STATEMENT

by

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to the United Nations**

**Open debate of the Security Council
on
Strategic Communications in UN Peacekeeping Operations: key to mandate
implementation and the safety and security of peacekeepers**

**12 July 2022
New York**

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Mr. President

Let me thank you for convening a discussion on this subject. I would also like to thank the briefers for their insightful remarks.

UN peacekeeping operations are a crucial factor in upholding a level of peace and stability on some of the world's most complex violent conflicts, often deployed in unwelcoming environments and tasked with a complex set of responsibilities. I would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to every man and woman for their sacrifice in the service of peace.

Under difficult circumstances, the UN peacekeeping operations have a special role to play in the support of local communities. Slovakia is supportive of the robust and comprehensive approach taken by the UN, to ensure that complicated political processes are continued, stability is maintained, and civilians are protected.

Over the past two decades, the scope and intensity of conflicts have changed dramatically, peacekeeping operations have faced increasing challenges, and traditional and nontraditional security factors have posed serious threats to the safety and security of peacekeepers.

One of the rapidly changing factors is strategic communications, which are critical to securing the political and public support that UN peacekeeping missions need to implement effectively their mandates and create a safe operational environment for peacekeepers. Strategic communications help manage expectations of relevant stakeholders, particularly local communities and the host government, and address misinformation that undermine the credibility of the such missions.

Close coordination among local and international partners, and an enhanced strategic communication vis-à-vis the local population and international media, are essential in particular to expose and denounce infringements of international norms by other actors. Strategic communications are also crucial for the maintenance of situational awareness, which requires "feeling of the pulse" on local communities that can have significant impact of whole of peacekeeping process.

We highly commend the Secretary-General's leadership in this domain, including the A4P+ initiative, which has provided a roadmap for our collective efforts. We welcome DPO's increased engagement in countering disinformation, along with the commitments of the Secretary General and the Department of Global Communications to counter factors that pose various challenges, such as the intentional targeting through information manipulation by malign actors, which are particularly worrisome. Implementation strategic communications as a specific priority have the potential to further increase operationalization and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations.

We also recognize the essential role strategic communications play in promotion of the Protection of Civilians and the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Slovakia strongly supports an equal and full participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security and calls for the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions that address this issue.

In Slovakia, increasing the number of women in our armed forces has been our long-term policy. Currently, servicewomen comprise nearly 12 % of our Armed Forces and this increasing trend is set to continue in the future. Slovakia has been active troop contributing country to UNFICYP since 2001 and currently deploys 239 personnel to the mission of which 29 (12,13%) are women. In March 2022, we have also marked the 9th anniversary of deployment of the UNPOL officers from Slovakia to the mission.

I thank you.