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**Towards Interoperability in Crisis Management – A Political Agenda**

President Martti Ahtisaari, Mr. Michael Matthiessen, Ambassador Adam Kobieracki, Ambassador van Zutphen, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. I feel greatly honoured to be amongst such an eminent gathering this morning and to have the opportunity of presenting my thoughts to you on behalf of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping – DPKO, as we call it. Thank you President Ahtisaari and Ambassador Solomon for inviting me.

Permit me to introduce myself very briefly. I am the first Director of Change Management in the DPKO. Among other responsibilities, I also wear the hat of the Chief Information Officer. In that capacity I will be your main interlocutor in DPKO. I must, however, confess that I have been there only for six weeks, so please bear with my ignorance if you discover it.

At the two earlier sessions of this conference in September last year and March this year, Director Da Costa and Under Secretary General Guehenno from DPKO spoke at some length on the growth and development of DPKO and the transformation of peacekeeping from a relatively simple exercise into a highly complex, compound, diverse and multifaceted undertaking. They spoke in historical terms about how initial efforts during the Cold War aimed at conflict containment and entailed sending lightly armed troops or unarmed military observers drawn from around the world to observe a cease-fire agreement. By contrast, subsequent peacekeeping missions have involved a combination of military operations, a civilian police deployment, a judicial and corrections presence, humanitarian relief activity, disarmament and demobilization, demining action, protection of human rights, management and return of refugees and internally displaced persons, rehabilitation and reconstruction, revival or even re-creation of state institutions, conduct of referendums and elections, support for economic recovery, and of course intensive and extensive diplomatic activity. This expanded model of UN peacekeeping worked effectively in Namibia, El Salvador, and Mozambique, and also achieved important successes in Cambodia.

My colleagues also spoke of the multiplicity of the players operating in a country or region where a peacekeeping mission today is undertaken. Those may include various departments of the United Nations, UN agencies, international financial institutions, regional political and military organizations, government departments and agencies of the host country, non-governmental organizations

and private sector logistics and administrative support. While speaking of the transformation of Peacekeeping into a more complex global endeavour, they stressed that the guiding principle of DPKO operations – to promote and sustain peace – has remained the same. I want today to emphasise that central to that transformation in Peacekeeping has been the establishment of interoperability as a major approach to crisis management and containment.

The great Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu said that the best victory is won without fighting the enemy. Similarly a crisis is best managed by preventing it from occurring. The first stage for that would be to predict that a crisis is likely to develop in a certain country or region. That would require continuous monitoring, collecting, collating, analysing and sharing of information. One of the major elements that has changed in recent DPKO operations is the communications and sharing of information. In early missions, communication was straightforward and often even tacit. Yet as the overall operations and structures have grown more complex, so have the challenges of information sharing. This shift has coincided, of course with dramatic changes in communications and information technology. One of the most important opportunities offered by more sophisticated information management and communications systems is the possibility of preventing a crisis. The analysis and evaluation of information can be essential to determining the likelihood and the nature of an emerging crisis and to the implementation of pre-emptive steps to prevent that crisis. Perhaps many lives could have been saved in Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo, through early intervention by the international community. Early and pre-emptive interventions are also likely to be less complex, more effective and economical. Communication and Information Technology can provide the means to help decision makers predict and prevent crises.

In the past decade, in the Former Yugoslavia and Central and West Africa, we have witnessed the tendency of crises of peace to expand rapidly, both in spatial and qualitative dimensions. Sometimes pre-emption and prevention are not viable possibilities. So when a crisis does occur, peacekeeping efforts have to focus on its containment. Often that requires rapid deployment of multiple elements of a robust peacekeeping operation in order to be an effective and influential deterrent to escalation. Again, a reliable C<sup>4</sup> I System designed for common usage by all elements of the mission can greatly aid its rapid deployment and early effectiveness in containment.

Once contained and limited, a peace crisis must be defused. During this phase too, interoperability of communications and information systems and a high degree of coordination between all elements of a UN Peacekeeping mission and with the non-UN presence in the theatre, play a vital role. As demonstrated by our missions in East Timor and Kosovo, the coordination of multiple components was crucial to overall success. These included experts in civil administration to guide the creation of new state institutions; legal professionals to establish a rule of law in the emerging democracies; and international civilian staff to provide the

administrative and logistics support to keep this large and complex structure functioning. The expanded capabilities of managing communications and information – as familiar as e-mail and satellite links, but nevertheless unheard of just a few years ago – contributed to increased coordination and overall mission success.

While the peacekeeping mission should, thereafter, thin out and ultimately withdraw, the peace and peaceable conditions established must be sustained and strengthened by the concerned state and, sometimes, its regional partners. To prevent the recurrence of a crisis, as has happened in Liberia lately, monitoring and preventative actions remain as necessary as in the first stage of predicting and preventing a crisis. Information sharing, consultations, coordination and timely decision making for timely actions are at a premium until national institutions are strong enough to ensure stability. Their effective coordination, in turn, requires flexible, adaptable and scalable communications capabilities.

Quite clearly, in all phases and stages of peace management, whether peace monitoring, peacekeeping or peace enforcement, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations needs communication and information management systems and tools to share information, to consult and to coordinate with other agents and organizations – international, regional, national and local. However, our closest interaction will have to be with other United Nations departments, agencies and funds, both in the field and at the headquarters. Ensuring joint operations that are effective in fulfilling our Departmental mandate requires ongoing reform and improvement of information management to support all aspects of increasingly complex and numerous Peacekeeping operations.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is currently responsible for fifteen operations in different parts of the world. A new peacekeeping operation is likely to be undertaken soon in Liberia. More often than not, our operations are located in countries and areas with minimal communications and information technology infrastructure. Often, whatever infrastructure existed is also destroyed before our arrival there. We therefore have to depend on our own capabilities only. Frequently we also have to share our assets with regional and national partners, in the interest of interoperability with them. We have a modern telecommunications system called Mobile Deployable Telecommunications System (MDTS), which has been designed for use in the field. It is a satellite communications system that meets our requirement of rapid deployment to areas with poor or severely degraded communications infrastructures. The Information and Communication Technology Board of the United Nations is working to standardize equipment, systems, programmes, procedures and methods for use by various departments and agencies of the organization. That gives us a good measure of interoperability with our UN partners in the field. However, we could do still more if the systems deployed by other organizations in the same theatre

were also compatible with MDTs. This is an area in which our technical experts could look to work more fully in conjunction with the private sector.

It is necessary to note that one of the constraints on interoperability is the need for security of communications and information. This bears directly on the security of our personnel and operations. As you are aware, in many parts of the world, where DPKO is conducting peacekeeping operations, some national entities and regional countries are part of the problem. Their access to certain information can be counterproductive, even dangerous. Our requirement, therefore, is to have a secure system on which we can share information carefully. One example of secure voice/radio traffic is the use of trunked radio systems in selected theatres of operations, which provide improved security over normal two-way radio systems.

Planning and deployment of new operations are based on information collected from a variety of sources, which may include the host country, regional countries and organizations, any UN presence already in the region, media and non-governmental organizations. Information technology can help DPKO enhance its capability to synthesize and assess that varied information more quickly and accurately.

One result of the process of reform undertaken in the past few years was the conversion of DPKO's Lessons Learned Unit into a Best Practices Unit. This has involved the creation of an ever-expanding base of lessons and best practices learnt from our experience in the field. Such a base of knowledge must be made accessible to those who need to use it for our ongoing and future operations. At the same time, the flow of input into this base, from the field, needs to be systemized.

In the past, information gathering in the field has not been a high priority for peacekeeping and other UN operations, and that has cost us dearly. Perhaps a more advanced and efficient system of collection and analysis of information would help us upgrade security measures against threats which cause tragedies like that of 19 August in Baghdad and the shooting down of our helicopter in Georgia two years ago. As threats to our personnel and material assets increase, and as the number and complexity of our operations expand, there is a need for us to enhance our information gathering capability in the field, particularly in those missions where threats may be more imminent or more active. A better information gathering capability is also likely to enhance our freedom of action in the field and could provide the added benefit of confidence building with and amongst the parties to the conflict. Remote sensing and monitoring technologies, such as the New Point Mercury terminals used for remote satellite earth station monitoring and control coordinated with communications and information technology can be effectively and flexibly applied to meet these needs.

We in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations understand that all these knowledge and information management and interoperability capabilities cannot be developed internally or in a single static model. We need to engage actively to work with private enterprises in the CIT sector to accurately identify and determine our current and future needs, and then to help provide improved technological capabilities, and viable and scalable approaches incorporating technologies to meet those needs. However, we have always to be mindful that we must cut our coat within our cloth. As I have tried to stress in discussing interoperability today, these capabilities must, nevertheless, remain appropriate to our needs and must be developed economically.

To conclude, let me say that in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations we greatly appreciate this crisis management initiative, and look at it as complementary to our own reform and development efforts involving interoperability. Surely, together we can make the whole business of peace management and peacekeeping more efficient, effective, economical and secure. Together, we can make the world a safer place for all of us to live in.