

Transcript of an audio-interview with Dr. Elisabeth Schöndorf, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin

Ms. Schöndorf, what is the so called „deployment gap“ in peacekeeping?

Well, the deployment gap denotes the fact that UN peacekeeping operations usually necessitate about 6 to 10 month to deploy in theatre, in the given conflict country. And in some cases this deployment gap may be even bigger, for instance when you think about the missions for Darfur or Congo or Chad.

What needs to be done to overcome this gap and what progress has already been made?

There are at least two aspects to this. The first is that there need to be technical improvements. And in this respect some small steps have already been made, for instance the UN Secretariat now has a bit more financial leeway to finance startup measures. That is good, you know, to have some extra money for this. Then the UN also has a logistic base with equipment, so it can give big troop contributors equipment to deploy quickly. This is also good, but it is still not very comprehensive, so there could be improvements as well. And then, secondly, there are also political problems. And this means that when you look at peacekeeping operations, there is usually a division of labor between those countries that put the boots on the grounds, which are usually countries like Pakistan or Bangladesh or Nigeria, the development countries. On the other side, you have those countries who mandate the operations and who give the big money to them. And these are usually the Western industrialized countries. And these countries would actually be able to deploy quickly on their own, because they have the better capacities. But they do not.

And what can be Germany's contribution to narrowing the deployment gap, Ms. Schöndorf?

Well, Germany could actually contribute more to UN peacekeeping. And this does not mean that it should contribute many boots on the ground, but rather enabling capacities such as for tactical and strategic transport, especially airlift, supporting other troop contributors with enabling capacities. That would be one thing that Germany could do. And the other thing would be, for instance, training support. Beyond this, Germany could at home facilitate the decision-making process about a participation for an UN mission. What does this mean, what is the German interest to participate etc.? There need to be earlier discussions between the government and between the parliament, so that when the mandate comes to the parliament to decide, the decision can be taken up very early.

For further reading:

Dr. Schöndorf, Elisabeth,
Die Entsendelücke im
VN-Peacekeeping.
Defizite, Ursachen,
Handlungsoptionen,
Berlin: SWP, 2011

Ms. Schöndorf, thank you for the interview.