

Statement by

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at the

UN Security Council open debate on

Peacekeeping Operations: The United Nations and Regional
Partnerships and its evolution

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Mr. President,

We warmly welcome your initiative in scheduling today's debate. This debate provides a timely opportunity to consider the evolution of regional partnerships in support to UN peacekeeping.

In my remarks I will focus on two main areas: EU-UN cooperation and UN-African cooperation.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the EU and its member states.

Mr. President,

Under-Secretary-General Ladsous recently described peacekeeping as being in a Time of Partnerships. Certainly, the collective enterprise that is peacekeeping involves the cultivation of a network of different partnerships: partnerships between member states, the UN system, host governments and, increasingly, regional organisations. The increasing participation of regional and sub-regional organisations is a significant development, and it featured as the theme of a successful seminar hosted by Ireland during our Presidency of the EU last year.

In our eyes, greater regional participation is a very welcome development. It is a concrete expression of the sharing of a collective security burden. More regional involvement can mean more local and regional expertise and understanding being made available. It can mean greater regional ownership, responsibility and commitment to addressing security challenges.

Some regional organisations offer the potential to respond rapidly, others provide critical niche capabilities. Ireland has seen first-hand, through our participation in EU and in NATO-led missions, the success of regional partnerships in peacekeeping.

But it is essential that a commensurate capacity exists, or is created, to ensure that mandates delivered by regional organisations are delivered effectively. This is why, to give just one example, predictable and sustainable financing is so crucial to ensuring the success of African Union peace operations. The real challenge in nurturing strategic partnerships remains the delivery of political and operational results.

Mr. President,

Ireland is a long-time and prominent supporter of closer EU-UN cooperation in peace operations. In terms of international peace and security, for us this is *the* paramount strategic partnership.

The exit of many European states from ISAF offers the prospect of a broader European return to UN peacekeeping. As a member state that has maintained a consistent presence on UN peacekeeping operations, we are pleased to encourage and facilitate this development in any way we can.

That is one reason why our mission recently convened a panel discussion on Command and Control arrangements in UN peacekeeping. It was designed to showcase the improvements that have been made in recent years, while also exploring ways to address some outstanding challenges, including ensuring high-quality leadership; improving mission planning; ensuring accountability; and minimising national caveats.

And so Mr. President, we could not agree more with your Concept Note for today's debate: that effective command and control of operations underpin both the success and the credibility of operations.

The prospective return to UN peacekeeping also offers an opportunity to renew, deepen and intensify the EU-UN partnership. Institutional ties in the EU-UN partnership have never been stronger. On the ground in Africa, eight of the EU's nine missions are deployed alongside UN presences. And cooperation in these theatres has never been closer.

The question we need to ask ourselves is whether we have reached a natural limit, a ceiling, in the EU-UN relationship? An important series of seminars on EU-UN relations will be held later this year under the Italian Presidency of the EU, with the support of ZIF and Germany. An imaginative, ambitious and bold approach in this seminar series can explore the further enhancement of this crucial strategic partnership between the EU and the UN.

Mr. President,

Turning to Africa, today there are many ways in which African organisations, regional and sub-regional, can contribute to peace operations. Two notable ways are through high intensity operations and surge capacity.

African willingness to pursue high intensity operations in Africa is incontrovertible. We have seen the commitment of South African, Tanzanian and Malawian troops in MONUSCO's decisive Force Intervention Brigade in the DRC. And we readily acknowledge the sacrifice of AMISOM soldiers in Somalia, including troops from Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia.

AMISOM has stayed the course where a force from outside the region may well not have. AMISOM also pursues tasks, such as offensive and counter-terrorist operations, that the UN does not undertake. But we also acknowledge that AMISOM as a contingent-led mission poses particular challenges of coordination. And that the presence of the two missions, UN and AU, demands heightened coordination if political and strategic coherence is to be achieved and if communication with the government is to be consistent.

Given the evident political commitment, African rapid response or surge capacity also clearly holds out promise. Development of African regional standby brigades is a welcome initiative, particularly in the frustrating context where others have proven so reluctant to use their rapid reaction capabilities.

But we must also be honest enough to recognise some important general constraints: while missions from the region bring the promise of greater acceptance, they can also pose a risk of partisanship. Regional or sub-regional organisations, either because of a

lack of resources or the absence of collective will, have also at times proven unable to act decisively.

We strongly support all efforts to enhance cooperation between the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations. Effective AU-EU-UN triangular cooperation will be critical to successful peacekeeping operations in the coming years in Africa.

Specifically on planning, we also agree strongly on the need to improve joint planning. We welcome progress made between the AU and the UN in Somalia; the joint planning between ECOWAS and the AU on Mali; and the current coordination between the AU and the UN on the transfer of authority in the Central African Republic between MISCA and MINUSCA.

Nationally, Ireland makes a significant contribution to the training of African security forces, both through participation in EU missions in Somalia and in Mali and on a bilateral basis. Components on human rights, IHL, gender and sexual abuse and exploitation form an important part of such training. We have helped to train the Ugandan police in community policing and the South Sudanese police in conventional munitions disposal, landmine clearance and specialist search awareness. We provide training for modest numbers of African military and police personnel at our United Nations Training School in Ireland. And we are pleased to support the elaboration of UN standards for peacekeeping operations as part of the UNMUM Project, and to provide expertise for the Working Groups on Military Police and Special Forces.

Mr. President,

We are, certainly, in a time of partnerships. Indeed, we have been for quite some time now. We can expect that partnerships will feature as a prominent theme in the Review of Peacekeeping announced by the Secretary-General on 11 June.

Ireland very much looks forward to making a positive, meaningful contribution to this Review, be it in support to a particular area of policy development or in some other way. And we look forward to continuing to make our contribution to various peacekeeping partnerships.