



Security Council

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Letter dated 3 February 2010 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a concept paper for the Security Council debate on “United Nations peacekeeping operations: Transition and exit strategies”, to be held on 12 February 2010 (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gérard Araud



Annex to the letter dated 3 February 2010 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations to the Secretary-General

French Presidency of the Security Council (February 2010)

United Nations peacekeeping operations

Debate on transition and exit strategies

Concept paper

1. Context

During the past 15 months, the Security Council has devoted considerable effort to the simultaneous promotion of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Progress has been made in each of these areas. We must now turn to the key issue of transition, which links the two elements.

The fact that peacekeeping operations are at an all-time high makes it all the more important to ensure the success of transitions. There are currently over 96,000 women and men in uniform, nearly 20,000 more than the previous high of 1993, and, during the current global financial crisis, they now have a budget of about 7.8 billion dollars. We must make the best possible use of the available resources. Above all, we must ensure that missions contribute more effectively to the establishment of sustainable peace in order to put an end to the tragic human consequences that wars have for the countries concerned, their people and their regions.

Some operations have been closed, sometimes successfully, sometimes (as with the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG)) for political regions.

However, most operations have been long term. This is a fundamental trend that is unlikely to be reversed in the short term.

The current situation is far from ideal. It is characterized, in particular:

- Certain long-standing operations which have existed for almost 50 years (Cyprus, the Middle East, and India and Pakistan) without any significant progress in the peace process, as already noted in the Brahimi report;
- The problems that the Council sometimes encounters in finalizing and implementing transition strategies. It is generally agreed that the long-term objective of the mission in Timor-Leste is to build the capacity of the Timorese security sector but, for reasons that have to do with the history of this Mission, it has proved difficult to restructure the operation in light of the progress achieved without undermining progress towards long-term goals;
- Disproportionate allocation of the resources of peacekeeping operations without clear justification. For instance, in Liberia there is one uniformed United Nations staff member per 300 inhabitants and per 10 square kilometres. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ratio is one per 3,500 inhabitants and per 120 square kilometres;

- A similar situation with respect to coordination: one of the accepted difficulties of security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo lies in the lack of coordination among the various stakeholders; however, despite copious references in the Council's resolutions, progress in this area is very slow and requires a strong commitment by national authorities;
- Insufficient attention paid to, and insufficient initial investment in, national institutions (particularly in the context of the rule of law and of security) in order to give them the means of resolving disputes on their own and thus to put in place the conditions for withdrawal of the Blue Helmets;
- The absence of immediate benefits of peace (particularly economic recovery and basic services) that would give the people reasons for investing in peace;
- The absence of a common approach through which the international community would endorse a single strategy of support for national priorities; and
- The slowness with which senior officials are deployed in the field with the necessary support team in order to contribute to achievement of the aforementioned objectives, and delays in the release of funds that can be used with the desired flexibility.

During this period, although efforts to strengthen Headquarters have been made, the ratio of deployed staff to Headquarters staff is growing at an alarming rate: about one Department of Peacekeeping Operations or Department of Field Support staff member for over 100 staff members deployed in the field. This raises serious questions about the long-term capacity of Headquarters to manage and monitor peacekeeping operations.

It is therefore more necessary than ever to conduct an in-depth discussion of the way we see exit and transition strategies for operations.

We need to further clarify the situation at the outset so that peacekeeping forces can create the conditions necessary for transition, withdrawal and exit without undermining ongoing efforts to achieve the longer-term goals of peace and stability. We also need, at the outset, a clearer idea of the peacebuilding priorities and of how the United Nations could support them — through a peacekeeping operation, an integrated peacebuilding office, activities in support of a United Nations country team, or in some other manner.

2. Elements for analysis

Our difficulty in developing and implementing exit and transition strategies has fundamental causes.

First and foremost, it is related to decision-making:

- The Council focuses primarily on addressing emerging or re-emerging crises. Once the initial emergency has passed, it is less involved in the management of operations and, a fortiori, in ways of promoting transition when the situation permits;
- Responsibility for decisions concerning transition are shared by various stakeholders — the Security Council, the Secretariat, troop-contributing countries and donor countries — and by the multiplicity of participants in

these groups (the troops contributed by certain countries may account for up to a third of an operation, but in no case do they exceed 11 per cent of the total for all peacekeeping operations; no country's financial contributions account for more than 22 per cent of the total overall cost);

- Missions in the stabilization and transition phase can have a certain appeal owing to the image of success that they project, the relative security prevailing on the ground and the political commitment of neighbouring States, but also because the host country fears that the departure of the mission will bring an end to international attention and assistance;
- There are often real obstacles to the implementation of a peace agreement, and the international community must make a greater effort so that trust can develop between opposing forces. In some cases, the presence of a peacekeeping operation can help preserve a fragile truce, but without promoting a political settlement;
- Interests conducive to maintaining peacekeeping operations therefore converge, sometimes to the detriment of a more innovative approach.

Prudence is certainly necessary. Experience shows that it has sometimes been necessary to reopen operations, which had been closed prematurely, under unfavourable conditions in order to address a deterioration in the situation on the ground (Timor-Leste in particular). Furthermore, the reduction or withdrawal of an operation is not easy for any of the existing major political or military organizations.

Our tools for emerging from a crisis are often limited as well:

- Lack of available police personnel for the tasks of maintaining order and training local police;
- Lack of rapid deployment capacity to support the rule of law and security reform, particularly in the judicial and prison sectors and in other sectors essential to peacebuilding;
- Insufficient and scattered peacebuilding efforts; and
- Lack of coordination of international action in these areas; particularly when the other stakeholders have made substantial investments in these areas, it is not always realistic to expect the United Nations to coordinate their actions. The Peacebuilding Commission must be strengthened so that it can play this key role; the upcoming review of the Commission will provide an opportunity to consider this matter further.

These difficulties are not insurmountable, however. We must make progress. France proposes to utilize its Presidency to pursue our concrete discussion on this topic.

This is a subject of concern first and foremost to the Security Council, because it is, above all, the practice of the Council and its members that must evolve.

3. Listen to the practitioners

We propose to hold a *restricted debate in the Council*, to which the Secretariat, several special representatives of the Secretary-General and other especially relevant stakeholders or troop-contributing countries will be invited. Based on

specific cases, participants will be invited to examine the obstacles that hinder exit and transition strategies and to make recommendations, particularly on certain key aspects:

- The drafting of mandates (clear mention of transition and exit strategies);
- Planning (desired objective, key tasks, phased completion of the mission);
- Capacities and resources (in particular for security sector reform);
- Coordination of international action in the field;
- Political support for peace processes (within the Council and elsewhere); and
- Processes (benchmarks, modalities for reporting to the Council on progress towards achievement of the desired objective, evaluation).

It will also be useful to take this opportunity to review the experience that the United Nations has gained from the closing of its operations (Ethiopia-Eritrea, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Angola, Mozambique, El Salvador, Sierra Leone, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and the former Yugoslavia), as the Secretary-General envisaged in his report (S/2001/394). France is pleased that the Council's working group on peacekeeping operations has decided to conduct such a review.

We hope that this debate will produce concrete proposals with a view to the adoption of a short statement by the President of the Council.
