CLOSING REMARKS

18-19 NOVEMBER 2018

H.E. SAMEH SHOUKRY
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

High Level Regional Conference
Enhancing the Performance of Peacekeeping Operations:
From Mandate to Exit
Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by welcoming you all once again and use this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all of you for your active participation and fruitful contributions throughout the sessions of the conference. I would also like to recognize the effort made by the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA) in organizing this timely conference; and wish to reiterate our thanks our partners, the governments of Japan, Norway and Canada, as well as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UN Women for their support to this initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Egypt believes that multilateralism continues to be the most viable option to manage and sustain a stable and peaceful world. In his recent address to the United Nations General Assembly, President El Sisi noted that the United Nations and its Charter remains the beacon for multilateralism. He underscored, in this connection,
that multilateralism thrives on balanced and shared responsibilities, mutual respect for the specific characteristics of each country; and solidarity in meeting the challenges we collectively face. We are, therefore, convinced that peacekeeping embodies the most precious principles of multilateralism.

It is in this context, and out of our commitment to Africa and the Arab region that Egypt took the initiative to organize this timely conference. We needed a regional platform for dialogue and exchange of views between troop and police contributing countries from Africa and the Arab region on the increasingly important question of enhancing the performance of UN peacekeeping operations, the flagship activity of the United Nations which predominantly manifests itself in Africa and to which we, Africans, are the primary contributors.

We found the United Nations Secretary-General’s “Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)” initiative energizing and motivating. Therefore, we thought that we should step up to the task and demonstrate our collective commitment in Africa to ensure that UN peacekeeping remains credible and viable in meeting the challenges facing our world and, at the heart of which, our continent. As we prepare to assume the responsibility of chairing the African Union in 2019, Egypt stands ready to deepen Africa’s partnership with the United Nations, especially and to identify a common and practical approach to improving performance of UN peacekeeping.
Not only is Egypt a top provider of uniformed peacekeepers, it is a long-standing contributor to the development of the peacekeeping doctrine and to efforts aimed at adapting it to the evolving operational needs on the ground. In this context, Egypt joined the Declaration of Shared Commitments on Peacekeeping Operations; the Voluntary Compact on Elimination of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and, most recently, the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians.

Egypt is also a regular participant and an active contributor to past defense ministerial conferences since 2012, and we are prepared to participate in the upcoming conference in New York next year. We believe, however, that voluntary commitments and outcomes of informal gatherings need to be further consolidated and developed in the ordinary multilateral intergovernmental framework of the United Nations, namely the General Assembly and its Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As our conference comes to an end, we need to remind ourselves again that peacekeeping is as good as its contribution to long-term and lasting peace. It is in this context that we are firmly convinced that a viable exit strategy needs to be anchored in a well-defined political strategy, and must be conceived from the outset of mission planning. To this end, a well-resourced peacebuilding component of a peacekeeping mission is essential to its effectiveness and success. This is a key message that I hope you can take away from this conference.
This is also a legacy that Egypt was keen to leave behind at the end of its most recent membership term of the Security Council of 2016/2017. We ended the membership with a consensus Presidential Statement that offered a number of guidelines for the Security Council and the UN Secretariat to follow when reviewing, changing or considering the end of a peacekeeping mandate in order to maximize our chance for such mandate to contribute to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we were preparing for this conference and conducting research to develop its concept and agenda, we dug up a very important report submitted by the late Kofi Annan to the Security Council in 2001. The report is entitled “No exit without strategy”. Despite its apparent old age, the issues and the challenge that this report addressed resemble, if they are not identical, to the questions we face today as we attempt to take forward the next generation of peacekeeping reforms. In addition to the interesting analysis and recommendations of that report, I thought the following quote will make a relevant concluding statement for our conference:(I quote)

“Between clear-cut success and failure there lies a large grey area. When confronted with an ambiguous situation, the Security Council may consider withdrawing an operation that is making a positive contribution in some respects but is being stymied in others. In this uncertain realm, it might be helpful to ask the following: Has the peace operation had a positive impact on the lives of those caught in the crisis? Is the country
better off than it would have been without a United Nations peacekeeping operation? …… Are the gains sustainable if the operation were to be withdrawn?” (end of quote)

These are the questions that must continue to guide the reforms of UN peacekeeping operations and determine the quality of their performance and their overall effectiveness.

In conclusion, I am certain that the outcomes of your discussions in this conference, and the views expressed by troop and police contributing countries, will assist in paving the way forward to developing a balanced and comprehensive framework of performance of peacekeeping operations. The outcome of this Conference will remain open for further valuable contributions throughout the coming few weeks with the aim of potentially consolidating a common African position on the question of performance of peacekeeping operations.

Thank you all for the fruitful deliberations over the past two days. I wish you safe trip back home and hope to see you more often in Egypt in the future.

With that I declare our Conference closed.