



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

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Tuesday, 12 July 2022, 3 p.m.  
New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Costa Filho . . . . . (Brazil)

*Members:*

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China . . . . .	Mr. Wan Feng
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United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Al-Ali
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Sims
United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Badawy

## Agenda

### United Nations peacekeeping operations

The key role of strategic communications for efficient peacekeeping

Letter dated 5 July 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/539)

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*The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.*

**The President:** I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

**Mr. Paulauskas** (Lithuania): Let me express our gratitude to the Brazilian presidency and to His Excellency Mr. Carlos Alberto Franco França, Brazil's Minister for External Relations, for convening a Security Council debate for the first time on such an important subject. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Lieutenant General Affonso Da Costa, Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ms. Jenna Russo, Director of Research of the International Peace Institute, for their insightful remarks.

Today, as instability and conflicts increasingly challenge international security, the United Nations and the Security Council must step up their efforts to deal with new challenges and unconventional threats, and organizing this debate is a commendable example of the Council's dedication to doing just that. The manipulation of information, including misinformation and disinformation, has long been part of the toolkit used by non-democratic States in times of conflict. As the Secretary-General rightly noted, today disinformation, misinformation and hate speech are increasingly being used as weapons of war. We are all witnesses today of how Russia is weaponizing disinformation to justify its unprovoked, full-scale and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

As a troop-contributing country, with 45 Lithuanian peacekeepers currently serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Lithuania is extremely concerned about the degrading effects of information manipulation and the threats posed by disinformation and misinformation in the context of peacekeeping operations. They could have long-term negative effects, including eroding communities' perceptions of the credibility of peacekeeping and the legitimacy of the United Nations presence.

Over the past few years, there has been a significant increase in disinformation campaigns against the United Nations and United Nations peacekeeping operations. As many speakers have noted, that trend

is particularly worrisome in Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where various actors are increasingly using social media and other platforms to deliberately spread disinformation and incite hatred and violence. Just last week, members of the Security Council condemned yet another deadly attack on MINUSMA in Mali (see S/PV.9086). It is crucial to ensure that such attacks are swiftly investigated and their perpetrators brought to justice, including those who might have incited such attacks by spreading anti-United Nations narratives. A reported increase in disinformation activities in Mali, including concerted efforts to deflect attention from atrocities reportedly committed by the Kremlin-linked Wagner Group, is not only sowing discord, confusion and seeding divisions in the increasingly volatile region, it has a direct impact on the safety and security of peacekeepers and undermines the implementation of MINUSMA's mandate.

We see strategic communications as one of the key tools at the disposal of the United Nations to address this ever-growing challenge. In that regard, we welcomed the 2021 Strategy for the Digital Transformation of United Nations Peacekeeping, as well as the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, with strategic communications as one of its priorities. We are committed to supporting the strategic communications of the United Nations in peacekeeping, including alongside the six concrete actions cited by the Secretary-General this morning, and especially through training and capacity-building on responding to misinformation and disinformation and on strategic communications in a digital environment. This is a multifaceted challenge that requires a multidimensional response, and Lithuania stands ready to contribute to our common interest in making United Nations peacekeeping more efficient and capable of addressing the needs of the twenty-first century.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

**Mr. Espinosa Cañizares** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank this morning's briefers. I also want to congratulate the Brazilian presidency on its conduct of the work of the Security Council so far this month, as well as its particular contribution to peace and security efforts, which is also reflected in Brazil's leadership in promoting strategic communications in peacekeeping missions. We had the opportunity to reflect on this topic

on 25 May, during the meeting sponsored by Brazil, Ghana, India and Ecuador in the context of Protection of Civilians Week (see S/PV.9042).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of United Nations Peacekeepers.

In my national capacity, I commend the adoption this morning of presidential statement S/PRST/2022/5. We look forward to the Secretary-General's review of strategic communications, including an assessment of existing capabilities. The value that Ecuador places on the role of system-wide communications has also been reflected in our presidency of the United Nations Information Committee over the past two years, where we have witnessed the role that communications plays in facilitating most of the efforts undertaken by the United Nations and its members.

Rapid technological development and the digital revolution have increased the number of tools available while also adding to the complexity of persistent challenges. That is why we must also delve comprehensively into discussions on the topic. Strategic communications encourage the strengthening of trust between the peacekeeping missions and the places where they work, while consultations with civil society at the local and national levels can help to effectively integrate strategic communications into the planning and implementation of efforts to protect civilians.

As one of the priorities of the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, strategic communications are linked to the women and peace and security agenda and to peacekeeping based on data and technology, thereby adding to the tools available for preventing and deterring sexual violence in armed conflicts. Beyond that, it is important to ensure that strategic communications cannot and do not reinforce gender stereotypes. Ecuador will work to ensure that the critical importance of strategic communications is also highlighted in the next session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, considering that such communications help to manage expectations among local communities and counter disinformation and misinformation.

Finally, strategic coordination must be part of the comprehensive planning and early coordination that precede any transition process with host countries and the various relevant actors, in order to ensure smooth

transitions that foster lasting peace, which is the central pledge of the United Nations.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Mr. Pendlebury** (Australia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate, and I thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and continued efforts to improve mandate implementation and preserve the safety and security of peacekeepers.

Today's peacekeeping missions face many challenges, including ambiguous information landscapes. Ceding the information space to those who work against the efforts of the international community can undermine the effectiveness of peace operations and damage the credibility of the United Nations. Strategic communications bridge the information gap between peacekeeping operations and local populations. They enable the dissemination of facts, the correction of disinformation and the building of credibility in our work, and they can mobilize civil society — including, importantly, local women leaders — to advocate on behalf of vulnerable populations.

Australia supports the use of strategic communications to spread awareness of a mission's mandate and counter misinformation, disinformation and hate speech in peacekeeping environments. We also see them as integral to effectively delivering on mandate elements that support key pillars of the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, particularly women and peace and security and the protection of civilians. We join with all stakeholders in peace processes to better understand how false narratives are used to inflame conflict. We strongly urge action to help peacekeeping missions better identify and counter these tools of conflict, thereby reducing the risk of violence to peacekeepers and civilians. Australia currently supports the integration and implementation of strong strategic communications in two key areas.

First, since we view peacekeeper preparation as central to building awareness of the importance of strategic communication among our deployed personnel, we have partnered with our regional family to deliver effective, contemporary predeployment training. The recent opening of Fiji's Blackrock Camp is a strong example of such cooperation, and Australia looks forward to supporting that facility as a regional centre of excellence in peacekeeper training.

Secondly, through our pledge to fund the establishment of an innovation hub in the Department of Peace Operations, we have taken practical steps to help fully implement the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of United Nations Peacekeeping. I am pleased to announce that Australia has released the first tranche of funding for that exciting and important project. Effective strategic communication must harness all available mediums, many of which are delivered and accessed digitally. The innovation hub will assist the United Nations, in partnership with a broad group of stakeholders, to identify and address complex issues through cost-effective, innovative solutions tailored to the needs of peacekeeping missions.

Australia thanks Brazil for convening today's open debate and highlighting the importance of strategic communications in peacekeeping operations. As a key priority of the Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) initiative, they represent a pillar of our collective efforts to achieve the Action for Peacekeeping vision. Australia renews its commitment to the A4P+ initiative and looks forward to ensuring that peacekeeping operations are effective, efficient and supported by clear and accurate strategic communications.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

**Ms. Tshabalala** (South Africa): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to Brazil for convening today's open debate on the key role of strategic communications for efficient peacekeeping. We would also like to thank all the briefers for their insightful interventions.

Strategic communications in United Nations peacekeeping operations remain imperative for the effective implementation of the mandates of each United Nations mission and managing expectations about their activities. It goes without saying that each peacekeeping operation has a particular mandate based on the prevailing situation in the host country. In that context, strategic communications represent an important explanatory tool for the work of the United Nations, as well as one of the priorities of the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative.

South Africa would therefore like to highlight four issues that are germane to strategic communications: the use of digital technologies in peacekeeping, the safety and security of peacekeepers, the advancement

of the women and peace and security agenda, and partnerships.

First, effective strategic communications are inextricably linked to United Nations efforts aimed at inclusive digital transformation. The continued reform of peacekeeping operations should take into account evolving digital technologies and their potential use for advancing United Nations peacekeeping mandates. Suitable technologies, complemented by capable personnel, should form an integral part of all phases of peacekeeping missions, including during transitions. Continuous training should be provided to all troop- and police-contributing countries in order to ensure access to digital technologies and the acquisition of skills.

Of paramount importance is the ability of the entire United Nations to communicate in unison to all relevant stakeholders in order to control the narrative about the roles and mandates of peacekeeping missions. Clear communication must be directed to host countries and local communities. Such an approach would assist in countering the misperceptions, misinformation, disinformation and fake news that negatively impact the integrity of peacekeeping missions and consequently endanger the safety and security of peacekeepers.

Secondly, approximately 4,200 peacekeepers have lost their lives since the establishment of the first United Nations peacekeeping mission, in 1948. The recent spike in attacks against peacekeepers illustrates that their safety and security remains a major concern. Innovative ways must be explored to eliminate those fatalities, including by intensifying intelligence collection and early-warning capacities, as well as urging the sharing of information among military, police and civilian components. It is key to develop the ability to use strategic communications as a means to enhance the analysis of the complex conflict environment and mitigate unwarranted threats.

Thirdly, we are heartened by the developments aimed at advancing the women and peace and security agenda in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The role of women peacekeepers, particularly in promoting women's rights and protection in conflict situations, is well documented in peacekeeping missions with female representation. Evidence suggests that the involvement of women peacekeepers has enhanced outreach and engagement in local populations, resulting in trust-building between the missions and the host populations. More efforts must be geared towards enhancing strategic

communications to amplify women's work and voices and increasing the deployment of women peacekeepers.

Fourthly, as we commemorated this year's International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers with the theme "People, peace and progress: the power of partnerships", we were reminded of the cardinal role of partnerships in the effectiveness of strategic communications, including in training and the dissemination, gathering and sharing of information, with the support of host Governments, local communities, civil society, non-governmental organizations, academia, regional and subregional organizations, United Nations agencies and other key partners, especially in the information and communications industry. We look forward to the completion of the new communications strategy for peacekeeping operations.

In conclusion, we pay tribute to the men and women who have served in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Their commitment and dedication have saved scores of lives and continue to do so during these most unprecedented times. We owe them a great deal of gratitude for their efforts.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

**Mr. Hossain (Bangladesh):** I congratulate Brazil for assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month and for organizing today's important open debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and the other briefers for their comprehensive briefings this morning.

As the leading troop- and police-contributing country, Bangladesh has invested its own resources to strengthen the capacity of peacekeeping missions in order to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. We have taken initiatives to deploy armoured personnel carriers in conflict-prone areas. We have also provided mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles to guard against improvised explosive device attacks.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of United Nations peacekeepers. Allow me to highlight a few additional points in my national capacity.

First, while we highlight the responsibilities of senior leadership in peacekeeping missions, we

also need to focus on the importance of adopting a whole-of-mission approach to ensuring effective strategic communications. In that regard, both the predeployment and in-mission training of all mission personnel, as well as their capacity-building, should be prioritized. Bangladesh has incorporated strategic communications and community engagement in the predeployment training of its peacekeepers.

Secondly, collaboration with the national and local authorities and communities is critically important for ensuring successful mandate implementation. Strengthening communications and dialogue among all stakeholders is important for that collaboration. We can also share experience in enhancing community engagement by organizing different unarmed protection activities, such as sports and sociocultural events. Such activities will facilitate engagement and build relations of mutual trust between peacekeepers and their host communities.

Thirdly, due to the increased use of social media and smartphones, misinformation and disinformation to the detriment of peacekeeping operations has become a serious concern for some missions. Peacekeepers need to build the capacity to monitor, detect, analyse and respond to such misinformation and disinformation. In that regard, we emphasize the need for the full and effective implementation of the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of United Nations Peacekeeping.

Finally, we commend the role of the Department of Global Communications in highlighting the contributions of troop- and police-contributing countries. We also welcome the initiative of the Department of Peace Operations to develop its own communications strategy. Member States have a shared responsibility in that regard.

In conclusion, I reiterate Bangladesh's commitment to supporting strategic communications in the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations as part of our efforts to achieve the priorities of the Action for Peace Plus initiative.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Malta.

**Mrs. Frazier (Malta):** I would like to thank Brazil for organizing today's high-level open debate on this important topic. I also thank the Secretary-General, Lieutenant General Affonso da Costa and Ms. Russo



for enriching our discussion with their insightful and compelling briefings.

Peacekeeping operations are at the heart of the Council's work, and the role of strategic communications is more fundamental than ever to ensuring that peacekeeping mandates are fulfilled and that these missions receive the support they need from all relevant stakeholders. The importance of ensuring a safe and secure environment for peacekeepers demands a strong communications strategy that reaches out to local Governments and stakeholders, creating the necessary political and public support for missions' fulfilment of their mandates. That is even more important in transition settings, where only an effective communications strategy can create an environment conducive to missions' eventual withdrawal. As underlined in the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, strategic communications are needed to promote success, manage expectations and foster support for peacekeeping.

Based on that initiative and today's discussion, it is clear that we are facing great challenges when it comes to the spread of disinformation and misinformation. The use of technology and social media has increased the reach of several forms of disinformation, which sometimes also includes terrorist elements. Such activities have the potential to destabilize peacekeeping missions and entire countries, undermining the trust between United Nations missions and the local population. Peacekeeping missions cannot fulfil their mandates and plan for transitions if trust between them and stakeholders is eroded or weakened. Strong and effective communications strategies have the potential to serve as an enabler and improve every facet of a mission's operation.

It is also important to make use of the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of United Nations Peacekeeping, which acknowledges that digital technologies have taken a more prominent role in the conflict arena and outlines how we can harness digital technology to better deliver on mission mandates. The implementation of more complex mandates, which include such important elements as the protection of civilians and the women and peace and security agenda, necessitates increased situational awareness and clear messaging. Dialogue and increased engagement are fundamental to reaching those goals. Furthermore, clear and effective communications are vital tools in

preventing sexual violence and building confidence among local communities.

Malta believes that we should always strive to find better ways to reach out to our audience. The implementation of peacekeeping mandates and the safety and security of peacekeepers can only be secured if effective strategic communications are internalized both in day-to-day planning and the wider mission mandates. That also demands adequate training for civilian and uniformed personnel. In that regard, I commend the efforts of the Department of Peace Operations in developing a new communications strategy, which should involve many of the elements we have discussed here today.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

**Mr. Peñaranda (Philippines):** I congratulate Brazil on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Today's high-level open debate is timely and meaningful, as we all recognize the importance of strategic communications as both a doctrinal and operational concept.

The changes in the evolving global landscape, marked by crises ranging from climate change and the coronavirus disease pandemic to regional conflicts and food insecurity, pose risks to United Nations peacekeeping operations. This meeting underscores the urgency of advancing the implementation of United Nations reforms to strengthen the Organization's peacekeeping operations as tools for global peace and security. With a proud peacekeeping tradition of almost 60 years, in 27 United Nations missions and with more than 11,000 Filipino peacekeepers, the Philippines is more committed than ever to implementing the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiatives, and would like to make the following points.

First, we support the view that strategic communications in peacekeeping operations are essential to implementing mission mandates and managing the expectations of various stakeholders, such as host States, local communities and other peace constituencies, including women and young people.

Secondly, the Philippines recommends that the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Global Communications consider conducting a joint policy review of United Nations strategic

communications to provide guidance for United Nations peacekeeping operations. That would further build confidence in United Nations peace processes and promote better understanding of the missions' *raison d'être*. A multi-year joint policy review and planning of strategic communications should be conducted on a regular basis, using a whole-of-Government approach.

Thirdly, we believe that for strategic communications to be effective and have an impact on the ground, the key messages and the messaging must be tailored to both the internal and external publics of missions. Context-specific communications campaigns that are focused on the relevant audiences would address misinformation and disinformation efforts aimed against a mission's leadership and would also help to ensure the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel. The Philippines therefore echoes a key proposal from Member States submitted early this year during the negotiations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, asking the Secretary-General to establish a framework for strategic communications in peacekeeping in order to combat anti-United Nations propaganda.

There can be no doubt that strategic communications should not be an afterthought but a core mission capacity and element. We need a more broad-based, comprehensive and adequately resourced strategic communications framework in peacekeeping that is fit for twenty-first-century international diplomacy.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

**Mr. Mlynár** (Slovakia): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening a discussion on this subject. I would also like to thank the briefers for their insightful remarks.

United Nations peacekeeping operations are a crucial factor in upholding a level of peace and stability in some of the world's most difficult violent conflicts, often deployed in unwelcoming environments and tasked with a complex set of responsibilities. I would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to every man and woman for their sacrifice in the service of peace. In difficult circumstances, the United Nations peacekeeping operations have a special role to play in support of local communities. Slovakia is supportive of the robust and comprehensive approach of the United Nations in ensuring that complicated political processes are continued, stability is maintained and civilians are protected.

In the past two decades the scope and intensity of conflicts have changed dramatically, peacekeeping operations have faced increasing challenges, and traditional and non-traditional security factors have posed serious threats to the safety and security of peacekeepers. One of the factors in this rapidly changing landscape is strategic communications, which are critical to securing the political and public support that United Nations peacekeeping missions need to effectively implement their mandates and create a safe operating environment for peacekeepers. Strategic communications help manage the expectations of relevant stakeholders, particularly local communities and host Governments, and address misinformation that undermines the credibility of such missions.

Close coordination among local and international partners and enhanced strategic communications vis-à-vis the local population and international media are particularly essential to exposing and denouncing infringements of international norms by other actors. Strategic communications are also crucial to maintaining situational awareness, which requires an ability to feel the pulse of local communities and can have a significant impact on the whole peacekeeping process. We highly commend the Secretary-General's leadership in this area, including the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, which has provided a road map for our collective efforts. We welcome the increased engagement of the Department of Peace Operations in countering disinformation, along with the commitment of the Secretary-General and the Department of Global Communications to countering factors that pose various especially worrisome challenges, such as the intentional targeting through information manipulation by malign actors.

We also recognize the essential role that strategic communications play in promoting the protection of civilians and the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda. Slovakia strongly supports the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security and calls for the full implementation of all the relevant Security Council resolutions addressing this issue.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

**Mr. Lagatie** (Belgium): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on strategic communications and their importance for

peacekeeping operations. I would also like to thank all those who spoke before me for their interesting remarks.

I will focus my intervention on misinformation and disinformation — challenges that are both old and new. They are new in the sense that the digital age and social media have brought myths and disinformation to new highs, and old in that the truth has always been the first casualty of war. In that regard, we are particularly concerned about Russia's narrative on its war in Ukraine. Belgium would like to take this opportunity to once again condemn all violence against peacekeeping missions and to honour the sacrifices of their women and men.

My first point is related to the power of ensuring the trust and confidence of the public. Misinformation can sometimes erode the confidence of local populations and peacekeeping operations and incite anti-mission sentiments. The past few years have shown enough that fake news rules easily. It is therefore crucial that we, the United Nations, constantly seek to communicate better and more convincingly. In that regard, we must avoid complacency and address the criticism regarding the disconnect between our peacekeeping missions and the local realities.

But fighting misinformation is only one part of our efforts; we also have to focus on one of the best ways to avoid it — clear, engaging and proactive communication about our actions, objectives, achievements, values and successes. We also need to listen better and try to address the concerns of communities. That is why such proactive communication has to be realistic and accessible to all populations. That is the price of restoring their trust. The belief that the United Nations and its operations are acting in their interests will be the best bulwark against disinformation.

*(spoke in French)*

My second point concerns strategic communications in United Nations missions. Missions must inform the public in their host countries about their mandate, priorities, actions and outcomes. As I mentioned, that helps to build trust with local communities. However, we need to be careful about which languages we use to make that information accessible. We need to communicate with the public in their native languages, which are often not official languages of the United Nations. We cannot lose sight of the fact that traditional media is the main information source for some communities. In that regard, we want to commend the

work carried out by local radio stations in the countries hosting peacekeeping operations.

I would like to conclude by making a point on humanitarian actors. Given that today's open debate has largely focused on the security of peacekeeping missions, we need to be aware that disinformation is increasingly putting humanitarian personnel at risk. Some parties to conflicts indeed politicize humanitarian action, and false rumours are often spread about humanitarian aid workers. Belgium calls on all parties to conflict to maintain discipline in the dissemination of information. We recall that humanitarian actors operate under the principle of neutrality — and they must be protected.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Erdan** (Israel): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's important and timely debate and to congratulate you on your presidency.

Sixteen years ago today, Iran's terror proxy, Hizbullah, launched an attack on an Israeli border patrol, murdering five soldiers, kidnapping two and wounding three others. That heinous act of terror ignited the Second Lebanon War, a war in which Hezbollah targeted Israel's civilian population, raining thousands of rockets down on Israeli towns and cities. The war concluded with the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), which strengthened the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and enhanced its mandate. Nevertheless, here we are, 16 years later, and Hizbullah's death grip on southern Lebanon has not decreased. It has increased exponentially, while barring UNIFIL from fulfilling its mandate.

As we know, strategic communications are one of the most critical aspects of peacekeeping missions in the implementation of their mandates, especially during times of crisis. Strategic communications are important for the protection of civilians, the de-escalation of conflict and the safety and security of the peacekeepers themselves. They enhance trust among the peacekeeping force, the relevant States and the local community.

However, in order for communications to be truly effective, they must address misinformation and disinformation and publicly point out the root causes of the issues that disrupt missions' mandates. When it comes to UNIFIL, one such root cause is Hizbullah's



continued presence and malign activity in that peacekeeping Force's very area of operations.

The current reality on the ground, which is well documented in multiple United Nations reports, reflects a dire situation in which UNIFIL's freedom of movement is excessively restricted. Its mandate is not being fully implemented, and the safety and security of its peacekeepers are threatened daily. But Hizbullah's actions against UNIFIL go far beyond the restriction of movement and blatant attacks. Hizbullah has undermined UNIFIL's ability to utilize strategic communications by launching a war of disinformation against the Force's objectives and mandate. By propagating false accusations and questioning UNIFIL's impartiality, Hizbullah tarnishes the Force's reputation and turns the local population against the very body that has been mandated to keep it safe. When that weapon of lies is implemented, it is no wonder that UNIFIL is subject to increased attacks and is unable to effectively fulfil its mandate.

In fact, over the past 16 years following the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), UNIFIL has been unable to prevent a significant expansion of Hizbullah's presence, or the 10-fold — I repeat, 10-fold — multiplication of its rocket arsenal, from 10,000 to 150,000 — that is more than 10-fold, in fact. Because of Hizbullah, UNIFIL's hands are tied behind its back. Following the explosion in the port of Beirut, and despite its own role in that atrocity, Hizbullah baselessly blamed UNIFIL's naval forces for the destruction, in an attempt to damage the Force's reputation.

Furthermore, blatantly diverging from the UNIFIL mandate, Hizbullah promotes the false narrative that UNIFIL patrols must always be accompanied by the Lebanese Armed Forces — all in order to distort and obstruct the Force's mandate. Hizbullah's actions constitute blatant violations of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). It is no secret that Hizbullah is the cause of Lebanon's political, economic and security crisis. The least that can be done is to give UNIFIL the backing it needs to fulfil its mandate, and to demand accountability from Lebanon as well. Israel calls on the international community and the Security Council to strongly and unequivocally condemn Hizbullah's unjustified and illegal actions in Lebanon.

Israel supports the crucial role of peacekeeping and maintains close cooperation with its relevant peacekeeping missions. Strategic communications

contribute to that close cooperation by increasing transparency and de-escalating tensions; they cannot merely remain a catchphrase. They require a proactive approach. Spreading accurate information must go hand in hand with countering disinformation. And when it comes to UNIFIL, the only obstacle to achieving strong strategic communications is Hizbullah's continued presence and activity.

Israel calls on the Council and the international community to redouble their efforts in combating the terror threat from Hizbullah and other terrorist groups that undermine international peace and security. In that regard, we highlight the importance of today's open debate and the special role of strategic communications in achieving that objective.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

**Mr. Larbaoui** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council, and to wish you every success in your lofty tasks. We greatly appreciate today's open debate, considering the importance of its topic and the pivotal role of strategic communications in enabling United Nations peacekeeping missions to carry out their duties in full. Since this meeting is dedicated to peacekeeping operations, I would like to mention that my country, Algeria, has changed its position regarding its contribution to achieving peace and stability worldwide, based on amendments made to our Constitution in November 2020, whereby we decided that our contribution would be directed under the auspices of the United Nations and in line with the purposes and principles of the Organization.

Peacekeeping operations in various areas of tension and conflict are an essential part of the responsibility of the United Nations for maintaining international peace and security. The growing and escalating conflicts and disputes we are seeing demand that we protect civilians, especially vulnerable people such as women, children and the elderly. Although the mandates of peacekeeping operations differ depending on the nature of each crisis, there are essential common factors that should be established in order to ensure that all missions can fulfil their mandates, and one of the most important is strategic communications, the subject of our discussion today.

It will be important to ensure that the work of strategic communications in peacekeeping operations is continually updated to keep pace with developments on the ground and confront the ever-evolving and multidimensional challenges, thereby enabling peacekeeping operations to meet their vital goals. In that regard, my country's delegation supports the Secretary-General's initiative calling for a renewed approach to strategic communications in the context of peacekeeping operations as well as the Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiatives. In that context, and by way of adding to the discussion on the development of a new approach to strategic communications, I would like to focus on the following points, in line with the issues raised in the concept note (S/2022/539, annex).

First, strategic communications continue to be a pivotal tool and an integral part of special political missions as well as peacekeeping operations. If we are to guarantee their effectiveness and credibility, we must uphold certain criteria, particularly inclusivity, effectiveness and transparency. We should also include all stakeholders, especially women, in creating and implementing strategic communications.

Second, it is important to ensure that strategic communications constitute an essential platform that allows for the expression of the demands, aspirations and expectations of civilians, as well as responses to their aspirations through a comprehensive, inclusive and direct approach, keeping peacekeeping operations aware of the reality on the ground, gathering their initial information from direct sources and permitting them a realistic and comprehensive understanding of the situation so that they can carry out their tasks effectively. In that regard, we consider language an important factor in building confidence, ensuring direct communication with the local residents and obtaining accurate information.

Third, and in parallel with this, we need to enhance mutual trust and coordination between peacekeeping operations and host Governments, which should facilitate missions' efforts, especially in their interactions with the local communities and the various essential stakeholders, and enable them to do their work effectively, particularly where gathering information on human rights issues and violations that should not be ignored is concerned.

Fourth, misleading and disinformation campaigns against peacekeeping operations have negative consequences not only for efforts to make progress on political and security tracks but for the protection of peacekeepers themselves. It is therefore extremely important to use strategic communications to correct any misinformation about the work of peacekeeping missions and clarify any ambiguity regarding their work on the ground in order to avoid misunderstandings and misconceptions.

Fifth, strategic communications should facilitate the work of peacekeeping missions by contributing to the fulfilment of their mandates according to their established time frames and objectives. Efforts should focus on facilitating political tracks and solutions agreed to among the stakeholders concerned, increasing those operations' effectiveness and credibility and the people's trust in the value they bring.

Sixth, it is important to use training to build and support peacekeepers' capacities in order to enhance communication and mutual understanding with major stakeholders, control lines of communication and use modern equipment and communications technologies, important tools that enable peacekeepers to better understand their operating environment.

Seventh, we should strengthen and enhance strategic communications in the framework of partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. Strategic communications plans should also be developed by all units and missions to ensure that work on the ground is carried out effectively and the desired goals are achieved expeditiously.

In conclusion, my delegation stresses the importance of strategic communications for peacekeeping operations' effective interaction with local communities, parties to conflicts, regional and international stakeholders and their various partners on the ground. Priority should be given to adopting strategic communications that give specific support to implementing peacekeeping operations' mandates and that enhance the use of tools, including social media, to ensure that the right information is delivered at the right time.

*The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.*