

Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, Deputy Permanent Representative, at the Opening Session of the Annual Debate of Peacekeeping Committee (C- 34) on Peacekeeping on 21st February 2012

Madame Chairperson,

I am delighted to be among the peacekeeping community today, once again, for the opening debate of the annual C-34 session to comprehensively review the whole question of peacekeeping operations.

2. Let me begin by thanking USGs Mr. Harve Ladsous and Madame Susana Malcorra for their leadership of UN peacekeeping through the year. A very warm welcome to the newly elected members of the Bureau and to you, Madame Chair, for having steered this process with the fairness, poise, and equanimity of a sage. We once again, repose our faith in your able leadership.

Madame Chair,

3. As the key UN instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security, the year gone by was challenging for the UN peacekeeping and the times ahead portent with things to come. An enterprise that comprised of twenty thousand personnel ten years back, peacekeeping today commands over one hundred thousand persons undertaking tasks that we entrust onto their hands. While it reflects the field realities, this also informs us that the roots of consensus we are able to build today run far deeper. The partnership that has forged this process, therefore, must be valued.

4. The geo-political context of UN peacekeeping has undergone transformational shifts. The global capabilities, economic, political, military, and social capitals are undergoing dynamic shifts. At the same time the field missions are faced with renewed challenges with a professed need for the infrastructure and mechanics of governance. The very architecture of peace and stability and what we build upon it, in situations of conflicts, is the test we are faced with.

5. Being a longstanding stakeholder of UN peacekeeping, India firmly believes in aligning UN's peacekeeping mechanism as one, ranging from mission planning, mission design, force generation, mandate making, to field implementation. Accomplishments of our peacekeepers during the year have been evidenced in the elections in DRC and Liberia, in the post-election crisis in Cote de Ivoire, and in the transition of South Sudan into a new Nation State. This has been all the more arduous more with dual expectations from the field and the HQs that has increasingly viewed missions as field manifestations of budgetary and accounting exercises.

Madame President,

6. That the UN peacekeeping delivers peace dividends at bare minimum price is recognized well by the international community. Moreover, we simply do not have the alternative to borrow from elsewhere rather than to build upon what has been shaped over six decades. However, contrary to the calls for integration and coherence, the policy instruments today seek to compartmentalize field functions and operations. The premium is on distinguishing rather than on co-locating functions within the larger political Process.

7. Our thoughts and theories lack fair representation of the views of wider membership. Our doctrinal approaches are HQs driven with field being a mere recipient. This scenario is both unhealthy and unsustainable. A fair division of intellectual and field burden in UN peacekeeping will strengthen the democratic core of this partnership by making it participative and representative in true sense. Mere enunciation of ideals and their reflection in the mandates kicks in a spiral of unfairness towards the end user who is tasked with its implementation. This challenge will be rectified at the level of the Secretariat and at the stage of mandate making.

8. The financial, operational and logistical necessities of the field need to be objectively assessed before finalizing ambitious agendas. Incorporation of protection agendas to the core of mission mandates without matching commitments to supply critical enablers such as air-assets belies the very intent and purpose of the exercise. Critical political and constitutional processes in DRC had to be undergone without such key enablers. The international community is witness to resources that are genuinely needed for the protection agendas. A realistic estimation of resource needs by the field missions and a streamlining of recruitment, equipments, and MoU processes at the HQs will enhance our collective abilities to function better. We definitely need to hear more about field support than reorganization and reconfiguration which is heavy on evidence and soft on promises.

9. The core challenge is to match our commitments to the principles with the men who can spend years in conflict situations without seeking homeland comforts and with critical enablers. Voices must be apportioned to those who bring field experience to the process.

Madame Chair,

10. As a country that has contributed over 130,000 personnel to UN peacekeeping, we firmly believe that troop's posture can be determined with their participation only. The founding principles of neutrality, consent, impartiality, and non-use of force continue to constitute the core of UN peacekeeping. Mindful of Indian airmen who used airpower in Katanga during

the 60s, today's doctrinal approaches appear of questionable relevance to us. Field orientation is the fountainhead of our legitimacy in defence of Charter objectives of peace and stability. Respect for sovereignty and integrity of states constitutes the very core this organization and our debates rest on. National ownership in our peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, therefore, is critical for the credible success of our field missions.

Madame Chair,

11. UN's peacebuilding architecture today requires unity and cohesion. Donor priorities on the one hand and the field complexities steeped in the socio-cultural and community contexts render our peacebuilding ecosystem incongruous. Convergence and co-location of peacebuilding initiatives, structures, and numerous UN entities involved in this venture is the call of the day. This will reflect commendably in the SSR and DDR processes on the ground. Our civilian affairs initiatives, likewise, also need to represent geographical composition of this organization and its field realities in a fair manner.

12. Lastly, on the Global Field Support Strategy, as I have outlined earlier, the middle alphabets of the acronym need to find their rightful balance in the overall scheme. This process has steamed ahead with intangible outcomes. Its appeals premised mainly on budgetary, financial and now on personnel grounds undermine the purpose of its origin. Centrality to peacekeeping in GFSS is critical for UN's peacekeeping architecture.

Madame President,

13. To conclude, C-34 and the peacekeeping community owes a debt to those peacekeepers who have paid the ultimate price in defence of the principles and objective enshrined in the charter of United Nations. We spare our thoughts for them and their families.

I thank you, Madame Chair.

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