



**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

Intervention of Marc Bouthé, Military Advisor  
to the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN  
at

Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Group of Friends of SSR on  
Strengthening Complementarity and Linkages between Human  
Rights and Security Sector Reform as a Tool for Sustaining Peace

New York, 04/04/2023, 10h00

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Thank you, co-chairs,

And thank you ASG Zouef and ASG Brands Kehris for your briefings today.

Thank you ASG Brands Kehris for referring to the Compliance Framework of the UN, African Union and European Union. I will focus on Belgium's national efforts and share three points.

**1.- First, let me simply state that Belgium undertakes bilateral efforts in SSR.**

We welcome the several peacekeeping initiatives taken in recent years, by our African partners and their regional organizations. It is important to stress this point as it is essential that collaboration on capacity building be driven by and for Africans. This message on ownership was a key take-away from the debate on the sixteenth of March in the Security Council. At the same time, **it is our duty to support them** in this regard. As a committed partner to Africa's development, Belgium, strives to put its money where its mouth is.

Belgium supports trainings to the security forces in a number of African countries. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, our collaboration in Kindu with the Congolese Armed Forces – the FARDC - contributes to achieving a lasting peace in the east of the country. These initiatives are carried out in good coordination with the local authorities and at their request.

**2.- Second, Human Rights are fully integrated in this collaboration.** Let me give a few examples.

Every year, a number **of soldiers or gendarmes from partner countries** are invited to participate in a training course "Advisor in the Law of Armed Conflicts" in Belgium. This is not a separate

training for foreign recruits. The soldiers take part in the standard course given to Belgian soldiers.

A part of the six week training that Belgian instructors provide to their Congolese colleagues of the **31<sup>st</sup> Rapid Reaction Brigade in Kindu**, is devoted to courses on the law of armed conflict or international humanitarian law (IHL), and on International Human Rights Law (IHRL). The Human Rights training is based on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. At the end of the training, **non-commissioned officers and enlisted soldiers qualified as instructors in the law of armed conflict.**

**3.-** The participants also discuss **why is it important to integrate international humanitarian law in the training and in their work.** And **this is my third point, co-chairs.**

The **March briefing in the Security Council** emphasized that respect for human rights, international humanitarian law, and the rule of law help ensure that the population maintains trust in their state institutions. The **latest - 2022 - SG report** on SSR stated that demonstrable human rights compliance is a key indicator of the professionalism of security forces and the exercise of responsible command. These key principles align with the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

Human Rights compliance is of course an international obligation. However, other **rationales are also emphasized during our training initiatives n Kindu.** I am honoured to be able to share them today as food for thought :

- If civilians have confidence in the armed forces, know that they are protected and well treated, they will be less inclined to join armed groups and more inclined to share information with the armed forces.
- Detainees captured by the enemy are more likely to receive humane treatment if the enemy knows that good treatment is reciprocated. This might also incite the enemy to surrender if he knows that he will be treated humanely.
- Human rights and international humanitarian law compliance help to gain and maintain international support.

- As representatives of the State, the security forces must be irreproachable in order to convey a good image of the country to the population and on the international scene.
- Violations are prosecutable.
- these principles are building blocks of the a return to an active peace.

Once again, co-chairs and ASG, we look forward to hearing more experiences, and sharing lessons learned.

Thank you.