Transformation of UN Peacekeeping: Role of the International Community in Peace-building

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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Konichiwa.

It is a pleasure to address this symposium, The Role of Peace Keeping Operation in the Process of Nation Building – Peace-building Experience in East Timor-, jointly sponsored by the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) and the United Nations University (UNU), especially in light of East Timor's imminent admission to the United Nations as a Member State later this month. While East Timor's journey to statehood is a testament to the courage and determination of its people, it also reflects positively on the emergence of multi-dimensional United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The United Nations approach to peacekeeping operations has transformed over the last decade. Earlier, peacekeeping operations primarily consisted of monitoring cease-fire arrangements, assisting in troop withdrawals, providing buffer zones between opposing forces and helping in the implementation of a final settlement. Today, peacekeeping operations are increasingly multi-dimensional and, in addition to some of the more standard features of peacekeeping operations, they possess elements that are reminiscent of the United Nations trusteeship process for de-colonization.

A central theme of my presentation is that these multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations, also known as complex operations, are increasingly essential to fostering peace, in places such as East Timor, and that the United Nations is well equipped to conduct them.

The development of multi-dimensional United Nations peacekeeping operations has been in great part a response to the burgeoning of post-Cold War civil conflicts. These conflicts, often triggered by various kinds of disputes, are usually propelled by large underlying problems, such as the lack of credible political structures, an absence of mechanisms for the orderly transfer of power, human rights violations and social inequalities.

Accordingly, strategies to address such conflicts must take a broad approach if they are to be effective. Peacekeeping must not only address immediate needs, but must also undertake efforts to build the foundations for a sustainable peace. These efforts should include, helping to forge viable political and civic institutions, strengthening human rights mechanisms and promoting law and order.

Small wonder, the seeds for multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations were sown in the early 1990s. In 1992, former Secretary-General Boutros Ghali issued an Agenda for Peace. The text of this document offered an elementary definition of peacekeeping, as

> *"the deployment of a United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all the parties concerned, normally involving United Nations military and or police personnel and frequently civilians as well. Peacekeeping is a technique that expands the possibilities for both the prevention of conflict and the making of peace."*

By describing peacekeeping as simply the condition of deployment, the Agenda for Peace laid the foundations for a broad interpretation of what peacekeeping could entail. Furthermore, the Agenda stated that both peacekeeping operations and peace-making, "to be truly successful, must come to include comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people." This is the concept of "peace-building," a defining feature of multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations. Not surprisingly, peace-building in an area torn by civil conflict amounts to nation-building, a term often used synonymously with peace-building.

The Agenda also cited a number of tasks that focus upon political or institution-building needs, as examples of peace-building activities. These included promoting political participation, electoral work, disarmament, human rights and professionalisation of security personnel.

During the following years, the United Nations initiated complex operations in Cambodia, Somalia, Mozambique and Bosnia, whose civil societies, economies and political institutions had been devastated by years of war. The United Nations missions in those countries provided a focus, as well as a coordinating mechanism for its work. The successes and setbacks the United Nations experienced provided further evidence of the need for a broad approach, and of the importance of strong and sustained political and financial support from Member States in order to achieve meaningful progress.

According to Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Reform Report of 1997, humanitarian and development activities can be important to peace-building efforts, provided they are politically relevant, as they can reduce the risk of resumed conflict and promote reconciliation and reconstruction.

In light of the setbacks of the United Nations, such as those in Bosnia and Rwanda, the Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, commonly referred to as the Brahimi Report, was issued in 2000. The Report provided a comprehensive assessment of the ability of the United Nations to conduct peace operations effectively and offered realistic proposals to enhance that capacity.

The Report, which reflected an objective perspective, stated that peace-building in some cases was vital to the success of peace-keeping. In the words of the Report:

> "It should have come as no surprise to anyone that some of the missions of the past decade would be particularly hard to accomplish: they tended to deploy where conflict had not resulted in victory for any side, where a military stalemate or international pressure or both had brought fighting to a halt but at least some of the parties to the conflict were not seriously committed to ending the confrontation. United Nations operations thus did not deploy into post-conflict situations but tried to create them. In such complex operations, peacekeepers work to maintain a secure local environment while peacebuilders work to make that environment self-sustaining. Only such an environment offers a ready exit to peacekeeping forces, making peacekeepers and peacebuilders inseparable partners."

Peace-building was defined by the report as:

> "activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more

than just the absence of war. Thus, peace-building includes but is not limited to reintegrating former combatants into civilian society, strengthening the rule of law (for example, through training and restructuring of local police, and judicial and penal reform); improving respect of human rights through the monitoring, education and investigation of past and existing abuses; providing technical assistance for democratic development (including electoral assistance and support for free media); and promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques."

In the last few years, several United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, including the United Nations Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and UNTAET, have been involved in peace-building.

Both UNTAES and UNTAET concluded successfully.
Their success can primarily be attributed to the strength of their respective mandates, structures and leaderships: in my view, these are the key determinants to a mission's success. The case of UNTAES, perhaps more so than UNTAET, exemplifies the convergence of all three determinants in an operation.

In January 1996, the Security Council created UNTAES with the purpose of successfully integrating the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium into Croatia. Around that time, most of the international focus was on the then-recently negotiated Dayton Accords and the status of Bosnia. The situation on the Croatian/FRY border in the Serb held region of Eastern Slavonia was a secondary and seemingly minor issue, despite the fact that this was one border where full war between Croatia and the FRY could have taken place.

President Tudjman would not have signed the Dayton Agreement without cast iron guarantees that Slavonia would be re-integrated into Croatia. However, NATO showed no interest in taking on this project as an adjunct to Dayton. Eastern Slavonia was in many senses an orphan mission, which was imposed on the United Nations.

At the end of 1995, most analysts saw little or no prospect of peaceful integration of the region and its people. The three most likely scenarios, in descending order of optimism were: (a) the vast majority of Serbs would leave peacefully; (b) the Serbs would leave after having destroyed everything, as was the case in Serb Sarajevo; or (c) there would be a Croatian military offensive with severe loss of life and material damage, Serbs would leave as refugees as they did in the Krajina, and there would be a 'hot border' between Croatia and the FRY over the Danube.

Exceeding all expectations, UNTAES very successfully carried out its mandate of peaceful integration. More specifically, UNTAES was charged with demilitarising the Region, ensuring that the multiethnic character of the Region was retained and promoting an atmosphere of confidence among local residents of all ethnic origins. UNTAES was also mandated to allow refugees to return safely to their homes, promote redevelopment and reconstruction of the region and to organise free and fair elections. All of these aims were achieved.

Three factors, as I mentioned to you earlier, were particularly significant in the success of UNTAES: a strong and viable mandate, an extremely well organised mission and the unity of command and control. Unlike other United Nations operations in the Balkans, which had complex and often disparate goals, the UNTAES mandate was specific and finite. It was

supported with adequate resources and 5,000 multinational peacekeepers who worked well together, and who were led by an outstanding Belgian Force Commander and his very capable Russian Deputy Commander – an early example of cooperation to achieve common objectives. There was never any daylight between the Russian Federation and the West on Eastern Slavonia.

UNTAES wound up in 1998. The following year, another multi-dimensional peacekeeping operation was born, which is the focus of this symposium.

In October 1999, in the wake of the violence that followed the popular consultation administered by the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), the Security Council passed resolution 1272, establishing UNTAET. UNTAET was given overall responsibility for the administration of East Timor and was empowered to exercise all judicial, legislative and executive authority. The broad mandate consisted of the following provisions:

> *"to provide security and maintain law and order throughout the territory of East Timor; to establish an effective administration; to assist in the development of civil and social services; to ensure the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development assistance; to support capacity-building for self government; to assist in the establishment of conditions for sustainable development."*

UNTAET ably carried out this broad peace-building mandate. Over the course of two-and-a-half years, it managed to restore stability and establish the basic administrative and political structures for an independent East Timor. It recruited and trained a new civil service. It competently maintained internal and external security. It enacted fundamental legislation and began the reconstruction of East Timor. A democratic process was initiated which allowed for the creation of East Timor's constitution and the election of its leaders. UNTAET also coordinated development efforts with other United Nations agencies, the international financial agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations.

The mission's strong mandate was bolstered by the willingness of Member States to provide resources, not least of which were human resources. Twenty-nine countries contributed military personnel to the mission while 39 countries provided police officers. The authorized maximum strength of the police and military combined exceeded 10,000.

UNTAET was also comprised of 737 international civilian personnel and 1,745 local civilian personnel. They worked with the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to name a few of the agencies involved.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sergio Vieira de Mello, together with the Force Commanders, and heads of components ensured that the many aspects of the international community's efforts converged and supported the fulfillment of the mandate.

Upon East Timor's independence, UNTAET was succeeded by the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET), which today supports the nascent East Timorese government, ensures external and internal security and helps build-up the local law enforcement agency, in accordance with international human rights norms.

UNTAET did face some problems that inhibited its smooth functioning, and these are worth noting. From the outset, UNTAET confronted challenges in recruiting candidates who

were well suited for the needs of the mission. In great part, this   was because UNTAET had to assume all the roles of a government and thus needed employees who were capable of performing a range of specialized functions. As generalists were more readily available than specialists with requisite skills, UNTAET often ended up recruiting generalists who were unable to perform the required tasks. To top it off, the logistical difficulties in traveling to East Timor also discouraged many suitable candidates from considering deployment in the mission area. Unfortunately, UNMISET has inherited some of these problems from UNTAET, as it too is having difficulties in recruiting civilian experts who could provide assistance to the East Timorese government.

UNTAET could also have tread more lightly in East Timor. Its omnipresence, in the form of massive air-conditioned compounds and big white jeeps, sometimes engendered the animosity of the host society. I understand that it is difficult to operate with a light touch, especially when a massive peace-building effort is underway, but a concerted effort should be made to do so in future complex operations.

Although there is room for improvement, the United Nations has demonstrated through its recent experiences with UNTAES and UNTAET that it is capable of conducting multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations. Besides successful performance in the field, there are more obvious reasons why this Organization is best situated to conduct complex operations.

No other organization can match the universal membership or moral legitimacy of the United Nations, as embodied in its Charter. Second, no other organization has the resource base of specialists, such as experienced police officers and judicial experts, to ensure that the gap between moral purpose and physical capability is not unbridgeable. Third, the hallmark of the United Nations peacekeeping is neutrality, which means that the actions of the blue helmets are not intended to favor one side or the other in a dispute. And last but not least, United Nations peacekeeping is particularly well positioned since the breadth of the United Nations system gives it unparalleled ability to coordinate action in all relevant areas.

In closing, I am reminded of the Japanese folk tale of Momotaro, the peach boy who vanquished the monsters that had been pillaging the countryside. Even though he was very strong, he was only able to beat the monsters with the support of his friends, the dog, the monkey and the pheasant. Similarly, although the United Nations has all the relevant tools to handle multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations, it cannot subdue the monsters that threaten international peace and security without the support of Member States.

Thank You.