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Remarks

by



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on

“Effective Peacekeeping in the 21st Century”

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Hello everybody. Thank you, Nalin Surie, for that introduction. You obviously bring vast knowledge and experience to the debate that we're going to be entering into today.

Hours before India gained its independence on August 15, 1947, Nehru delivered what you and the world now know as his "tryst with destiny" speech. Most great independence speeches look inward – setting out a vision for a people who, for the first time, have won the right to define who they are and who they aspire to be. But what distinguished this speech, and the national product that Nehru so eloquently set out, was that, from its genesis, India looked outwards as well as inwards – seeing its responsibilities as extending to people far beyond its borders.

"At this solemn moment," Nehru declared, "we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity." Invoking Gandhi, he continued, "The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over." In Nehru's conception, "The service of India means the service to the millions who suffer." In other words, serving India meant serving the world's most vulnerable people.

And, in Nehru's eyes, that service meant advancing the cause of peace. His speech, as you all know, ends with a pledge that India will "make her full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind." This idea was even embodied, as you well know, in India's Constitution, which explicitly states the aim to "promote international peace and security" – one of the only nations in the world whose foundational document embraces that ambition.

These foundational commitments – and India's role as one of the original 50 state parties to the new United Nations – help explain why India's leadership in UN peacekeeping has been so significant and long-standing.

India first contributed military hospitals and field ambulances to the UN command in Korea, and then deployed in 1956 to the UN peacekeeping mission in Suez, Egypt. There,

Indian peacekeepers helped to supervise the withdrawal of French, Israeli, and British forces, and then served as a buffer between Egyptian and Israeli forces going forward. Nehru even had occasion to visit the Indian troops in Suez in 1960, touring one of their observation posts.

UN peacekeeping aimed to maintain peace and to prevent relapse into conflicts that caused so much suffering in the world. In its early manifestations, it was firmly neutral among the parties and deployed only with their consent. Peacekeepers helped to maintain ceasefires almost entirely through their presence, with little risk of being drawn into the conflicts themselves.

This match between India's national ambition and peacekeeping's early goals – help explain why, over the past 50 years no country has - as was stated earlier - contributed more to UN peacekeeping. India has participated in 48 of the UN's 69 peacekeeping missions – a higher proportion than any other country. More than 180,000 Indian troops have served as peacekeepers – again, more than any other country. Especially when considered in light of the security challenges that India faces in its own region, these numbers are astounding.

However, in the decades since the early UN missions, peacekeeping has evolved significantly. More and more, UN peacekeepers were deployed to volatile situations, where rebel groups and militia continued to fight, often attacking civilians, and in some instances targeting peacekeepers. Today, two-thirds of peacekeepers operate in active conflicts – this is the highest percentage ever.

Taking stock of the horrors of these conflicts – from young boys abducted from their classrooms in South Sudan and forced to become child soldiers, to young girls systematically raped in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a tactic of war – it can begin to feel, and I know this is how many are feeling this week – as Shakespeare wrote in *The Tempest*, that “Hell is empty and all the devils are here.” In such hellish situations, it goes without saying that peacekeepers cannot simply stand by as atrocities are committed.

Further, peacekeepers have been asked to take on new responsibilities – far from the expectations for early peacekeepers. The early blue helmets would not recognize the mandates given their successors today, which include disarming armed groups, facilitating the safe delivery of humanitarian aid, supporting efforts to hold accountable the perpetrators of war crimes and atrocities, and protecting civilians from those crimes themselves. In the meantime, the demand for peacekeeping has soared, driven by a growing number of crises. The number of uniformed personnel rose from fewer than 20,000 fifteen years ago, to 50,000 ten years ago, to 100,000 today. And that number does not even count the more than 20,000 peacekeepers serving in the African Union operation in Somalia.

Yet despite the increased demand for peacekeepers, the supply of available troops has decreased. Back-to-back catastrophes in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s exposed the grave consequences of deploying to hostile situations peacekeepers with fuzzy mandates who were neither authorized nor prepared to use force. These experiences, coupled over time with increasing demands placed on Western countries by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other missions, helped precipitate a move by many Western militaries to get out of UN peacekeeping. Europe and North America went from contributing 50 percent of peacekeepers 20 years ago, down to 7 percent today.

As a result, even as the environments where peacekeepers operated grew more dangerous and the demands placed upon them more complex, the UN had fewer resources on which to draw. In a supply-driven market, the UN used the forces it had – many brave and capable, but some that were not the best suited for the missions they were given. The UN chose an imperfect fit over no fit at all.

And throughout this shift in peacekeeping, India remained a key player. When, in the early 2000s, the UN issued a call for peacekeepers to deploy to the Democratic Republic of Congo to prevent it from sliding back into a civil war, India marshaled a substantial force to answer the call, and then contributed to the Ituri brigade to stabilize eastern Congo. It answered the call again in Darfur, Sudan in 2005, and in Liberia in 2007. Just last year, when some countries

pulled their peacekeepers out of Liberia as the Ebola outbreak spread, India kept its police in place – including its now famous all-female police patrol.

Yet the overall shift to peacekeeping in areas of great instability has created a predicament for India and for many traditional contributors to peacekeeping. Peacekeepers were being asked to bear an ever-larger share of troop contributions – in environments where the host governments were weak or where they cooperated only sparingly with the blue helmets, where certain parties had not laid down their arms, and where peacekeepers increasingly risked being drawn into conflict. In these environments, India’s long-standing commitment to live up to Nehru’s call to serve the “larger cause of humanity” was increasingly in tension with the tradition of non-interference that he also championed.

This predicament - this dilemma, this tension - looms large every day for contemporary peacekeepers on the ground in current conflicts. And today, I would like to share thoughts on three ways we can confront the tension and bring peacekeeping closer to the institution that India, the United States, and the world need it to be.

First, we can do a better job of tackling these challenging new circumstances together. And by that, I mean ensuring that more countries do their share to contribute to UN peacekeeping, rather than leaving it to a steadfast circle of troop contributors. President Obama has made it one of his top priorities not only to increase U.S. contributions to peacekeeping – which I’ll come back to – but also to work tirelessly to get other countries to step up.

This is rooted in President Obama’s deeply held conviction that America cannot turn its back on conflicts and suffering in faraway places. We have seen, time and again, how such conflicts can displace millions of people, upend markets, and destabilize entire regions. And we have seen how the instability created by these conflicts often attracts violent extremist groups, who exploit the vacuum of authority to terrorize civilians, to recruit new members, and to plan and launch attacks – something that India knows all too well from its experience. Indeed, seeing the attacks last week in Paris, it was impossible not to be reminded of the 2008 attacks in Mumbai. In addition, President Obama recognizes America’s profound moral stake in ending

the suffering and atrocities beyond our borders, be they mass rapes in South Sudan or massacres in the Central African Republic.

That is why the United States so embraces the task of advancing international peace and security. Modest as America's troop contributions to UN peacekeeping may be alongside those of a nation like India, which has given so much, our broader efforts to address shared global threats and instability are substantial – from the 10,000 U.S. troops working with Afghanistan's national security forces to support the country's government and people; to the American men and women in uniform leading the global coalition to degrade and ultimately destroy the monstrous violent extremist group ISIL; to the nearly 3,000 troops we deployed last year to West Africa to help end the deadly curve of the Ebola outbreak – to highlight just a few examples of our commitment to international peace and security.

Yet, recognizing that peacekeepers – traditional peacekeepers, wearing blue helmets – have a critically important role in preventing atrocities and mitigating conflicts, President Obama has supplemented these efforts by ramping up U.S. engagement on peacekeeping itself.

He has committed \$110 million per year for three to five years for the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, which will deepen the capacity of some of the leading African troop and police contributors and position them to respond more rapidly to crises. The President has pledged to double the number of U.S. staff officers in UN peacekeeping, to offer the UN access to our unrivaled network of air- and sea-lift support, and to undertake engineering projects where there's an urgent need and we're uniquely positioned to help. And he issued new presidential guidance – the first in more than 20 years – to expand and deepen our support for U.N. peace operations for years to come. All this while continuing to invest more financial resources in peacekeeping than any other nation.

President Obama has also pressed other leaders to up their own contributions, convening world leaders at the UN in New York this past September to rally new commitments to peacekeeping. The summit marked the culmination of a year-long global effort – with meetings in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America – an effort kicked off by Vice President

Biden at the previous UN General Assembly – and an effort aimed at getting countries to do more to contribute to international peace and security. The message was that if the international community wanted peacekeeping to succeed, world leaders had to do more than just talk about why it mattered, and instead make tangible commitments to fill peacekeeping's enduring gaps.

In all, 50 countries took part in this summit. Those countries included India, represented by Prime Minister Modi, as well as the other peacekeeping stalwarts – such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Rwanda – all of whom announced important new contributions on top of all they were already doing.

But, for the first time in decades, these leading peacekeeping countries were not alone. Malaysia announced significant infantry, police, and engineering capabilities. Finland pledged multiple military units, including special forces. Chile – helicopters, hospitals, and engineering units. Colombia declared its intent to deploy multiple infantry battalions over the next few years. And China announced that it will establish a significant standby force – to be ready to deploy immediately in times of crises.

All told, leaders from every part of the world pledged approximately 12 field hospitals, 15 engineering companies, and 40 helicopters, as well as 15 police units and over two-dozen infantry battalions. In total, they committed to providing nearly 50,000 additional troops and police to UN peacekeeping.

If countries deliver on these contributions – and we will join the UN in insisting that they do – UN peacekeeping will be positioned to improve significantly its performance. The UN will have the capacity to fill long-standing gaps in operations – from attack helicopters to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance units. If a new mission is created or an existing one significantly expanded, as sadly is sometimes the case, the UN will be able to put troops and police swiftly into the field. And to the stalwarts like India that had stuck with peacekeeping when so many other countries pulled back, the summit sent a clear message that the world is with you in this indispensable enterprise.

Now, if the first challenge is getting more countries to do more in peacekeeping, the second is ensuring peacekeepers do what is asked of them. We should expect that peacekeepers deploying to a particular mission are fully committed to fulfilling the responsibilities assigned to them and following the UN's rules of engagement.

Let me say from the outset that in formulating and renewing mandates, the Security Council, as Nalin said at the beginning, must do better at affording those countries that deploy peacekeepers a meaningful opportunity to provide their views and to share the experience of their personnel on the ground. To that end, my team has already started to hold informal meetings with leading troop-contributing countries well in advance of the mandate renewals of certain peacekeeping missions. But this, I agree, cannot substitute for improved consultations between the Security Council and contributing countries, which the United States would enthusiastically welcome. And, of course, let me reaffirm that we support a reformed UN Security Council that includes India as a permanent member.

Once peacekeepers get to the field, they must fulfill the mandates they are issued. While they may sometimes face resource gaps or have inadequate equipment that hampers their ability to carry out their duties in full, they cannot superimpose their own set of preferences on top of the UN mandates. We should also expect that peacekeepers in volatile situations use force when needed to defend themselves, to protect civilians, or to otherwise carry out their mandate as authorized by the Security Council. This is not a modern development. Even the traditional principles of peacekeeping call on peacekeepers to use force in self-defense or in "defense of the mandate" – that is, when necessary to fulfill their duties. And it is as essential a requirement for peacekeeping missions today.

This is exemplified in something that happened in the newly independent nation of Congo in 1960. This was one of the UN's first peacekeeping missions. And disputes over Belgium's enduring presence in the country, as you all know, had led some to take up arms. In response, the UN deployed more than 20,000 peacekeepers, thousands of them from India.

Though it was more than five decades ago, the position of India's permanent representative, Krishna Menon, was unequivocal on the role of its soldiers. To those who argued that peacekeepers could only use force to defend themselves, Menon said that "self-defense" was never intended to limit peacekeepers to using force only when they came under direct attack. Instead, he said, "self-defense means an action taken by anybody there, which is against the purposes of the United Nations mission and the ordinary conception of an ordered government." With his signature wryness, Menon added, "If there was no question of using force, why did the Security Council...send 20,000 armed troops to the Congo? They were not going to play in a tournament. If the idea was not to use force, then engineers, scientists, parsons, and preachers would have gone...The United Nations projected itself through military might."

Now let me be clear, because there's some confusion about this everywhere: there is a vigorous debate over whether UN peacekeepers should sometimes undertake offensive military operations to degrade threats to the peace.

This is what the Force Intervention Brigade is mandated to do in the Democratic Republic of Congo to take the fight to armed groups committing widespread atrocities against civilians. But while use of force for offensive operations has been rare in UN peacekeeping, the use of force in the course of carrying out key tasks, such as the protection of civilians, cannot be.

And that was the conclusion of the UN Secretary-General's high-level panel on peace operations – made up of 16 experts from across the world, including from India and Bangladesh. They concluded that, "When unarmed strategies fail...and civilians are under imminent threat, peacekeeping operations with a mandate and capacity to use force have the obligation to protect civilians from armed attack wherever they are deployed." They added that, "The actual use of force may not be necessary if the potential attackers perceive and know United Nations troops have the determination and capabilities to respond forcefully in case of attack." In other words, if peacekeepers consistently use force when circumstances demand – not gratuitously – they will likely have to use it less – not more – often. And the inverse is also true. When peacekeepers fail to use force to defend themselves or protect

civilians, they don't just endanger fellow peacekeepers and communities in the immediate vicinity. They also undermine the credibility and legitimacy of peacekeeping missions everywhere, sending the message that peacekeepers – and the international community they represent – can be bullied or can be ignored.

UN peacekeepers using force defensively as needed to fulfill their mandates is sometimes referred to as “robust” peacekeeping, but this is a misnomer. Instead, it should simply be called “peacekeeping,” because it is impossible for peacekeepers to carry out their core responsibilities in volatile environments without recourse to force when needed.

When peacekeepers are providing security for a convoy carrying crucial provisions to resupply a UN peacekeeping mission, and they come under attack from armed militants – as happened along a stretch of the Nile River in South Sudan, in April last year – we should expect peacekeepers to repel the attack. And that is exactly what the Nepalese peacekeepers did – moving the civilians aboard the barges to cover, coordinating life-saving aid for the wounded, and launching a counterattack to repel those who were coming after them.

When armed rebels advance on a town where UN peacekeepers are present – as happened in October 2008 in Goma – we should expect peacekeepers to hold their ground and protect the civilians living there. And that is exactly what Indian peacekeepers did – engaging the approaching rebel forces with artillery and attack helicopters, and forcing them to retreat.

Unfortunately, these examples are more the exception than the rule. A report by the UN's internal oversight office in March last year found that – in 507 attacks against civilians from 2010 to 2013 – peacekeepers virtually never used force to protect those coming under attack. Thousands of civilians likely lost their lives as a result. And indeed examples abound of peacekeepers not fulfilling their rudimentary responsibilities, such as not responding when citizens only five miles away from their base come under fire and call for help, dozens of whom, in that instance, were massacred; or retreating from a town in which they are based, rather than using force to confront approaching militants.

This cannot go on. Not for the institution of peacekeeping. And certainly not for the people the blue helmets are entrusted with protecting. And the good news is that there is a growing consensus around what modern peacekeeping looks like. In May, Rwanda, which draws of course upon its experience not merely as a leading troop-contributing country, but as the country that most exemplifies what it means when UN peacekeepers do not protect civilians in the face – in that instance, of a genocide, Rwanda channeled this growing consensus and lessons learned from the field into a set of best practices for the protection of civilians in missions.

These “Kigali Principles” call, for example, for troop-contributing countries to grant the military commander of a peacekeeping contingent prior authority to use force – because if a commander has to radio back to capital to seek permission, it may mean not being able to react in time to repel a fast-approaching attack on a nearby village.

In the span of just a few months, a diverse group of troop-contributing countries have endorsed the “Kigali Principles,” including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Uruguay. Already, one-third of all troops currently serving in UN and AU peacekeeping operations come from countries that ascribe to the “Kigali Principles” – and that proportion is rising. We should view these principles not as an aspirational set of benchmarks, but rather as the new blueprint for peacekeepers – and especially infantry – deploying into volatile situations.

This growing consensus, together with the new contributions announced at the September summit, can change the impact that peacekeepers have in the field. In the past, the scant supply of troops and police meant that neither the UN nor the countries contributing the lion’s share of peacekeepers could afford to be selective without leaving significant gaps in missions. However, the 50,000 additional troops and police should allow us to ensure a better fit between what missions demand and what troops and police are willing and able to do. Troop- and police-contributing countries that have qualms with the mandates, or doubts about their

capacity to do what is asked of them, should no longer feel pressured into deploying to missions simply because nobody else will.

Countries should consider their comparative advantage in deciding whether to deploy to a particular mission. Enabling units – including medical, engineering, intelligence, and aviation capabilities – can be every bit as important as infantry battalions.

In this regard, we are particularly encouraged by Prime Minister Modi's announcement at the September summit that, in addition to all of its other contributions, India will provide an additional field hospital, engineering company, and a company to support communications.

For its part, the UN must demonstrate leadership by strengthening its monitoring and evaluation of troops and police in the field. And we strongly support UN efforts to institute a system of periodic assessments of units. When underperformance results from a lack of appropriate training and equipping, we must help to build those capabilities over time. When it is a matter of misconduct, refusal to follow commands, or the failure to implement mandated tasks, the UN must be prepared to repatriate the responsible parties.

Now, a third key to peacekeepers' success in challenging new environments is maintaining their legitimacy and the faith, and trust, and confidence of the local population. So here, let me state the obvious: peacekeepers must not abuse civilians. The world has been justifiably sickened and outraged by one allegation after another of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers.

The irony here is as striking as it is tragic: those trusted with being protectors becoming perpetrators. In one alleged incident in August of this year, a 12-year-old girl said she was hiding in the bathroom of her family's home in Bangui – the capital of the Central African Republic – when UN police officers came through, conducting a house-by-house search. According to the girl – whose case has been documented and denounced by UNICEF – a man wearing a blue helmet and UN peacekeeping vest found her and dragged her out of the bathroom. "When I cried," the girl said, "he slapped me hard and put his hand over my mouth."

The man took her outside into the courtyard, she said, groped her, and tore at her clothes. Then, she said, “He threw me to the ground and lay on top of me.”

This is not an isolated allegation. It was reported in August that Médecins Sans Frontières had treated four minors in the Central African, including the 12-year-old girl, who reported sexual abuse by UN peacekeeping forces. In June, two girls under 16 said they had received food and other basic goods in exchange for sex with a UN soldier. And just last week, new allegations emerged in the Central African Republic, where three girls between the ages of 14 and 17 – which is under the minimum age of consent – told a reporter that they had sex with UN peacekeepers months earlier.

Sexual exploitation and abuse has no place in any society. But it is especially abhorrent when committed by those who take advantage of the trust that communities are placing in the United Nations.

According to a report released this year by the UN’s internal oversight body, in more than one-third of the cases of reported sexual abuse by peacekeepers from 2008 to 2013, the victims were children. And these are merely the allegations that we know about. This has to stop.

We commend in this regard UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s efforts to strengthen the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy with respect to such crimes – from bolstering reporting and accountability measures, to pledging to set up an immediate response team to investigate certain cases.

But we member states must do our part, as well. We know that we will never be able to fully eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers – or in our societies, for that matter. And we know that punishing those who commit sexual exploitation and abuse – whether the victims are civilians or members of security forces – can be a complex undertaking. The U.S. military itself has long grappled with challenges surrounding these issues, despite significant efforts to address the problem and to try to assist victims. Serving in

a multilateral force with a hybrid chain of command – as peacekeepers do – makes this process all the more challenging. And we totally understand that.

But by the same token, we cannot let these crimes to be carried out with impunity – accountability is essential. The governments of police and troops alleged to have committed crimes related to sexual exploitation and abuse must carry out prompt, thorough, and impartial criminal investigations as soon as they learn of these allegations. And those found to have committed such crimes must be punished appropriately. If a troop-contributing country lacks the capacity to conduct these kinds of professional investigations and prosecutions – as some say they do – the United States stands ready to help find the support needed to build that capacity.

Governments also must report back to the United Nations on their investigations into sexual exploitation and abuse. The UN and its member states need to know that the soldiers and police accused of abusing the privilege of wearing the blue helmet are adequately investigated and, where appropriate, punished. Victims and their communities need to know that justice is being served.

Unfortunately, the opaqueness of the current system makes it virtually impossible to get an accurate sense of whether investigations have even been opened into these allegations. This is a recipe for impunity: We cannot implement a zero-tolerance policy if we do not know whether abuses are being investigated. On the flipside, if peacekeepers who commit sexual exploitation and abuse are firmly punished, others may think twice about committing such crimes. And if victims see that peacekeepers who commit terrible abuses are held accountable, they might be more likely to come forward.

The new contributions announced in September at the summit allow the UN to bring greater urgency to this accountability effort. The UN needs to measure compliance. And it needs to suspend from peacekeeping any country that does not take seriously the responsibility to investigate and, if necessary, to prosecute allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The vast majority of the 91,000 troops and 13,000 police in peacekeeping missions serve honorably. They do not commit sexual abuse, nor do they turn a blind eye to it. And most contributors are serious about prosecuting soldiers and police from their forces who perpetrate these crimes. But these allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse tarnish all peacekeepers. And that is all the more reason why all member states have a stake in stamping out this serious problem.

Let me conclude.

Earlier I spoke of the indelible intervention by India's permanent representative to the UN, Ambassador Menon, in that 1960 meeting of the UN General Assembly regarding the recently deployed peacekeeping mission to the Congo. As you will recall, Menon argued that peacekeepers had a responsibility to use force not only to defend themselves, but to defend against threats to "the purposes of the...mission."

Almost a year after Menon spoke those words, Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria – one of the thousands of Indians serving in that mission – planned an operation to dismantle a roadblock manned by armed rebels. Shortly after launching their attack, Salaria and his men were ambushed and pinned down by heavy fire. Salaria realized that if he did not act swiftly, every man under his command – as well as Swedish and Indian peacekeepers attacking from the other direction – would likely be surrounded and killed. Though greatly outnumbered, Salaria led his men in charging the enemy's superior position.

Struck in the neck by automatic fire, he continued fighting, killing multiple armed rebels. Awed by the Indians' bravery, the rebels fled their position despite the superior numbers. Salaria died of his wounds shortly after they fled. He was posthumously awarded India's highest military honor, becoming one of only 21 recipients in the history of the nation to receive the Param Vir Chakra. And Salaria is just one of 161 Indians who have given their lives in peacekeeping missions around the world.

Salaria's story is a stark reminder of the risks that we ask peacekeepers to take. And it makes clear that, as we ask peacekeepers to do more, in more dangerous places, we must do more to have their backs.

We must urgently improve medical support for uniformed personnel, from more rapid medical evacuations to higher standards of emergency care. We must invest more in the safety and security of uniformed personnel, including by ensuring that they have the necessary equipment and training to serve in inhospitable environments. And we must do better at holding those who attack peacekeepers accountable for their crimes.

But Salaria's story also reminds us of the reason that – when people around the world find themselves in desperate situations of instability or violence – they still look to blue helmets to protect them. It is the same reason that, just last week – as signs mounted of an imminent explosion of violence in Burundi – a number of Burundians called for peacekeepers to deploy, to help prevent any such outbreak.

The reason is simple: people still believe in peacekeeping. And they believe in peacekeeping in large part because, over many years and many missions, men and women like Captain Salaria have risked and in some instances sacrificed their lives to protect vulnerable people just like them. That belief is something we should fight to preserve.

Profound as the challenges facing peacekeeping are - "Hell is empty, and all the devils are here," again, it feels like that – these challenges are not intractable. If we truly undertake this effort together, in partnership, building up the capabilities that will allow us to strengthen UN peacekeeping and other shared efforts to promote international peace and security; if we insist that the peacekeepers we deploy are willing and able to fulfill the mandates assigned to them; and if we safeguard the legitimacy of the institution, by ending the impunity and lack of transparency when peacekeepers commit deplorable abuses against the people they were sent to help, we can make peacekeeping into the enterprise that today's conflicts demand, and the world's people yearn for. Achieving this is closer than ever to within our reach. It is on us to seize the opportunity.

Thank you.
