

United Nations Security Council

**Debate on
Maintenance of International
Peace & Security
“Peace Operations facing
asymmetrical threats”**

7 November, 2016

INDIA STATEMENT

Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin
Permanent Representative

Mr. President

Thank you for organizing this Open Debate on “Peacekeeping Operations facing Asymmetrical Threats”.

2. I am also grateful for the very interesting briefings provided as a precursor to this session on an issue of enormous relevance for the future evolution of the United Nations' peacekeeping operations.

Mr. President

3. Threats and challenges to the UN's peacekeeping enterprise are not new. Congo in the 1960s, Bosnia & Rwanda in the 1990s, Sierra Leone in 2000, and many others since then precede the current stresses that peacekeeping faces.

4. What is different now is that the “new normal” consistently requires staying and operating in volatile environments, where parties involved are not only using technological advances in the adaptation of destructive weaponry to their benefit but are wedded to transnational ideologies and linked to trans-border networks of crime and terror. Illicit violent organizations are gaining increasing control over territory, markets and populations. Although such phenomena are not limited to peacekeeping missions alone, they impact peacekeeping in a manner like never before. All this is new.

Mr. President

5. At one level, we can focus on the technical fixes to address such situations. We can call for the development of doctrinal principles about the use of offensive capabilities for peacekeeping missions that operate in asymmetric and war-fighting environments to address these issues.

6. Following this approach, we can adopt new technology, intelligence gathering, standby and quick-reaction capabilities, and force enablers and hope these will do the trick.

7. Notwithstanding the problems associated with blurred distinction for the UN when a mission operates in an asymmetric environment in parallel with a non-UN force, we can, as a pragmatic way forward, work with regional and other organisations, especially in situations that require responses that go beyond the “nation-centric” peacekeeping model.

8. In short, we can opt for further policy and operational guidelines on how to use versatile force to match diverse threats and levels of violence and implementation of force protection measures as a solution.

Mr. President

9. Tackling challenges faced by peacekeepers today needs more than an up-to-date tool kit. Peacekeeping operations differ from war-fighting and peace-enforcement, in the sense that they do not entail the use of force as a central *modus operandi*. Peacekeeping is not about fighting an enemy and the evolution towards more robustness has not fundamentally changed this.

10. The lessons learnt from the history of peacekeeping is that lasting peace is not achieved through military and technical engagements but through political solutions. Peacekeeping is not a strategy in itself but rather a strategic tool. It requires collaboration.

11. Peacekeeping requires a political consensus among Security Council members, troop contributors and others on the costs, limits and dangers of operations in high-risk environments. However, what

we see coming out from the Security Council is not consensus but dissensus.

12. Resolution 2304 revising the UNMISS mandate, last August, is a case in point. It was adopted with little agreement within the Council itself; with little groundwork with the host Government; and no effective consultations with the Troop & Police Contributing Countries who have to implement it.

13. The UN Security Council needs to revisit the way mandates are designed. It cannot underestimate the complexity of “bringing peace”. UN peacekeeping operations, by the way they are agreed upon, planned and implemented can only deliver “limited successes”. The Council should, therefore, mandate an operation to do only what the UN is structurally and politically organised to do rather than provide a multiplicity of mandates and raise expectations which cannot be fulfilled and then absolve itself of all responsibility. The current approach is not sustainable.

14. Specifically, assertive conception of the use of force should be adopted with the utmost prudence, and in any case should be *ad hoc*. This is so because a military option carried out by UN peacekeepers cannot be a long-term response to what are fundamentally political problems. It is for the Council to address these politically rather than militarily.

Mr President

15. In essence, the solutions that we seek lie as much in a better understanding of what’s out there as in more introspection of what plagues us within here. This is the philosophical dilemma that the Council, a body set up more than seventy years ago, in a world which was very different, now faces in a fundamentally changed security landscape.
