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**Letter dated 24 December 2015 from the Chair of the
Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations
addressed to the President of the Security Council**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the concept note of the third thematic discussion of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations in 2015, held on 6 May, at the special meeting with the members of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Mahamat Zene **Cherif**
Chair
Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations

Annex to the letter dated 24 December 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note for the special meeting of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations with the members of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, 6 May 2015

Background

On 6 May 2015, Chad, as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, will hold a thematic discussion with members of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and members of the Security Council at the Permanent Representative level. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Tété António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, and José Ramos-Horta, Chair of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, have been invited to brief.

The Panel, led by Mr. Ramos-Horta, was appointed in October 2014 by the Secretary-General to assess the state of United Nations peace operations, including peacekeeping operations and special political missions, and emerging needs for the future. The Panel is considering a broad range of issues, including the changing nature of conflict, evolving mandates, good offices and peacebuilding challenges, managerial and administrative arrangements, planning, partnerships, human rights and protection of civilians, and uniformed capabilities.

Since its establishment, the Panel has held a series of consultations with key partners to United Nations peace operations, including host countries of peacekeeping operations, troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as regional organizations, United Nations system partners, civil society organizations and host communities of peacekeeping operations, and think tanks. Regional consultations were held in Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America and the Caribbean, and thematic workshops held to consider the use of force, good offices and mediation, the protection of civilians and sustaining peace.

For their meeting with the Security Council Working Group, the Chair has proposed that their discussion focus on four themes, as outlined below.

The use of force

The issue of how and when peacekeepers use force has taken on renewed urgency in light of the evolving and demanding contexts where peacekeeping missions are being deployed, as well as recent robust mandates authorized by the Security Council. Peacekeeping operations have to date used force in self-defence, or in defence of their mandate, e.g., for the protection of civilians. In its resolution 2098 (2013) on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Council authorized MONUSCO to carry out targeted offensive operations to prevent the expansion of all armed groups, neutralize these groups, and to disarm them through the Intervention Brigade. This new mandate for MONUSCO led to debate among Member States on whether United Nations peacekeeping was best suited to carry out offensive operations. Many troop- and police-contributing countries have

highlighted the importance of adherence to the three principles of peacekeeping (consent, impartiality and non-use of force except in self-defence or defence of the mandate) in their interaction with the Panel; other troop- and police-contributing countries have emphasized the need for peacekeeping operations to be more robust and less risk-averse, given the hostile environments in which peacekeeping is deployed.

- *Do the peacekeeping principles need to be updated in a changing world, or do they remain useful in guiding missions' mandates, strategies and actions?*

- *What are the outer limits of what peacekeeping operations can undertake effectively?*

- *How are those limits defined?*

Asymmetric threat environments

The experience of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has exposed peacekeeping to a new generation of attacks: those involving suicide bombers, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other tactics of unconventional warfare. While it is not new for peacekeepers to operate in contexts where asymmetric or irregular tactics are being used by armed groups, the deliberate targeting of peacekeepers with this new generation of attacks is. Twenty-eight peacekeepers lost their lives in MINUSMA last year, the largest annual fatality rate in a peacekeeping mission since 1994, in the United Nations Operation in Somalia. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has indicated that it draws the line on engaging in counter-terrorism, defined as active efforts to militarily target "terrorist" actors and groups, which should remain the territory of bilateral or multilateral peace enforcement initiatives.

Going forward, it is not unlikely that United Nations peacekeeping will be deployed in environments where actors using "asymmetric" tactics operate, including against the United Nations. This raises a number of questions:

- *Are United Nations peacekeepers best suited to operate in the new generation of asymmetric threat environments?*

- *What capabilities do peacekeepers need in order to protect the mission and civilians from "asymmetric" attacks?*

- *What are the implications for the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel, and what measures can be put in place to protect them?*

- *Can peacekeeping missions effectively pursue and achieve their mandates in asymmetric threat environments?*

Triangular cooperation

For peacekeeping tasks to be effectively implemented on the ground, missions rely heavily on their uniformed components. When the understanding of a certain task by troop- and police-contributing countries differs from that of the Security Council, of the Secretariat or of host States, missions can face the challenging situation of being held to account for actions their personnel are not willing to perform. Continuous dialogue between the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat is essential to ensure a common

understanding of the actions necessary to further peace and stability in peacekeeping theatres. Greater consultation between the three entities, especially during the development and review of mandates, could be considered.

- *What are the limitations of the Security Council's current engagement with troop- and police-contributing countries?*

- *How can the engagement between the three peacekeeping constituencies be improved, particularly around mandate design and renewal periods?*

- *What experiences of troop- and police-contributing countries can be fed into the mandate design and renewal process?*

Partnership with regional organizations (African Union)

The role of regional organizations in peacekeeping, in particular that of the African Union. has grown considerably over the past 15 years. The past decade has seen the United Nations and African regional organizations explore a number of structural arrangements for enhancing cooperation. While partnerships in Darfur (the Sudan) and Somalia, as well as re-hatting experiences in Mali and the Central African Republic have faced some challenges, they have helped the United Nations and the African Union learn more about each other's comparative advantages and helped them strengthen their cooperation. The capacity of the African Union and regional economic communities to deploy troops more quickly than the United Nations has led some to view African missions as well-placed "first responders" to crisis, while United Nations missions offer a longer-term, more sustainable and comprehensive multidimensional response. Lessons from these partnerships have re-emphasized the need to sequence mandates and to coordinate the approaches of the Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council.

- *What are the lessons learned and best practices of partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, and how can cooperation be enhanced?*

- *How should the United Nations, including the Council, work more closely with the African Union throughout the conflict spectrum?*

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