



# AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail [australia@un.int](mailto:australia@un.int)

150 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 [www.AustraliaUN.org](http://www.AustraliaUN.org)

## UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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### Peacekeeping operations facing asymmetric threats

#### Statement by H.E. Ms Gillian Bird Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

As delivered

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Thank you Mr President.

Recurrent intrastate conflicts, expanded terrorist and extremist networks, and deliberate targeting of civilians define global security today. UN peacekeepers are facing unprecedented demands, more complex and dangerous environments, and significant fatalities through malicious acts.

Seven of the eleven countries most affected by terrorism host UN peace operations, even though the HIPPO report and the Secretary-General agreed that UN peacekeeping operations were not designed to counter terrorism.

Violent and asymmetric threat environments should not weaken our resolve to create political space for peace negotiations and protect civilians. But we must also train and equip peacekeepers to operate as safely and effectively as possible.

There is an urgent need for consistent and relevant training, greater situational awareness and improved crisis management.

First, on training, we need to ensure peacekeepers meet UN pre-deployment standards, and are able to respond to the specific threats they will face. We support standardisation efforts underway, particularly development of UN Military Unit Manuals and associated training. Australia is co-chairing the drafting of the Military and Police Handbook on IED Threat Mitigation, which will help peacekeepers detect and defeat terrorists' weapon of choice.

Second, Australia strongly supports the findings of the Report on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping, recommending the use of technology to improve situational awareness and protect peacekeepers, particularly where such technology provides low-burden, low-cost force protection. Under Australia's REDWING program, for example, a suite of practical counter IED devices that operate in austere environments was developed. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles and night vision equipment are also particularly important.

Enhanced intelligence is key to ensure peacekeeping operations are better positioned to prevent and counter asymmetric attacks. We also encourage efforts to improve engagement with local communities. This builds trust and is an important part of broader early warning and conflict prevention.

Third, while prevention is key to countering the threat, in the event of a security crisis, the UN needs the flexibility and resources to boost security and medical capacity, including quick reaction forces and medical evacuation capabilities. A comprehensive policy on crisis management, including mandatory crisis management exercises, is an important step. We also welcome the development of a medical performance framework to improve standards across healthcare capabilities. Lack of medical evacuation capability that operates 24/7 and in all-weather remains a critical gap.

Mr President, fragile states hosting peace operations are vulnerable to terrorist and violent extremist networks. We support a more strategic and coherent approach across the UN in its efforts to prevent terrorism and violent extremism, and acknowledge the need to strengthen cooperation and coordination among UN counter-terrorism and peacekeeping bodies. The Secretary-General's recommendation to integrate prevention of violent extremism into relevant activities of UN peacekeeping operations, in accordance with their mandates, merits further consideration.

Mr President, in conclusion, peacekeeping is a high risk venture, at the core of the UN's mission to maintain peace and security. In asking peacekeepers to face these risks, we need to give them the means to do their job as safely and effectively as possible.

Merci, Monsieur le Président.