

Haiti: Peacekeeping chief points to changes in mandate of UN mission

10 February 2017 – While the security situation in Haiti is not perfect, solid progress has been made over the past few years, the head of United Nations peacekeeping operations has said, stressing that the Organization is considering a change in the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in the island nation, known as MINUSTAH.

Wrapping up a week-long visit during which he attended the swearing in of the new Haitian President, Jovenel Moïse, and carried out an out an evaluation of Mission, Hervé Ladsous, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told reporters yesterday in Port-au-Prince: “The military component of MINUSTAH is likely to disappear in the relatively near future. We are looking at the modalities.”

At the heart of the Mission’s work is ensuring stability, he continued, noting that the recent elections had gone off with few incidents, thanks to MINUSTAH and particularly the Haitian National Police, and the Provision Electoral Council. “I think this is something to be noted,” he said.

He recalled that in October 2016, when the UN Security Council renewed MINUSTAH’s mandate, it had expressed its wish to examine the mandate of the Mission in mid-April. The Secretary-General is to make recommendations to the Security Council on 15 March.

“I think that when we look at the situation in this country compared to what it was a few years ago, we have made a lot of progress,” Ladsous said. “Security is not perfect, but I think it is much better.”

Mr. Ladsous went on to note that the regular strength of the Haitian National Police is set to reach 15,000 and that efforts will continue to strengthen the capacities of this police.

Somalia: UN Security Council urges sustained momentum towards democratic governance

10 February 2017 – Welcoming political and security progress in Somalia since 2012, including the recently concluded elections in the country, the United Nations Security Council today highlighted the need to “maintain the

momentum towards democratic governance in the African nation.

In a Presidential Statement adopted today, the 15-member Council also hailed the increased representation of women in the Upper House and the House of the People and underscored the important contribution of women to Somalia's peacebuilding and State-building processes.

The UN body responsible for matters concerning international peace and security also congratulated President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' and paid tribute to former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for his service and commended the swift and gracious transfer of power in Somalia.

The new President, known as 'Farmajo,' was declared the winner on Wednesday after two rounds of voting by the Somali Parliament in the capital, Mogadishu. The runner-up, incumbent President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, chose to withdraw from a third and final round.

It also underscored the importance of timely and transparent appointment of ministers and the cabinet, in consultation with the Somali Parliament, and called on the Parliament and all federal and provincial leaders to cooperate fully with the Federal Government in driving forward reform and addressing immediate priorities without delay.

The Security Council further emphasized the need to accelerate agreement between the federal and regional authorities on a federal security sector architecture as well as the importance of good faith cooperation between the authorities to speed up the country's peacebuilding and State-building process.

It also called on the international community and Somalia's partners to step up their support to efforts to build and strengthen the country's national institutions, governance structures and socio-economic infrastructure.

The Council further urged the Federal Government to promote a comprehensive reconciliation process that brings about local, regional, and national cohesion and integration in a climate of respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to establish an effective federal political system.

Also in the statement, the Council recognized that the coming months would be an important

period for Somalia, and said that it would follow progress closely, and reaffirmed its support for peace, stability and development in Somalia.

UN calls for 50 per cent increase in funding for mine action in 2017

9 February 2017 – The United Nations has launched a \$511 million international appeal for humanitarian mine action in conflict and post-conflict settings for 2017, a 50 per cent increase from last year's \$347 million consolidated appeal.

Across the world, the conflicts tearing countries, communities and lives apart cause a tragic increase in the number of casualties due to landmines and other explosive hazards," said the Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), Agnès Marcaillou, in a press release issued earlier this week.

There is an absolute necessity for a humanitarian mine action response. The knowledge and willingness to help are there – it is adequate funding that is missing," added Ms. Marcaillou, who also chairs the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action.

According to the Portfolio of Mine Action Projects 2017, an online resource for information on such projects, there is a sharp increase in the need for humanitarian mine action, including landmine clearance, risk education and victim assistance.

The Portfolio covers over 200 projects and presents a consolidated picture of the needs and strategies of 22 countries and territories contaminated with landmines and other explosive hazards such as unexploded cluster munitions, rockets and improvised explosive devices across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and South America.

Needs are the greatest in active conflict zones, with Afghanistan requiring \$124 million; Iraq \$75 million; Syria \$52 million; and Yemen \$17 million. In addition, countries which have extensive residual contamination also need substantial support, with Cambodia requiring \$23 million and the Lao People's Democratic Republic \$26 million, according to UNMAS.

UN and international partners express support for working with new Somali president

9 February 2017 – The United Nations and its international partners in Somalia today said that they were eager to partner with President Mohamed

Abdullahi 'Farmajo', his new Government and the people of Somalia to avert another famine in the country and to assist with improving security for all Somalis.

The comments were made in a congratulatory statement on behalf of the United Nations, the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ethiopia, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The international partners urge all political forces in Somalia to work together in support of President Farmajo and the incoming government, the statement read.

Distributed by the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the statement also noted the need for reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of a number of local conflicts, as well as the resumption of the constitutional review process.

The Somali Parliament selected the new president yesterday in two rounds of vote. A one-person, one-vote election is expected in 2020.

The international community welcomed the election results and commended outgoing Federal President Hassan Sheikh Mohamed and his Government for their many achievements over the past four years.

They also thanked him for a gracious concession speech that facilitated a peaceful and orderly transfer of power in decades.

Yesterday's orderly and peaceful transfer of power is a major achievement for Somalia and should boost confidence in the country's future both at home and abroad, said Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Somalia and head of UNSOM.

He added Hambalyo Somalia in Somali, which translates to Congratulations Somalia.

Fighting reaches 'worrying proportions' in South Sudan's north-east – UN mission

9 February 2017 – The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) today voiced concern about an escalation in the fighting between Government and opposition forces in the west bank of the River Nile in the African country's north.

Fighting has reached what the head of UNMISS, David Shearer, described as worrying proportions, according to a statement issued by the Office of Spokesperson for the UN peacekeeping operation.

What began with an exchange of fire between SPLA [the Sudan People's Liberation Army] and Aguelek opposition forces, has expanded geographically, the statement said, noting that military resupplies have since been observed arriving in the area.

Military operations on the west bank of the Nile River are taking place in an area where people, predominantly from the Shilluk ethnic group live, forcing people out of their homes. The town of Wau Shilluk is now reported to be deserted. Humanitarian workers have been evacuated and aid is not being provided, the statement added.

On Wednesday, UNMISS received reports of hostilities between the two sides in Owachi and Tonga, Panyinkang County.

Meanwhile, Mr. Shearer today returned to the South Sudanese capital, Juba, from a two-day field visit to Bentiu and Leer, two towns which have been among the most affected by the country's conflict, according to a separate statement issued today by the spokesperson's office.

In Bentiu, Mr. Shearer met state government officials, as well as internally displaced people who are living in the largest protection of civilians site in the country. In Leer, he visited the mission's temporary operating base to assess UNMISS' success in mounting robust patrols which push the mission's presence deep into the field.

He held discussions with local officials and also took the opportunity to travel to an opposition-controlled area to meet with pro-Machar representatives so he could hear all shades of opinion on how to facilitate humanitarian assistance and advance the peace process, the statement said.

The local opposition told Mr. Shearer that they support the current localized cessation of hostilities and remain in a defensive position which they hope will encourage the return of humanitarian agencies to Leer.

Both the local authorities and the opposition praised the UN for its efforts to facilitate communications between them. Mr. Shearer heard that they both recognize that an inclusive national dialogue will assist the peace process, the statement added.

South Sudan has faced ongoing challenges since a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and his then former Vice-President Riek Machar erupted into full blown conflict between forces loyal to each in December 2013. The crisis has produced one of the world's worst displacement situations with immense suffering for civilians.

Despite the August 2015 peace agreement that formally ended the war, conflict and instability have also spread to previously unaffected areas.