

Reforming Peacekeeping in a Time of Conflict

Remarks by Amb. Samantha Power, at the American Enterprise Institute

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Good afternoon.

I've come here today to talk to about UN peacekeeping. There is a lot going on in the world right now. Elie Wiesel once – quite recently – shared with me the following thought: “The winds of madness are blowing”, and I know how it feels; but the urgent, critical issues on our plate should not divert us from an important fact: the United States has a vital interest – and a critical role to play – in strengthening peacekeeping to meet demands that peacekeepers are currently struggling to meet around the world.

I start from a basic premise: Conflicts in faraway places matter in various ways to the United States. These conflicts matter because we recognize that violence within any country can quickly cause national and regional instability – displacing millions of people, upending markets, and spilling over into neighboring countries. Conflicts undo the hard-earned progress countries have made towards building democracy, they weaken both governments and civil society, and they allow criminals and repressors to thrive.

They also matter because the instability created by these conflicts increasingly attracts extremist groups, who can use the vacuum of authority to terrorize civilian populations, and plan and launch attacks. The suffering caused by these conflicts can be a powerful recruitment tool for terrorist groups. Even conflicts that are not fuelled at the outset by extremist elements can attract and foster them. Or, because state authority breaks down, places of conflict can be comfortable places for extremists to hang out, unmolested. Whether it be Darfur, Mali or the Central African Republic, we ignore these crises at our own peril.

Not only does curbing violent conflicts make us safer, it also is consistent with what our hearts tell us is right. A number of public opinion polls have shown that large majorities of Americans support action to prevent mass atrocities from occurring in another part of the world.

We do not want to live in a world where more than 9,000 kids are recruited in less than a year to become child soldiers, as has happened recently in South Sudan. We do not want to live in a world where religious or ethnic communities who lived together for decades in harmony, such as the Muslims and Christians in the Central African Republic, learn to hate and

fear and demonize one another. Neither do America's foreign policy leaders: the next chairs of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, Senators McCain and Corker, have long been strong advocates on preventing such atrocities. So have the committees' current chairs: Senators Menendez and Levin.

Recognizing that our security and our values prevent us from ignoring these conflicts, the question is what should America do to stop them?

The United States has a lot that we must do right now. Our troops are fighting ISIL in the Middle East; they are deployed to West Africa to beat back Ebola; and they continue to serve valiantly in Afghanistan – all this even as we face substantial budget cuts. Crises from eastern Ukraine to Gaza continue to cascade on the broader Foreign Policy horizon. As President Obama said at West Point, “America must always lead on the world stage,” but “we should not go it alone.”

Even if the United States has an interest in seeing conflict abate or civilians protected, that does not mean that the U.S. forces should be doing all of the abating or the protecting. We shouldn't. It should go without saying that we cannot and we should not send the US military into all of the places conflict is burning, civilians are hurting, or extremists are lurking. Just because we have far and away the most capable military in the world does not mean we should assume risks and burdens that should be shared by the international community.

This is where peacekeeping comes in. When conflicts in Congo, Mali or South Sudan require boots on the ground to defuse conflict – peacekeeping is often the best instrument we have. Peacekeeping operations ensure that other countries help shoulder the burden, both by contributing troops and sharing the financial costs of the operations. Provided that peacekeepers actually deliver on their mandate – multilateral peacekeeping also brings a greater degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the local population. Because missions are made up of troops from multiple countries, with strong representation from the global South, spoilers and militants have a harder time cynically branding them as having imperialist designs.

Even in places where the United States has decided to deploy troops, we have benefitted from being able to hand off to the UN, as we did in Haiti, allowing the peacekeeping operation to provide longer term support for security, rule of law, and political transition.

The multilateral nature of peacekeeping helps address the free-rider problem we see today in so many matters of international security – from

the spread of Ebola to the rise of ISIL to the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters – whereby countries with vested interests in addressing threats rely on the United States’ to do the lion’s share of the work. Peacekeeping gets other countries to stand up, rather than stand by.

So, we start from the premise that – in a world where we have a vested interest in curbing violent conflicts and preventing suffering – America needs peacekeeping to work. But precisely at this moment, when we recognize the crucial role peacekeeping can play in shoring up US interests, our demands on peacekeeping are outstripping what it can deliver.

Today, we are asking peacekeepers to do more, in more places, and in more complex conflicts than at any time in history.

There are currently sixteen UN peacekeeping missions worldwide, made up of nearly 130,000 personnel, at least 100,000 of them uniformed military and police – compared to just 75,000 total peacekeeping personnel a decade ago. That’s not to mention the more than 20,000 peacekeepers fighting in the African Union’s mission in Somalia. To stress, this is by far the most peacekeepers that have ever been active in history. And yet the numbers only tell a small part of the story.

The strain on the system would be challenging enough if we were asking peacekeepers to do what they used to do – monitor ceasefires between two consenting States. But we are giving peacekeepers broad and increasingly demanding responsibilities in increasingly inhospitable domains. We are asking them to contain – and at times even disarm – violent groups, like the countless rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We are asking them to ensure safe delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance, such as by escorting emergency shipments of food and medical supplies to civilians as they have done in South Sudan. We are asking them to protect civilians from atrocities such as those being carried out in the Central African Republic. We are asking them to help provide stability in countries emerging from brutal civil wars, as in Liberia. And in virtually all of these missions, we are asking them to carry out these duties in countries where governments are extremely weak, and often unable to meet the basic needs of their citizens.

Today, two-thirds of peacekeepers are operating in active conflicts, the highest percentage ever. Peacekeepers often deploy to areas where myriad rebel groups and militias have made clear their intention to keep fighting. And the warring parties in modern conflicts increasingly include violent extremist groups, who terrorize civilians and view peacekeepers as legitimate targets.

But precisely at this moment – when we asking more of peacekeeping than ever before; and as we recognize the crucial role it can play in protecting U.S, interests in just about every mission around the world. We see both the promise and the pitfalls of contemporary peacekeeping and we see life-saving impact when peacekeepers are willing and able to fulfill their mandates, and the devastating consequences when they are not.

A few examples.

In South Sudan, where a new civil war has displaced over a million people and killed more than 10,000 since last December, the UN peacekeeping mission has arguably played a critical role in the prevention of further bloodshed. On December 15, the day infighting between President Kiir and former Vice-President Machar sent the country spiraling into horrific violence, government soldiers went house to house searching for ethnic Nuer men and executing them in the streets. In one incident, soldiers crammed between two and three hundred Nuer men into a small building and then opened fire on them through the windows, killing nearly all of them. In the city of Bor, rebel forces repeatedly targeted the homes of ethnic Dinka, executing the unarmed inhabitants and looting their cattle and other possessions.

In response to the onset of violence, the UN opened the gates of its bases to civilians fleeing the violence, eventually taking in more than 100,000 displaced people. On a Security Council trip to South Sudan I took in August, I visited the UN base at Malakal, where more than 17,000 people were taking shelter. Rough as the conditions were for the people on the base – and they were rough: many of them were living foot-deep in filthy water – they told me that at least they had access to food and clean drinking water and protection from deadly attacks, which was more than could be said for the South Sudanese outside of the gates. Two decades earlier, recall, when civilians sought refuge under the UN flag, peacekeepers made a different choice. In April 1994, some 2,000 Rwandan Tutsis had sought refuge in the Don Bosco School in Kigali, which UN peacekeepers were using as a base. Hutu militias had surrounded the school, chanting “Hutu power,” drinking banana beer, and brandishing machetes. Yet when orders came for the peacekeepers to evacuate, they followed orders. They had to shoot over the heads of the Tutsis to get out – so resistant were the people to let them go. Not long after peacekeepers walked out of the school, militia members walked in, butchering virtually everyone inside.

That was then. Now we have the UN mission in South Sudan opening its gates and staying with the people at a time of great need. At the same time, South Sudan demonstrates the continuing challenge of rapidly

deploying peacekeepers and the equipment they need. At the outset of the December conflict, the Security Council swiftly authorized an emergency surge of 5,500 troops, nearly doubling the number of today troops there. Yet almost one year later, the mission is still more than 2,000 troops short, severely restricting the mission's ability to project force and provide security for civilians outside UN camps. It has also suffered from a chronic shortage of helicopters. In fact, some of you may know there's a shortfall of more than 30 helicopters across UN missions, consistently restricting mobility and effectiveness often in life-or-death situations.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there is similar good news and bad news. After years of stagnancy, the UN mission has played a critical role in the last year, year and a half, in disarming and defeating powerful rebel groups. Alongside the Congolese forces, this effort has been led by a special unit of the mission known as the Force Intervention Brigade. The Brazilian UN force commander, Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, who has been critical to a heightened emphasis on preventing atrocities, told fellow peacekeeping commanders at a recent Security Council meeting to change their mindset and stop reporting "just what happened yesterday" and instead start reporting "what we did yesterday." So the accountability is for what we did in the face of what is happening. And the brigade under dos Santos Cruz has put these convictions into action, neutralizing a number of powerful rebel groups, including the M23, which had committed unspeakable atrocities against Congolese civilians. General Santos Cruz has set an example by putting himself on the front lines of this aggressive effort, participating in patrols with his troops, and even traveling personally to the headquarters of one rebel group to tell its leaders to lay down their arms or face a frontal assault. This is not your mother's or your grandmother's peacekeeping.

And yet even with this singular leadership we still see UN peacekeepers in Congo fairly routinely fail to protect civilians. On the evening of June 6, armed assailants attacked civilians at an outdoor church service in the Congolese town of Mutarule. Many people called the nearby UN base – which was only five miles away – they were begging for help; in some instances they were using free phones the peacekeepers had provided them for just such an emergency. Yet the peacekeepers sat in their base, later claiming they thought that local Congolese military commanders would intervene. More than 30 people were massacred, eight of them children. One victim was a four-year-old boy with mental and physical disabilities, who was burned to death. These are the stakes of what gets done right and what gets done wrong, or not done, in this case.

This incident in Congo is unfortunately not an isolated case – even though the protection of civilians has moved to the heart of contemporary missions'

mandates. A report by the UN's internal oversight office in March found that – in 507 attacks against civilians from 2010 to 2013 – peacekeepers virtually never used force to protect civilians under attack. Thousands of civilians may have lost their lives as a result, and this is unacceptable.

In Mali, during the nine months in 2012 and 2013 that extremist groups controlled towns in the North, a teenage girl was whipped 60 times in the streets of Timbuktu for daring to talk to young boys. Music was banned, major mausoleums demolished, and libraries burned. Today, peacekeepers play a critical role, alongside the French to help root out extremists. UN peacekeepers have helped to provide Malians with the security and assurances to return to their communities, reducing the number of Internally Displaced Persons in Mali by more than 60 percent in the past year. And the peacekeepers' presence has prevented extremists from retaking key cities and towns such as Timbuktu, where the community is reconstituting its long tradition of religious tolerance and rebuilding its ravaged holy sites.

At the same time though, the peacekeeping mission in Mali face serious challenges in projecting force over the vast territory north of the Niger River. The mission has struggled to move troops, establish base camps and sustain them in an austere environment with unusable roads – the mission has had to spend millions of dollars just to transport water to troops in that environment. Worst of all, UN troops are also facing unprecedented attacks by extremist elements. Just to give a few examples. On August 16, a suicide bomber drove a pick-up truck laden with explosives into the heart of a UN camp in the town of Ber and detonated its load. Two Burkinabe peacekeepers were killed, and seven others wounded. On September 18, five Chadian peacekeepers were killed when their truck drove over an IED. And on October 3, men armed with RPGs on motorbikes ambushed a UN logistics convoy traveling to resupply troops in the field, killing 9 peacekeepers from Niger. Suffice it to say, when the UN created peacekeeping six decades ago, it did not have suicide bombers or IEDs in mind.

Now when we deploy peacekeepers into some of the most complex conflicts of our time and deploy an extremely low number of troops proportional to the tasks that they are been assigned, some of these problems would likely be evident even if the world's most advanced militaries were the ones wearing blue helmets.

Regardless, the problems I've described – slow troop deployment, limited mobility, the challenge of keeping units fed and hydrated in remote areas, and the failure to confront aggressors and protect civilians – are problems that are in the U.S. interest to see addressed. I would like to share four

ways that the United States and our partners can strengthen peacekeeping so it can better meet the demands of 21st century conflicts.

First, the pool of countries that deploy troops, police and military enablers needs to expand. UN peacekeeping is increasingly funded by developed countries and manned by developing countries. This is unsustainable and unfair. It will not produce the peacekeeping forces that today's conflicts and our national security demand. And it perpetuates divisions between the two camps, when in reality we have a shared interest in seeing peacekeeping succeed.

That is why Vice President Biden convened world leaders at the UN General Assembly in September for a Peacekeeping Summit, to press for more commitments from capable militaries and to demonstrate our common cause with those who are performing this dangerous task. We are encouraging European militaries, many of which are drawing down from Afghanistan, to return to UN peacekeeping where they played a very active role in the 1990s; urging Latin American militaries to deploy outside the Western Hemisphere; and asking East Asian militaries to contribute more substantially to peacekeeping, some for the first time. These countries will not only bring more troops to UN peacekeeping operations, but also niche capabilities – such as the surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities that Dutch and Nordic troops are now bringing to the UN mission in Mali, which should help prevent deadly attacks on peacekeepers and civilians, like the ones that have taken the lives of more than 30 peacekeepers in the last year.

At the September summit, many of our partners answered the U.S. and UN call. Colombia announced its intent to deploy its highly capable troops, which have benefitted over the years from U.S. training to UN peacekeeping. Japan announced it will change its domestic legislation to permit greater participation in peacekeeping. Indonesia announced that it will more than double its deployment of troops to UN peacekeeping operations and create a standby force to permit rapid deployment. More than two dozen other countries, from Sweden to Chile to China, made new commitments. We will continue to urge new contributions over the coming year, and world leaders will reconvene in September 2015 to make new pledges to peacekeeping.

As for our own military, in addition to our high-profile military efforts in Afghanistan, against ISIL, and against Ebola, the United States today contributes about 1,400 troops to the multinational peacekeeping force in Sinai and the NATO mission in Bosnia. But as Vice President Biden announced at the summit, we are reviewing whether there are gaps that the United States is uniquely positioned to fill. That includes providing

critical airlift for UN or AU peacekeepers and building base camps, as we are currently doing for the mission in the Central African Republic. We are also doing more to share our unique knowledge of confronting asymmetric threats, like the ones peacekeepers are confronting in Mali and Somalia, lessons we learned through more than a decade of war in Afghanistan. And we are doing more to help peacekeeping missions make better use of advanced technology, such as counter-IED equipment, which can improve peacekeepers' ability to project force and save lives.

Our second goal in this effort is to ensure that countries with the will to perform 21st century peacekeeping have the capacity they need to do so. Because African leaders see first-hand the consequences of unchecked conflicts, several have been at the forefront of embracing a new approach to peacekeeping: seeking to aggressively execute the tasks assigned to peacekeepers and in particular the responsibility to protect civilians. The African Union has demonstrated a commitment to building rapid response capability on the continent, and the United States is leading a coalition of international partners in support. To this end, in August, President Obama announced a new initiative at the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit: the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, or A-Prep. The United States will invest \$110 million each year for the next three to five years to build the capacity of a core group of six countries – Ethiopia, Ghana, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda. And we are hopeful that our allies in NATO and elsewhere will join the partnership to increase and deepen these capabilities.

The idea is to deepen our investment in those militaries that have a track record of deploying troops to peacekeeping operations and that commit to protecting civilians from violence. To give just one example, Rwanda's troops were among the first boots on the ground when conflicts erupted in the Central Africa Republic. Rwandans understand the importance of getting peacekeeping right, having experienced the catastrophic consequences of it going terribly wrong 20 years ago. And because Rwandans robustly enforce their mission mandates, the people in countries where they serve trust them; troops from other countries who serve alongside them in UN peacekeeping see what robust peacekeeping looks like; and aggressors who would attack civilians fear them.

The United States has trained hundreds of thousands of peacekeepers in the past decade through the Global Peace Operations Initiative, launched under President Bush. A-Prep is an important supplement to that effort. Our military experts will work alongside partners like Rwanda to strengthen their institutions and capabilities so they can rapidly deploy troops when crises emerge, and supply and sustain their forces in hostile and inhospitable environments. In exchange for this support, these countries have

committed to maintain the forces and equipment necessary to undertake those rapid deployments.

Third, we need to build a global consensus in support of the mandates peacekeepers are being asked to undertake. The Security Council first tasked a peacekeeping mission with the responsibility to protect civilians in Sierra Leone in 1999 – in the face of the brutal civil war in that country. Today, 10 missions – constituting almost 98 percent of UN troops across the world – are charged with protecting civilians. However, a number of large troop-contributors openly expressed scepticism at the scope of responsibilities that the Security Council has assigned to their troops. These countries cite the traditional principles of peacekeeping – that is, operating with the consent of the parties, remaining impartial between the parties, and using limited force. This approach is understandable. Many of the countries that subscribe to this served in some of the earliest peacekeeping missions – in which blue helmets were deployed at the invitation of warring parties to observe a ceasefire along a demarcated line, such as one between Israel and Syria, or India and Pakistan. In that context, it was absolutely vital that peacekeepers had the states parties' consent, that they behaved impartially, and that they simply observed and reported infractions.

But for more than twenty years, peacekeeping has steadily evolved. We must question how relevant these principles remain to places like Mali and South Sudan, where peacekeepers are called on to defend peace and protect civilians. As Ethiopia's Prime Minister recently argued, we cannot ask extremist groups for their "consent;" remain "impartial" between legitimate governments and brutal militias; or restrict peacekeepers to using force in self-defense while mass atrocities are taking place around them.

If peacekeeping is to be effective in the 21st century, we must close the gap between the mandates the international community asks peacekeepers to undertake, and their willingness to successfully execute them. If we do not, it not only puts the lives of civilians and peacekeepers at risk but undermines the credibility and legitimacy of peacekeeping everywhere.

Recently some of the largest and longest-serving troop contributors have demonstrated a willingness to tackle this challenge head-on. Over the last year, Bangladesh has conducted a comprehensive internal review to craft a new national peacekeeping strategy, aimed at adapting to the demands of contemporary peacekeeping; it has recognized the evolution of peacekeeping and pledged to make the protection of civilians an essential component of its troops' training. Meanwhile, earlier this year, Pakistan

swiftly removed a sector commander who failed to deploy his troops to protect civilians under attack, sending a message to Pakistan's some 8,000 peacekeepers worldwide that such inaction was not condoned. Just last week, Pakistan declared at the UN that it is committed to "robust peacekeeping to protect civilians."

Translating these shifts in posture into unity of purpose will take time, but these are promising steps, and we will work with our partners and the UN to encourage more steps like these. In turn, we must take seriously and seek to remedy the troop-contributing countries' understandable frustration that they lack sufficient opportunity to share with the Security Council the practical experience on their troops on the ground prior to taking on complex and robust mandates which put in harm's way their men and women in uniform.

Fourth, we need to press the UN to make bold institutional reforms. It is easy to criticize the United Nations for all the problems we see on the ground. But at the same time we create much needed accountability for failures or abuses, we should take note of some profound and far-reaching changes that the UN Secretariat has made to peacekeeping since its catastrophic failures in Rwanda and Srebrenica. From doctrinal changes that recognize the new responsibilities of peacekeepers; to better systems for the recruitment and deployment of a vast number of military, police and civilian personnel; to improved logistics and procurement – the United Nations has made some advances. Last year, we spearheaded the effort to enact further reforms, including longer troop rotations to preserve institutional memory, financial penalties for troops who show up without the necessary equipment to perform their duties, and financial premiums for troops who are willing to accept higher risks. Incentives and disincentives have to be better leveraged in the service of our shared aims.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has just launched a new strategic review of peacekeeping, the first in nearly 15 years. While we don't expect a mere review to remedy deficiencies in capabilities and shortages in political will, the review should address those shortcomings of peacekeeping that the UN – as distinct from the UN member states – has the ability to try to fix: inadequate planning; slow troop deployment; uneven mission leadership; unclear and unenforced standards for troop performance; inadequate measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse; insufficient accountability for failures to protect civilians; and an inefficient division of labor between peacekeeping operations and other UN agencies. Most of the issues that I've just described, the UN secretary can take a strong leadership role. Member states then in turn have to step up. You have to have both for the reforms that are needed to kick in and make a difference.

These four lines of effort are all critical to ensuring peacekeeping better addresses 21st century challenges. They demonstrate the need for U.S. leadership. And to exercise that leadership, the United States must pay our UN dues in full.

I understand the frustration that many Americans feel with the United States paying a substantial share of the peacekeeping budget and with the U.S. share rising over the past decade, due to the formula the United States negotiated in 2000, which allowed our regular budget contributions to be capped. We agree that the formula should be changed to reflect the realities of today's world. But, until that happens, we also insist on paying our full dues at this critical moment. If we do not, we will dramatically undercut our power to achieve the reforms needed, undermine our leadership, and potentially underfund important African-led missions, such as the ones in Mali and the Central African Republic.

This does not mean we simply sign over a large check and look the other way. On the contrary, as diligent stewards of taxpayer funds, over the last six years we have pressed hard to improve the cost-efficiency of peacekeeping and to prevent significant new costs. Through U.S.-led reform efforts, the UN has cut the per-peacekeeper costs by roughly 16 percent – that's one-sixth of the cost reduced through efficiencies and streamlining. We have also aggressively fought cost increases, saving hundreds of millions of dollars per year by prevailing on other countries for a more modest increase in the long-frozen reimbursement rate for UN peacekeepers. And we have pressed to streamline and right-size missions where warranted by changing conditions on the ground. In the Ivory Coast, we have cut the number of mandated troops in half, from around 10,000 to 5,000. In Haiti, we have reduced the number of mandated troops from nearly 9,000 after the 2010 earthquake to just over 2,000 today. We were on course to do the same in Liberia prior to the outbreak of Ebola. These efforts ensure governments do not use peacekeepers as an excuse not to take responsibility for their citizens' own security. And streamlining missions frees up troops and resources that are needed elsewhere.

We will continue to work relentlessly to make peacekeeping as efficient as possible without undermining its effectiveness, in close coordination with the Congress. As Congress reconvenes next week to consider a spending bill, I plan to continue working with a bipartisan group of lawmakers to find a path forward on this critically important issue.

Before closing, let me touch on a trip President Obama asked me to take last week to take stock of the international response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Long before Ebola hit Sierra Leone and Liberia, brutal civil

wars did. And both nations subsequently hosted UN peacekeeping missions. The UN's mission in Liberia, UNMIL, is ongoing.

When UN peacekeepers arrived in Sierra Leone in 1999, the ceasefire between warring parties was shaky. More than 50,000 people had been killed, and rebel groups had amputated the limbs of 20,000 people. Over the next six years, UNAMSIL was performing a lot like the contemporary missions I described earlier. It suffered some very serious failures and setbacks, including credible allegations of an outrageous pattern of sexual abuse by troops. Less than a year after the mission deployed, rebels kidnapped hundreds of peacekeepers, killed four of them, and renounced their ceasefire with the government.

But talk to Sierra Leoneans, as I did last week, and they recall a mission that had an outsized impact in helping Sierra Leone rebuild after an utterly devastating conflict. Peacekeepers helped to disarm at least 75,000 ex-fighters, including hundreds of child soldiers, who they helped reintegrate into their families and communities once again; the blue helmets decommissioned more than 42,000 weapons; and they helped half a million displaced people return to their communities. After providing security for the country's first-ever democratic presidential election in 2005, the UN peacekeeping mission was drawn down.

One of the questions that kept running through my mind as I toured Freetown last week was: what if UN peacekeepers had never come to Sierra Leone? What if the country had still been at war when the Ebola outbreak struck? How much faster would the virus have spread? How would doctors and nurses have been able to flood the country to support the country's weak health system? How would Sierra Leone's military have been able to help build Ebola treatment units or run safe burial operations, as they are now doing, if they were tied down fighting rebels?

We rarely ask these questions of peacekeeping. We see the many ways peacekeepers come up short – the slowness to deploy, the failures to protect civilians, the abuses, the list goes on. But what we cannot see – what is impossible to see – is the counterfactual. What would any of the more than a dozen countries where UN peacekeepers are deployed today look like without a peacekeeping presence?

And when missions do their jobs, as UNAMSIL did in many ways, they make themselves obsolete. They draw down. Troops come home not to parades – in spite of having risked their lives on the line for people from nations that are not their own – they come home to anonymity. Yet this “what if” question is one we must ask ourselves with every mission. What would have happened in South Sudan if no UN peacekeepers had been present when Dinka and Nuer began going door to door and killing

people on the basis of their ethnicity; or if the UN had not opened its gates to 100,000 people fleeing this violence? What would the Central African Republic look like today if no African Union or European Union peacekeepers, now UN peacekeepers, had come to try to prevent attacks by anti-Balaka and Seleka militias, who were massacring civilians with abandon?

In all of these instances, the answer is a simple: without peacekeeping, the violence and the suffering would have been much, much worse.

The “what if” question doesn’t let anybody off the hook: not peacekeepers, not the countries that fund and lift, and support peacekeeping and authorize these missions as we have the privilege of doing within the security Council, not the peacekeeping contributors themselves, not the UN Secretary – nobody gets off the hook. But it does remind us why this effort is so worthwhile. And why American leadership is so critical.

Just because places like Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic are better off than they would have been without peacekeeping does not mean the institution is where it needs to be. It is not.

Nor does it mean we are satisfied with peacekeepers fulfilling parts, but not all, of their mandates; or with peacekeepers standing up to protect civilians some of the time, rather than all the time; or with missions that deploy in part, but not in full, to the field. We are not.

When the stakes are as high as they are though in these conflicts – when shortfalls can result in atrocities committed, communities uprooted, and in entire societies being split along ethnic or religious lines – getting it right some of the time is certainly not good enough. Peacekeeping must be consistently performing and meeting our expectations. And we will keep working with our partners to bring about the kind of reforms upon which the security of millions of people around the world may well depend.

Thank you.