

STATEMENT BY MR. TARANJIT SANDHU, MINISTER, AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS ON MARCH 11, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you and the Bureau on your election. We are confident that you will guide the Committee to a positive outcome and assure our full co-operation in doing so.

We thank Under-Secretary General Guehenno and OIC Jane Lute for their annual comprehensive briefings and highlighting the priorities in peacekeeping for the coming year. We would, in particular, like to place on record, the outstanding leadership provided by Mr Guehenno for the last eight years. We also compliment the DPKO/DFS teams for their dedication and hard work.

Mr. Chairman,

The Report of the Secretary-General (Doc. A/62/627) outlines the progress made on the three broad identified challenges facing United Nations Peacekeeping. We look forward to discussing the activities mentioned in the report as well as the issues it sets out for peacekeeping in the next 12 months. We associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement.

We note with happiness that the total number of Troop Contributing Countries have reached 119 and would like to welcome Burundi, Columbia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Qatar and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the family.

Mr Chairman,

We are all aware of the escalating demands on the United Nations for peacekeeping operations. This unprecedented surge has given rise to enormous challenges in peacekeeping - not only because new missions are being

established or old ones expanded, but also due to the volatile and insecure environments in which UN forces have to function, the growing complexity of the difficult tasks assigned to them, and the tools that they are provided with.

We had welcomed the efforts by the Secretary-General to respond to peacekeeping challenges by strengthening and rationalizing structures in the UN via building military planning, management, and operational capacities. The realignment of DPKO by creating two Departments - Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support (DFS) – has been undertaken. However, we are yet to be convinced that there exist clear command structures, coherence in policy and strategy, effective coordination and integration, as well as preservation of unity of command from Headquarters to the field. While these principles do find mention in the Secretary-General's report, you have also heard several Troop Contributing Countries highlight the difficulties they are facing at present, in the restructured set up.

We do hope that Secretary-General will make appropriate corrections from lessons learnt so far in order to make UN peacekeeping well integrated, effective and professional. In that context, we are willing to take a constructive look at the new proposals for strengthening the Office of Military Affairs(OMA) distributed to the Member States last week.

We also heard with attention USG describe Integrated Operational Teams (IOTs) as a central feature of the restructuring package aimed at ensuring unity of command and integration of peacekeeping efforts. In order to encourage new ideas and involvement of Member States, effort should be made to recruit officers on secondment basis on these teams.

The safety and security of UN peacekeepers is of vital concern to troop contributors who place their soldiers at risk in pursuance of the UN ideal. The 116 deaths and several injuries to peacekeepers, are a reminder of the importance of fully addressing safety and security concerns. In this context, the UN needs to focus on enhancing its capacity for information gathering and assessment on the field level. Secondly, cooperation and coordination between the Department of Safety and Security and DPKO needs to be improved with clear accountability. Thirdly, the missions must be properly planned and mandated as well as equipped with appropriate weapons and technologies. Fourthly, DPKO needs to ensure that its peacekeepers are not stretched to cover geographic areas that exceed their capacities. They should be deployed in accordance with agreed concept of operations. Last but not the least, the UN should seriously consider having seconded security personnel to enhance the safety and security of the UN peacekeeping operations.

Mr Chairman, India has consistently called for energizing the mechanism of triangular consultations between Troop Contributing Countries, the Security Council and the UN Secretariat. Private Meetings under the Resolution 1353 format continue to be held on the eve of renewal of Mission mandates, leaving little scope for serious or meaningful discussions.

In this context, it is with regret that we have to point out that despite the emergency situation in UNMEE, the Security Council has not found the time to hold consultations with the Troop Contributing Countries so far, not to mention its inability to withstand a serious challenge and defiance to its authority. It is again reiterated that for ensuring the success of peacekeeping operations, TCCs must be involved early and fully in all aspects and stages of mission planning and that their views need to find way into mission mandates.

Mr Chairman,

We appreciate the effort put in by DPKO in developing its internal document entitled "United Nations Peacekeeping: Principles and Guidelines". It has been described as a "living document that will be reviewed and updated regularly". We, therefore, look forward to continuing our constructive dialogue with the Secretariat to further clear some of the ambiguity and inconsistency in terminology in this document.

Mr. Chairman,

We note the United Nations effort to enhance its partnership with regional actors. In this context, India supports the efforts to enhance peacekeeping capacity in African countries. We share close and historic ties with Africa and are one of the oldest, largest and most consistent contributor to UN Peacekeeping missions in Africa, having participated in almost every major operation since the inception of peacekeeping. We are currently involved in bilateral capacity building in many African countries. At the same time, the UN 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.

As regards conduct and discipline of troops, we are convinced that sexual exploitation and abuse are totally unacceptable forms of behaviour. We fully support the implementation of a policy of zero tolerance and encourage raising the awareness of those with managerial and command responsibilities and the establishing of standards of conduct, training and investigation. Careful preparatory training in terms of a multi-cultural, pluralistic and tolerant outlook is as important as subsequent swift punitive action, once culpability is established. We welcome the General Assembly approved resolution on draft MOU and call

upon the DPKO to implement it at the earliest. We would also like the DFS to take lead in ensuring that the spirit of GA Resolution is respected by investigative bodies of the UN.

We also note the creation of a Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training and establishment of an Integrated Training Service (ITS) within it. We would encourage the ITS to utilise and benefit from the considerable field expertise of the Troop Contributing Countries as well as develop a collaborative relationship with institutions of training within the TCCs.

Mr Chairman,

We recognize that security sector reform is an important element in the transition from United Nations Peacekeeping to sustainable peace and development. Early planning of security sector reform by national authorities with relevant partners is needed. In this context, we look forward to a meaningful and substantial consultations with Member States and Secretariat in the forthcoming session of C-34 with respect to the recently released Secretary-General's Report on SSR.

Mr Chairman,

We have noted the establishment of Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions that was strongly piloted by the Under Secretary-General last year. We would seek a more detailed presentation of the role it is playing in the areas of justice, corrections, mine action, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

The role of Civilian Police in peacekeeping has grown substantially. We take note that the authorized strength of police component in the peacekeeping operations has increased by over sixty five per cent and has gone upto 16,000 police officers in 18 peacekeeping operations. The assurance that Police Adviser continues to be a member of the senior management team with direct access to the Under Secretary-General is welcome. We look forward to engaging in constructive discussions in the C-34 regarding the future requirements of the Police Division. At the same time, we would like to emphasise the need for adequate transparency in ensuring representation of qualified candidates from Troop Contributing Countries of developing countries in senior leadership positions in the Police Division.

Mr Chairman, India stands solidly committed to assist the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security. We have a proud history of UN peacekeeping dating back to its inception in the 1950s. We have contributed nearly 100,000 troops, and participated in more than 40 missions. India has also

provided and continues to provide eminent Force Commanders for UN Missions. We salute the 116 Indian peacekeepers, as well as those from other countries, who have made the supreme sacrifice by laying down their lives while serving in UN Missions.

The emphasis by Secretary-General on his commitment in ensuring increased participation of women in operational peacekeeping is welcome. India has traditionally been contributing lady military and police officers to a number of UN Missions. We are particularly honoured to have provided the first full Female Formed Police Unit for peacekeeping work. This unit completed its first year in January in assisting the UN Mission in Liberia and has been highly appreciated for its outreach to the most vulnerable sections of society, i.e. women and children, in a post-conflict environment, besides performing its normal duties.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, we are fully committed to the purposes and principles of the UN and look forward to making UN peacekeeping an ever more effective and efficient tool in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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