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**Minister of State**  
**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**  
**UN Peacekeeper Day**  
**RUSI**  
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**Introduction**

I am delighted to see so many people here today who care deeply about peacekeeping and our peacekeepers.

I thank our hosts: the United Nations Association-UK, the United Nations Association-Westminster, the Canadian High Commission and of course RUSI, for making this happen; for putting together such an engaging agenda; and for continuing our meaningful conversation about UN peacekeeping.

It is right that we begin by taking a moment to remember – and to celebrate and to honour - those brave women and men from more than 120 nations who have served the United Nations so well in the cause of peace.

Today in particular, it is important that we pay tribute to the more than 3800 UN peacekeepers who have given their lives in the name of peace.

We send our peacekeepers into danger – on difficult missions far from home - because we believe that people who are caught up in conflict deserve to enjoy peace and security, human rights, and development: the ideals upon which the UN was founded.

We also know that even when conflict rages far away, the shockwaves can be felt on our shores. In an increasingly interconnected world this is truer today than it has ever been.

So peacekeepers matter to us as well as the innocent people they are sent to protect. They create space for compromises to be explored. They secure the opportunity to bring countries back from the brink.

We owe our peacekeepers a huge debt of gratitude, and we owe it to them to ensure they are the best they can be.

That is why the UK Government remains committed to supporting the UN Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping agenda, and promoting the “three Ps” approach that we launched at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in London: with more **Pledges** of quality people and equipment; better **Planning** of missions; and better **Performance**.

So, what does this mean in operational terms?

Firstly, it means moulding our peacekeeping forces to better reflect those they serve and protect.

That is why ensuring that a gender perspective is consistently applied in peace operations is a key strategic outcome of the UK's fourth National Action Plan. That is our five year strategy, jointly owned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development, for delivering our commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

We are determined to ensure that getting more women involved in this work is seen for what it is –an essential part of successful operations - and never a mere box-ticking exercise. The twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in 2020 is an opportunity to move beyond rhetoric to action including through promoting women's meaningful participation in peace processes and increasing support to women who are working to resolve conflict, counter violent extremism and build peace at the grassroots level.

The UK is continuing to demonstrate our commitment to the role of peacekeeping in Women Peace and Security. In March I announced a £1 million contribution to the Canadian inspired Elsie Initiative, which will bolster the participation of women in peacekeeping globally.

I am pleased to report that we are also practicing what we preach, with female staff now making up 7% of the UK's deployed uniformed personnel. But we must and we will do more.

Secondly, our peacekeepers must be ready, willing and able to perform in operating environments that are increasingly complex and hostile.

In these circumstances, it is only right that, when asking Peacekeepers to perform to the highest standards, we give them the very best guidance and training before we deploy them.

Which is why we work to spread best practice. The UK currently trains around 11,000 peacekeepers each year, and we provide capacity-building support to a number of UN Member States.

Last year, Vietnamese peacekeepers demonstrated what is possible through such partnerships, when they deployed a Level Two Field Hospital on a UN mission for the first time in their history.

Once peacekeepers are deployed, we must also hold them fully accountable for their conduct and performance.

We must recognise outstanding contributions, but also take appropriate action when peacekeepers fall short or betray the trust placed in them. Where the UN works with non-UN forces, such as those of a host state, we must apply the same rigorous standards to their personnel.

Thirdly, we must get our planning right in order to give our peacekeepers, and the civilian staff who play such a vital role in broader stabilisation missions, the best possible chance of working effectively together and succeeding.

## **Conclusion**

Let me conclude by assuring you that the UK remains committed in all these areas.

We are committed to a more representative peacekeeping force.

We are committed to a better trained and better prepared peacekeeping force; and we are committed to holding to account those whose conduct falls short of the high standards the world expects.

We are 100% committed to our Peacekeepers, and to making UN Peacekeeping the best it can be.