



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail australia@un.int

150 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 www.australia-unsc.gov.au

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE 'UNITED NATIONALS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: IMPROVING SAFETY AND SECURITY OF PEACEKEEPERS'

24 May 2021

Statement by Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ)

There is no higher priority than the safety and security of our peacekeepers and the civilians they are mandated to protect. We pay tribute to all those blue helmets who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace and call for greater accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.

In recent years, our collective efforts have seen meaningful progress to reform peacekeeping, particularly through the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) and more recently A4P+. But as the security environment deteriorates in some missions and new threats emerge, peacekeeping missions must be able to meet these challenges.

We must do all we can to generate the right capabilities, resources, and mindset for missions to safely and effectively deliver their mandate – there is a clear need to enhance the peacekeeping toolkit. CANZ encourages peacekeeping intelligence, early warning and rapid-response systems to be more effectively utilised, including through the necessary pre-deployment training. Not only are these capabilities essential to protect peacekeepers, but they are critical to the protection of civilians. We also welcome the focus on stronger strategic and operational integration as a priority of A4P+, this is essential within missions and more broadly across the entire peacekeeping enterprise.

CANZ reiterates the strong link between peacekeeping performance, safety and security. We welcome the implementation of the Integrated Peacekeeping Performance and Accountability Framework and see this as an important mechanism to support accountability for improved safety and security. The Action Plan to improve the Security of UN Peacekeepers has been central to improved security and we call for the full implementation of its recommendations. CANZ also takes great interest in the implementations of recommendations made by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34).

Conventional threats such as IEDs and attacks on peacekeepers rightly demand a significant focus, especially in an evolving threat environment. But it is also critical that we focus on eliminating the more insidious dangers that can occur *within* peacekeeping missions. Bullying, sexual harassment and assault continue to undermine a safe and inclusive work environment, particularly for women peacekeepers, and we must work tirelessly to create a culture of zero-tolerance. We must also ensure women peacekeepers have access to appropriately fitting equipment and necessary medical services throughout their deployment.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by peacekeeping personnel is not only an egregious assault on those they are mandated to protect. It also threatens the legitimacy of peacekeeping missions in the countries in which they operate and, by extension, the safety and security of peacekeepers serving in good faith. We must uphold the Secretary General's commitment to zero-tolerance across the UN system and work to eradicate all forms of SEA.

Over the past year, Peacekeeping missions have shown immense resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic and we applaud ongoing efforts to roll out vaccinations in the field and by Member States prior to deployment. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, improvements to the quality and availability of medical support, including casualty evacuation, should remain a top priority – this includes placing a greater emphasis on the mental health of peacekeepers. CANZ reiterates calls for the systematic

documentation of all SOFA violations, which continue to pose a risk to safety by impeding medical evacuations and freedom of movement.

There is also much work to be done in addressing occupational safety and health issues, which are avoidable and regrettably remain a major cause of casualties. Work accidents including driving incidents and illness both require an increased focus during the pre-deployment phase through better training and medical screening.

CANZ encourages a holistic and systematic approach to improving the safety and security of peacekeepers – this remains critical for missions to effectively deliver their mandate, protect civilians, and support sustainable peace.