

EAPTC leadership 18 Apr 2019

[Confirm Chatham House rules.]

Coming at the end of the conference gives a chance to link back to earlier comments.

It is self-evident to say that peacekeeping is complex, difficult and often dangerous.

We work in environments where we have little control over the operational circumstances, the amount of resources provided by Member States, the climate, or the level of opposition and declining consent that we face.

In these environments, we either thrive or fail on the quality of our leadership. In principle, leadership is one factor over which we have more control. We select, train and empower leaders, but we need to do more and better. This requires your active engagement.

The quality of our leadership, at all levels, civilian and uniformed, is becoming more and more important as our Member States take a more critical approach to the UN and its performance.

The UN needs to prove its utility and to have a greater effect.

In Apr 2017, the Chief Executives Board of the UN developed the UN system leadership framework. The framework outlines eight characteristics of UN leadership, but for our discussion three points are more relevant.

Leaders in peacekeeping need to actively defend norms and standards contained in the international treaties, resolutions and declarations adopted under the auspices of the United Nations. We need to understand these and show courage in their defence.

Leaders need to focus on prevention – prevention of conflict. Our leaders need to be able to work beyond silos – there are no siloed problems and therefore there cannot be siloed solutions. Prevention requires better and more sophisticated forecasting – points touched on yesterday in the intelligence discussion. Sophisticated forecasting requires better system wide analysis. System wide analysis is underpinned by effective cross-cultural and cross-mission team building and team work.

Lastly, we need to have a tangible effect on the ground. This requires that we have a robust implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in a universal, all-out effort to tackle poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, instability, insecurity, and injustice. We need to move from managing crises to preventing them in the first place. This again requires the ability to build teams across peace and security and development actors – a point made yesterday by Guy.

Peacekeeping is still in many ways improvisational—but it has professionalized. A substantial body of unique doctrine, policy and guidance has been built on decades of experience and lessons learned.

It remains a challenge to manage training that matches the scope and pace of the evolution in mandates and doctrine, the constant rotation of personnel from scores of countries, and the emergence of new threats against peacekeepers and the people they are mandated to protect.

I intend to seat my remarks on leadership on one theme – performance. Over the last almost three years, UN peacekeeping has seen a series of investigations beginning with the Cammaert report into Protection of Civilians failings in South Sudan through to the Amoussou report and the Semuliki report, to the dos Santos Cruz

report. The dos Santos Cruz has been by the far the most influential report – it was an independent report submitted directly to the SG. When he received the report on 18 Dec 2017, he wrote on the cover that it revealed “worrying flaws” that required “urgent action”.

As many of you know, that resulted in the ongoing Action Plan, which focused on four areas: mission footprint; accountability; capacity; and, mindset. Without wishing to diminish the importance of any of the areas, I believe that the most important is mindset. This, to me, becomes apparent when you identify that the underlying focus of the Cruz report is to enhance performance. The key element in performance is effective leadership and effective leadership at the top of an organization helps to create a climate of excellence. Effective leadership can overcome deficiencies in equipment, tough living conditions, and the extremes of life in field operations – particularly operations in a demanding and dangerous environment such as in Mali.

We see three essential elements of leadership. Technical competence – knowing the policies, practices, rules and regulations – in short, knowing peacekeeping. The ability to build and lead effective teams across professional and national cultures. Personal qualities – chief amongst them integrity and resilience – being able to keep going and leading by example.

Since 2016, we have made significant progress towards a leadership architecture at the operational and tactical levels. Cascading down, we all know the Senior Mission Leaders’ course (SML) and its post-selection partner, the Senior Leadership programme (SLP). Also, at post selection, we have conducted tailored induction programmes for new senior leaders which address their specific needs and include a crisis management exercise. On the military side, we have the FC course, the Sector Commander course (brigade level) and now the infantry battalion commander course. The last two flow directly from the dos Santos Cruz report. On the police side, we have the

Police Commander course and the FPU commander course. Once we have proven the model, both the Police Commander course and the battalion commander course will become requirements for service. Turning to civilians, we have the MAST which is directed to potential mission CoS and CMS/DMS – often the most senior secretariat personnel in a mission. At the mid-level, we have the SMART programme. Throughout all these courses, we use adult learning approaches with experiential training.

Training is nothing without practice. Missions are now required to run exercises and rehearsal at all levels ranging from infantry company up to mission leadership level. UNMISS is the leader in this area with a well-developed and continual exercise programme. All missions now have the skills develop and run their own exercises. FHQs are supported by a Member State led CPX programme. Missions now undertake NY HQ-led stress tests which assess their ability to manage crises at the leadership level as well as undertake a practical test of their ability to conduct CASEVAC.

The International Peace Institute (IPI), with the support of a Member State has developed scenario-based exercises make an invaluable contribution to both training and exercising. These come complete with scenario and also directing staff notes and are ideal for both team building and practicing procedures. When these were developed, we asked that the exercises have elements which involved the entire leadership team from Head of Mission to Police Commissioner, Director of Mission Support and Spokesperson. Too often, exercises focus on political issues and omit the other elements of a problem. When senior officials feel that they had no role to play and that their time was wasted, they will not participate in future. This erodes the value of exercising.

In addition, we asked that the scenarios did not focus on achieving the right solution, but rather on achieving a sound process. The focus is on getting the process right, rather than getting the right

answer. If you can get the process right and practice the process, you have built a resilient way of tackling problems that you can replicate when it comes time to confront operational challenges.

Lastly, when we conduct exercises in missions we aim to involve the deputy or 2ic level as we know that crises often occur when the principals are not present – separated from their HQ, out of the mission, or incapacitated.

Scenario-based training and exercising are the way to go – they allow teams to practice their skills in a controlled environment. Taken together, training and practice, should go a long way to achieving our shared and often stated goal, including through UNSCR 2436, of enhancing performance. No one should dispute that leadership is a key element of performance – perhaps the key element.

Once leaders are in place, they also need informal guidance and mentoring from a trusted person (former colleague or peer). The Leadership partnering (mentoring) began in 2014. These are confidential, one on one relationships, either at the HoM and deputy level. We have 29 mentor relationships at present.

My closing comments may come as a surprise to many. The leadership architecture and the exercise and rehearsal programme represent significant progress and a considerable investment in the shared goal of Member States and the Secretariat to enhance performance. However, there is no support account funding for any of it and thus the continued future of these activities is not predictable. All the programmes are reliant on the generosity of a few Member States who either fund these activities, or provide in-kind contributions of skills, hosting or other forms of invaluable support, or the programmes are supported by a levy on missions.

So, in looking towards Member States, there are some areas where they can help. Under Action for Peacekeeping, there is a shared

commitment to “collectively commit to ensuring the highest level of peacekeeping performance, and to hold all civilian and uniformed peacekeepers, particularly leadership, accountable for effective performance under common parameters while addressing performance shortfalls.” We ask that Member States ensure that uniformed leaders have the appropriate skills to operate within a UN environment, including an understanding of their responsibility for conduct and discipline.

We ask that Member States put forward qualified female civilians and uniformed personnel for leadership functions in operations.

Lastly, we ask that Member States continue to provide funds or expertise, including in partnership with us, to support our various leadership offerings, or offer to host programmes.

This brings me back to my opening point. We need to do better and we need your help. Develop good mid-level officers by deploying them into staff positions in either military or police components. They will learn the intricacies of multi-national operations and strengthen their leadership skills by having to work across multiple cultures. We both win – you get back better officers and we get access to talent. Put forward your best diplomats and public servants for senior civilian posts and put forward your best military and police officers for command positions. They will be the better for the experience and you will have made a positive contribution to the success of UN peacekeeping.