

STATEMENT BY MR. TARANJIT SANDHU, MINISTER, ON UNITED NATIONS
PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON JANUARY 23, 2009



Mr. President,

Before I begin, I should inform you that Ambassador Sen is indisposed, and he has asked me to represent him at this debate today.

Thank you for arranging this debate on a critical and very visible aspect of the work of the United Nations. Peacekeeping is a subject that involves the larger membership of this world body, and it is entirely appropriate to consider how this crucial activity can be improved, especially at the current juncture. Today, over 140,000 personnel have been authorized to serve as peacekeepers in 18 operations that are deployed across five continents, at a total budgeted cost of \$7.2 billion. These statistics illustrate the size and scale of the task that peacekeeping involves. The thoughtful briefings provided separately by the Under Secretaries-Generals for Peacekeeping and Field Support illustrate several of the challenges in this regard. Suggestions

made by them merit greater consideration by all stakeholders, within and outside this Council. We also align ourselves with the statement to be made by the distinguished representative of Morocco on behalf of the NAM.

While the number of peacekeeping operations may not have increased greatly in the last decade, there has been an unprecedented surge in the number of peacekeepers deployed. This surge has generated enormous challenges, not merely because of the numbers involved but also because of the manner in which some missions have been established, the mandate provided to them, and not the least, the tools they have been provided. From this standpoint, it is a very welcome step that this Council has scheduled today's discussion on peacekeeping at this juncture, and India felicitates France for doing so under its Presidency of the Council this month.

Mr. President,

Article 24 of the Charter defines the functions and powers of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. That Article begins by underscoring that these powers were being conferred on it "in order to ensure prompt and effective actions by the United Nations". However, when the Council is neither prompt nor effective in its consideration of such challenges, it ceases to discharge its primary responsibility. There are a number of examples which are perhaps best not elaborated at this juncture, although some of these have been mentioned by previous speakers.

It is in this context that the powers of the Council in the context of its operational efforts in the maintenance of peace and security need to be read in consonance with Article 44 of the Charter. In the current international context, that Article should be read to imply that the Council should invite non-Council Members to participate in the decisions of the Security Council concerning the employment of contingents of that Member's armed forces. Clearly, therefore, the Charter visualized peacekeeping as a tool jointly invented and honed by the Council and the General Assembly. It was not intended to be an attribute of the power accorded to the Council by the Charter.

Regrettably, in reality, the Security Council has completely monopolized its hold on UN Peacekeeping operations. The corollary of this is of course the fact that the Council bears major responsibility for the situation as it exists. It is therefore timely for the Security Council to seriously make an in-depth review of the situation as it obtains today, including the question of whether it should continue to have exclusive monopoly of establishing and running peacekeeping operations.

Mr. President,

India has been a leading proponent of the view that the mechanism of triangular consultation between Troop Contributing Countries, Security Council and the United Nations Secretariat must be energized. In this context, we do note the holding of Private Meetings under the format established by Resolution 1353, and the increase in the frequency of briefings by the Secretariat for TCCs.

However, such briefings continue to be held on quite literally on the eve of renewal of Mission mandates, making them proforma exercises, as there is little real scope for serious or meaningful discussion. We reiterate the imperative of involving TCCs both early and fully in all aspects and stages of mission planning. This should include the stage of preparation and planning of the operation, in the monitoring and conduct of an operation, and finally, in the evaluation of an operation, including the identification of lessons learnt. Their views, if found reasonable, must be reflected in mission mandates. It must be borne in mind that today, many of those who have the final say in Security Council resolutions often do not participate in their implementation, and are therefore not called upon to bear the brunt of criticism when Missions face difficulties if their mandate is unrealistic or the means authorized inadequate.

In this context, Mr. President, the draft Concept Paper circulated in the context of today's debate—the start of a “collaborative process”—does not appear to envision substantive collaboration in the context of the involvement of Troop Contributing Countries.

I must reiterate that the experience of functioning in an operation gives Troop Contributing Countries a unique ability to contribute to the planning process. TCCs can assist the Council making appropriate, effective and timely decisions on operations. The 2008 Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations acknowledged this and called for substantive consultations with Troop Contributing Countries during all stages of PKOs. It is time that these recommendations are implemented in letter and spirit, in order to achieve meaningful outcomes. These should include moving towards an integrated approach, and to establish effective strategic oversight by those members—inside and outside the Council—with stakes in a particular peacekeeping operation.

Mr. President,

There are a few more specific points that I should like to underscore. Firstly, it must be reiterated that there can be no peacekeeping operation when there is no peace to keep. That is to say, peacekeeping must be built upon a peace agreement that is credible, not the other way around. Secondly, troops are contributed by contributing countries to a larger cause: that of peace in far off lands. The safety and security of UN peacekeepers must be of paramount concern to this organization, in whose name they serve. The tally of sacrifice by peacekeepers in the years past underscores these concerns. Furthermore, India fully supports implementation of a policy of zero tolerance with regard to conduct and discipline of troops, including sexual exploitation and abuse. There is a need for raising awareness of those entrusted with managerial and command responsibilities as well as establishment of standards of conduct, training and investigation. Careful preparatory training, in terms of a multi-cultural, pluralistic and tolerant outlook, is as important as swift punitive action once culpability is established.

It is also desirable to evolve professional training programmes for peacekeepers in consultation with Member-States. Here too, the experience of troop contributors with

a long history of assisting in peace operations should be fully drawn upon by integrated training service.

We are in support of greater cooperation by the United Nations in peacekeeping efforts. However such programmes must be in accordance with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The United Nations cannot absolve itself of its responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. The real challenge before the UN is to strengthen peacekeeping without regionalizing it.

Mr President,

India stands committed to continue to assist the United Nations in maintenance of international peace and security. India has a proud history of contributing to UN peacekeeping, which dates back to the inception of this activity in the 1950s. Over the decades, India has contributed nearly 100,000 troops and participated in over 40 missions, including in some of the most challenging operations. We salute the 118 personnel of Indian forces, as well as peacekeepers from other countries, who have made the supreme sacrifice in the interests of world peace, while serving in various UN missions.

Mr. President, we look forward to constructive and meaningful engagement with the Security Council to carry the debate forward and ensure fruition of our joint efforts, in this very visible activity of the United Nations. We hope that through our collective efforts, we can evolve greater coherence and integration in the process of identifying solutions to the challenges before international peacekeeping.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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