

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 27 October 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that, under the Senegalese Presidency of the Security Council during November 2016, Senegal intends to hold an open debate at the ministerial level on the theme “Peace operations facing asymmetrical threats” on 7 November 2016 at 10 a.m.

In that regard, I wish to transmit to you the attached concept note for this meeting (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Gorgui Ciss  
Deputy Permanent Representative  
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



**Annex to the letter dated 27 October 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

[Original: English and French]

**Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme “Peace operations facing asymmetrical threats”, to be held on 7 November 2016**

**Background**

Today, most crises triggering the deployment of a peace operation are non-international conflicts. These are often referred to as internal or intra-State conflicts involving a confrontation between government forces and non-state armed groups.

As a consequence of this situation, the security environments of United Nations peacekeeping operations have become much more complex.

In many such environments, a broad range of armed groups pursue their criminal objectives via asymmetrical and terrorist operations. They regularly target United Nations personnel and civilians.

The actions of such groups are a major challenge not only for the security and safety of United Nations personnel, but also for the proper implementation of mandates. This is particularly true in the area of the protection of civilians for several United Nations peace operations and other operations authorized by the Security Council.

This is a reality now shared by several missions: the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). However, the magnitude of such threats is best illustrated in the case of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

In Mali, despite the signing of a peace agreement between the Government and the main armed groups, MINUSMA operates in a difficult environment characterized by targeted attacks against United Nations personnel, civilians and civilian infrastructure.

According to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, “during the reporting period, there was a significant increase in attacks against the Malian defence and security forces and MINUSMA, with 39 attacks perpetrated against the Malian forces, 27 attacks against MINUSMA and one attack against a MINUSMA contractor, compared to nine attacks against the Malian forces and 15 attacks against MINUSMA in the previous reporting period” ([S/2016/819](#), para. 27).

A total of 34 peacekeepers were killed and 190 injured between January 2015 and November 2016.

The Security Council has the responsibility of deciding to establish peace operations and ensuring that the missions deployed in those environments have the full range of capabilities necessary to operate safely and fulfil their mandates effectively.

That is the thrust of the debate, the purpose of which is not, however, to engage peace operations in counter-terrorism activities.

Indeed, as the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations noted in its report, “United Nations peacekeeping missions, owing to their composition and character, are not suited to engage in military counter-terrorism operations. They lack the specific equipment, intelligence, logistics, capabilities and specialized military preparation required, among other aspects” (A/70/95-S/2015/446, para. 119).

Therefore, in the debate, consideration should instead be given to the issue of adapting mission presence and activities to such environments, including by providing missions with the necessary capabilities to strengthen troop security on the ground and improving the effectiveness of their actions in response to asymmetrical threats.

The High-level Panel rightly recognized in its report that, “where asymmetric threats are present in the operating environment, United Nations missions must be provided with the necessary capabilities and training. In addition, an appropriate concept of operations and rules of engagement are required to protect themselves and deliver their mandates, including through preventive and pre-emptive postures and willingness to use force tactically to protect civilians and United Nations personnel” (ibid., para. 120).

In the light of the above, it must be acknowledged that there are many measures that can be taken not only in the context of adapting the presence and activities of peace operations to better prevent and counter asymmetric attacks, but also in how they can better support the efforts of the Government in this fight.

#### **Need to adapt peace operations in environments with asymmetrical threats**

Over the past decade the Security Council, the Secretariat and Member States have sought to strengthen the mandate and capacity of United Nations peace operations in order to curb the increase in asymmetrical threats, particularly in the context of implementing civilian protection mandates.

In addition to defending itself against a significant direct threat from several extremist groups, MINUSMA has a mandate to prevent and deter attacks against civilians by armed groups. To that end, the Security Council has authorized the use of force under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

A series of other peacekeeping operations, including MINUSCA, MONUSCO, the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), UNMISS and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) also have a capacity-building mandate for national institutions and actors, especially in the areas of the rule of law and the security sector. Along the same lines, such operations as MINUSMA, MONUSCO and MINUSCA are making use of modern military capabilities and technologies.

In line with Pillar III of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, United Nations peacekeeping operations often have a comparative advantage in the programmatic support they offer to institutions in the areas of the rule of law and security, in that they can contribute to efforts to strengthen capacities, inter alia, in judicial reform, the prevention of radicalization in detention centres, security sector reform, border control and policing.

In his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the Secretary-General stressed his intention to integrate preventing violent extremism into the relevant activities of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, in accordance with their mandate, in order to strengthen the capacity of Member States through such mechanisms as the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections, as well as programmes for security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

It is also worth looking at how they can provide more assistance to capacity-building in the host country in the prevention and mitigation of asymmetrical threats.

### **Need for innovative collaboration between peacekeeping operations and counter-terrorism institutions**

Terrorist threats have an increasing presence in zones where peace operations are deployed. Consequently, there are clear reasons to strengthen cooperation, coordination and synergies among United Nations counter-terrorism bodies, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and peacekeeping operations.

A number of Security Council documents (resolutions 2129 (2013), 2185 (2014), 2195 (2014) and 2242 (2015), and presidential statement [S/PRST/2014/23](#)) already provide a solid foundation for strengthening such inter-institutional cooperation. Those documents call upon the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the special envoys of the Secretary-General, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Programme, the Counter-Terrorism Task Force and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, as well as other relevant United Nations bodies, to strengthen their coordination and synergy, including by developing dialogue and the exchange of information, in particular during the mission planning and review phases.

### **Questions for the debate**

How can a better understanding be developed of asymmetrical threats in the conduct of peace operations?

What is the strategy to reduce and even eliminate the impact of such threats on the security and effectiveness of peace operations in the fulfilment of their mandates?

How can Member States and the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system work closely together to confront such threats while delivering their respective mandates?

How can United Nations peace operations be given the technical and operational capacity to enable them to better adapt to asymmetrical environments?

How can such threats be better taken into account in the planning, concept definition and operational methods of those missions?

How can support to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and corrections activities be adapted to such environments in order to strengthen the capacity of the host country?

**Format**

An open debate of the Security Council, at the ministerial level, open to Member States and representatives of regional and subregional organizations, under the presidency of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, Mankeur NDIAYE.

**Briefers**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations; the Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Michaëlle Jean; and the Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Jean-Paul Laborde, will brief the Security Council during the open debate.

**Outcome**

Senegal plans to circulate a Chair's summary following the debate.

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