

UNGA
71st session
Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth) Committee

Thematic Debate
Comprehensive Review of the
Whole Question of Peacekeeping Operations
25 October 2016

INDIA STATEMENT
Ambassador & Deputy Permanent Representative
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Mr. Chairman,

I thank you for organizing this debate.

2. I would like to start by thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Hervé Ladsous and the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, Mr. Atul Khare, for their briefings and for sharing their assessment of the progress made in peacekeeping activities and the challenges therein.

3. We would like to align our statement to the statement made by the delegation of Morocco on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

4. Our views on this topic are based on India's longstanding experience in peacekeeping operations of the United Nations. We are proud to be the largest cumulative troop contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, having provided over 195,000 troops in 49 of the 71 missions mandated so far.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Peacekeeping, the signature activity of the UN, is under tremendous stress today. The multiplicity of tasks and Christmas-tree mandates; a departure from well-established principles

of impartiality; an avoidance of the primacy of Politics; a focus on mere 'band aid' solutions through peacekeeping, and a near absolute lack of effective consultations amongst the TCCs, Security Council and the Secretariat are all part of the existential and philosophical dilemma facing the peacekeeping today.

6. The HIPPO report and the Secretary General's report on implementation of the same indeed talk about many of these issues, calling for an urgent reform and a change of mindset of the UN system and the decision makers. However, nearly one and a half years later, tangible progress in implementation of recommendations of both these reports is still awaited. Many delegations have echoed the need and urgency of change required.

Mr. Chairman,

7. We could begin by considering how the peacekeeping mandates, which are the principal peace and security instruments of the UN system, are conceived. In our view, the overall process and approach concerning finalisation of these mandates clearly demonstrate that the problems that we are faced have their origin at their source itself.

8. To understand this one doesn't need to go far, but has to only look at one of the most recently renewed, and so far unimplemented, mandate for UNMISS in South Sudan. Even after three months of the adoption of the resolution, which, by the way, was done in some haste, the situation on the ground, including for our peacekeepers is no better. It is important to point out that in this case, as in the past, not only did the Security Council not listen to the TCCs, it even failed to secure the consent of the host government for the revision of the mandate. Further, seeing the way the mandate renewal resolution was adopted, it appears that there was no consensus even among the P-5.

9. We thus saw a Chapter VII mandate coming out of a fragmented Security Council, with little or no groundwork of crucial political work especially with the host Government, with little agreement within the Council itself, and with no effective consultations with the TCCs who, in the end, have to implement this mandate. Is it any wonder why we are in the situation we are in?

Mr. Chairman,

11. The primary purpose of peacekeeping operations is to prevent conflicts in conflict-prone areas and their relapse in areas emerging from long-drawn conflicts. This is primarily a political activity. Despite so many reports and member states having highlighted this repeatedly, many peacekeeping operations today, as in the past, are continuing to operate in a vacuum of political negotiations. While peacekeeping operations do get deployed with international backing, they are hardly accompanied by coordinated pressure on the warring parties or those assisting them.

12. Moreover, in several cases of mandates relating to many current Peacekeeping operations, there has been a significant departure from one of the most critical of core principles

of peacekeeping which is, the impartiality of the UN and avoidance of taking sides. This has led to an increase in the risk faced by peacekeepers and, as a result, we are increasingly witnessing the UN peacekeepers becoming targets themselves.

Mr. Chairman,

13. The focus of most UN peace operations today is merely on operational conflict management. While their mandates tend to contain multiple tasks, those related to institution- and capacity-building are hardly prioritised, and never adequately resourced.

14. To make it worse, in a number of cases even the tasks given to the peacekeepers as per the mandates of the UNSC are not adequately resourced, making the task of today's peacekeepers extremely difficult and increasing unnecessary risks of the kind we faced in Mali.

Mr. Chairman,

15. Protection of civilians has been an issue of concern and much debate this year. We believe that all peacekeeping operations, by their very nature, are undertaken inherently to help protect civilians from being harmed. That being said, the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians lies with the national governments and it should be our endeavor to work to strengthen those structures, whose breakdown lead to the situations of conflict and law and order in such countries. The approach of coming up with robust mandates to deal with such situations is ridden with serious inherent risks and less than certain outcomes. The approach therefore needs to be to achieve 'sustained peace' which can in the longer term ensure protection of civilians in the most natural manner.

16. The incidents of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) have not only scarred the victims of such abuse but also the UN's credibility. Peacekeepers turning into predators is the worst nightmare come true. India has fully supported the initiative to create a Trust Fund for victims of SEA and was the first to contribute to it. We understand that since then only four other countries thereafter have stepped up. We definitely should be doing much more on this count.

Mr. Chairman,

17. USG Ladsous has talked about building new coalitions of support to address collective security challenges in today's multipolar world. Perhaps this can and should start at home i.e. within the security council, the body which remains divided, as it comes up with unwieldy and un-implementable mandates putting both credibility of the UN and the safety and security of peacekeepers at grave risk. While the challenges we face are more and more inter-linked across regions and often continents, the growing fragmentation of the UN system to deal with those is alarming, reflected so clearly within the Security Council itself.

Mr. Chairman,

18. We have discussed these matters for far too long without making sincere attempts to implement the required change. We must not delay it any further as the risks of ignoring these is too high.

19. I would like to conclude by paying tribute to the men and women of the United Nations who are carrying out their tasks to implement peacekeeping activities, as well as to those peacekeepers who have lost their lives in field operations, defending the flag of the UN while working relentlessly for the cause of peace.

I Thank you, Mr. Chairman