

Transcript of an audio-interview with David Haeri, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, New York

**Mr. Haeri, what is the New Horizons process about and where are the limits of this process?**

Fundamentally it builds on the effort over the last ten years to strengthen UN peacekeeping. It is an effort that was born out of some of the tragedies of the 1990s, what happened in Ruanda, in Srebrenica, in Somalia. And then the effort of the UN to take those lessons and look to how it should build peacekeeping and reform peacekeeping. That was a relatively successful effort. And it accompanied a huge growth over the last ten years of peacekeeping, from 30.000 deployed globally to over a 120.000 total deployed today. But that growth also put strain on peacekeeping, how to find the resources required, how to maintain the political support required, and how to ensure that the partnership which makes peacekeeping effective – troop contributing countries, the Security Council providing the mandate, the secretariat providing the overall management how that partnership remains strong. And we noticed on the New Horizons that there were some areas in which that partnership was fraying and needed to be strengthened. And that really has been the fundamental point. Where do we need to look at?

Policies, that need to be revisited, mandates need to be understood better, protection of civilians, the question of use the force in peacekeeping. How do we find the capabilities we need? How do we ensure that the planning and monitoring and oversight systems are strengthened and in good order? And this is really the focus of the New Horizons reform process. It is not new really, it is actually building on an ongoing process of reform and strengthening of ten years now.

## **What has been achieved over the last two years?**

One thing is that there has been a sense of separation between the troop contributing countries which are largely from the global South, with some notable exceptions, the council, which is providing the mandate, and the countries which are providing a lot of the financial support. We wanted to try and strengthen this partnership, particularly between the council and the troop contributing countries. Because when the mission is on the ground and when we rely on the troops from those countries to carry out very dangerous tasks, very difficult mandated tasks, we want to ensure that they have, let's say, the same sense of buy-in, of ownership of these mandated tasks. So, in that regard, we try to, with the council and the TCCs, ensure that the planning processes will be more transparent, and the dialogue around the mandates happened earlier. And the council has definitely taken this up as an important cause. For example, meeting with the troop contributing countries one week before the mandate is passed at least, rather than in the previous years sometimes it had been the same afternoon, or not at all. That has been one important change. And we, for our part in the UN Secretariat, have undertaken measures to ensure that we provide the troop contributing countries with more information. We provide the Security Council with our assessments earlier on, so that this dialogue can occur. The protection of civilians which is a mandate which UN peacekeeping missions are given - eight missions currently have this mandate- was one area where we saw that there was, let's say, a different view amongst various peacekeeping actors as to what this meant. And so, over the last two years, in the special committee on peacekeeping where policy issues are discussed, in the Security Council, we have had quite an ongoing dialogue about what this should mean in peacekeeping, what are the limits and what are the expectations. And in that we have seen quite a good evolution, deepening consensus. I would not say, it is a full consensus. But we have moved from just a policy debate into development of training, modules, scenario-based training for troops and police. We have developed guidelines for missions on how they should plan. And this has all been the result of this dialogue and discussions. So that has

been an area of important progress.

### **And what needs to be further addressed?**

One area which is ongoing is defining performance and capability standards for UN peacekeeping units. We get UN peacekeeping units from across a vast range of countries. And of course, they come with different capabilities, different organizational and operational experiences. When a regional organization which has countries in the same area is not deployed operationally, it has the opportunity for its units from different countries to rehearse, to exercise, to practice. And it allows them to come to a common understanding of what is the performance level expected of a military hospital, of an infantry battalion, of the staff offices that form the command. But when you draw them from 114 member state, you do not have that luxury. And so, setting some kind of baseline standard is important. And we have been working on that with the member states. That baseline standard of performance then informs what training you need, it informs what equipment you need. It allows you to be more interoperable when you meet other TCCs, other troops on the ground. It allows you to consider a performance evaluation. It is a very important task, and we have been looking at that with respect to, as I said, infantry battalions, medical hospitals, staff offices. And we will perhaps extend it to others. And that is ongoing. We have some important progress made. We will see during this year, these standards are being further developed. And in general, I think, our view of what we have done in New Horizons has been the quite good progress at the, let's say, strategic, policy level, dialogue in New York at the UN headquarters. We need to see it translated into the field. We look at, for example, at a mission in Southern Sudan which is starting up as an important test case of what we have said regarding the role of peacekeeping as an important early actor in peace-building. And the mission in Southern Sudan is going to be tested on just this front. Can it help secure and maintain the confidence and peace? And can it help kick-start the peace-building, the early recovery, the extension of the authority of the state, the peace dividend which the Southern Sudanese are going to be looking to, the establishment

of new institutions, police and others. These coming two years are going to be really, let's say, a marker of, can you walk the talk? You have talked well about it, can you actually implement it in a new way?

**Mr. Haeri, thank you for this interview.**