

Agenda Item 117: Programme Budget for the Biennium 2000-2001: report of the Panel on UN Peacekeeping Operations

Statement by Mr. Satyabrata Pal, DPR on November 29, 2000

Mr. Chairman,

We are grateful for this opportunity to speak on the request, presented by the Secretary General in person the other day, for emergency resources to implement the Brahimi Report. The Chairman of the Group of 77 has just spelt out how we would like to handle this request procedurally, and we entirely support his statement.

We listened with very great attention to what the Secretary General said, and to what was said, after he spoke, by members of this Committee. We heard that, if the request for emergency resources was turned down or cut back, peacekeeping operations, and the troops deployed there, will suffer. Some who spoke after the SG argued that those who would not accept his request wholesale had no interest in peacekeeping, particularly in Africa. Therefore, before I go any further, perhaps I should recall where we are coming from.

The latest list put out by the DPKO of countries contributing troops to peacekeeping operations shows India at the top, which is where it has been for much of the last 40-odd years. In Africa, starting with ONUC in 1960, the UN has sent peacekeeping forces into the Congo, Namibia, Somalia, Mozambique, Angola, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. We have been in all of them, with brigades in the Congo and Somalia, and formed units, usually at least a battalion, in Mozambique, Angola, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. In Liberia, where the UN only sent military observers, we were asked to contribute and did. In a few months, we shall be sending a battalion and supporting units into the operation in Ethiopia-Eritrea. We have therefore participated in every single peacekeeping operation in Africa. I wonder if any other country can claim this.

The one exception so far is the prospective Mission in the DRC, where we declined to contribute troops because the concept of operations, presented by the Secretariat but actually drawn up in a member State's Ministry of Defence, was fundamentally flawed. We decided instead, to provide military observers, and in order to keep the OAU's Joint Military Commission going, in March this year we made a voluntary contribution to it of \$100,000.

We have put our soldiers in harm's way whenever the UN has asked us to, particularly in Africa, and our money where our mouth is. We think we have earned the right to speak frankly about the real needs of peacekeeping, to ask if what is being proposed addresses them, and to make suggestions that we believe do.

In all these peacekeeping operations in which we have taken part, crises have occurred, and have had to be resolved. In ONUC, for instance, the first illustrious hostage taken in a UN peacekeeping operation was Brian Urquhart, eventually rescued by Indian troops. In more recent years, there have been crises in UNTAC, in the closing stages of MONUA, in the Observer Mission in Liberia, in Somalia, and, of course, most recently in Sierra Leone. From our first-hand experience, we can avouch that there was nothing the

Secretariat could have done either to have prevented, or to have resolved, these. Which is why we are puzzled by the claim that, unless the DPKO is given more staff immediately, peacekeeping and peacekeeping forces will suffer. We need to retain a sense of proportion in this matter.

We agree that the DPKO could be strengthened, but where, we ask, is the emergency, when the real problem in peacekeeping is the frequent failure of political will in the Security Council, and the reluctance of the developed countries to send their forces into peacekeeping operations? There are others: yesterday the SRSG for East Timor told the Security Council that he thought it absurd that he was presiding over a Mission that spent ten assessed dollars on itself for every voluntary dollar spent on administering the territory. These are not sudden emergencies, they have been with the UN for the last decade or more, and the Brahimi Panel will not cure them.

In the early 1990s, when the present Secretary General was the Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping, DPKO managed much larger bodies of troops on the ground with roughly the same strength it presently has; it did not claim then that there was an emergency in staffing. It still has not been explained what the emergency presently is, particularly because the figures show that, over the last eight years of zero nominal growth, in which the Secretariat has shed posts, the DPKO and the DPA were the two departments that were not affected. If we were to compare them to our national structures, the DPA has more staff at the professional level than we have in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi.

Compared to 1992, the Secretariat today has 27% fewer posts; most of these were pruned from the economic and social sectors, though there is, surely, at least as much of an emergency there as there is in peacekeeping. Extra resources of the order requested for the implementation of the Brahimi Report could just as well be sought, but have not (and we could ask why) for any one of the departments that have to follow up on the major conferences held earlier this year, on women or social development, to name just two. Instead, we have heard it said that if Brahimi fails, so will the UN; this is apocalyptic claptrap.

An enormous amount of emphasis has been placed on strengthening the UN's capacity to gather and analyse information for peacekeeping. EISAS has been proposed as the solution, because, we are told by the Brahimi Report, the ECPS set up in the Secretary General's reforms in early 1997 has not been up to the mark. We must ask, firstly, why the General Assembly has not been told this, when GA resolution 52/12, on the SG's reform proposals, specifically requested a report on their implementation. Since the GA has not been told over these last three years that ECPS was not doing what it was expected to do, two conclusions can be drawn: the Secretariat did not wish to acknowledge a failure, or did not respond to a GA mandate. In any case, it is odd that the Brahimi Panel should stumble upon an urgent need which the Secretariat has not felt over the last three-and-a-half years.

But even more to the point, what will EISAS do? An improved information gathering capacity, it is argued, would better serve the Council. The Brahimi Panel urged the Secretariat to "tell the Security Council what it needs to know, not what it wants to hear". However, as those who have followed the discussions in the Security Council on the Brahimi Report will know, though this quote from the report was in fact put into an early draft of the resolution which the Council adopted, it was deleted from the final version. The truth, sadly, would thus appear to be that the Council continues to want to be fed only what it wants to

hear. An expensive new Secretariat unit will provide exactly the same advice. It will make not an iota of difference to a peacekeeping operation, or to the peacekeepers involved.

Nevertheless, we recognise, and have said so, that the DPKO, like most other departments in the UN, could do with some strengthening, but, to make a reasoned assessment, we should wait for the review of the functioning of DPKO which the Special Committee has requested for years. If the Secretariat had responded with the sense of urgency which members of the Special Committee felt, this review would have been long completed, and we could all have had an objective basis to judge what the DPKO's real requirements were. Instead, having failed to respond urgently when urgency would have been helpful, the Secretariat now claims an emergency where there is none. Now that the new Under Secretary General has undertaken to submit a report early next year, that, and the Secretary General's requests under the Support Account, which this Committee will also look at early next year, should provide the basis - the underpinning and the rationalisation - for decisions on the structure and size of the DPKO.

If some stop-gap arrangements are needed, we are prepared to consider them, once the Special Committee has completed its work, and the ACABQ has done its own scrutiny. By definition, however, the extra resources now given will be the barest minimum; otherwise the DPKO review becomes pointless. And the Secretariat will have to explain just why they are an emergency need; a supplementary request for 249 posts, which is almost 60% of DPKO's authorised strength, can hardly be described as an emergency request.

There are four reasons why we find these sudden alarms and excursions extraordinary:

- if the reformed structures in the Secretariat were not up to speed, the Secretariat was asked by the General Assembly to report on this as the reforms were implemented; it did not, including at this current session;
- the current biennial budget was passed late last year, and the Support Account early this year, when every one of the peacekeeping operations now under way was already in being, but some of the most important ones were in their formative stages, when calls on the Secretariat are at their height; if there was a crisis or emergency, that was when it would have arisen, and when these emergency resources should have been requested, but they were not;
- this year, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping was actually in session when the Brahimi Panel was set up. At no stage was the Special Committee told that there was a systemic crisis in the Secretariat that could only be cured by emergency resources; in fact, it was given the impression that all was as well as could be expected. That was eight months ago;
- the Committee for Programme and Coordination has met this year to consider the Medium-term Plan. That is when programme managers explain the difficulties they face in implementing their mandates, so that programmatic justifications can be given for more resources. No one in the Secretariat told the CPC that either the DPKO or the DPA were in distress; that was five months ago.

If the Secretariat is asking for emergency resources now, this emergency must have arisen over the last few months. What, we ask again, is this emergency? The Secretariat has not been able to give any sort of response, except to cite Mr. Brahimi.

These, Mr. Chairman, are fundamental questions. We put them from the only perspective from which we work, which is to strengthen the United Nations. We believe our discussions here should be constructive, undertaken in good faith, and should respect the views of all delegations. We were surprised to hear it said here that questioning Brahimi was nitpicking. If we were going into zoological diversions, we could have said that picking nits needs close hand-eye coordination, it needs a controlling brain, and in the process of evolution, only intelligent forms of life pick nits, not brainless invertebrates that mindlessly ingest and regurgitate matter.

However, the moot point is, Mr. Chairman, that, on any issue, not least in this Committee, all of us must apply our mind independently to any issue that may lie before us. There will be differences of opinion, but they cannot be bridged by patronising and deprecatory references to the sincerity or motivation of delegations with which we disagree; such aspersions are not helpful, not in the culture of this Committee, and not conducive to the consensus which we hope to reach.