United Nations
READOUT/REMARKS

Readout of the Secretary-General’s meeting with
H.E. Mr. Arif Alvi, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The Secretary-General met with H.E. Mr. Arif Alvi, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Secretary-General thanked Pakistan for its support to the United Nations. The Secretary-General reiterated the UN’s commitment to support the country’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They exchanged views on regional developments.

Islamabad, Pakistan
17 February 2020

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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

REMARKS ON FUTURE CHALLENGES TO GLOBAL PEACE: THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS VIS-À-VIS A4P

Islamabad, Pakistan, 17 February 2020

[as delivered]

Rector, Dear Members of the Faculty, Dear students, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to ask you to join me in paying tribute to the heroic 157 Pakistani peacekeepers that sacrificed their lives to protect the lives of some of the most
vulnerable populations in the world. So, I would ask you please to join me in a moment of silence.

Thank you. I am very proud to be a colleague of theirs.

It is a great pleasure and an honour for me to be here in the Centre for International Peace and Stability, one of the most important institutions in the world that support peacekeeping activities in an extremely competent and professional way.

We all know that peace does not happen by chance. It is the result of difficult decisions based on solid evidence and facts. The Centre for International Peace and Stability, and institutions like it, are improving our knowledge and understanding of threats to peace and sources of instability. You are doing important work in the service of peace.

I myself graduated in engineering, and when I see the facilities and opportunities available to today’s students, I sometimes wish I could go back to college.

I know the students of the National University of Sciences and Technology are making the most of your education by aligning your academic studies with the broader goals of sustainable and inclusive development, equal opportunities, environmental protection and social progress.

Science and technology are an excellent starting point for changing the world, and I wish you all the best in your efforts.

Excellencies, dear students,

Pakistan is one of our most consistent and reliable contributors to peace efforts around the world.

Since the first Pakistani deployment to the Congo – as it was referred - in 1960, Pakistan has contributed more than 150,000 personnel to 41 peacekeeping missions in 23 countries.

And as I mentioned, 157 Pakistani military, police and civilian personnel have paid the ultimate price while serving under the United Nations flag. We will never forget their sacrifice.
Today, Pakistan is the sixth largest contributor of troops and police, with more than 4,000 uniformed personnel serving in nine United Nations peace operations, including in some of our most dangerous missions, like in the Central African Republic and Mali. Pakistani officers are also playing an important part as Force Commanders and Chiefs of Staff, and Pakistan contributes critical equipment, including a helicopter unit in Mali.

I have seen for myself the professionalism, the commitment of Pakistani military, police and civilian personnel in our missions and I thank you for your important contribution to creating a safer and more peaceful world.

United Nations peacekeeping is a beacon of hope for millions of people affected by conflict and instability.

Since 1948, over 70 UN peacekeeping missions have supported countries to make the transition to peace, fostering an environment of stability and development.

But as the nature of conflict changes, UN peacekeeping faces new challenges: rising threats to the security of peacekeepers themselves; difficult relations in several cases with the governments of some host countries; and problems in identifying an end-point and an exit strategy for our missions.

The growth of well-armed non-state armed groups, some of which operate across borders with shifting alliances and no clear political goals, has made it more difficult to negotiate an end to conflict.

The pathways to peace often depend on finding or creating unity of purpose and political will, at the local, national and international levels.

In some places, Blue Helmets are targeted by armed groups. That means we have to expend some of our resources on our own protection.

New digital technologies and the spread of propaganda on social media platforms are changing the face of war. Our peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali have both been targeted by misinformation campaigns.

These new challenges called for decisive and cohesive action by all peacekeeping partners.

Excellencies and dear students,
This is the background to the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, that was launched in March 2018 to revitalize the essential partnership between the United Nations, troop- and-police contributor countries, Host Governments, regional organizations and all who have a stake in peacekeeping.

Pakistan was the first country to endorse the Declaration of Shared Commitments on A4P. I thank the Government of Pakistan for stepping forward to champion safety and security, performance and accountability.

Over the past two years, more than 150 Member States and four partnering organizations have followed Pakistan’s lead.

The Declaration covers eight areas for peacekeeping: political solutions; Women, Peace and Security; protection; safety and security; performance and accountability; sustaining peace; partnerships; and conduct.

It is a blueprint for all our peacekeeping-related work.

The success of A4P depends on all peacekeeping stakeholders upholding their commitments.

We in the United Nations Secretariat have made progress across key areas of the Declaration, including measures to reinforce the security and performance of our peacekeepers. These have resulted in improved casualty evacuation procedures and a decline in peacekeeper fatalities from malicious acts, from 59 in 2017 to 28 in 2019.

It is important to underline that this reduction in casualties is not the result of diminishment of activities, or a more protective behaviour, on the contrary, it is the result of more proactive action of our peacekeepers. It is the fact that they are being much more proactive and based on that more able to intimidate those that would eventually attack them, that it was possible to meaningfully reduce the number of casualties in our peacekeeping operations and at the same time increment the capacity for the protection of civilians by the peacekeepers themselves.

In Central African Republic, where more than 1,000 Pakistani troops serve, an enhanced partnership with the African Union contributed to a peace agreement between the government and armed groups, which is now being implemented. Levels of violence and civilian casualties have fallen.
With the deployment of the first-ever Pakistani Female Engagement Team to South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan is a leader in championing women peacekeepers and an example for other troop contributors.

This inspiring all-women Pakistani team has implemented successful projects on vocational training, medical outreach and psychological support, and improved information-gathering that feeds into security assessments. It is my experience, with ten years as High Commissioner for Refugees, being in some of the most dangerous areas in the world, that to gain the confidence of populations, to gain the confidence of communities, women peacekeepers – both military and police - are absolutely essential, and they can do things that us, men, are not able to do – gain the confidence and create conditions for more effective action of our peacekeeping units.

Looking forward, we see several areas for progress within the A4P framework.

First, supporting missions in the most challenging environments to deal with greater security risks than ever.

Second, we are building greater capacity to improve the protection of civilians through training partnerships and provision of better equipment.

Third, we will enhance our analytical and intelligence capacities, by strengthening direct engagement with the host governments, communities and local people.

Fourth, we will strengthen implementation of the Human Rights Due Diligence policy, including through review mechanisms.

We will continue to work with troop and police-contributing countries to increase the number of women in uniform; to fill equipment gaps; and to set standards for environmental sustainability and accountability.

And we will build on our efforts to hold accountable the small minority of peacekeepers who commit unlawful acts, including sexual exploitation and abuse.

I remember the first meeting I had with the Ambassadors of troop contributing countries when I started my functions. It is true that three years ago, there was a campaign that was negative and question was very much in the limelight of the international Media. I am very proud of the fact it was possible to completely change that perception and today when we read the media on peacekeeping it is a totally different and a much more positive image that we are able to collect. I am extremely
grateful to all countries that assumed leadership in order to have better training, better trainers and better accountability of their forces. This has contributed enormously to strengthen the image of peacekeeping around the world, and Pakistan has been absolutely exemplar in that regard.

We are planning to create a framework, together with our troop and police-contributing partners, to systematize performance evaluation and accountability.

Excellencies, dear students,

Pakistan’s great founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, said the aim of the state should be: “Peace within and peace without”.

United Nations peacekeeping is based on the same principle.

Peace in one place helps to build peace everywhere.

I thank you once again for your important contribution.

And I look forward to discussing all these issues with you. Thank you very much.