



Hervé Ladsous
Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations
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Near verbatim transcript

Opening Remarks:

I am very pleased to be here for what I intend to be the first of regular meetings, both in this setting but also in less formal settings. I do intend to work very closely with you.

First of all, let me say how deeply honoured I feel that the Secretary-General offered me this wonderful opportunity to work for the United Nations and for Peacekeeping. Peacekeeping which is certainly one of the flagships, if not the flagship, of the United Nations and which plays such an important role in today's world. The 21st Century has not seen a decrease in threats to peace and security. There remain such threats all over the world and indeed you know the figures: 16 peace operations in four continents with over 120,000 peacekeepers, from Asia in East Timor to the Caribbean in Haiti, from the Middle East to Africa, where indeed many of our operations actually take place.

The second thing I would like to say is how proud I am to be taking this position, to join the team both here in New York and on the terrain, with our peacekeepers who are displaying great talent and great courage, and some of them at the expense of their lives. You probably know that since the beginning of this year we have had to deplore the deaths of 86 peacekeepers, 29 of them being civilians, and they did that in the line of duty. I want to pay tribute to their courage.

Peacekeeping has shown some very significant achievements in the recent past. You would remember Côte d'Ivoire last spring, where, thanks to the United Nations, thanks to UN peacekeepers, there was a victory for democracy and upholding, implementing the results of a vote which had been crucial and that now allows Côte d'Ivoire to re-embark on the road to unity and development.



But also what happened in Sudan, the birth of a new country, which is a very rare event: the creation of South Sudan, a new State with all the challenges and difficulties that face it. This is why, actually, I can tell you that my first trip to the field will be actually to Sudan, to the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, to talk with the authorities, talk with the people in the Missions and see where we go, because clearly we still face many challenges there. From there I intend to go to Addis Ababa because I think having the United Nations and the African Union working together is something extremely important, and I want to highlight that this will be for me a priority.

There will be, of course, a lot of things I will have to learn. I am in the process, and my colleagues are giving me extremely heavy schedules. But what I would like to say at this stage is that I have no preordained plan. I want to learn, to speak to all, to the governments of Member States, to the countries concerned by our missions, to our peacekeepers, to all who have a stake in all this so as to see how we can proceed. This, I think, is the spirit of the peacekeeping partnership. Member States, especially those in the Security Council, the governments of the countries concerned by the operations, the troop contributors - all this has to be taken into perspective so as to try and achieve together, in partnership, let me say again, the right decisions.

Of course I would like to mention my desire to work with regional organizations, with the European Union, with all the members of the UN family – the funds and programmes, the various agencies - so that together we can fulfil the mandate.

There is a lot to build on and, clearly there has been a lot of progress over the years, but challenges do remain. Some of them, perhaps, highlighted: the fact that we are increasingly operating in very difficult areas, in hostile environments, sometimes with new actors who are not state actors. And therefore we must try never to lose the perspective of the mandate but to be as effective as possible in achieving the results. You may remember that only three days ago we lost three colleagues in Darfur. This is something that has to be kept in mind. We need to do all we can - and for me this is going to be a priority - to give to our brave colleagues the protection they need; protection against the environment, the equipment also, that includes communications should be up to date, helicopters – that by the way is a big bottleneck as I understand it.



We have to invest as much as possible to offer our peacekeepers the best security we can achieve for them. We also need to continue investing in the skills and their knowledge. Peacekeepers nowadays have very complicated mandates, very complex, very specialized sometimes, and all this has to be kept in mind, that we have to give them all the means to face these challenges.

At the same time, I realize that in these times of economic and financial crisis there are financial constraints from the membership. They demand effectiveness, but they demand also the best value for the money. They demand in some cases some savings. All this will have to be discussed in the spirit of partnership I mentioned and which is so important to me. This will be as far as the operations are concerned. At the same time, let us not forget all the intellectual work that has gone over all the years, especially since 2000 and the Brahimi report – thinking ahead, thinking how to adjust the concepts of peacekeeping to those demands I briefly outlined. The latest state of that reflection is the New Horizon, which was developed by my predecessor. I do intend to continue the work on all this. To refine the way we do peacekeeping, to do those reforms that are necessary, to develop the capabilities to face this wide range of activities.

We have to keep all this in mind with the very specific work needed in the field of protection of civilians, helping those countries develop or change their police, change their justice – building or re-building it sometimes, protecting human rights and the rights of children and the rights of women. This also will be a priority. I was very interested to see that a few years ago no woman was a Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and I think that it needs to be put to the tribute of the Secretary-General that now one third of all SRSGs are in fact women. Some women are working as police, on the ground and so on. Along with UN Women, I do intend to push that agenda to the extent possible.

I told you, no pre-determined grand vision. These are just some parameters of my first thoughts after just nine or ten days on the job. But above all, I want to talk to everyone, to all the stakeholders. I want to listen to them with the goal of trying to achieve the mission which is entrusted to us by the Charter - promoting peace, stability, human rights and help all those that we can help around the globe who have suffered, had their lives shattered by conflict, by violence, help them regain hope and build something solid for the years to come.

Spokesperson Nesirky: Let's take some questions.



USG Ladsous: Please be indulgent. I do not know all the details yet but I'll try my best.

Question (Mr Abaddi): First of all I would like to congratulate you, Mr Under-Secretary-General, for your appointment as the Head of the Peacekeeping Department. I know you just said that you have come here ten or nine days ago, but you are no stranger to this house. You are a long, experienced diplomat in this organisation. I had the pleasure of serving with you in the Security Council for many years and you know the house in and out. I wish you the best in your endeavours. I was interested in, I was curious, you briefed the Security Council yesterday. Have you noticed any changes in the procedures of the Security Council or any other aspect since you left the Organisation ten or 15 years ago?

USG Ladsous: Well thank you very much Mr Abaddi. I do share those memories with you. A change? Well, perhaps it is a bit early for me to comment on that. I think that basically it is still this place for dialogue and sometimes extremely precise, extremely direct – I'm talking about the consultations of course, not of the perhaps more formal meetings. No I can't say, apart from the difference in the premises of course, that I noticed much. I think that you can still feel the atmospherics of 15 delegations, who want to do the job but have of course their interests and express them, and that is as it should be.

Question (Evelyn Leopold): *Bonjour encore.* The Sudan, if that's your first stop. Do you think you can remedy, or deal with, or have any luck with the bombing that's happening from the sky by Khartoum in the border areas, which doesn't seem to have subsided? Because the Security Council doesn't seem to, well is not going to adopt any resolution on it.

USG Ladsous: Well, my first goal of course is to get to know the interlocutors, the Government of Sudan, the Government of South Sudan, see the Missions and listen to the people including people in Darfur, people in Abyei to see how it is that we can proceed. There are a number of problems, of course. There is undoubtedly violence, and the attack in Zam Zam against our peacekeepers earlier this week shows that some of that is not yet resolved. There is the functioning of our Missions, we still face difficulties to get visas, to get flight clearances, road convoys, not to mention the material difficulty. In Abyei, you know UNISFA is facing the simple fact that it's the rainy season and no road, practically, is passable.



So we have to keep deploying forces, and that's UNMISS, double "S", in South Sudan, that's UNISFA in the Abyei area. We have to try and prevent new flares of violence, and I'm told that with the end of the rainy season that it is when the traditional migration takes place again and this may give rise to incidents that we have to try and prevent if possible, to the extent possible.

At the same time we have to look ahead, we have this new government in Juba, which is as I said a rare event nowadays, which has to build itself up and we have to work with them to build up their institutions, their practices. That is going to be something extremely challenging, but I think you have seen that the Government of South Sudan has approved the mandate of UNMISS, double "S", a couple of days ago so that is a promising base.

And one final last aspect of the agenda is of course comforting, encouraging and helping, if they so wish, the Sudanese and the South Sudanese governments to proceed with their bilateral relationship. Last Sunday's meeting between President Bashir and President Kiir was a very good meeting, maybe not so much in the concrete results, but first in the fact it took place, and took place in a good atmosphere, materialised by the joint press conference of the two Heads of State, and the intention to signal to work on the bilateral issues that are on the table. And of course the United Nations as well as the African Union, the high level panel chaired President Thabo Mbeki, we are on their side and we are ready to support them in their efforts to secure a long lasting and positive relationship.

Question (Edith Lederer, Associated Press): Welcome to you on behalf of the United Nations Correspondents' Association, many members are here and we hope you'll come back often. My question is actually the UN Peacekeeping Department has probably as many troops deployed now as it's ever had. Is it reaching saturation point? And what about pressures from, particularly, the countries that are footing the bill to try and cut back on some of the missions and some expenses?

USG Ladsous: Well, thank you very much for that question. Yes, I confirm that at around - over actually – one hundred and twenty thousand, including ninety-eight thousand uniformed military personnel, we are at about the highest point ever. Now, saturation is a relative notion of course. It would depend on the mandates that the Security Council could give us. And the latest mandate is about UNISFA in Abyei, which is adding to the total. But at the same time it's true that we have to



cut back where ever we can. For instance we are looking, in the case of Haiti, at coming back to pre-earthquake surge levels. And other missions, as things go, of course wherever we can we will try and reduce the numbers and therefore the costs.

I am totally aware, I said so, that there are severe financial constraints around the world, especially in times of crisis such as these and this we have to discuss. But I would highlight this, we will discuss in the framework of the partnership which has to exist between the mandating countries, expressed by the decisions of the Security Council, the troop contributors and all those who have a stake in those matters. I think this is clearly one of the issues we are facing. But one thing for sure, I will not compromise on the expenditure linked to the security of our personnel. That, to me, is extremely important.

Question (Margaret Besheer, Voice of America): Welcome, Mr Ladsous. I was also going to ask about Sudan so I'll just ask you a little follow up. First of all do you have a date for your trip yet? And second of all, what has happened with UNMIS single "S"? Have they fully been terminated, are they gone, are there little bits and pieces, where does that mission stand?

USG Ladsous: The trip will start in two weeks time, almost to the day. As to UNMIS "single S", yes, the mandate ended on the 9th of July so now we are managing the tail end. You know, it's a matter about equipment, about some personnel. But to all practical purposes, it has ended three months ago.

Question (Matthew Lee, Inner City Press): Thanks Mr. Ladsous. I'd wanted to also ask about either Sudan or Haiti, but since you said indulgence on details, I wanted to ask you about, I guess, you, yourself if it's possible.

And one is: you're the fourth, it seems, French head of DPKO in a row. So I wanted you to say whether, you know, sort of, if you could discuss the selection process. Many of us heard that it was going to be a Mr Bonnafonte, at the last second it became you. My understanding is that you were the Chief of Staff to not only Alain Juppé but to Michèle Alliot-Marie, including during the time she ... this scandal of flying on Air Ben-Ali.

So I wanted to know, given the Arab Spring, there's three things I want to know from you quickly. One is, how is appropriate that the head of Peacekeeping, I mean



what do you say about that whole incident of the Ben-Ali flying? Two, what do you say about things, comments you made on Haiti in 2004 that President Aristide, the elected president at the time, should leave? And also when you were the DPR here of France, in '94, things that you said about Rwanda. Do you have any reflection on those who would look at those three things and say maybe there's a problem here, or maybe do have different views now or do those remain your views? What do you make of that critique?

Spokesperson Nesirky: Thanks Matthew for making one question, several.

USG Ladsous: Yes.

Spokesperson Nesirky: The only one who does that.

Lee: These questions have been bouncing around for some time.

USG Ladsous: Well look, the important thing first is I'm looking ahead. I'm looking at doing the best job I can.

If we have to go to the past, well let me give you a few illustrations. You mentioned statements I made in 2004 on Haiti. That was at a time when I was spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, I was therefore expressing the position of my Government at that time. And similarly when I took positions in the Security Council 15 years ago, that was the instructions of my Government. So that is fact, that's history, that's the past.

Now coming to the more immediate past, let me say I do not want to go into what has been done or not done by one of my bosses. I was *directeur de cabinet* to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France, and I dealt in that capacity with all the issues that were coming up, that includes the Arab Spring. I must say it was a very heavy but very demanding but very exciting year and my job was to help the Foreign Minister run the Foreign policy of the Government of France. Period. I will not go into personal aspects. Let me just say that I was very proud of having had these duties, and even more so during the time when I was serving Alain Juppé, the present Foreign Minister.

But now, my duty is to the United Nations. I have severed my connections to my Government and my loyalty is here to the Secretary-General and to the governing



bodies of the Organization, and that includes of course first and foremost the Security Council.

Question (Michinobu Yanagisawa, *Yomiuri Shimbun*): Thank you very much for this opportunity. I would also like to ask you about South Sudan. Specifically Japan's possible contribution to and participation in UNMISS in South Sudan. Japan prefers to base its forces in its engineering unit in the capital Juba, which is relatively safe, for Japan's rather stringent policy to allow use of force only in self defence. Would this be okay for the UN, would you accept this geographical preference by the Japanese Government?

USG Ladsous: Well I'm fully aware of the conditions on the PKO legislation in Japan and I've had indeed opportunities to discuss this in the specific case with Japanese representatives, even Parliamentarians as I remember it. Right now I understand there is a mission from the Japanese Self Defence Forces which is travelling to South Sudan to look at how exactly to adjust the actual operational aspects of the operation when Japanese participation materialises. Let me add that Japanese participation will be very welcome if it is confirmed, when it is confirmed. Because we know that it will be a case of engineers actually, and we know their skills, we've seen their skills, I've seen their skills myself in East Timor. They do a remarkable job so they are very welcome and they will be tremendously useful in a country where very little infrastructure exists. And it will be good for the Mission; it will be good for the South Sudanese people.

Question (Iftikar Ali, *Associated Press of Pakistan*): Yesterday the Security Council held a debate on security sector reform, which you addressed also. There was a lot of emphasis on the ownership of these reforms by the states. What role would your department have in helping these countries carry out social ... SSR, security sector reform?

USG Ladsous: SSR, security sector reform indeed. Well, it is something tremendously ... it has grown terribly important over the years. You know, when I was already here in New York in '95, I believe around '95, DPKO had a police adviser, nothing much more. Now you have to realise that within these 120,000 peacekeepers, we have over 14,000 policemen who are actually either exerting police tasks, or training or training trainers.



And police is only one aspect of course, there are many more facets. But I think, yes the notion of ownership is crucial. You cannot force a country to build up new police, one that would be effective, that would be not corrupt, that would be mindful of the importance of the rule of law unless that country really wants it and it's people want it. Because after all, especially in the peacebuilding context, very often it is a matter of giving the average citizen a sense of security, of not being threatened. So what we have here in DPKO is a small group of specialists who can work *a la carte*, you know, either find experts, organize events to train people, it's really multifaceted but I can tell you they are very, very busy and very much in demand. So I wish to signal their role and the activity they are deploying. I think it is terribly important, with this optic of peacebuilding.

Question (Barbara Plett, BBC): You mentioned the looking at reducing the number of peacekeepers in Haiti, and that's something the Security Council is going to be looking at tomorrow. I presume that was the recommendation of DPKO and I just wonder if you could confirm that. And also what are the conditions, just to clarify that the conditions have change which means you don't need as many Peacekeepers now. And is there any connection to the controversies that have surrounded the Peacekeepers in Haiti - the issue of their possible link to the cholera outbreak, the sex scandals, all of that.

USG Ladsous: Let me be very clear indeed. It will be the decision of the Security Council. But we believe that it should be possible to reduce, to come back to the levels of MINUSTAH before the earthquake. There was a surge and that was very helpful but now we might be going down to the levels of before the earthquake. In general, I think there is a desire from the Government of Haiti to retain MINUSTAH and this, I'm told, is shared by 60 per cent of the population of Haiti. There was a survey, an opinion survey done and people think that MINUSTAH is an important element to give them a sense of security at this stage. Because the Haitian National Police is being developed, it's being trained, but it's only, I believe, 4,000 operational policemen when probably four or five times that number would be necessary.

So in the meantime, yes, our people are serving a real purpose for the lives of ordinary people. And finally, no, there is no link to those absolutely dreadful events which took place two months ago - which are being handled, by the way, and you would know that the Uruguayan authorities are following up to the maximum, both in terms of military criminal procedures and in terms of civilian criminal procedures.



So that is to be noted. That was totally neither here nor there. You know we have a policy of zero tolerance. That is something I will strive to enforce. But you cannot link that terrible incident with the overall perspective of the Mission in Haiti.

Question (Alexandra Geneste, *Le Monde*): The Security Council resolution voted allowing for three months the deployment of a political mission with 200 people, not more. Is the DPKO working on the next step? Can we expect it to be larger, a real Peacekeeping operation per se?

USG Ladsous: I think that question should be asked to the Libyan Authorities. I mean, the TNC, or a new government which should emerge shortly. So far it has been made very clear that there was no request on the Libyan side for any military style operation. What they want is a compact mission which can help them in establishing their new institutions or reforming them. This is why this three months Mission, at this stage, comes under the Department of Political Affairs, with our support of course. We are providing some police advisers, rule of law advisers. But as I said, at the end of the day we will have to be in agreement with the authorities of Libya and see where we go from there. That's why I think it's being handled *en temps réel*, you know, as things go.

Question (Ali Barada, *An-Nahar*): Would you bring a new approach between Lebanon and Israel to solve the outstanding issues at the border and over flights. And are you visiting Lebanon and Israel soon?

USG Ladsous: I do intend to visit that region before long. I cannot yet tell you when. Certainly it is a very important element on the agenda. It's a very delicate part of the world. Very fine balances. UNIFIL of course is playing a very important role. So yes, I do intend to focus on that too.

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