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KEYNOTE SPEECH BY PROFESSOR S JAYAKUMAR MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MINISTER
FOR LAW AT THE UNITAR/IPS/JIIA SINGAPORE CONFERENCE "NEXUS BETWEEN PEACEKEEPING AND
PEACE-BUILDING: DEBRIEFING AND LESSONS"

(MONDAY 22 NOVEMBER 1999)

Ladies and Gentlemen

First let me congratulate the Institute of Policy Studies of Singapore, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Japan Institute of International Affairs for organising this Conference. The fourth in a series of conferences, it enables us to reflect and learn from peacekeeping experiences over the years.

We in Singapore are glad to be again associated with this series of conferences. We believe that the UN has a key role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security. Although a small country, we have over the years supported and participated in a number of peacekeeping operations in Namibia, Kuwait, Angola, Cambodia and Guatemala. Every country, no matter how small, can and should contribute to these efforts.

We passed a significant landmark last year when the UN celebrated 50 years of peacekeeping. In today's conflict-ridden world where wars are fought across and within states, UN peacekeepers have become a familiar sight. There are now 17 operations spread across the world involving more than 14,000 peacekeepers. Peacekeeping may only form a fraction of the UN's work but the Blue Helmets are a familiar image around the world due to regular news coverage. And because the military forms the backbone of peacekeeping operations, it is this image of the Blue

Helmet helping to maintain a ceasefire or policing a buffer zone that inevitably springs to mind.

But peacekeeping has evolved substantially in the post-Cold War era. While bipolar rivalry has declined, intra-state conflicts have erupted with increasing frequency. This has made peacekeeping missions more complex and multi-dimensional. In Angola, Namibia, El Salvador and Western Sahara, for example, peacekeepers undertook non-military tasks such as disarmament, demobilising and reintegrating former combatants. They were called upon to resettle refugees and support humanitarian assistance.

However, in more recent operations such as Kosovo and East Timor, UN peacekeepers are required to also act as a transitional civil administration. Beyond the election-monitoring phase, they are expected to establish entire social systems and provisional institutions from scratch. These various peace-building tasks were thrust upon the UN's peacekeepers out of necessity. Their responsibilities were not made any easier by mandates and guidelines that are often vague and unrealistic.

The turning point that marked this mandated larger role for the UN's peacekeepers came with Cambodia. In Cambodia, UN peacekeepers were expected not only to maintain the fragile peace between the warring factions but to create and maintain all conditions necessary for peaceful and fair elections including political, social, military, legal, administrative and human rights. Military personnel worked alongside civilian staff to ensure Cambodia's peaceful transition towards self-rule. The conceptual link between peacekeeping and peace building as laid out by the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 Agenda for Peace, thus became a reality.

In his 1997 report titled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that "peace-building may involve the creation or strengthening of national institutions, monitoring elections, promoting human rights, providing for reintegration and rehabilitation programs, and creating conditions for resumed development. Peace-building does not replace ongoing humanitarian and development activities in countries emerging from crisis. It aims rather to build on, add to, or reorient such activities in ways designed to reduce the risk of a resumption of conflict and contribute to creating conditions most conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery."

Peace-building has become a huge industry and the scale of operations has enlarged significantly. Yet the world knows little of these peace-building efforts. It is more the pity as this is where one of the UN's greatest contributions lie. But news networks rarely, if ever, profile the efforts of the civilian and civilian police personnel involved in peacekeeping cum peace-building missions. Nor are the peace-builders easily identifiable in the film clips. Nonetheless, it is clear that peace-building does contribute to international peace and security, particularly in preventing conflicts from recurring.

Therefore, wherever possible or relevant, peace-building elements must be

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included in the mandates of peacekeeping operations. The UN's peacekeeping role cannot focus solely on maintaining the peace. The ultimate goal must be to ensure a smooth transition to a successful post-conflict phase. Responsibility for any peace-building activity must lie with the Security Council but this does not mean that the international community should be disengaged from these efforts. Rather, there must be a cooperative effort to ensure the success of any peace-building efforts.

If the UN's peacekeeping and peace-building efforts are to have any chance of success, a number of key issues must be addressed.

First, the Security Council must give clear and achievable peacekeeping and peace-building mandates. In recent times, there have been too many unrealistic goals, too many vague directions to peacekeepers and peace-builders in the field and too many changes of mandate during operations. The UN must make a sober and realistic assessment of what is possible in each situation and how it can be achieved. This is easier said than done. Any decision made by the Council must take into account the interests of the major powers, the concerns of contributing states, the situation in the country concerned and the inherent capabilities of peacekeeping forces and peace-building elements.

Second is the UN overstretching itself: we must assess how many peacekeeping cum peace-building missions the UN can comfortably undertake. There are today numerous conflict situations all around the world. Few can be resolved in a year or two. The UN is already fully stretched in the Balkans. Its role in East Timor will also place a huge burden on the UN system.

Beyond this, the Security Council and the international community must be willing and able to extend the peacekeeping and peace-building efforts, as necessary. If the efforts are ended prematurely, there is a real danger of the situation becoming worse than before the peacekeeping cum peace-building mission was initiated.

A third question that must be answered is how we should control and manage the funding of peacekeeping and peace-building efforts in terms of resources and finances. This must be thought through carefully. Currently, peacekeeping activities are funded by UN assessed contributions. But peace-building activities are dependent on both assessed contributions and Trust Fund voluntary contributions. Funding therefore can be problematic and is often a time-consuming effort. There is little time to be wasted. Peace-building activities must begin from the moment a peacekeeping operation is launched if they are to have an impact.

On the supply side, contributing countries must be quickly reimbursed. Delays in such payments could lead to member countries being less willing to contribute to future peacekeeping and peace-building efforts. In this regard, member states should pay their financial obligations to the UN in full, on time, and without conditions. I do not need to remind any of you that the UN has been "running on empty" for a long time.

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The fourth area that we must consider is how the UN can avoid creating a dependency mentality in the people enjoying the benefits of the peace-building endeavour. Capacity-building efforts must thus involve local talent. The goal should be to develop in the people an indigenous, self-sustaining capability to run their own country. For a territory to become a true nation, its people must be both willing and able to take responsibility for their own lives.

A fifth question, and to me the most difficult, that I must ask today is why comprehensive peace-building is selectively built into only some peacekeeping missions. Why is peace-building not being more comprehensively considered for Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo? We are all well aware that peace-building is an expensive undertaking. But surely the aim of reducing the risk of a return to conflict, and helping to create conditions conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery must apply to all mission areas. We must consider whether the inclusion of more peace-building activities would indeed increase the effectiveness of the peacekeeping operations in the other mission areas. In the longer term, this may result in less resources and funds being required overall.

Finally, how can the bridge between peacekeeping and peace-building be strengthened? For the greatest success, peacekeeping and peace-building actions must be integrated and coordinated. But what specifically needs to be done?

Whatever their views on peacekeeping, both optimists and pessimists agree that the present arrangements for peacekeeping are far from perfect, indeed not even adequate. The UN can no longer afford to "muddle through" different crises. But while the pessimists believe little can be done except to limit commitments to those tasks that can be achieved, the more optimistic generally focus on improving the UN's access to resources from member states and increasing the efficiency of operations.

I myself am an optimist. UN members are aware of the limitations of peacekeeping operations and peace building operations in their current form. For UN peacekeeping operations to continue to be effective, many of the questions that I have raised today will have to be addressed and considered. Some may never be fully answered. But I hope that at this conference, you will extract the lessons to be learnt for, and from, Kosovo and East Timor. Given the complex situations that we face these days, a rigorous discussion is needed on how peacekeeping cum peace-building operations can be better designed and implemented.