

UN Peacekeeping Operations: Trends and Lessons Learned

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am truly delighted to join you today. As you know, this year marks 60 years of Finnish Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations. [For us UN peacekeeping operations have been a unique opportunity to **make our contribution** to the maintenance of international peace and security and to **provide Finnish units with peacekeeping competence abroad**. Surely, there is something we can offer: Finnish professionalism and a mind-set well suited for peacekeeping.]

United Nations peacekeeping has come a long way. Quantitatively, today, the number of Blue Helmets is almost three times higher than in 2003, and nearly six times higher than 15 years ago.

The model of UN peacekeeping operations has evolved over time, ranging from the “traditional” Chapter 6 tasks of cease fire monitoring and observation to complex multidimensional missions in high risk environments with robust mandates in support of comprehensive peace processes.

Today in the Middle East and Africa we see UN peacekeepers in the middle of new realities. Original parties to agreements are not any more the only major **actors**, and peacekeepers have to adapt to evolving geopolitical contexts characterized by asymmetric threats.

Attacks by armed groups and transnational threats have intensified greatly over the last few years, posing major challenges for efforts to protect civilians and stabilize complex environments. At the same time, the number of peacekeepers’ casualties has risen sharply.

In the least permissive modern operating environment it is essential that peacekeepers are respected by parties to a conflict – particularly by spoilers. To that end real time situational awareness and a capability to respond quickly to emerging scenarios are essential. Effective intelligence gathering and analysis, unmanned aerial systems (UAV) and helicopters are just some examples of the new type of thinking. In addition to the operational capability, the overall credibility of peacekeepers depends on adherence to the highest standards of conduct and discipline and on responsibility and accountability for their actions.

Over the years the United Nations has, often after major setbacks, conducted comprehensive reviews on peacekeeping. For example, we may

remember the UN's internal New Horizon process in 1999 and the Brahimi report in 2000. The latest review undertaken by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) has produced several proposals to improve UN operations today and in the future.

HIPPO findings as well as UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' (DPKO) priorities in 2016 can be seen as a UN response for the lessons learned.

The DPKO's top priority continues to be **strengthening the performance of peacekeeping operations** by clearly defining standards and setting expectations concerning the skills, capabilities and specialized capacities.

The other DPKO priorities are:

- **Effective use of Technology and Innovation,**
- **Better managing relations with host countries,**
- **Enhancing partnerships with regional organizations and**
- **Strengthening UN political engagement with key stakeholders** such as Security Council members and Troop Contributing Countries (PCCs).

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations is still a key actor in peacekeeping but like all large organizations it should continuously analyse its work and find answers to the following fundamental questions: **firstly**: How to adapt to the evolving operational environment, **secondly**: How to use resources effectively to support field operations and **thirdly** and most importantly: How to implement essential changes genuinely and fast enough in practice.

Thank you.