

# 75 YEARS OF THE BLUE HELMETS: BUILDING INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE PEACE OPERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Friday 29 September, 2p.m. - 3.30p.m., Azur Room



Satu Koivu, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Valérie Gauthier, Caroline Ziadeh and Lise Howard

## Keeping the peace in the face of new challenges

Following the showing of a video celebrating 75 years of United Nations peacekeeping operations, journalist, Valérie Gauthier, opened the discussion on the 71 missions set up between 1948 and 2023.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix began by highlighting the long list of countries that have benefited from these missions, from Cambodia to El Salvador, including East Timor and Angola. He pointed out that the failure of some operations was partly because the ambitions of certain mandates did not match the reality on the ground. Caroline Ziadeh went on to describe the successes of the UN operation in Kosovo since 1999, which has *'stopped the war and the killings and facilitated the return of displaced persons, although there*

*are setbacks today with the population losing confidence in the mission.'* Satu Koivu, Police Commissioner for the mission in Cyprus, which has been in place since 1964, explained that *'the cessation of fighting and the opening of crossing points in the previously hermetic buffer zone are successes, but we have to recognise that the presence of UN forces, which is still necessary today, is a sign of failure.'* American academic, Lise Howard, drew on numerous academic studies to assert that *'two out of three peacekeeping operations achieve the objectives of their mandate'* and that *'the presence of peacekeepers unambiguously reduces the number of deaths, injuries and conflicts.'*

Jean-Pierre Lacroix made the point that *'every day that the ceasefire is maintained is a success'*, before admitting that *'in the face of the challenges imposed by new methods of warfare and disinformation in often vast territories, the allocated resources are insufficient.'* The Special Representative in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, continued her analysis by explaining that *'the nature of the conflict and the populations have changed, and the analysis and administration of the mission must also evolve.'* *'We must remain attentive to secure the four pillars of the 1999 resolution, which are the cessation of hostilities, the deployment of NATO forces, the management of community affairs by the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and economic affairs by the European Union'*, as well as *'maintaining dialogue at local and national level in order to restore confidence.'*

### **The nature of the conflict and the populations have changed, and the analysis and administration of the mission must also evolve**

Caroline Ziadeh

*'All members of peacekeeping operations are ordinary people, but they serve in extraordinary places'*, added the policewoman. *'Our security is called into question, our buildings and property are damaged and sometimes we're attacked directly'*, she explained, *'and we must be able to meet increasing expectations, adapt and develop new skills.'* When asked about the broadening of the missions' responsibilities, Satu Koivu assured the audience that, in the case of the Cyprus mission *'the main aim is to listen to and support the local communities, but the situation has changed over six-*

MODERATOR:

**Valérie Gauthier**, France 24 journalist and TV presenter

SPEAKERS:

**Jean-Pierre Lacroix**, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations

**Caroline Ziadeh**, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

**Lise Howard**, Professor of Domestic and Foreign Policy at Georgetown University

**Satu Koivu**, Deputy Police Commissioner, Senior Police Advisor UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus)

*ty years; the military incident has been resolved but there are now major civil and criminal problems.'* Lise Howard added that *'governments are asking for increasingly complex mandates, and everyone is making demands.'*

Reacting to the accusations of sexual abuse by a number of peacekeepers, Jean-Pierre Lacroix accepted his organisation's responsibility: *'It's unacceptable and it undermines the positive work done by everyone. We've taken action, entire contingents have been fired and the national authorities have been warned.'* *'We must do more to get to know the territories and populations better, go everywhere, diversify the staff and never stop working so that these crimes don't go unpunished'*, he continued. *'The UN is increasingly targeted by attacks, the uniform no longer protects and fake news exacerbates the violence'* he concluded to counterbalance his earlier statements. Satu Koivu added that *'the integrity of the mission is continually challenged, working in a blue beret carries a risk, but we also have equipment and technology to help us.'* Her colleague in Kosovo recounts the latest attacks in May 2023 against NATO soldiers in the north of the country, along with the deterioration of UN offices in the capital. *'Faced with these threats, we must continue to engage in dialogue and find solutions*



Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Valérie Gauthier

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### Statistical studies show that the more women there are, the better the results, with less exploitation and abuse

Lise Howard

with local allies, political and religious leaders and young people to change the public discourse', she says.

The American political scientist briefly recalled the multidimensional mission to Namibia in 1989-1990, the aim of which was to 'change the political atmosphere in a country with a complex history (genocide, apartheid, civil war) but with a lot of resources and a difficult post-colonial democratic transition.' 'That's why it was important to talk directly to the Namibians and see what they expected from the Blue Helmets', she concluded.

Faced with the growing misinformation made possible by NICTs (New Information and Communication Technologies)



Watch the full debate on YouTube

and social networks, Jean-Pierre Lacroix maintained that 'we need to communicate proactively, tell positive stories and do a better job of detecting information.' Caroline Ziadeh looked back at the disinformation campaign against one of her colleagues, who was wrongly accused in 2018 of being a Russian spy. This 'required a campaign of clarification and investment in fact-checking to develop defence mechanisms.' Satu Koivu echoed the arguments of other international officials, stating that 'we have a responsibility to lead the narrative, to check the facts, so that people understand the action of the Blue Helmets.'

The diplomat, based in Pristina, went on to detail her efforts to rebuild confidence in her mission, including the meeting with Kosovar civil society stakeholders to inaugurate 'the Barabar centre, a place for dialogue and inter-community exchange.' In turn, the Police Commissioner justified the setting up of various 'committees on health, crisis management, etc. to find solutions to all the challenges.'

Lastly, Jean-Pierre Lacroix stressed the importance of including women in all these processes, 'because it considerably improves the working environment of the missions and because the vulnerable populations are mostly women who no longer want to see armed men.' 'Statistical studies show that the more women there are, the better the results, with less exploitation and abuse', continued Lise Howard. 'Unfortunately, China and Russia often block Security Council resolutions that include women's rights, so we have to go through the General Assembly to vote on them.'

The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations concluded the discussion by explaining that 'although the missions are not equipped to combat global warming, the resulting scarcity of resources is having a major impact on conflicts, and we must take this into account.'

DEBATE

## AFRICAN RESISTANCE

29 September 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Nacre Room



Drissa Traoré, Niagalé Bagayoko, Sonia Le Gourrielec, Didier Awadi and Newton Ahmed Barry

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### Fight against imperialism and dictatorships

While coups d'état have multiplied in Africa - Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Gabon - in the last two years, the continent is experiencing a new wave of popular protests, announced Sonia Le Gourrielec. But 'how and against whom is this resistance being organised today?'

Senegalese musician and activist, Didier Awadi, pointed out that all forms of resistance are different, whether cultural, political or armed. Having long fought for political pluralism in his country, the rapper explained that today we must fight against all the models being imposed, against imperialism, against populism and for Africa.

To understand the political unrest in Africa, Newton Ahmed Barry said we must look at

the profile and rhetoric of the insurgents and their partners. In Burkina Faso, three insurrections have marked the country over the past 25 years: the first in 1998, following the assassination of journalist Norbert Zongo, was linked to attacks on press freedom; the second in 2011-2014 was motivated by the need for democratic accountability; the third in 2022 was an insurrection of despair in the face of the onset of terrorism in the country.

### All these military coups are the consequences of institutional coups

Didier Awadi