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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
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Sir Jeremy Greenstock
Chair, United Nations Association - UK
3 Whitehall Court
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Dear Sir Jeremy,

Thank you for your letter of 7 June to the Foreign Secretary, which included detailed and helpful recommendations arising from your conference to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers. I was delighted to see you mark the event and am replying as Minister responsible for matters relating to the UN.

The High Level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping Operations (HIPPO) gave us the opportunity to review how UN peacekeeping can adapt and change. We now need to make that change a reality. The Government's focus is to: support the UN to improve its planning capabilities; build on the pledges made at the 2015 Leaders Summit; and find ways to improve the performance of peacekeepers.

We intend to use the 'UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial: London, 2016' to drive forward meaningful improvements in the ways nations contribute to UN peacekeeping operations. The Leaders' Summit last year delivered the means for change; the UK-hosted Defence Ministerial will capitalise on this to drive forward capability development to meet the evolving threats to global peace and security.


The Government shares your desire to improve the quality of leadership and co-ordination of peacekeeping operations. The HIPPO report made a number of recommendations on leadership and the transparency of the appointments process for key roles in UN peacekeeping. FCO and Ministry of Defence officials are considering how to pursue the issue of leadership at the Defence Ministerial to build on our existing political and programmatic support to the reform agenda. Our initial focus will be on encouraging the UN to publish clear criteria for mission leadership roles to ensure candidates are selected based on how well their skills match the needs of individual missions. Your suggestion to create a panel of experienced former mission leaders and Under-Secretaries-General is interesting, and could be used not only for recommending appointments but also to mentor existing and prospective mission leaders.

I am also grateful that the UNA is continuing to keep the spotlight on the problem of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by UN peacekeepers. It is a totemic issue; peacekeepers need the trust of those they seek to protect. Every time a peacekeeper fails to uphold the integrity and decency that is expected of the UN, that trust is

undermined. I welcomed the Secretary General's decisiveness in withdrawing units facing credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Government fully supports the appointment of Dr Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator for improving the UN's response to SEA. We have committed £1 million this year to assist the UN and the Special Coordinator in these efforts.

You suggest an international tribunal on SEA is an option for Member States to consider. However, the Government's view is that an international tribunal is not a feasible, practical or effective solution to ensure accountability for SEA for all peacekeepers. A particular risk is that it removes responsibility from Troop Contributing Countries to take action. This direct accountability is critical both when contingents are on active deployments and in subsequent legal and disciplinary processes. We believe we should support Dr Holl Lute in: pushing for progress on improving the suitability and training of those deployed; designing a reporting system that communities will trust; and ensuring a stronger UN response to proven allegations. We will continue to insist that there must be timely and thorough investigations of all allegations.

In closing, I would like to highlight that the Ministry of Defence and FCO will host jointly an event in July with key civil society representatives to discuss the Defence Ministerial. This will be an opportunity to understand and engage with how we frame the discussions and outcomes of the Ministerial. Invitations will issue shortly and I very much hope representatives from UNA will be able to attend.

Sincerely,


**RT HON BARONESS ANELAY OF ST JOHNS DBE
MINISTER OF STATE**