



# IRELAND

Statement by

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UN Security Council open debate on  
UN Peacekeeping operations: new trends

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Mr. President,

Adapting to meet radically new and different environments and challenges, UN peacekeeping is in the process of undergoing significant change. We warmly welcome Russia's scheduling of today's debate which provides a timely opportunity to consider these new trends in UN peacekeeping operations. Ireland aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Ireland has a strong and distinguished record on peacekeeping, with unbroken service on UN missions since our first deployment in 1958, including holding the appointment of Head of a UN Mission on twelve occasions. We see peacekeeping as a crucial instrument in maintaining and ensuring peace; in preventing conflict; and in giving the necessary space and support to countries emerging from conflict to develop and grow. And so we dearly wish to see UN peacekeeping that is smart, fit for purpose, and well-resourced to meet the high demands we place on it.

These demands only continue to grow. The reality is that in recent years peacekeeping has evolved to such an extent that the term itself scarcely describes the range and nature of activities undertaken in its name. Today's debate is well informed by the Concept Note that, above all else, calls for a more systematic and joined-up approach to justifying and elaborating these new trends in peacekeeping. Two of these developments stand out: more robust peace enforcement, undertaken in certain circumstances, and a more comprehensive and ambitious approach to institution- and state-building.

In 2000, Lakdhar Brahimi wrote that "there can be no peacekeeping unless there is a peace to keep". Changes in the nature of conflict, however, mean that UN forces increasingly operate in less secure environments. In a small number of specific situations, for example eastern DRC, the UN has sought to be more proactive in how it protects the civilian population, by supporting targeted offensive operations against armed groups.

Such robust operations do not, in our view, have any impact on the impartiality of UN peacekeeping. Impartiality does not mean having to adopt a neutral equidistance between two or more parties, in this case government forces and non-government armed groups. Rather, impartiality is about implementing your mandate in a fair-minded and unbiased manner. It is a fundamental misreading of the nature of UN peacekeeping to see more proactive and robust targeting of armed groups, in order to protect vulnerable civilians preyed on by such groups, as in any way incompatible with the UN's mission.

But there is no doubt that more robust peace operations can only work if undertaken to deliver clear political goals and as part of a broader stabilisation strategy. Higher-intensity peace enforcement also brings sharply into focus the imperative of having UN command and control arrangements that are fit for purpose, with decisive leadership, well-resourced planning and with the reduction and elimination of national caveats and restrictions. Ireland is pleased to be organising a panel discussion on 3<sup>rd</sup> July at UN Headquarters to continue this important conversation and to consider the significant progress made to date and the challenges outstanding on C2.

A second point arising from less secure environments concerns the safety of peacekeepers. We owe it to our service personnel, deploying into increasingly dangerous environments, that they are as well-equipped as possible. It is sobering to remember that to date this year 37 persons serving on UN peacekeeping missions have been killed. We are convinced of the clear benefits offered by modern technology and hi-tech equipment, notably the sharply increased situational awareness offered by unarmed unmanned aerial vehicles. This and other technology acts simultaneously to strengthen the mission in delivering its mandate and to increase force protection.

Nationally, with over 130 members of our Defence Forces currently serving on the Golan with UNDOF, Ireland is acutely aware of the imperative of strengthening force protection. An Irish and UNDOF force fully equipped with counter-IED equipment would be better able to protect itself and the civilian Syrian population from the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.

The work of the UN's Mine Action Service has taken on a new relevance as missions have deployed into environments with unconventional threats, such as IEDs. Ireland was pleased to deploy for one year a team from our Defence Forces for service with UNMAS to provide specialist training on Conventional Munitions Disposal, landmines and specialist search awareness to the South Sudan National Police Service. We are keen to identify what further support we can provide to UNMAS in the future.

The second most striking change in UN peacekeeping is the dramatically increasing range of responsibilities and tasks with which UN missions are charged. Mission mandates have grown longer and more complex, particularly in terms of institution- and state-building. Meanwhile, resources have not increased in line with this increasing demand.

There are a variety of ways to try to square this circle, including increasing flexibility and innovation in relation to resourcing missions, improving common standards and building strategic partnerships. Ireland is pleased to support the development of common standards relating to Military Police and to Special Forces. But, realistically, some hard choices need to be made on just what can be expected of UN missions.

The Security Council should replace vague, aspirational mission mandates with mandates of clear purpose, tempered by achievable and realistic ambition. The recent work to refocus the UNMISS mandate for South Sudan, and to reallocate to it resources from other UN missions in the region, is a welcome step in the right direction. Given the scarcity of resources, there is also a clear case for moving to downsize or close some long-standing missions. It is important that this conversation on adjusting multidimensional mission mandates feature representatives of development agencies from the broader UN family.

Mr. President,

We look forward to contributing further to this important reflection on the nature of UN peacekeeping and to seeing how these policy areas can be strengthened and developed.