

Remarks by Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun at the Opening Ceremony of China-ASEAN Peacekeeping Seminar

2007/12/01

Respected Mr. Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Chief of the General Staff,
Respected Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

I am very pleased to attend the China-ASEAN Peacekeeping Seminar. On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I wish to thank the Ministry of Defense for its diligent efforts in preparing for the Seminar and extend warm welcome to our ASEAN friends. I wish the meeting a complete success.

At present, the international situation is undergoing complex and profound changes. The noble cause of human progress is facing both historic opportunities and unprecedented challenges. In today's world, the force for peace is growing and the conditions for promoting development are constantly improved. To pursue peace, development, stability and cooperation is the common aspiration of people of all countries. Generally speaking, opportunities outweigh challenges.

At the same time, the process of globalization continues to develop in depth. In this world, all countries share weal and woe and are closely related in their security and development. Without universal security, no country can enjoy real security. Without common development, no country can achieve sustainable development. To achieve world peace and development, we must persist in multilateralism, strengthen collective action, promote international cooperation and continue to strengthen the role and authority of the United Nations.

Dear colleagues,

The United Nations is the most broadly-based, representative and authoritative inter-governmental international organization. Founded more than 60 years ago, the UN has gone through numerous changes but has always upheld its lofty aim "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind" and played an irreplaceable and important role in maintaining world peace and security. The UN peacekeeping operations have made a unique contribution to this aim. The UN peacekeeping operation is an important initiative that has been gradually developed in practice after the United Nations went through a series of crises. It is an effective means to practice multilateralism and achieve collective security. Since the first deployment in 1948, the UN peacekeeping operations continued to develop. Millions of peacekeepers worked or are working actively in places of the world with most urgent call for peace. With shared beliefs, they have gathered under the banner of the United Nations and made tremendous efforts to help countries in conflict restore peace and rebuild homes. Some of them even sacrificed their precious lives.

Dear colleagues,

In the 21st century, the United Nations peacekeeping operations have entered a new era and have shown the distinctive new features as follows:

First, peacekeeping operations are expanding in scale with more participating departments. In 2000, the United Nations deployed 15 peacekeeping operations, with about 20,000 peacekeepers from over 80 troop-contributing countries. At present, there are 17 ongoing UN peacekeeping operations involving over 100,000 peacekeepers and as many as 119 troop-contributing countries. The expanded scale of peacekeeping operations call for increased resources. The 2007-2008 peacekeeping budget is as high as 5.29 billion US dollars whereas the figure for 1999-2000 was about 2.7 billion US dollars. More departments are participating in peacekeeping

operations, including the peacekeeping, political, legal, management and other departments. Other specialized UN agencies are also strengthening their participation.

Second, peacekeeping operations have a broadened mandate and more diversified tasks. Traditional peacekeeping operations were mainly about monitoring ceasefire, troop withdrawal and separation of warring parties and periodic reports of the situation on the ground. But in the 21st century, most UN peacekeeping missions are multi-functional and integrated missions with a mandate that has extended rapidly beyond "peacekeeping" to include "conflict prevention" and "post-conflict peace-building". According to available statistics, the current UN peacekeeping operations have dozens of functions, including organizing and supervising elections, assisting in the implementation of constitution or judicial reform, disarming illegal armed forces, restructuring the security department and providing humanitarian relief.

Third, peacekeeping operations are more involved in internal conflicts. In the past, peacekeeping operations mainly handled disputes and conflicts between countries, but they are basically deployed to resolve conflicts within a country now. In the 17 ongoing peacekeeping operations of the United Nations, 12 are to help the country concerned to achieve peace, stability and national reconciliation. This requires strengthened communication between the United Nations and the host countries, comprehensive and accurate understanding of the political, ethnic, economic, cultural and other aspects in the host countries and flexible approaches in light of local conditions. Only in this way can the UN play a more effective role.

Fourth, regional organizations play an increasingly important role in UN peacekeeping operations. In recent years, the African Union, the European Union, the Organization of American States, ECOWAS and other regional and sub-regional organizations have strongly supported and cooperated with United Nations peacekeeping operations through a variety of channels, bringing in their unique strengths in maintaining regional peace and security and making unique contribution to contain conflicts and ease humanitarian crises. Intensified participation by regional organizations also led to increasingly diverse forms of deployment of UN peacekeeping operations. For example, the Security Council authorized in July the deployment of an AU/UN Hybrid Force in the Darfur, Sudan.

Dear colleagues,

These new features of peacekeeping operations have also brought new challenges and the need of reforms to properly cope with them. China is in favor of rational reforms of UN peacekeeping operations to enable them to better adapt to the changing circumstances and better perform their duties and missions. I wish to underscore the following points:

First, right guiding principles are the foundation for the success of UN peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping operations should be carried out in compliance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and under the authorization and guidance of the Security Council. Views of parties concerned should be fully respected, neutrality should be strictly observed and the principle of using armed forces only when necessary should be firmly adhered to. Practice has proven that only in this way can peacekeeping operations truly help conflict areas realize durable peace and security, win popular support and achieve success.

Second, a rational organizational structure is the pillar of the success of peacekeeping operations. We welcome the UN Secretariat's adjustment of its peacekeeping agencies and hope the reformed Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the newly-established Department of Field Support will begin their functioning at an early date and provide strong policy guidance and logistical support to all UN peacekeeping operations. Other UN agencies should also give necessary support to the two Departments to form a synergy. All missions should improve their internal structure and enhance coordination and cooperation among departments for maximum efficiency.

Third, competent personnel are the basis for the success of peacekeeping operations. Efforts should be made to improve the administration of peacekeepers, and strengthen supervision, personnel and financial systems, as well as trainings both before and during operations. The Secretariat and all peacekeeping missions should take measures to ensure professional ethics and disciplines of peacekeepers. Meanwhile, the security situation is

severe in some regions where peacekeeping operations are conducted. In certain areas, peacekeepers have even become targets of terrorist attacks. Therefore the safety of peacekeepers should be earnestly guaranteed, and these envoys for peace should never become victims of conflict and violence.

Fourth, sufficient financial resources are the guarantee for the success of peacekeeping operations. All countries should bear in mind the strategic interest of maintaining global and regional peace and stability and demonstrate their due political will by providing timely and adequate financial support to UN peacekeeping operations, so as to create necessary conditions for fast deployment of peacekeeping operations. At the same time, an exit strategy should be formulated in a timely manner to ensure that the limited peacekeeping resources are spent in most needed places.

Fifth, good partnerships are the catalyst for the success of peacekeeping operations. The UN should further enhance its cooperation with regional organizations and encourage them to contribute more to peacekeeping. The international community should continue to help regional organizations such as the African Union to improve their peacekeeping capacity and provide financial and logistical supports. It needs to be emphasized that we should not rely totally on peacekeeping operations for conflict resolution. Priority should be given to eliminating root causes of conflicts, economic development, and capacity and institution building in particular. Only when the initiative and strength of specialized UN agencies, international financial institutions and relevant regional organizations are fully tapped and integrated strategies are adopted, will countries concerned be able to get out of conflicts and achieve durable peace and stability.

Dear colleagues,

Asia is the largest and most populous continent and the most active participant in UN peacekeeping operations. Both China and ASEAN actively support multilateralism and vigorously promote the role of the UN. ASEAN, as an important regional organization in Asia, has actively participated in and supported UN peacekeeping operations. Over 2,000 peacekeepers from ASEAN countries are deployed around the world. China has sent a total of over 9,000 army men, policemen and civilian officials to peacekeeping missions since 1989. Among them, over 1,800 peacekeepers are now working in 12 mission zones. The Chinese multi-function engineering troops to Darfur, Sudan will be soon deployed. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has also shouldered substantial scale of assessment for UN peacekeeping operations. Both China and ASEAN have made important contribution to the development of UN peacekeeping operations and maintenance of world peace and security.

I sincerely hope that my ASEAN and Chinese colleagues can fully exchange views during this seminar and share experience in peacekeeping operations in the new era. China looks forward to having more similar activities with colleagues from ASEAN so that we can strengthen studies on issues such as formulation of guiding principles, enhancing efficiency and improving the work of multifunction missions, make suggestions for better coping with challenges facing peacekeeping operations, make more contribution to enriching the content and enhancing the influence of peacekeeping operations, and jointly promote a greater role of the UN.

Thank you.