Remarks by High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
Izumi Nakamitsu on behalf of the Secretary-General

DDR High-level Roundtable: Tenth anniversary of the Integrated DDR Standards and the experience of Côte d’Ivoire

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Côte d’Ivoire and the Department for Peacekeeping Operations, especially the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, for organizing this event.

Over the past three decades, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) has become an integral part of peace operations across the globe. DDR has played a key role in violence prevention, stabilization and support to political processes. We have seen the examples of how DDR contributed to sustaining peace in many places such as Central America, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia and – of course – Côte d’Ivoire.

DDR is not a stand-alone process. To be successful it must be fitted into the overall policy and political framework for resolving the conflict. To be sustainable, it must take into account concurrent security and stabilization operations including security sector reforms as well as long-term and multidimensional reintegration of former combatants. As it is the case in Cote d’Ivoire and other peace operations settings, United Nations Country Team and donors have a major role to play in ensuring a smooth transition from peacekeeping to sustaining peace, and return to a development path.

Discussions today will illustrate that the nature of DDR operations and peacekeeping more broadly has evolved over the past decades. The heightened political and security challenges in recent times have made peacekeeping, and DDR, more challenging. These include contexts in which there is no peace agreement or inclusive political process, a rising number of armed groups with regional agendas and links to transnational criminal networks as well as a large number of illicit arms within communities exacerbating the threat of violent extremism. We have also witnessed a considerable number of DDR actors from civil society to regional and international organizations –whereby improving coordination has become crucial to the success of these programmes.

My first point therefore relates to the evolutions and innovations of UN DDR approaches, given the changes in the political and security challenges within which these Programmes are undertaken. Community Violence Reduction (CVR), including community
security measures, are examples that can complement classic DDR programmes to create the space for stability, recovery and sustainable peace. In many of today’s peacekeeping environments, conflict is often ongoing rendering this classic DDR disarmament approach more challenging or altogether impossible in certain settings. The ultimate goal of DDR is to help end the conflict by establishing an environment conducive to durable peace and sustainable development. The easy availability and illicit flow of weapons, especially in fragile conflict and post-conflict societies seriously complicates the attainment of this goal. Consequently, the traditional DDR disarmament operations need to be complemented by small arms and light weapons (SALW) control programmes at the community level. They take into consideration principles of weapons and ammunition management and more comprehensive arms control measures as part of CVR approaches and community disarmament programmes which aim at encouraging communities to give up their weapons in exchange for development support.

Experiences show that DDR is also a flexible and dynamic tool: DDR programmes over the past three decades have traditionally understood the first ‘D’ as the act of collecting weapons from ex-combatants and those associated with armed groups. But UNOCI’s good practices in Côte d’Ivoire have included training of national security forces in large-scale weapons collection and destruction programmes. This is an important development because as we all know arms are the primary tools for conflict and armed violence. Ensuring that weapons collected within peace operations are destroyed is an important step towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goal Target 16.4 which calls for the reduction of the illicit flows of arms.

This leads me to my second point, which is the critical interdependence between Disarmament and other D (Demobilization) and R (reintegration). In recent peace operations situations without a solid cease-fire or tangible peace agreement, demobilization has been challenged by a lack of confidence among the belligerents. Confidence is key not just to demobilization, but also to disarmament. Challenges to the reintegration of former combatants not only involve the lack of sufficient resources and of the broader economic recovery, but also the determination of who is a former combatant especially in contexts of trans-border belligerence. The issue of financing DDR operations is not new. But in recent years it has become a serious challenge at a time of dwindling donor resources, especially for the reintegration of ex-combatants. Sustaining peace will not be possible if we are not able to ensure holistic outcomes between D, D and R.
Against these backgrounds, it is essential that the United Nations DDR operations reflect the changing nature of conflict and peacekeeping. The Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR, jointly chaired by the DPKO and UNDP, launched the revision of the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) on their ten year anniversary this year. Standardizing guidance on DDR operations in the 2006 IDDRS was a major step towards improving the “One UN” approach to carrying out its DDR mandate. It is now crucial that we use the revision to take UN DDR to the next level, ensuring the United Nations’ role in DDR operations is consistent, up-to-date and of highest quality.

The first word of the Integrated DDR Standards implies that successful DDR operations require cohesive cooperation amongst UN partners. I am therefore pleased that the Office for Disarmament Affairs also contributes to enhancing the standard through a joint project with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. By highlighting the relationship between traditional “disarmament” operations in DDR and more comprehensive arms control, it also underscores the importance of connecting peacekeeping practice with disarmament policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under the leadership of the new Secretary-General, the UNs is embarking on a review of its peace and security architecture to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. In June 2015 the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) called for a common and realistic understanding of mandates, including required capabilities and standards, as important changes to the design and delivery of better peace operations. In December 2016, the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/71/64 on Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures which emphasizes the importance of including an integrated, comprehensive and effective weapons management strategy in peacekeeping missions that would contribute to a sustainable peacebuilding process. The inclusion of Community Violence Reduction approaches in several peace operation mandates over the past years, including in the DRC, is in line with these recommendations. In a similar vein, the 2017
revision of the Integrated DDR Standard and development of new guidance— including on disarmament and arms control – will help ensure that DDR remains relevant to contemporary and future peace operation contexts. Needless to say, integrated DDR Standards should continue to be the living and dynamic tool it was meant to be.

The past decade of implementing the Integrated DDR Standards has taught us that as complex as DDR appears, it is a tool that can adapt to realities on the ground. By working as One, the UN can deliver effective DDR with the support of and in coordination with the host Government, regional and international organizations, and other stakeholders, including donors. The lessons learned in the case of Cote d’Ivoire are very significant and can contribute to enhancing current and future DDR programmes.

I thank you very much for your attention.