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Swiss Statement

presented by
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Madam Chair,

This year has been witness to a number of important events that could have implications for the future of peacekeeping. In Côte d'Ivoire, the violent clashes that followed the elections tested the ability of the United Nations to keep the peace in an extremely hostile environment. However, the UN has intervened with firmness and determination, a development welcomed by Switzerland. The UN demonstrated in this case its ability to protect the civilian population against such violence. In Southern Sudan, the creation of the UNMISS is a major development, which should contribute to peace and security in this new Member State. The mandate of this mission is extremely wide-ranging and the environment in which it operates is challenging. The establishment of clear priorities would seem to be essential for its success. It is therefore important that the mission be given the financial and human resources necessary for implementing its crucial mandate.

In view of these two cases, it is regrettable that there continue to be disagreements between Member States, particularly between those which fund peacekeeping operations and those which provide personnel. The last year has in fact been marked by difficult discussions regarding the financial aspects of peacekeeping operations: within the Contingent Owned Working Group, during the session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. Though important, these discussions have had the unfortunate effect of complicating debate on many of the other challenges still facing UN peacekeeping operations. We are confident that the Senior Advisory Group set up to look at this issue will be able to find consensus-based solutions. Peacekeeping must remain flexible, so it can be adapted to changing circumstances and local requirements. It is therefore essential that Member States work in a spirit of global partnership and show a willingness to rise above their differences. If peacekeeping missions are to satisfy their mandate, they will require political leadership from the Member States, as well as the necessary material and human resources.

Madam Chair,

Switzerland has noted with interest the strategy of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support on the contribution of peacekeepers to early peacebuilding. It is important that the Secretariat is encouraged to pursue its work on clarifying and formalizing how peacekeeping operations can contribute to building a lasting peace. My delegation believes that the Secretariat should also continue to deal with transition management within the UN system. This will ensure the effective enforcement of this work, which in turn will ensure that more explicit consideration is given to the issue of coordinating the efforts of all partners involved in long-term peacebuilding. We shall follow the implementation of this strategy closely and hope that it will produce tangible results on the ground for UN missions.

Where the protection of civilians is concerned, Switzerland is very pleased that the C-34 has paid attention to this issue over the last four sessions to achieve a better understanding of what is a common task for peacekeeping partners, and to arrive at

an improved strategic framework. Switzerland also welcomes the Secretariat's efforts to develop training modules on the protection of civilians. We now need to ensure that these efforts lead to tangible results on the ground. In this regard, Switzerland would like to point out that the C-34's considerations on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations cannot be conducted in isolation from the rest of the UN system. Coordination among all the parties involved, including humanitarian agencies, is essential and must take into account the mandates of each party. The forthcoming Security Council debate in May 2012 on the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations should be an opportunity for delegations to consolidate the progress that has been made in recent years and will no doubt teach us lessons that will inform our discussions during the next session of the C-34.

Gender issues and the implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security must continue to inform the work of the C-34. The new structures in place, such as UN Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, must continue to be involved in UN peacekeeping discussions. The C-34 should also systematically account for the specific cross-cutting gender issues that are encountered during peacekeeping missions, particularly in relation to the protection of civilians. We therefore encourage the C-34 to forge ahead with its efforts to prevent and control sexual abuse and exploitation during peacekeeping operations. Finally, Switzerland believes that one of the cornerstones of a lasting peace and an egalitarian society is a better gender balance in UN missions, particularly in leadership positions.

Madam Chair,

We would draw attention to the 2011 report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which encouraged its members to "hold an informal dialogue with a view to intensifying the efforts of its working group". There is a growing perception that, in recent years, the C-34 has been the locus of prolonged negotiations, characterized by an excess of rhetoric and a great deal of frustration on all sides. My delegation again commits itself during the forthcoming session to achieve the most effective working process – an aspect it believes to be of prime importance. With this in mind, we welcome the initial measures taken to launch a dialogue of this kind and today's adoption of the draft decision submitted by the Bureau. My delegation hopes that this will make it possible to identify areas in which the Committee's efficiency can be improved further and its work made more effective. The possible areas for improvement include working methods, the reporting structure, the role and support of the Secretariat and Bureau, and indeed assistance for countries which find it difficult to participate in the work. Switzerland is ready to contribute to this joint effort to increase the impact on the ground of the C-34's deliberations.

Thank you.