Remarks by Ambassador Nikki Haley at a UN Security Council Open Debate on Peacekeeping

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U.S. Mission to the United Nations

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Thank you to the Secretary-General for being here and for his commitment to peacekeeping; for the briefing from Chairman Faki; and Ms. Touré, I have to tell you that your advocacy and your passion and the way you fight for the people is to be admired. It’s inspiring, but it’s to be listened to. You spoke of many truths today, and I think that we need to make sure that when those truths are spoken, it takes courage to say those truths. And we shouldn’t let that courage go to the wayside. We need to honor that courage by responding. And so I thank you for your honesty. I’d also like to thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for coming to chair this important meeting on the future of UN peacekeeping.

Around the world, the blue helmet is the most instantly recognizable symbol of this organization’s mission. We send peacekeepers to take on some of the world’s toughest challenges. Protecting defenseless civilians. Separating warring parties. Helping to build state institutions where the rule of law is nowhere to be found.

The UN Charter makes no mention of peacekeeping. No one thought of these kinds of missions when the Security Council first met. But when given an appropriate mandate, and when properly managed and equipped, no one doubts that these missions can play an essential role supporting peace and saving lives. That is why peacekeeping reform remains a top priority for the United States.

When I arrived here, we laid out a few principles that continue to guide our approach. Peacekeeping missions need to support political solutions. They need host country cooperation. Mandates must be realistic and achievable. Missions need to have an exit strategy. And we need to be willing to change mandates when things aren’t working.

These principles do not reflect the narrow interests of a single Member State, but rather, we should all agree that these principles can improve peacekeeping across the board. For the past year, every time the United States has looked at a peacekeeping mandate, we have gone back to these principles. We believe these missions are changing for the better. Missions are becoming more effective and more efficient.

We reconfigured the mission in Haiti to focus on police and the rule of law. We changed the mission in Darfur and downsized it to reflect current political and security realities. We have supported responsible drawdowns of peacekeeping missions, most recently in Liberia, while pushing peacekeepers in Lebanon to actually use all of their mandated authorities to be more effective in carrying out their tasks.

And yet, we still have a lot to do. A prime example is in Mali, where the mission struggles to protect itself from terrorist attacks that have made this the most mission dangerous peacekeeping assignment in the world. We have a responsibility to make this mandate realistic and achievable. But when a mandate is no longer realistic or achievable, we need to change it and focus it on addressing the most pressing priorities.

When a government stands in the way of a UN peacekeeping mission, we need to put real pressure on the government to change course. When a mission no longer supports a political solution, we need to get the parties back to the table or ask ourselves should the mission be there at all.

The United States strongly believes that we need robust performance standards and data-driven analysis on the performance of peacekeepers. The United States encourages the Secretariat to develop and implement a comprehensive performance policy that identifies clear standards, evaluates the performance of all personnel, and includes measures to ensure accountability when they fall short. We need to develop a “culture of performance” when it comes to the peacekeeping operations at the UN. The people the UN serves deserve to know that when blue helmets arrive, they are qualified, appropriately equipped, and ready to perform their duty.

As part of this effort, we must intensify our work to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping. The Secretary-General took positive action to address abuses in the Central African Republic. But this behavior is still happening. There can be no excuses. We encourage the full use of Resolution 2272’s authorities to end the culture of impunity, including responding to allegations in MONUSCO and UNMISS. All Member States need to support the Secretary-General when he takes action to make sure peacekeepers meet the highest standards of conduct.

Resources are important for peacekeeping, of course. The United States has long been the largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping by far. That will not change, but peacekeeping is a shared responsibility. With shared responsibility comes shared burdens and shared costs. One country should not shoulder more than one quarter of the UN peacekeeping budget, and we look forward to a more equitable distribution of the budget among Member States.

Moving forward, the United States will not pay more than 25 percent of the peacekeeping budget. This is a cap required by U.S. law. We pledge to work with Member States and the organization to ensure we make this adjustment in a fair and sensible manner that protects UN peacekeeping. All of us have a role to play, and all of us must step up. The Security Council, the UN Secretariat, regional organizations like the African Union, troop and police contributors, and host governments have to work together.

As we move forward, we need to always remember why we deploy peacekeeping missions in the first place. We send peacekeepers to the frontlines to help those who have been victims of war, who have often experienced unimaginable atrocities. If we think about the people peacekeepers are meant to serve and keep those people at the forefront of our minds, none of us should hesitate to do our part to make peacekeeping as effective as it can be.

Thank you.