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Seminar on Multidimensional and Integrated Peace Operations

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Distinguished participants, dear friends,

I'm very happy to be here and to address this crucially important gathering on a theme that governments and international organisations alike are grappling with these days: how can we strategically realign our many-faceted international presence in order to achieve the aim of assisting war-torn societies in their transition from war to peace, despite the typically stove-piped nature of our domestic and international political and administrative systems.

There is growing recognition of the complex and non-linear nature of conflict. Organisational structures must reflect this reality. While normative changes in UN policies have expanded the reach of peace operations, institutional reforms have not necessarily kept pace. Peacekeeping should be seen as a component of a larger strategy on integrated peacebuilding strategies. The peacebuilding strategy should aim at pulling together resources in order to reap the benefits of the peace dividend that the peacekeeping operation, when successful, can provide.

As UN member states we have a responsibility to provide resources for peace operations and to take part in the global debate on how this essential instrument can be improved.

Increasing the UN's capacity to implement effective and efficient peace operations should not be left to the Secretariat alone.

On the basis of our extensive consultations and research on the current application of the integrated missions' concept, we see a clear need to revisit the very definition of integration. We must identify what to integrate and when it should be integrated in order to achieve the desired impact. We also need to focus on what objectives we should integrate around, what outcomes we should expect to achieve through integration, how we can measure our impact and create incentives for integration.

The debate on integration and the system coherence debate is nothing new in a UN context. The latest "integration surge" emerged in response to an identified need to improve the delivery of a post Cold War peace dividend.

The 2005 report included in your seminar folders recommended a number of steps to be taken by the UN itself – many of which have already been or are in the process of being implemented – and by its member states.

I think it is increasingly accepted that in principle, the United Nations is uniquely placed to achieve a more comprehensive approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding – more so than any other organisation.

Despite of the rumours of its "imminent demise", the UN has overseen a surge in activity over the last three to four years that has made it the largest multinational peacekeeping actor in the world. The UN is currently directing more operations and more personnel than NATO, the EU, the African Union and other regional organisations combined – and it does so under severe resource constraints.

The last few years – and not the least the experience of the Iraq war – has shown that global legitimacy is more necessary than ever.

The capacity of the West to influence the Rest has been dramatically reduced. Hence, while we recognise that the UN is gradually becoming better at dealing with the issues at hand, it is also becoming even more necessary that it does so, as the alternatives may not be as attractive as some of us might have thought only a few years ago.

I have had the privilege to follow this process from close quarters and from a number of different vantage points, and it has been encouraging to note how the debate has matured over the last few years. What we have found

since the initial report commissioned by the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs was launched is that a number of initiatives have already been taken, and structures and policies adapted; indeed there is already enough experience to draw some general lessons.

It is increasingly acknowledged that any form of integration needs to be determined by the functions it seeks to deliver, and the desired impact of our actions. Simultaneously, some of the inherent dilemmas involved in integration remain:

- a) Balancing the need to maintain impartial humanitarian space in times of conflict. The political and military pursuit of long-term peace and stability can often conflict with immediate lifesaving action that all civilians are entitled to under international humanitarian law. This is both an incentive for, and an impediment against, the integration effort. Indeed, peacekeeping carried out without reference to humanitarian programmes can have a devastating impact on civilians, whereas humanitarian action without reference to stabilisation objectives can help perpetuate the conflict.
- b) The local ownership dilemma: building credibility and capacity around local structures and actors, while keeping in mind that the actors we thereby empower may not always be striving for the same direction of change as the overarching peacebuilding strategy presupposes. While the ideal scenario is a full realignment between national and international programming, the reality is much more complex.
- c) The human rights dilemma: both inside and outside the new local structures.

Further challenges:

- a) Operating within a system that is fragmented not only by default but also by design.

The objective of this process is to take stock of the progress made so far towards increasing the capacity of the UN and its member states to better plan, manage, monitor, support and deliver complex peace operations;

further develop and implement the integrated concept as well as contribute to addressing some of the core challenges in the time ahead. A clear finding in all of this is the need to better link the overall call for integration with the need for a systemic reform of the UN. Many of the obstacles are directly linked to the need for better understanding of the concept and what it entails and implies among member states, key donors and troop-contributing countries.

This was identified as important in the ECHA report and has in fact increased in importance since, especially as peacekeeping has continued to grow in both volume and complexity.

The project is twofold:

- regional consultations with the full range of stakeholders; and
- research (including the many evaluations that have been commissioned and published on related issues, and an in-depth analysis of the current set-up designed, or not, to support these missions).

We have held regional meetings so far in:

- Beijing – jointly with the Chinese, bringing in 22 key troop contributing countries in the region at decision-making level (Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs);
- Addis Ababa – focusing particularly on the UN operations in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (UNMIS, BINUB, MONUC, UNMEE and AMIS); and
- Geneva – focusing particularly on the humanitarian dilemmas of any form of post-conflict response and the different interpretations and applications of the integrated mission concept.

Today's meeting in New York sets the scene for some very interesting discussions, focusing particularly on strategic integration, decision-making processes, planning and not least, as alluded to above, how to better realign funding and resources, and managing the peacekeeping-peacebuilding interface. In the early autumn, we will be meeting in West Africa. And finally, we will conclude the process in Oslo in October.

The outcome of these meetings will culminate in a final document that summarises the findings of the regional seminars and sets out

recommendations for the planning and implementation of future integrated missions. This document will be presented to the senior management of the UN and other stakeholders.

Findings

In fact, if there is one lesson that stands out it is that integration cannot be based on fixed templates.

Achieving integration requires a clear and shared understanding of what it actually means in practice. There are still fierce disagreements within the UN and outside the UN over whether integration constitutes an enabling framework for planning and prioritisation – i.e. mechanisms to promote coordination – or the de facto merging of administrative and operational policies and programmes.

That being said, there are some key lessons and observations to be drawn.

Revamping the current administrative and budgeting structures and procedures are a crucial factors for success or failure in this area.

- Joint planning is critical. Jointly agreeing on benchmarks to assess the impact of the planning (e.g. did it meet the objectives, deliver on mandate responsibilities?) as well as evaluating the aftermath are equally important. We have advanced on the former, but are lagging behind on the latter as benchmarking, not surprisingly, has become a somewhat donor-oriented exercise.
- The degree of integration must be determined by the desired impact. We must remember the ECHA report mantra: form follows functions.
- Integration should not be seen either as an administrative template or as a goal in itself. Integration is a tool aimed at improving impact on the ground through more efficient delivery, less bureaucracy, reduced duplication of effort, and more effective engagement with partners.

- Full integration (budget, programme and premises) should be determined by the desired impact.
- Integrated strategies must be linked with integrated funding, or else their implementation will not be possible.
- The latter is, however, complicated by structural, administrative and financial barriers within the UN system, and fragmented donor patterns. While the Security Council increasingly authorises mandates that are wide-ranging and multifaceted in nature, the assessed contributions funds for the peacekeeping mission only cater for a small part of the tasks required of the overall operation. This is made worse by differing budget practices, cycles, common services arrangements, convoluted procurement regulations and oversight mechanisms that have prevented any real form of integration from taking place. It is only when the different inter-state bodies of the UN (the Security Council, the Fifth Committee, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the ACABQ) the UN departments, agencies, funds and programmes all work together despite these differences that the overall ambitions of the mandates can be met.
- No fixed templates – rather an agreed strategy attuned to shifting realities on the ground.
- Quick impact projects and common funds are only useful in so far they are well managed and targeted.
- Leadership remains critical, which points us to the importance of better profiling in the initial selection process as well as tailoring the mission preparedness package to build substantive competency about the UN system as a whole and about the underpinning processes, and conflict management training (to be used internally and externally), all of which – if done properly – could assist the mission leadership to create incentives for integration where needed.
- Greater accountability for impact among all actors will support more effective and efficient integration.

- There is also another aspect of integration that merits more focus – how to better mutually support, reconfigure and adapt our responses efficiently, and on a regular basis, to meet the actual demands and changing conflict environments on the ground. Too often we – and the UN and various smaller actors and donors – are too busy focusing on the “green flags” in a mission – the elements of success. And thus we don’t pay enough attention to the critical areas, where serious involvement is still needed, or the impact of our involvement. The tendency is to focus only on the successes, and not on the unfulfilled objectives and the possible consequences of failing to meet them.
- In spite of the best of intentions, we have a tendency to remain too static in our approach. It is important to think strategy, not exit. In general, a quick exit is unlikely to be a good strategy, and we repeatedly declare victory too soon. In so doing, we run the risk of punishing success.
- We must overcome the tendency to see elections as an exit strategy for international engagement, and to equate elections with democracy. It is also important to recognise that although elections represent an important milestone, they tend to shift the risks rather than overcome them. That said, integration is increasingly seen as a means of achieving a sustainable exit and of easing the interface between peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and efforts to restore national capacities.
- In spite of the fact that the UN continues to operate at the limits of its capacity, there is little doubt that the collective ability of the United Nations to plan and lead complex peace operations has significantly improved over the last few years. While there is still substantial room for improvement, we believe that the glass is half full, not half empty.
- Furthermore, we believe that we, as member states, have a responsibility to provide resources for peace operations and take part in the global debate about the improvement of this essential instrument. Increasing the UN’s capacity to implement effective and efficient peace operations should not be left to the Secretariat alone.

- Another trend is the growing acceptance of the protection of civilians as an organic part of any peace operation mandate. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) defines protection broadly as ‘all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of individuals in accordance with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law’. What is less clear is who is responsible for which aspect of this definition. A closer examination of protection and its implications is necessary.

An interesting example is health cooperation in Afghanistan.

- When military forces are deployed in peacekeeping operations in larger numbers, they typically bring embedded military medical facilities, including field hospitals with capacities for advanced surgery. These facilities tend to have surplus capacity. The dilemma is that there is then advanced health capacity in idle mode in an area where adequate health services are extremely scarce. In the case of the Norwegian engagement in Afghanistan, we opted for a solution whereby our military surgeons use their spare time to train and develop the local hospitals in the towns in which they are serving (Mazar-e-Sharif and Meymaneh). Based on local needs, a particular focus has been placed on capacity-building in anaesthetics and treatment of severe burns. There is also focus on further developing local expertise, equipment and capacity, so that the effort can be sustainable.

I am mentioning this small example simply because I think it illustrates that we, as a military organisation, are aware of the pitfalls of walking blind-folded into the humanitarian field. It also illustrates that pragmatic solutions can be found when “vetted” by professional agents in the health field and the national government. The model recognises the need for sustainability and structural change and of abstaining from competing with local or international civilian health services.

- Finally, an integrated approach must be given the resources and training necessary for its implementation. No two operations are the same. But all need better knowledge of the different organisational mandates, better integrated planning, more robust guidelines, and,

most importantly, the demonstration of mutual respect. This will improve interoperability between contributing states, within the mission, and between partners on the ground.

I hope that this seminar will provide a more in-depth understanding of these and the many other trends, challenges and dilemmas that face UN peacekeeping today. I believe it is vital that member states engage in this crucially important debate. A key objective of our discussions here should be to find practical ways of reconciling the different operational goals and mandates within a common framework based on the desired outcome. I look forward to engaging with you on this over the next days.

Thank you.