

**Transcript of Video Message from Jean-Pierre Lacroix,
United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for Symposium
to Mark 25th Anniversary of Japan's Act on International Peace Cooperation**

Excellencies, Dear Friends,

It is a great honor for me to have been invited to deliver remarks at today's event, marking the 25th Anniversary of the Adoption of Japan's Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. While I have not been able to travel to physically be with you today, it is my pleasure to address this distinguished audience today by video message. I am also planning to travel to your country soon, and I am looking forward to it.

Let me start by expressing my deep gratitude to Japan for being such a longstanding and solid contributor, partner and friend of UN Peacekeeping.

Over 25 years, more than 10,000 Self-Defense Force and Police personnel have been deployed to Peacekeeping Operations. Six of your compatriots died in the service of International Peace, and I would like to pay tribute to them today.

But Japan supports Peacekeeping in many other ways. Financially, being among the top 3 financial contributors. Politically, in particular through the Peacekeeping Summits, and I understand that Japan has offered to host a preparatory meeting to the Vancouver Summit. Japan also supports Peacekeeping operationally, by funding, and investing in training for Peacekeeping troops, as demonstrated by the recent generous donation from Japan to the Ethiopian Peace Support Training Center.

Today, I would like to offer my thoughts on the trends and challenges in Peacekeeping and submit to your discussion some of the prospects we are looking at.

UN peacekeeping is one of the most visible symbols of the United Nations. It is also one of its largest tools, with an annual budget of over \$7 billion, involving around 118,000 personnel from 125 Member States.

Peacekeeping has demonstrated its capability to deliver, but is now challenged by an ever-increasingly complex geopolitical landscape. New conflict environments are stretching peacekeeping to the limits of its capabilities and testing its political role. Peacekeeping has yet to evolve further from the relatively static model of the 1990s and 2000s, to one that is adapted to the complex conflicts of today in a nimble, responsive and modular fashion.

In recent years, peacekeeping has successfully accompanied transitions from conflict to peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, and supported stabilization in Haiti. It has

enabled the holding of two elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and midwifed the creation of South Sudan. But in DRC and in South Sudan, our missions can only fulfill their mandates if they are supported and can support active political processes. This is also the key condition to exit strategies..

Peacekeeping has, and will continue to operate in an environment of multiple international peace and security actors, whether regionally established or through ad hoc coalitions of Member States. In that regard, pursuing close partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations is critical.

Peacekeeping encompasses a broad range of operations – including those with policing, ceasefire and border monitoring, multidimensional/multidisciplinary functions – demonstrating the flexibility of the peacekeeping tool. The future should be no different but we need to continue our efforts to prioritize our mandates. This is a key condition for efficiency.

A more flexible vision of peacekeeping is at the heart of deliberations on reform of the UN's peacekeeping and security architecture, and should guide departmental reform efforts. Below are a number of areas that could be considered to address existing challenges and pursue potential opportunities.

The experience in Mali highlights the complexity of operating in asymmetric environments where groups using terrorist tactics, targeting peacekeepers, also exist. Despite our best efforts, MINUSMA is still not perceived by the armed groups as a sufficiently strong deterrence. A reflection is required on peacekeeping posture in such environments, and the delineation of comparative advantage and division of labor with those engaged in kinetic action.

As the manifestation of collective will, peacekeeping is the quintessence of multilateralism. It is one of the most powerful weapons in the UN's arsenal, and one which, with judicious and strategic use, can have lasting impact. There is a need to re-assert the utility and effectiveness of peacekeeping, within the Organization and vis-à-vis Member States and the public. In this context we need to take concrete measures to redress peacekeeping's shortcomings.

More than 95% of peacekeepers operate in missions mandated to protect civilians, including through specialized functions for the protection of children and the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. While the first responsibility for protection always lies with the host government, the protection of civilians is often the benchmark against which the

performance of peacekeeping missions is measured in the eyes of Member States and the general public. Addressing the challenges of protection is therefore a key aspect of improving peacekeeping.

Recent incidents of violence against civilians in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have highlighted the limits of peacekeepers' ability to protect and reinvigorated efforts to close gaps in performance. UN Peacekeeping has sought to temper expectations, acknowledging that there are outer limits to protection mandates linked to both the nature of threats and capabilities. At the same time, it is crucial to improve our ability to prevent and efficiently respond to threats to civilian population.

Strengthening protection requires incorporating protection into larger political strategies for mandate implementation, as well as improving analysis of threats, internal mission coordination on Protection issues and crisis management. Improving accountability for the performance of peacekeeping personnel for protection is equally essential, as is continued training and advocacy across the spectrum of protection activities. In particular, the strict implementation of the UN Zero tolerance policy on Sexual exploitation and abuses is a top priority for all of us.

Peacekeeping must strengthen civilian capacities for protection, as effective protection requires a whole-of-mission effort. To that end, developing comprehensive strategies that incorporate all mission personnel and the capacities of UN humanitarian and development actors is essential, as is close cooperation and support to regional organizations. Improving the role of civilian personnel in strengthening the capacities of host governments and supporting communities with the development of community-based protection plans are other important areas requiring further efforts.

I hope these few thoughts will be useful in the context of this symposium and I am looking forward to discussing these during my upcoming trip to Japan. I thank you for your attention.