

Security Council Open Debate on International Peacekeeping Operations
26th of August, 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement of H.E Mr. Briens, Representative of France to the United Nations

Mr. Briens (France) (spoke in French): I would like to join previous speakers in condemning in the strongest terms the reprehensible attack just carried out against the United Nations in Abuja. We express our compassion for and solidarity with the victims and their families, to the Government of Nigeria and, through the Secretary-General, to all United Nations staff, who prove their dedication to peace on a daily basis.

I thank you, Sir, for your initiative to hold this meeting on the most important subject of peacekeeping, a pillar of United Nations activity. France associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Peacekeeping operations have become one of the most visible areas of United Nations activity. We have seen a considerable increase in recent years of the resources deployed on the ground and the goals to be met. The growing complexity and diversity of missions require enhanced cooperation between regional organizations and strengthened synergy among peacekeeping and peacebuilding stakeholders.

I recall the steadfast commitment of France to building United Nations peacekeeping capacities. France participates in seven of the 16 peacekeeping operations, contributing more than 1,500 men and women. Beyond this direct contribution, France also contributes approximately 6,000 men and women to United Nations-mandated peacekeeping operations of the European Union, NATO or on a national basis. As such, France has a presence off the coast of Somalia and in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Côte d'Ivoire.

Above all, France supports the participation of African States in peacekeeping operations through African peacekeeping capacity-building programmes. In the context of training and support for African contingents, France has established national schools with a regional focus to impart operational and technical expertise adapted to the needs of African armies. These schools provide the same quality of teaching given in France, adapted to local conditions.

Since 1997, more than 14,000 European and African students have been trained in the 16 schools we support. Since the Franco-British initiative of 2009, we have continued to call for strengthened military expertise, enhanced cooperation between the Council and troop- and police-contributing countries, and better cost-control in peacekeeping operations.

While a number of recommendations of the Brahimi report (S/2000/809), published more than 10 years ago, remain valid, I would like to focus on three aspects that we view as vital for improving peacekeeping: the protection of civilians, inter-mission cooperation, and the establishment of peacekeeping-to peacebuilding transition strategies.

First, the protection of civilians is one of the primary objectives of peacekeeping mandates. Peacekeepers must be trained in this task and behave beyond reproach on the ground. Peacekeepers are tasked with establishing an environment of security to allow for the resumption of political processes. This requires the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including for children affected by conflict, security sector reform programmes, and programmes strengthening the rule of law. Women are among the main assets for transforming societies, and it is therefore vital to strengthen their participation in decision-making. Integrating women into police and armed forces will make it possible to fight sexual and gender-based violence and to promote human rights in these institutions. Advisors on the protection of children and women must play an ever greater role in missions.

Secondly, with regard to inter-mission cooperation, when unforeseen events threaten to destabilize a country and to cast it back into the cycle of violence, inter-mission cooperation provides for a specific and effective response to strengthen missions in a timely manner with the personnel and materials they need. We saw this in Côte d'Ivoire, where cooperation between the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Liberia played a decisive role. Helicopter reinforcements allowed heavy weaponry to be

neutralized and continue to allow traffic and the movement of mercenaries at the Liberian border to be monitored.

Similarly, cooperation among missions and peacebuilding offices, as well as with regional organizations, must allow us to be more effective in the fight against such cross-cutting threats as the Lord's Resistance Army in Africa, piracy or trafficking, which have the potential to destabilize entire regions.

Finally, cooperation and the sharing of resources among neighbouring missions should allow us to make economies of scale in order to meet the demands of good management and budget constraints.

Beyond the primary need to protect civilians, there are also the need to develop crisis exit strategies that ensure a return to lasting peace, particularly on the social, economic and political fronts in societies often decimated by conflict. We count on the Peacebuilding Commission to instil greater coherence in the actions of the international community in post-conflict situations.

Peacebuilding priorities must be taken into account at the earliest stages of crisis management so as to anticipate the conditions and mechanisms needed to emerge from the crisis. It is therefore necessary to take into account as soon as possible emerging threats such as drug and human trafficking, organized crime and corruption, which have the potential to destabilize fragile countries.

In conclusion, we recall that the success of peacekeeping missions is the result of the joint efforts of Council members, financial contributors, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat. These efforts are futile, however, without the firm commitment of the host country.

Finally, France pays tribute to the Blue Helmets of all nationalities, who sometimes give their lives in their dedication to peace.