilding: towards a comprehensive approach

Initial proceedings

**Decision of 20 February 2001 (4278th meeting):
statement by the President**

By a letter dated 25 January 2001 addressed to the Secretary-General,¹ the representative of Tunisia informed the Secretary-General that, during its presidency of the Security Council in February 2001, Tunisia intended to organize on 5 February 2001 a debate, open to States which were not members of the Council, on the topic "Peace-building: towards a comprehensive approach". Annexed to the letter was a note with suggestions on specific subjects for the debate, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; refugees and displaced persons; poverty eradication and promotion of sustainable development; strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions; a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy; and the role of the Council.

¹ S/2001/82.

At its 4272nd meeting, on 5 February 2001, the Council included in its agenda the item entitled "Peacebuilding: towards a comprehensive approach", and included also the above-mentioned letter. At the meeting, the Council heard a statement by the Secretary-General, following which statements were made by all members of the Council, and the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Croatia, Egypt, Guatemala, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Romania, the Republic of Korea, Senegal and Sweden (on behalf of the European Union²).

The Secretary-General stated that the overarching challenge of peacebuilding was to move societies towards sustainable peace, and was the sum of many initiatives, projects, activities and sensitivities.

² Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia aligned themselves with the statement.