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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record (partial)\* of the 14th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 1 November 2012, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Messone . . . . . (Gabon)

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\* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 54: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (A/67/312-S/2012/645)**

1. **Mr. Ladsous** (Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations) said that United Nations peacekeeping remained one of the Organization's most visible and critical activities. In April 2012, the Security Council had requested that a mission should be deployed to Syria, at extremely short notice. That experience had demonstrated that peacekeeping could, with Member State support, respond even in the most challenging environments. Despite the tight timelines and uncertain conditions, a wide range of troop-contributing countries had promptly offered personnel, and observers from 60 nations had quickly been deployed. Despite their efforts, security conditions on the ground had made their work unsustainable, and the Council had decided not to renew the mandate beyond August. United Nations peacekeeping remained ready to support the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria to bring peace and stability to the region.

2. Nearly one third of all peacekeeping troops were currently deployed in the Sudan, South Sudan and Abyei. In Darfur, although large-scale conflict had largely abated since the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) had been established in 2008, challenges remained, with conflict continuing between Government and opposition forces, increased criminality and banditry, and restlessness among militia members. Progress in implementing the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur had been slow. However, in view of the prevailing and projected security situation, the Security Council had endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation to rightsize the strength of the Mission's military component from 19,555 to 16,200 and that of its police component from 3,772 to 2,310. In its second year of independence, South Sudan faced significant internal security and State-building challenges, which the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was helping to address. In addition, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) had succeeded in restoring security in the Abyei Area in 2012 and would be responsible for supporting border security arrangements under the agreements signed by the Sudan and South Sudan on 27 September 2012.

3. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the situation in the eastern part of the country had deteriorated significantly with an armed mutiny that had begun in April and had taken a heavy toll on the civilian population, which was already suffering from the activities of other armed groups. Countries of the region, under the auspices of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, had proposed arrangements to address the situation, including a border monitoring mechanism and the creation of a neutral international force. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) would support those efforts, while continuing to build the Government's capacity to protect the population effectively.

4. In Côte d'Ivoire, despite some progress since the violent post-election crisis in 2010 and 2011, the root causes of instability remained. The security situation had deteriorated in recent months, particularly in the west and along the border with Liberia, as well as in Abidjan and the east. The Secretary-General had recommended that the reduction of the military strength of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) by almost a thousand troops should be deferred to 2013.

5. In Liberia, progress in the consolidation of peace had made it possible to consider reducing the military component of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) by approximately 4,200 troops between August 2012 and July 2015. During that period, UNMIL would continue to support efforts by the Liberian people and Government to carry forward reforms that were critical for the sustainability of the fragile peace. The gains achieved in West Africa were extremely precarious. The situation in the border area between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia remained unstable, owing mainly to cross-border movements of armed groups. UNOCI and UNMIL had intensified their inter-mission cooperation arrangements.

6. In Afghanistan, following the 2011 comprehensive review requested by the Security Council, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) had reviewed its activities and posture to optimize resources and focus on priority core mandate areas, with the aim of playing more of a supporting role in relation to Afghan counterparts. The Mission was also preparing for the post-2014 phase, which would include support for the Afghan authorities in the planning and organizing of the 2014 presidential elections.

7. In Haiti, there had been some progress in the task of strengthening democratic and rule-of-law institutions, as well as in the overall maintenance of security throughout the country. That should translate into a phased withdrawal of approximately 1,000 personnel, although building the capacity of the Haitian National Police would take some time. Lastly, in Timor-Leste, following the peaceful and orderly conduct of two rounds of presidential elections and the parliamentary elections, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) had started a phased drawdown, which was expected to lead to the closure of the Mission on 31 December 2012.

8. It was important to prepare for potential future roles for United Nations peacekeeping, whether in Mali, Syria, Somalia or elsewhere. In Somalia, for example, the Organization was conducting a comprehensive strategic review of its strategy and presence, and continued to provide logistical support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). While it was impossible to predict where the next operation might be mandated or in what configurations, it was necessary to be proactive in planning for a range of contingencies, including by strengthening partnerships with regional organizations. Past operations had been characterized by great diversity in terms of their types and strategic contexts. Since 1948, there had been 67 operations, 16 of which were still under way. It was thus clear that a single model could not be applied to every mission. Flexibility in revising the design, configuration and size of operations was a tradition that would be maintained and strengthened.

9. Setting up a system of periodic evaluation to ensure the rightsizing of missions was also extremely important. Each mission should be evaluated on its own merits at least every two years. The evaluations would ensure not only that each operation had the right number of uniformed and civilian personnel, but also that the personnel had the right skills to meet changing needs.

10. United Nations peacekeeping remained a financially efficient mechanism for collective action. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had a critical role to play in strengthening and improving peacekeeping, which was very dependent on global partnership. The issue of reimbursement was a complex and difficult one, and it was to be hoped that the recommendations of the Senior Advisory Group would provide a basis for a consensual solution. The

116 countries currently providing uniformed personnel were key actors. High-level officials from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support had conducted several visits to those countries and sought to expand the pool of troop contributors by participating in regional meetings. The courage and sacrifice of peacekeeping personnel were admirable, and he paid tribute to the memory of those who had given their lives in the service of peace.

11. In the area of policy and reform priorities, there were five issues that would be of the utmost importance in the year ahead. The first was the introduction of an overarching quality assurance framework, supported by guidance and training, as a means of improving the performance and enhancing the safety and security of military and police personnel. The steps taken in that regard included the development of standardized approaches to policing and the production of mission-specific training materials. Consideration was being given to the use of unarmed unmanned aerial systems as a means of enhancing force protection. Efforts to attract police officers with the required language skills, to increase the number of female officers and to reduce gaps in terms of equipment and expertise, inter alia through inter-mission cooperation, had begun to bear fruit.

12. Boosting civilian capacities was the second priority, particularly in rule-of-law and security institutions. Strengthening the performance and structures of police, justice and corrections institutions; conducting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives; and supporting national security-sector reform were ongoing priorities, as was mine action. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would consolidate their expertise and co-locate some existing capacities as part of the joint global focal point arrangement.

13. Regarding peacebuilding and protection of civilians, which constituted the third priority area, work towards improved guidance and training was continuing. The early peacebuilding strategy was a tool for guiding mission prioritization and ensuring a focus on advancing security as a means of laying the foundations for institutional strengthening. Regional courses on the protection of civilians had been conducted in Latin America and Asia to prepare Member States' military, police and civilian trainers. Four of the eight missions with protection of civilians

mandates had developed strategies, and two had undergone training; the training included modules on child protection and conflict-related sexual violence. The protection capacities of host-country security and justice institutions were also being developed, and early warning mechanisms were being established.

14. The fourth priority area was the global field support strategy, through which the Department of Field Support was putting in place more effective and efficient arrangements that could respond flexibly and rapidly to evolving needs. The fifth priority area concerned the steps being taken to hold United Nations personnel to the highest standards of conduct. A single incident of misconduct could overshadow the otherwise exemplary behaviour of all peacekeepers. Thanks to the collective efforts of the United Nations and police- and troop-contributing countries, misconduct allegations in missions, notably charges of sexual exploitation, continued to decline.

15. Peacekeeping was a key component of the architecture for maintaining international peace and security. United Nations peacekeeping accounted for only a small fraction of global defence expenditures, yet it played a significant role in preventing and reducing human suffering. Further, it restored the confidence of international and local investors in post-conflict countries, thereby promoting economic activity in those areas. In other words, peacekeeping actually worked.

16. **Ms. Haq** (Under-Secretary-General for Field Support) said that multilateral efforts in peacekeeping were undergoing profound change. Partnership was the lifeblood of United Nations peace operations and was evident in the successful outcome of the deliberations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. It was clear that the ambitious experiment of United Nations peacekeeping was proceeding unabated.

17. The next two to three years would afford a rare window of opportunity to achieve more effective peace operations. Economic, technological and managerial factors were exerting a powerful influence on peacekeeping. Economic factors had brought greater emphasis on efficiency and cost sensitivity, and a greater appreciation of the value of financial and human resources. Previously unimaginable technological advances in communicating, planning and monitoring had rendered many existing practices obsolete, while management had rightly come to be recognized as a science that should be informed by past experience.

Those three factors should push United Nations peace operations to the next stage in their evolution, but the Organization still had an obligation to learn from its past.

18. The most important lesson of the past was the importance of prioritizing the field, where tangible results were achieved and where those who relied on the Organization's support were most vulnerable. Effective stewardship of resources was also an important obligation: resources were too often taken for granted, leading to supply driven approaches that did little to improve the lives of colleagues in the field. In that context, improved services to the field would be accompanied by greater economies of scale and efficiency gains. Action to strengthen national capacity for State-building in the aftermath of conflict was also crucial; the citizens and Governments of host nations must be able to take over from peacekeeping operations and continue seamlessly on a path of sustainable growth and development.

19. The conviction that the Organization could achieve both better results and greater cost-efficiency was the foundation of the global field support strategy and the basis of her Department's work. Progress in implementing the strategy had been marked by various innovations that had strengthened support in Syria, Somalia, Libya and elsewhere. The Global Service Centre, which included the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi and the United Nations Support Base at Valencia, had played a central role in responding to immediate operational demands. In Libya, for example, the Centre had made it possible for a small team to be operational in Tripoli within a few days of the adoption of the relevant Security Council resolution, thereby saving the Organization nearly \$1 million. In addition, the United Nations Support Office for AMISOM had relied on the modularization programme under the global field support strategy to expedite the deployment of African Union troops in Somalia.

20. With respect to regional service centres, the Department's immediate focus was on ensuring that the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe, which should serve as a model, functioned as an integrated hub of transactions support. Only then would it be prudent to establish centres in other regions. Already there had been improvements, such as a reduction in the average response time to client queries on financial matters from five days to three.

21. Ultimately, the global field support strategy would bring about a clear-cut division of labour, known as the end-state vision, among United Nations Headquarters, the Global Service Centre, the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe and the missions, in contrast to the current situation, in which operational, transactional and strategic functions frequently took place alongside one another at all four levels of activity. Member States would be receiving a progress report within a few weeks.

22. There were both opportunities and shortcomings in a number of areas. A recently signed aviation contract was expected to save the Organization about \$8 million in the first year and result in fewer stopovers and reduced travel time for troops headed homeward. Under a new food supply contract, troops would enjoy better-quality food at 30 per cent less cost. However, there were still significant gaps in the provision of medical, engineering and transportation support, especially with respect to helicopters. Greater workforce diversity was also needed: women accounted for only 13 per cent of mission leaders, down from 17 per cent in 2011. Lastly, a review of the Field Service category had been initiated to address issues such as the possibility of nationalizing Field Service functions to bolster national ownership of peacekeeping efforts.

23. Various measures were being taken to strengthen accountability, which was vital to the effectiveness and credibility of peace operations. For example, heads of missions were being required to use risk management practices in their decision-making, and an integrated conduct and discipline framework was being implemented; available data suggested that in 2012 there would be a further decline in allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Nonetheless, allegations concerning the most egregious forms of such exploitation and abuse — those involving minors and non-consensual sex — were a serious matter, and a swift response was essential in every case.

24. Two system-wide initiatives aimed at strengthening accountability were to be introduced in 2013-2014: the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, which would yield greater transparency in financial planning and resource management, and the enterprise resource planning project known as Umoja, which would enable the Department to manage its global supply chain more effectively, ensure that missions were properly equipped, and reduce the time

and effort needed to carry out transactions. Accountability in the matter of a smaller environmental footprint should also be improved through closer engagement with host countries and the United Nations Environment Programme.

25. In the year ahead, her Department would take stock of the results of the global field support strategy and enunciate a clear end-state vision that would lead into the next phase of implementation. Barriers should continue to be broken down, so that all United Nations departments, funds and programmes worked together from the outset of mission planning until the handover to United Nations country teams. There would also be an opportunity to strengthen relations with the African Union and other regional and subregional organizations. In all of those efforts, the foremost concern must be for the countries receiving assistance and the personnel serving the United Nations. Seventy-six United Nations peacekeepers had lost their lives in the past year, and African Union peacekeepers in Somalia continued to suffer casualties with tragic frequency.

*The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.25 a.m.*