



Misión Permanente de Costa Rica ante las Naciones Unidas

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Statement to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations H.E. Mr. Bruno Stagno Ambassador, Permanent Representative

February 1, 2005

Mr. Chairman

Allow me, to welcome and wish you, and all the members of the Bureau, success in the proceedings of the current session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

At the same time, my delegation wishes to thank the Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, for his presentation.

As in previous sessions of the Committee, the Costa Rican delegation reiterates its disposition to collaborate with you and our colleagues, in order to obtain the best result in our negotiations.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation endorses the statement made by the distinguished delegate of Argentina. We have only asked for the floor to emphasize some points which are of particular interest to my country.

Convinced that peacekeeping operations are, in many cases, the main ally to the well-being, and even the survival, of millions of people, Costa Rica grants special importance to this issue within its foreign policy. For us, peace has neither borders nor time-limits, it is not the product of a victory nor of a mandate. For us, peace is the result of a profound conviction in the effective respect of human rights and the consolidation of the rule of law.

That it is why, it should not be of any surprise that a country without an army, like mine, actively participates in this Committee, nor that we are horrified by the regrettable events that are explained in the A/59/661 report.

These events not only breach the Code of Personal Conduct for Blue Helmets, the MONUC code of conduct and the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13). These events also constitute crimes that are typified in our national legislations and are also a flagrant

violation of the international law of human rights and to the *raison d'être* of peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Chairman,

We are horrified, not only by the seriousness of the crimes committed, but by the inefficiency of the existing mechanisms to prevent them. The latter is a challenge we must face without delay.

This Committee has as its mandate to establish those policies that govern the activities of the Organization in peacekeeping. For this purpose, we meet once a year and emit guidelines and recommendations with the purpose of achieving the well-being of those millions of people we were just talking about.

To achieve this objective, we commit our efforts and resources. This is why we created the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation wishes to recognize the work done by of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and welcomes all the recommendations contained in the A/59/661 report. Especially the eighth recommendation, which refers to a wider application of prevention and detection policies to protect against sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers, including the public naming and shaming of those found to have engaged in sexual exploitation and abuse.

We are satisfied that the Department on Peacekeeping Operations agrees with all the recommendations and we expect their prompt implementation.

In this sense, my delegation considers it important that this issue be included in the report of the working session of this Committee. We are obviously willing to cooperate with other States that are similarly interested.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary General's wise appointment of H.E. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Permanent Representative of Jordan, as advisor on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations peacekeeping personnel, gives us great satisfaction and relief.

We trust that the proven capacity of Prince Zeid, and his personal experience in the field of peacekeeping operations, will facilitate the solution of this serious problem and will help us to prevent any recurrence in the future.

Mr. Chairman,

When analyzing the A/59/661 report, the first thing that alarms us is that this investigation began only in response to media reports published at the beginning of last year.

Why did we have to wait for media reports on these abuses to begin an investigation?

In 2001, three years ago, it was agreed to send child protection advisors (CPA's). This was done with the objective of meeting the special needs of this population.

Why, then, did we have to wait until the media reports on these abuses to begin an investigation?

Including the issue of gender in peacekeeping operations was also a response to a concern by Members States to address to the needs of women, a vulnerable sector in conflict situations.

Why, I repeat, did we have to wait until the media reports on these abuses to begin an investigation?

Last year, the Special Committee noted that the UN shares the responsibility of its staff with the countries that contribute contingents. It also emphasized that those countries and the office of the Mission must collaborate in the handling of bad conduct cases and in adopting measures so that national laws are respected.

Why, then, did we have to wait until the media reports on these abuses to begin an investigation?

Mr. Chairman,

The A/59/661 Report indicates that one of the main causes that promote abuse is poverty. It was hunger that propelled the children to initiate contact with members of the MONUC in search of food or some money. It also indicates that this food insecurity is due to the fact that the population can not attend to their fields for fear of militia attacks.

Is it not part of the obligations of the Mission to create a security zone to protect the civil population from the militia? Is that not the reason for the military camps to be located in close proximity to the civil population?

That those that are deployed to protect the civil population become their new abusers is absolutely unacceptable.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation believes that responsibility for these acts reaches all the spheres of the Mission and Department of Peacemaking Operations.

Those who have been denounced as perpetrators of these acts must be judged and, if found guilty, sanctioned to the full extent of the law.

The commanders of those contingents that declined to provide the information or assistance solicited, or who in fact, deliberately interfered with the investigation, must be

sanctioned according to the existing normative framework and should not participate in future UN peacekeeping operations.

Those who are in positions of leadership and supervision in this Mission must answer for their omissions.

Only thus, Mr. Chairman, will we make sure that a deplorable situation, such as the one before us, will not damage permanently the dignified image that thousands of men and women have courageously and responsibly created, at the risk of their own lives, and sometimes losing it, to make the dream of peace and international security a reality.

Thank you.