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Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Swiss Statement

presented by
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Madam Chair,

Important events for the future of peacekeeping have occurred over the last few months. In Côte d'Ivoire, the UN has intervened with firmness and determination, a development welcomed by Switzerland. Those who criticize UN peacekeeping missions for being unable to react promptly to violence against civilians have been proved wrong. In South Sudan, the creation of 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 establishment of clear priorities will 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 challenges, 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 the debate on many of the other challenges still facing UN peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping must remain flexible, so it can be adapted to changing circumstances and local requirements. Switzerland would like to stress the notion of global partnership, a fundamental principle of peacekeeping, which was reaffirmed during the "New Horizons" process.

Madam Chair,

The Review of International Civilian Capacities is a promising process. Switzerland welcomes the start made in implementing the independent experts' report and will continue to actively support these important efforts. Under the leadership of the Department of Field Support, the work has been undertaken energetically and with determination. Some recommendations of course need to be discussed between Member States in greater depth before they can be applied. We nevertheless welcome the determination of the Secretariat to rapidly implement the changes which fall within its sphere of authority. We are hopeful that this process will result in substantial improvements on the ground, proving that the UN is able to innovate and reform itself. We fully support the objectives being pursued, i.e. more agile and rapid management of existing capacities within the system and among Member States. We also welcome the first stages in implementing the Global Field Support Strategy, which should result in the rapid and effective launching of missions, and their timely deployment, as well as improving conditions for supporting civilian personnel. These changes are bound to have an impact of peacekeeping missions generally, and on their civilian components as well. With this in mind, we would encourage transparent exchanges of views between the UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding communities. We shall also be taking a close interest in the strategy of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support regarding the contribution of UN peacekeeping to early peacebuilding, recently circulated by the Secretariat.

With regard to the protection of civilians, Switzerland is very pleased that the C-34 has paid attention to this issue over the last four sessions to achieve an understanding of this task shared by all peacekeeping contributors, and to arrive at an improved strategic framework. 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 actors, is essential and must take into account the principles of action of each party. These principles must be reflected in our work. Moreover, the forthcoming debate on the Security Council agenda in November 2011 should be an opportunity for delegations to consolidate and develop the recommendations of Resolution S/RES/1894 (2009) and will no doubt offer lessons on which we shall capitalize at the next session of the C-34.

Madam Chair,

We would draw attention to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which in its most recent report 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 stronger rhetoric and a great deal of frustration on all sides. My delegation again commits itself during the forthcoming session to optimize the efficiency of working methods – an aspect we believe to be of prime importance. With this in mind, we welcome the initial measures taken to launch a dialogue of this kind. My delegation hopes that it will be possible to identify areas in which the Committee's efficiency can be improved and its work made more effective. The possible areas for improvement include working methods, the structure of the report, the role and support of the Secretariat and Bureau, and assistance for countries which find it difficult to participate in the work. Some measures would be relatively simple to implement, such as treating topics on a bi-annual basis. Switzerland is ready to contribute to this joint effort to increase the impact of the C-34's deliberations.

Thank you.