Ladies and Gentlemen,

What a pleasure it is to be here at the Cairo Center for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa.

The CCCPA has been a key partner for us – not just a partner for training, but also a partner for ideas: from strategy to doctrine to principles.

As a bridge between the African and Arab worlds, Egypt is a critical voice for the two regional centers of gravity for United Nations peace operations.

The CCCPA was founded in 1994. I arrived to the United Nations in 1991. What I would like to talk about today is the paradigmatic shift in peace operations over the past quarter century.
After the cold war, the UN underwent a tectonic shift, from monitoring to multidimensional peacekeeping operations. The Security Council authorized 20 new PKOs between 1989 and 1994. The number of peacekeepers grew seven-fold, from 11,000 to 75,000.

This rapid growth, as we all know, did not happen without severe growing pains, as Bosnia and Rwanda painfully demonstrated. The UN entered a deep period of reflection, culminating with the Brahimi Report in 2000 and the Capstone Doctrine in 2008.

Today, we are again facing a period of reform. Secretary-General Guterres has made this clear, already announcing the formation of an internal review team – which, by June, will give its recommendations on the restructuring of the peace and security architecture.

Following on the heels of the HIPPO and AGE reports, the Secretary-General has quickly adopted a new tone, a new style of leadership, and a new strategic direction. He has said – and I quote – that “today’s conflicts are … fueled by competition for power and resources, inequality, marginalization and exclusion, poor governance, weak institutions, sectarian divides.” And “while the causes of crisis are deeply interlinked, the UN’s response remains fragmented.”

Mr. Guterres has vocalized his strong belief that the UN must rebalance its approach to peace and security. This is a belief that I share.

Many of our current multidimensional peace operations – both in design and implementation – have reached their natural limits. In certain countries – such as Darfur, Western Sahara and eastern DRC – they have even overstayd their welcome.
We are faced now with extremely dangerous asymmetric environments, which are complicated by conflicting agendas and protracted political negotiations. Overextended and overwhelmed by protection mandates that far outstrip their resources, some Missions are clearly losing their dynamism.

Security Council mandates exceed 20 pages in length, with objectives so diffuse that they obscure any clear political strategy or end-state – without which, peace operations risk being reduced to no more than their component parts.

In many cases, peace operations – indeed the UN as a whole – has lost political leverage, unable to counterbalance complicated local and regional dynamics, persistent spoilers, predatory economic interests and powerful criminal networks.

Peacekeepers are expected to fill gaps in host-State Governments, without the necessary resources to address underlying causes of conflict. This leads only to recurring cycles of violence.

Although most decisions of the Security Council are reached by consensus, their implementation is negatively affected by severe divisions over issues like sovereignty, the protection of civilians, and accountability.

Despite admonitions to “deliver as one” – a fragmented Secretariat often results in fragmented responses. The myopic distinction between “two types” of peace operations (PKOs vs SPMs) is symptomatic of this division.

Furthermore, questions remain over the UN’s strategic and working relationships with regional organizations and coalitions of the willing, as well as the “militarization” of Missions and their strategic direction.
All of these factors are influencing fundamental discussions about the nature, scope and limitations of peace operations.

After 12 years of MINUSTAH, 13 years of UNMIL and almost 20 years of MONUC/MONUSCO, Member States’ patience (as well as pocketbooks) are wearing thin. Annual budgets in the DRC, Darfur and South Sudan reach up to $1 billion annually – while financial contributors worry about the slippery slope towards peacekeeping as development.

It bears repeating that the Marshall Plan – ambitious as it was in both scope and geography – brought sustainable recovery to Western Europe in only five years. Stabilization is not development, and stabilization plans are not indefinite. The UN’s first steps in this direction, including the use of programmatic funding and draft compacts with national authorities in CAR, are encouraging.

The establishment of a new peace operation provides but a very short window of opportunity, in situations where a crisis has galvanized the political will of the international community and created new dynamics on the ground. Within this limited timeframe, however, the resources and momentum that accompany a start-up operation are rarely, if ever, complemented by a meaningful UN system-wide stabilization plan.

Early security and political gains – hard won through military and diplomatic means – must be grounded in more professional and concerted efforts aimed at stabilization, based on a realistic exit strategy for the UN that supports the host-government to becoming self-sufficient early on.

The time has come to reflect strategically, take stock of recent experience, reassess major assumptions and consider adjustments to the conduct of UN
Missions. It may be worthwhile, therefore, to consider the following, strategic turn:

- **First, the UN must restore the primacy of the political:** the political goals of a Mission should not be subordinate to security ones. From the outset, the UN should facilitate a dynamic *and inclusive* political process, aimed at national dialogue and reconciliation. Governments and elites may be the first to the table, and their buy-in is indispensable, but peace agreements succeed or fail based on their legitimacy within local communities. To be more people-centered, Missions must extend their outreach to the population at large, so that the public appreciates what the Organization is trying to achieve and understands both its goals and limitations.

- **Second, the international community must acknowledge that there is no substitute for national ownership:** peacekeeping cannot replace national will in nation-building, nor can it build up peace for a nation alone. Any comprehensive, non-enforcement operation should evolve into a truly national endeavor, with national authorities and the people themselves becoming the true drivers of change. This would require strong, action-oriented, compacts between the international community and the recipient nation, which define the **responsibilities of all parties**, including those related to national revenue generation and security and economic reforms.

- **Third, the UN must assert leadership and management over political processes:** these must be inclusive, non-partisan and – most importantly – resistant to undue influence by the external agendas of powerful constituencies. Prevention activities must also be mainstreamed through all aspects of UN activities, in order to ensure that the **overall length of peace operations does not exceed 4-5 years.**
• Fourth, the UN and regional players have to leverage their common objectives: the UN is increasingly turning to regional and sub-regional organizations as real partners and trusted allies, on a level playing field. Regional troops or coalitions of the willing are often simultaneously deployed alongside UN peace operations. Much stronger coordination is needed, and stronger does not necessarily mean less discrete, as the UN’s impartiality must be respected.

• Fifth, peacekeeping must develop in-depth, professional, unbiased and comprehensive planning and analysis: to achieve concrete results, the design of all UN peace operations, Missions and offices should be based on professional planning and comprehensive analysis. Flexibility of options and regular implementation reviews, together with necessary adjustments, should become the norm. A system of checks and balances, firewalls and ground truthing, should be incorporated into the very fabric of the overall planning and assessment process.

• Sixth, political strategies should be complemented with equally important peace stabilization and consolidation plans: such plans should serve as an entry and exit strategy for any operation, with specific, time-bound and sequenced benchmarks. Properly resourced by national and international contributions, sequenced stabilization plans should encompass initiatives to be undertaken by all major providers, including the UN system and multilateral and bilateral donors. Delivery should be centered on national capacity building, good governance and security sector management from day one.

• Seventh, we must close the gap between the Security Council and troop contributors: with the encouraging results of the recent Peacekeeping Summits, a wider cross-section of Member States is reentering peacekeeping. To build on this, the P5 should be encouraged to establish a robust, joint, high-readiness brigade, which could be made available to the UN during the early stages of
peace operations. This could serve to promote a spirit of cooperation and unity of purpose, within the Council and beyond. Simultaneously, the UN should give real impetus to setting up similar joint brigades/units from Africa and Asia, perhaps with the assistance of donors.

- And finally – eighth – the UN needs to radically improve the selection of Mission leadership: the recruitment of Mission leadership should be conducted exclusively on the basis of proven track records and operational experience. Priority should be given to capable, senior and seasoned UN professionals, especially those who understand how to work with and within the system.

DPKO and DFS have joined together to address these in a more consistent and strategic manner. There have, indeed, been serious, good faith efforts to improve the United Nations conflict and crisis management capacity. Force generation is more strategic; the participation of women has increased; and technology has been upgraded.

At the same time, the Organization should more actively focus on the development of other areas, such as national capacity building in preventing violent extremism, counter-terrorism, organized crime and anti-corruption. I strongly believe that these and other key issues should be addressed by the Security Council and General Assembly, in earnest and as early as possible.

The road ahead will not be easy, and we need much more than incremental progress. But as the Secretary-General has stated, “we
need the support of both our bodies for our efforts to build and sustain peace across the continuum, from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and long-term development.”

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you also to the CCCPA for hosting us here today.