

United Nations Nations Unies

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“SUPPORTING PEACE IN NEW KIND OF CONFLICTS”

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President Ahtisaari, Under-Secretary Laajava, Mr. Thornberry, my fellow panelists and guests. I am honored to have been invited to address this event, in the company of so many distinguished speakers and seasoned veterans of international conflict management.

I have been asked to explore the challenges facing the United Nations in supporting peace in new kinds of conflicts. I will humbly try to do so, particularly from a UN peacekeeping perspective, as I represent the Department of Peacekeeping Operations here today. Of course, recent events urge us to acknowledge that new threats to international peace and security -- such as in the form of transnational terrorism, destabilizing cross-border refugee flows, organized crime and narco-trafficking -- cannot be seen in isolation from some of the “old types” of conflict that have been left to fester.

WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF CURRENT UN EFFORTS?

In the last year alone, the United Nations has been involved in trying to help mitigate or resolve more than 30 different conflicts worldwide. In a number of the cases, the UN’s conflict management role has been primarily restricted to very discrete diplomatic efforts by the Secretary-General himself, whilst in others, he has dispatched Special Envoys to support regional and sub-regional efforts to resolve civil conflicts; in Sudan and Burundi, for example. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Secretary-General is working together with the other members of the “Quartet”-- the US, the EU and the Russian Federation. Concurrently, the UN is trying to broker

comprehensive political settlements of deep-seeded disputes in Cyprus, Western Sahara, and Georgia. Most recently, the Organization pulled off a diplomatic coup at Bonn, Germany, in December 2001, in finding consensus among anti-Taliban factions for the installation of an interim Afghan Administration led by Hamid Karzai.

In addition, the UN maintains a political presence in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Guatemala, Tajikistan, the Central African Republic, Bougainville/Papua New Guinea and Angola, to help promote post-conflict peace-building efforts.

The most visible and high profile form of UN involvement is evidenced in the deployment of 15 peacekeeping operations around the world, with total annual budgets hovering between 2 to 3 billion. I am pleased to report that there have been some very positive developments in UN peacekeeping over the past year or so.

The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) came to a close on 20 May 2002, culminating in East Timor's independence. When UNTAET arrived, over 80% of houses and buildings were destroyed, the civil administration was no longer functioning, the judiciary and court systems had ceased to exist and the private sector had collapsed. Since then, over 11,000 civil servants have been recruited and trained. The Police College established by the UN has graduated 1,500 officers. Dozens of government buildings are restored, and over 17 rural power stations are back on line.

Sierra Leone also took a critical step forward this year in putting decades of deadly conflict behind her, with the peaceful election and installation of a new government in May 2002. The over 17,500 strong force of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) greatly helped lay the foundations for this breakthrough and for the disarmament and demobilization of over 47,000 rebel fighters.

We are also moving progressively forward in helping to stabilize the situation between Eritrea/Ethiopia, whose recent conflict demonstrated that the need for "traditional" peacekeeping operations remains ever present. Also, we look forward to the successful conclusion of the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, transferring

responsibilities for the police-restructuring tasks to the European Union on 1 January 2003.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there has been some success. The peace operation on the ground, (MONUC), has been supporting the disengagement of armies, and the overall level of violence has dropped since it deployed. The next stage of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating combatants, however, is unlikely to move forward successfully until a comprehensive power-sharing agreement between the Congolese parties is achieved, and the regional dimensions of the conflict are addressed. The recent conclusion of the “Pretoria Agreement” between Rwanda and the Government of the DRC provides a basis for some optimism.

These recently established UN peacekeeping operations are added to the list of our transitional administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and much longer-standing “traditional” operations in Cyprus, Southern Lebanon, the Golan Heights, the Iraq-Kuwait border, India/Pakistan, and Western Sahara.

DOES THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT DICTATE THE RESPONSE?

Why are we making progress in certain cases, but not in others? Is it because the diplomats involved, or the operations concerned, are not working effectively enough? There is no doubt that the performance of individuals can and does make a tremendous difference. The UN cannot, however, bring most conflicts to an end, unless the countries with the means and influence make it a priority to resolve them.

Take for example, the case of Afghanistan. Who would have imagined two years ago, that American and European troops would be patrolling the streets of Kabul? The tragic events of 11 September 2001 transformed the dynamics for international action in Afghanistan. Absent this unexpected seismic shift in the global geo-political landscape, Afghanistan might have been left essentially to its own devices to escape from over 23 years of brutal war.

Likewise, the end of the Cold War afforded us the opportunity to bring peacekeeping treatment to bear on the festering wounds of a number of proxy wars. The internal conflicts in Cambodia, El Salvador and Mozambique were not new. What was new was the ability of former Cold War adversaries to forge consensus in the Security Council on the need to end those wars. What was new was the opportunity for peace. What was new was their unity of vision for the UN to provide that avenue for peace. Out of this political context emerged a new vision for UN peacekeeping operations beginning in fact, in Namibia, under President Ahtisaari's leadership.

This new vision entailed a readiness on the part of the Security Council to enlarge the scale and scope of the operations' mandated tasks, and Member States willingness to provide them with the political, financial, material and personnel support to do so. The new generation of peacekeepers thus facilitated the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants into civilian life. They conducted elections, monitored human rights and developed national human rights institutions. They engaged in monitoring and restructuring of police forces. They were given a prominent role in fostering good governance and economic recovery.

Sadly, that newly found consensus and resolve was quickly strained by developments in the mid-1990s in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina, prompting Member States to drastically curtail their investment in UN peacekeeping.

In the ensuing few years, trends towards the "regionalization" of peacekeeping tasks gained ascendancy, notably in the Balkans. The limits of the "regional approach", however, became clear in 1999, following the Kosovo, East Timor, and Sierra Leone crises. They reminded us that no other organization retains the universal legitimacy of the UN, and that the capacities of regional organizations are not monolithic. In short, there are no equivalents to NATO in Africa, or anywhere else for that matter.

THE CHALLENGE OF RAPID RESPONSE TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

I mention the trends in UN and related peacekeeping operations of the last decade in order to emphasize a central point: it is the political context for international action that determines the nature of the UN's response to conflicts, just as much if not more so than the nature of the conflicts themselves. We can assume that ethnic strife, confessional politics, religious divide, greed and grievance, bad governance, inequities in the allocation of scarce resources, corruption and/or the unalloyed quest for power will continue to fan the fires of the 'third millennium's' conflicts. What we cannot assume is the extent to which the international community of nations will summon the political will to extinguish those flames, particularly before they spread into new kinds of threats to international peace and security.

The experience of the past decade has demonstrated that the universe of the possible can be quite vast. And, when the stars actually align as a result of unexpected or fortuitous events, the "lead time" we are given for advance preparation and planning of a new operation can sometimes be measured in days' and weeks, not months or years.

Juxtaposed against the need for rapidity of deployment is the increasing difficulties we are facing to field qualified military and civilian police personnel. Modern armies are downsizing and facing competing demands for troop commitments to regional and sub-regional peacekeeping assignments. The 'enabling forces' that used to be government-provided, particularly in the fields of logistics, communications, transport, and aviation facilities are now in desperate short supply. Also, many countries are becoming more unwilling to deploy scarce human and material assets into potential harm's way, half way around the globe.

At the same time, the Member States of the United Nations have recently taken the decision to allocate over \$140 million for us to build a strategic reserve of equipment at our Logistics Base in Brindisi, Italy, as well as to enter into service contracts and standby arrangements with commercial providers. We are concurrently overhauling our civilian staffing strategy, so as to be able to recruit and deploy qualified personnel within

extremely short notice. And lastly, we are renewing our appeal to Member States to maintain the readiness to contribute their military and civilian police personnel in the time and in the numbers required.

On this front, the challenge before the UN is two-fold. On the one hand we must retain the requisite commitment and support of governments, being the only ones that can shape the political context for the success of a UN operation. On the other hand we must be able to turn to the private sector to help sustain a rapid deployment capacity, and to maximize the output of limited resources by leveraging them with modern technology.

The challenge is compounded by the fact that establishing the proper security environment quickly is of no use, unless it is capitalized upon with the urgent delivery of the requisite humanitarian, developmental, human rights and economic assistance. This can take many forms. Social services may need to be restored, rule of law institutions might need to be strengthened, agricultural production may need to be rejuvenated, and water and electric-supply restored. Jobs, for sure, will need to be created to provide a viable economic alternative to crime or war. The need is often urgent to re-establish methods of disseminating information to war-affected populations. Governmental structures at the local, regional and national level need to be repaired, and sometimes created afresh. And the seeds for the creation of a vibrant civil society need to be nourished if not planted, so as to support national capacities to breath life into, and sustain genuine national peace.

This means that the entire family of United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes need to be able to work together. It means cooperating with regional and sub-regional organizations to identify tasks for which they might be better suited. It entails cooperating with non-governmental organizations and International Financial Institution on both short-term recovery and the initiation of long-term reconstruction. When the UN is given a central role for stewarding the transition from war to peace, the burden of effective coordination is immense.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

To conclude, as a prelude to further discussions, there is tremendous scope for the UN to better coordinate its efforts within itself and external partners -- as well as to enhance its rapid deployment capacities -- by making maximum use of modern technology and information systems. When the international consensus and will emerges to resolve a conflict, and the international community then turns to the UN, we must be ready to act. I look forward to hearing from the experts on how information technology could help us to do so.

Thank you.