High-Level Session II – Peacekeeping Reform: More Effective and Safer Peacekeeping

Round 1: How can we enhance current and future mission effectiveness, safety and security? What is need for peacekeeping reform?

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this vital conversation on the future of UN peacekeeping. Allow me to speak today as a Force Commander currently deployed in a mission that has recently endured a time of high-intensity hostilities and is now transitioning into a fragile post-crisis environment.

Following the cessation of hostilities in November 2024, UNIFIL has been adapting swiftly to a transformed political and security landscape. We are enhancing mobility and visibility, and deepening our partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces—the cornerstone of state authority and a key pillar of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

We have prioritised operational and technological adaptation to deliver on our mandate and strengthen force protection. UNIFIL remained present along the Blue Line throughout the recent hostilities, a testament to the courage and professionalism of our peacekeepers. Over 40 were wounded, but we were fortunate to suffer no fatalities. Their resilience embodies the values of peacekeeping.

In response to recent threats, we are streamlining our command structure and reinforcing accountability across all levels to ensure greater cohesion and flexibility in our operations. At the same time, we are enhancing base protection and refining our crisis-response protocols to maintain continuity, even under threat. We have also invested in layered, redundant communications systems to preserve command integrity across our land, maritime, and air components.

These reforms are not just technical adjustments—they are strategic enablers. They strengthen our deterrence posture, reinforce our resilience, and position us as a more credible actor on the ground. As we approach critical political milestones, these adaptations will help ensure that we remain a trusted and capable force for peace.

After three years in command, I understand better than ever that peacekeeping is ultimately political. Military efforts alone cannot achieve lasting peace. UNIFIL's role—as defined in Resolution 1701—is to assist stabilisation and support the parties in fulfilling their obligations toward a sustainable solution. This must remain our collective aim.

Peacekeeping must continue to serve as a political tool in the service of peace. This calls for stronger partnerships—among missions, Member States, and regional actors—built on trust, burden-sharing, and the effective use of our comparative strengths.

Excellencies, peacekeeping remains a powerful symbol of international solidarity. UNIFIL draws strength from 48 Troop Contributing Countries, united even under fire. This multilateral commitment is what gives peacekeeping its legitimacy and effectiveness. To ensure its continued success, we must invest not only in new capabilities but also in a renewed commitment—to mandates, to safety, and above all, to peace.

Thank you.

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Round 2: Why is mis- and disinformation a threat to UN Peacekeeping and how can advances in Artificial Intelligence address mis- and disinformation as well as hate speech?

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates

The political and security environments in which peacekeeping operates today are deeply polarised, and information—accurate or not—spreads with unprecedented speed. Perceived failures or missteps are amplified and manipulated to fit political agendas, resulting in long-lasting strategic consequences.

These consequences are not abstract; they translate into very tangible threats. In our area of operations, false narratives can lead to reduced freedom of movement, either through imposed restrictions or our own calculated risk decisions. They undermine trust among local populations, and in some cases, provoke hostility and violence against peacekeepers—towards our personnel, our patrols, even our bases.

UNIFIL has experienced this directly. We frequently encounter movement restrictions rooted in unfounded beliefs: that our patrols should always be accompanied by the Lebanese Armed Forces, or that we are operating unlawfully. These narratives are not new—but they gain traction, especially during periods like our annual mandate renewal, when misinformation becomes a tool to influence public opinion or pressure political actors.

Tragically, in 2022, we witnessed the most severe consequence of this environment—the killing of a peacekeeper. The attackers cited narratives rooted in misinformation to justify their actions. This highlights the human cost of unchecked falsehoods.

Beyond the immediate risk to life, mis- and disinformation erode our legitimacy. They could plant images among communities that we are partial, ineffective, or even a threat. And once trust is lost—among host populations or within the international community—it becomes much harder to fulfil our mandates.

However, we cannot afford silence. In the information age, silence is often seen as agreement. Yet responding to every claim is not always viable—and at times, it is counterproductive. What we need are coherent strategies and new technologies—across missions and at UN Headquarters—to anticipate, manage, and counter harmful narratives before they take root.

Artificial intelligence is a powerful tool capable of combating and amplifying misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech. AI can help identify disinformation, forecast viral narratives, and support timely fact-checking. While UNIFIL has not yet experienced AI-driven attacks, the technology to generate sophisticated falsehoods is already widely available. We must prepare now, before the threat becomes entrenched.

Ultimately, the credibility of UN peacekeeping—and the safety of our personnel—depends not only on what we do on the ground but also on what people believe we are doing. That is why we must treat mis- and disinformation not as a peripheral concern but as a core operational threat.