

Statement by Ambassador Rabab Fatima, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN at Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Top TCC Group on impact of current pandemic on peacekeeping

6th of October, from 4.30 pm to 5.30 pm

I thank the Permanent Representative of Morocco and the Permanent Representative of Pakistan for organizing today's meeting. My sincere appreciation goes to USG LaCroix and Atul Khare for their briefing.

It goes without saying that Covid-19 pandemic has constrained UN's ongoing work in almost all areas. Peacekeeping operations are no exception.

During the pandemic, the peacekeepers continued to respond to the call of duty and carried out their mandated operations. In addition to that, they had to take up additional responsibilities to support national efforts to contain spread of the pandemic. In the process, they themselves have gotten exposed, which has put them at a higher risk than ever before. Despite precautions, many peacekeepers have been tested positive.

It has indeed been a testing time for all of us, especially the T/PCCs, as we had to address the concerns about the safety and security of our peacekeepers, without compromising our commitments to the peace operations. We have reached out to the DPO leaderships to register our concerns.

And I must acknowledge and appreciate the leadership of both USG LaCroix and USG Khare for their sincere efforts to address those concerns. I also take this

opportunity to recognize the dedicated efforts of each and every one of our peacekeepers in the field who continued their important work in the field and contributed to overcoming the crisis.

Allow me now to briefly reiterate a few specific points on the impacts of the pandemic on the peace operations from the perspective of a leading T/PCC:

- First and foremost, the peacekeepers on duty need adequate medical supplies including PPE, masks testing kits, disinfectants and other essential medication for protection from the infection. For those getting infected to this deadly virus, the best possible medical care need to be ensured.
- Despite measures taken by DPO, due to possible pandemic containment capacity constraint of local community, the risk of spread has always been there. So, the capacities of Missions to handle such health emergencies need to be continuously scaled up. It is important that the living condition requirements of peacekeepers during pandemic are not compromised.
- Medical testing and treatment facilities in the Mission area including in the level-1 and level-2 hospitals have to be enhanced. Additional capacities may need to be built and adequate equipment be provided keeping in mind the safety requirement for transportation of COVID patients. Provisions for isolation units, including isolation chambers during air transportation and provisions for Aeromedical Evacuation Teams (AMETs) to accompany the patients must also be there.

- Growing dangers of supply chain disruptions, social unrests, and violence in the pandemic situation might affect the mission settings. Various aspects of gender dimensions including gender based violence, extended rotations for women peacekeepers add to our challenge. All these add to the existing challenges in fulfilling the PoC mandates of the peacekeepers. The missions must be adequately empowered and resourced to tackle those challenges.
- The pandemic is a new reality. So, going forward, preparedness to address challenges such as the one we are confronted with now, has to be embedded in future planning and mandate setting of peacekeeping Missions. We must be prepared for any such contingency. The peacekeepers who are at the frontline would need to be protected by all means.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate that Bangladesh remains fully committed to UN peacekeeping and we shall continue to do our part in furthering these mandates and critical work.

Thank you.
