**Security Council**

Briefing by Force Commanders (FC)/Heads of Military Component (HOMC) of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

June 17, 2015

Statement

Mr. President,

We welcome, and thank for their presence, Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Hervé Ladsous; Lieutenant General Yohaness Gebremeskel Tesfamariam, Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); Major General Michael Collesgaard, Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); and Major-General Michael Finn, Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

We express our deep appreciation for the very interesting and useful insights here provided.

Mr. President,

We acknowledge the dramatic changes, in nature and scope, of the United Nations Peace Operations worldwide.

With reference to the UN Secretary-General remarks on June 11th, at present UN Peacekeeping Missions are forced to operate in situations where there is no peace to keep. Thus, the field personnel entrusted with the mandate to protect civilians, are themselves increasingly under threats, and forced to counter asymmetric and unconventional attacks while carrying out other complex mandated tasks, among which to protect the civilian population.

The three topics introduced by the briefers translate the complex reality, of the environment in which peace operations are deployed. We are going to briefly address each of them, namely:

1. Challenges in the Protection of Civilians;
2. Challenges of operating under an asymmetric environment; and
3. Challenges derived from caveats an impediments to command and performance of peace operations.

Regarding the Protection of Civilians, it became the central feature of the mandates approved by the Security Council, and the primary reason to deploy a UN Peacekeeping Mission.

However, at present, this core objective of the UN Missions is seriously challenged by repeated cycles of violence, weak governance and recurring instability even in countries where peace agreements have been successfully implemented.

The interpretation of the protection of civilians concept, from a UN perspective, comprise a three tier approach as the mission strategy: Dialogue and Engagement as Tier I; Provision of Physical Protection as Tier II; and Establishment of a Protective Environment the Tier III. Those are conceptual key elements to ensure a mission’s success.

However, the lack of resources, of effective information gathering or information analysis, weak or non-functioning states, poor unity of purpose by different Troop Contributing Countries (TCC’s) within a mission, law and order problems and, the inadequately trained or prepared military forces are challenges that the Security Council must address timely, and take corrective measures in order to avoid failure and try to ensure the best conditions for a mission´s success.

Operating under Asymmetric Environment is the most radical evolving operational situation faced by contemporary peace keeping missions, which were originally designed as a separation force to keep a truce or armistice between symmetric opposing regular armed forces.

At present, as the assessment reviews shows, an asymmetric environment in which peace keeping missions operate, poses major security and safety issues to peace keepers who are mandated, as its core objective, to protect civilians.

This is further compounded by the increasing threat of regional terrorism, particularly in Africa, with the use vehicle borne Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and suicide attacks, increasing the number of casualties among UN Personnel.

Therefore, the need to establish a comprehensive C-IED/Asymmetrical threat approach as the strategic framework response to this deadly threat, while maintaining the military and civilian components permitting the mission to effectively accomplish its mandate.

Finally, the conditionality imposed by Caveats as impediment to Command and Performance, if we take into account that unity of command and control is of paramount importance for any mission performance and success.

Although in small numbers, some Member States troops or police contributors to peace keeping missions impose caveats, such as location of deployment, types of actions that units are not allowed to undertake and parallel rules of engagement.

These and the retention of an operational link between a contingent and their capitals often results in disobedience of orders from the Force Commander, a situation totally unacceptable as it hampers the mission´s operational capabilities.

We are of the view that Troop and Police Contributing Countries should strictly respect the chain of command, since the failure to adhere to coherent and consistent orders of the Force Commander may lead to wrongdoing and even to catastrophic consequences to all those involved, while damaging the reputation of the entire United Nations system.

To end, Mr. President, we convey our deep appreciation for the convening of this session, for the briefings provided, and for the interaction afforded between Council Members and Force Commanders/Head of Military Component on the ground.

I thank you Mr. President