

The following information was released by the United Nations Commission for Social Development:

Against the backdrop of a rapid increase in the number and complexity of United Nations peacekeeping operations, delegates in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations welcomed today the opportunity to discuss the Secretary-General's proposals to strengthen the Organization's capacity to manage and sustain peace operations.

()Speakers also focused on the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel and civilian populations in host countries, reform of the Department's Police Division, reimbursements to troop-contributing countries, as well as equitable gender and geographical representation.

Stressing the need to promote gender equality in peacekeeping, Ghana's representative said the persistent asymmetrical representation of men and women was untenable. The time had come "to move beyond the annual ritual of paying lip service to gender equality to the pursuit of practical measures to buttress our commitment to gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations, as envisioned under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)". More women should be appointed to senior managerial positions at Headquarters and in mission command posts.

NICHOLETTE WILLIAMS (Jamaica) () Noting that Member States had a collective responsibility to protect, not only the peacekeepers, but also the host populations, she said any reform process should take into account the need to preserve unity of command -- an important component of effective peacekeeping -- and ensure the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel. As the departmental reform continued, Jamaica looked forward to seeing the first phase of the Standing Police Capacity become operational and to the timely implementation of the other three phases in the stipulated time frame.

NANA EFFAH-APENTENG (Ghana) () Although some modest gains had been made in promoting gender equality in peacekeeping, the persistent asymmetrical representation of men and women was untenable, he said. The time had come to move beyond the annual ritual of paying lip service to gender equality to the pursuit of practical measures, so as to buttress commitment to gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations as envisioned under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). More women should be appointed to senior managerial positions at Headquarters and to mission command posts.

()Regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, he said it was his expectation that the model Memorandum of Understanding would facilitate the eradication of such acts and called for urgent action on a comprehensive victim assistance policy, as well as other preventive strategies, such as personnel welfare and recreation and an anti-prostitution campaign. Regarding the realignment of the Peacekeeping Department, the proposed changes should be discussed within the framework of the reform agenda still under consideration by the Special Committee, which must make appropriate recommendations on that matter. While the Military Division was stretched beyond its limits, Ghana applauded the Secretariat for strengthening the Police Division.

PAUL GOA ZOUMANIGUI (Guinea), () Noting the creation of legal, expert and conduct and

discipline teams in several missions, he said his country continued to support a zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse. Despite differences of opinion, Member States were encouraged to reach agreement on the revised model Memorandum of Understanding, the victims-assistance strategy and the guidelines on recreation that would be coming into effect at the end of year. The issue of proper leisure would reduce the incidence of sexual exploitation and abuse. Communication was also a priority, and better information and awareness on behalf of both peacekeepers and local populations would contribute to proper conduct.

He welcomed the interaction between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, and encouraged its further development. Guinea agreed with the Secretary-General regarding disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and on the importance of a clear peacekeeping doctrine. While agreeing also on the need to focus on the creation of a body of 2,500 civilian peacekeepers, there was a need to take into account gender and geographical representation. Greater importance should be accorded to conflict prevention, as well as improved coordination and integration.