Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me pleasure to welcome you to the opening ceremony of the twenty-first session of the United Nations Senior Mission Leaders Training Course.

The UNSML is the crown jewel of the global peacekeeping training architecture. This session, held for the first time ever in North Africa, and the second time in the Middle East, aims to identify and prepare potential and current senior mission leaders to undertake the responsibilities of leadership in peacekeeping operations around the globe.

During the coming two weeks, those officials will be engaging with the best that the world has to offer in terms of speakers, mentors, trainers, and facilitators on what it takes to lead a multidimensional peacekeeping operation. And at a time when conflict and strife is engulfing the world, we count on you to contribute to the global efforts to regain peace and stability.

On that note, let me welcome our guests from the United Nations Integrated Training Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) and Field Support (UNDFS), the distinguished mentors, speakers, facilitators and trainees in the course. I welcome you all to Cairo.

Let me also welcome the representatives of Japan and the United Nations Development Program in Cairo. Your contribution and support to the activities of the Cairo Center for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA), including this course, are commendable.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Cairo Session of the UNSML comes at a critical juncture for peacekeeping. It also coincides with the imminent release of the report of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, assembled by the Secretary General last October.

From our standpoint as a top troop contributing country, and as the host of the High Level panel’s MENA consultations conducted in Cairo last March, we are particularly interested in the findings and recommendations that the panel will present to the Secretary General, and indeed the world. We also look forward to the discussions that will ensue, the results of which could affect – and potentially reshape – the future of peacekeeping for years to come.

The importance we attach to these discussions cannot be overestimated. They come at a time when the global and regional security landscape is dramatically changing with:

- the ever increasing intensity and frequency of inter- and intra-state conflicts;
- the collapse of a number of nation states particularly in Africa and the Arab World;
- the rise of non-state actors, including terrorist and criminal organizations, ushering in an era of trans-state conflicts,
- And as conflict takes on an ethnic/religious nature that turns it into a zero-sum game and puts it beyond political settlement.

Those threats, challenges and risks further complicate our already complex peacekeeping endeavors, as we continue to deploy missions where there is no peace to keep, and where the lives of innocent populations and mission personnel are endangered. They also systematically test the durability and effectiveness of peacekeeping as a tool to deal with complex crises.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the face of those challenges, the enshrined principles of peacekeeping remain as relevant today as ever. It is our understanding of them that needs to evolve. For Egypt, impartiality certainly does not mean neutrality, consent is not at all synonymous to seeking the agreement of terrorists, and the use of force for the protection of civilians and missions’ mandates, without unwarranted excesses, is feasible.
Another thing that needs to evolve is our approach to the relationship between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations. Egypt is already taking the lead in this regard. In March 2015, the Arab Summit heeded Egypt’s call to establish a joint Arab Force. The follow up discussions about the force have reached an advanced stage, setting the scene for a more effective and potent role to be played by the League in preventing and responding to the many threats to peace and stability in the Arab world.

Within the African context, Egypt continues to play a very active and constructive role in the African Union, supporting the development of the African Standby Force, scheduled to be fully operational by the end of this year, as well as developing the AU Commission’s capabilities in the areas of mediation and conflict prevention, as adopted in the AU Summit last January.

And as these two important regional organizations continue to evolve and to improve their contribution to the maintenance of peace and security, so needs their relationship with the United Nations. We have already played an important role in facilitating this discussion: first, last November, when together with the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Commission, we organized an international conference on “Regional Aspects of Peacebuilding”, which presented the ongoing review process of the peacebuilding architecture with practical recommendations for achieving coordination and synergies between the UN and regional organizations; and second, last March, when we hosted the MENA consultations of the UN High Level Panel for the Review of Peace Operations, which allowed for a deeper and substantial discussion to take place between the UN and the League of Arab States.

Those are the forward-looking global debates and discussions that Egypt is already actively engaged in, and will continue to do so in the future, especially as the ten-year framework agreement between the UN and the AU comes to a successful conclusion next year, and as the League of Arab States readies itself for the establishment of the Joint Arab Force.

Moreover, Egypt’s contribution to doctrinal and policy debates in the field of peacekeeping is only one element of its larger leadership in peacekeeping. Egypt has been and continues to be a top contributor to peacekeeping operations around the world. Currently, more than 2400 of our men, and I am happy to note women, are being deployed in eight UN peacekeeping missions. Our involvement in training of peacekeeping personnel, through the Cairo Center for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping, is not only at records high, but also have expanded to include new thematic areas, such as border issues.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, Egypt is a candidate on behalf of the African Group for election to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2016/2017.

Egypt approaches this bid while recognizing the great responsibility and weight of such membership, and it indeed is a responsibility that we take very seriously, as we did before in 1949-50, 1961-62, 1984-85 and 1996-97.

It is the intention of Egypt to use its membership in the Security Council, and we stand confident in our campaign and our ability to fulfill this duty, to be an effective voice of Africa, and the entire global South in various fora.

In this context, I would like to reaffirm Egypt’s commitment to achieve international peace and security and its support for the role of the Security Council in addressing situations that represent a source of concern and threat to international peace and security.

Moreover, let me use this opportunity to express Egypt’s readiness in principle to host a UN Regional Service Centre to support peace operations in the Middle East.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the end, let me wish you a successful training and an enjoyable stay in Egypt.

I thank you.