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POSITION PAPER

COUNTRY: Canada (Dominion of Canada)

COMMITTEE: United Nations Security Council

AGENDA: Improving Effectiveness in Peacekeeping Missions

"We need action not only to end the fighting but to make the peace ... My own government would be glad to recommend Canadian participation in such a United Nations force, a truly international peace and police force." (Lester B. Pearson, November 2, 1956)

As a founding member of the United Nations, Canada is committed to the guidance provided in the UN Charter to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, and to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights.

In 1956, in the crucible of the Suez Crisis, then Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester B. Pearson eased tensions by proposing the inception of The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) for which he was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize. The UNEF resulted from his persuasive diplomacy and the force was led by a Canadian general, E.L.M. Burns, whose calming demeanor as he walked the line between Arabs and Israelis became a staple of the nightly television news. As this was the first UN peacekeeping mission, Pearson is often credited as the inventor of the concept. Canadians began to think of peacekeeping as their unique vocation.

Since the first UN armed peacekeeping force was deployed at the height of the Suez Crisis in 1956, more than 125,000 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members are estimated to have been deployed on peace missions in more than 35 countries over the past six decades and approximately 130 of Canada's peacekeepers have laid down their lives on such missions and many more have been mentally or physically injured. Canada had a leadership role in peacekeeping in the early 1990s. The country had *"1% of the world's population but was doing 10% of the world's peacekeeping."* Canada had played a large role by contributing 80,000 personnel — roughly 10 per cent of the total UN forces sent on peacekeeping missions — between 1948 and 1988. However, Canada and many other countries started to "back off" from UN missions in the mid-1990s as a result of the "gross incompetence of the United Nations" at the time as well as major problems and failures encountered on several UN missions, particularly those in Rwanda, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia.

As of 2021, 55 Canadians (43 men and 12 women) in total were involved in UN peace operations. This included 20 staff officers, 27 police officers and eight “experts on mission.” Canada is one of the few countries who pay their payments to the UN on time in full without any arrears. But today, Canada no longer has the capacity to make such a significant contribution (in terms of personnel) as in 1990’s to the UN’s peace operations, especially because the country is also contributing to other military operations worldwide, including with NATO and counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The environment in which peace missions are now deployed, as well as associated armed conflicts, are increasingly complex and deadly. Most of today’s wars are not civil wars; they are “*internationalized civil wars*”. That means that there are foreign states and non-state actors who play a role in instigating, prolonging, or exacerbating struggles. The second thing is the emergence of extremist groups. Instability and violent conflict are a fertile breeding ground for extremist movements. Many of today’s UN missions bear little resemblance to those undertaken prior to the 1990s.

The UN has gradually reduced its funding to peacekeeping missions. There have been shortages of both personnel and equipment for UN missions in recent years. For instance, in December 2018, the UN Secretary-General reported a continued “critical shortfall in terms of equipment” for MINUSMA in Mali, referring more specifically to a “lack of military medium-utility helicopters and contingent-owned armored personnel carriers, including mine-protected vehicles.” The UN has been criticized that it is “*often too slow to engage with emerging crises*.” Concerning mission design, there are concerns that “*mandates and missions are produced on the basis of templates instead of tailored to support situation-specific political strategies, and technical and military approaches*.” As times have changed, peace operations have had to adapt to new security challenges. The focus of such operations today must be to prevent and resolve conflict, rather than to keep the peace. **The era of chapter VI-style peacekeeping is over. We are in chapter VII** and we must send forces that must be capable and must be credible in order, in extremis, to have to use kinetic force to establish an atmosphere of peace and to permit the other elements to be able to function. More work is needed to ensure that these operations remain relevant, efficient and adapted to the constantly evolving international security environment. Peacekeeping mandates authorized by the Security Council must be properly financed, given their complexity and unique challenges which “**Blue Helmets**” face on the ground. Inadequate funding can have catastrophic consequences for UN missions. The complexity of modern UN peace operations requires UN personnel to have specialized skill sets and there is a reliance on military people who are also diplomats and diplomats who understand the military aspects. Contingents deployed on these operations are from a wide range of countries with varying military standards, giving rise to a need for training and standardization to avoid interoperability problems in the field, which is a situation that differs from NATO, whose forces train and exercise regularly. Major contributions (in terms of personnel) to peace missions are from “*third world partners*” who lack adequate training and have low levels of readiness. So, a focus on intensive training prior to deployment is key.

Sexual abuse and exploitation are enduring shame on the Organization and its operations. The UN must work to improve accountability and ensure justice is provided. Troop contributing countries must vigorously investigate and prosecute national personnel who indulge in such deplorable acts. UN Member States must penalize TCCs that fail to investigate, prosecute and punish such perpetrators. The UN must work to improve transparency in investigations and make sure individual victims are compensated for the harm they suffer by UN personnel.

On the whole, it is clear that force alone cannot create peace; it can only create the space in which peace may be built. For successful peacekeeping operations, the UN needs clear, strong and sustainable political and financial support from all Member States. The delegate of Canada calls upon all Member States to actively support the United Nations to enable it as a truly credible force for peace.