DRAFT REPORT

POLICY BRIEF 2019:1

Action for Peacekeeping: Strengthening the Effectiveness of Future Peace Operations

Challenges Annual Forum 2018

Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

The Challenges Annual Forum 2018 was hosted 27 to 29 November in Stockholm by the Swedish Armed Forces and the Folke Bernadotte Academy. More than 140 participants from 30 countries, the United Nations, academia and think-tanks took part in the dialogue over two days. The theme for the annual forum was *Action for Peacekeeping: Strengthening the Effectiveness of Future Peace Operations.* Drawing on a series of background papers, presentations from senior UN officials, government ministers and researchers, and working group discussions, the Forum provided a platform to examine the reforms and collective action required to implement the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative and strengthen the effectiveness of UN peace operations.

The Forum provided a timely opportunity to consider the challenges facing UN peace operations and how the international community may be best placed to address them. Multilateralism is under siege. Superpower rivalries, impunity for human rights abuses and a lack of regard for global cooperation continue to challenge efforts at multilateral cooperation. In the words of one speaker, the UN is a twentieth century institution facing twenty-first century challenges. These developments continue to have an impact on UN peace operations. The last few years have shown that there is not enough willingness to commit the funding and resources required to implement some of the complex peace operations being authorised by the Security Council. Peace operations need to focus on what they are good at and where they have a comparative advantage over other types of missions and operational deployments. Participants at the Forum were in agreement that the A4P initiative offers an opportunity to close the gap between rhetoric and reality when it comes to strengthening peace operations.

Background details

The Challenges Annual Forum 2018 was hosted 27 to 29 November in Stockholm by the Swedish Armed Forces and the Folke Bernadotte Academy. More than 140 participants from over 30 countries, the United Nations, academia and think-tanks took part in the dialogue over two days. The theme for the annual forum was Action for Peacekeeping: Strengthening the Effectiveness of Future Peace Operations.

Attribution

This conference summary has been drafted by Lisa Sharland, Head of International Program, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and Advisor to the Challenges Forum International Secretariat (CFIS), on behalf of the partners and Forum participants. It does not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Forum, nor those of the author.

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FBA

SWEDISH ARMED FORCES

INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR THE CHALLENGES OF PEACE OPERATIONS

This Forum set out to address several objectives in support of strengthening peace operations. First, to provide a platform to discuss how the A4P agenda and broader reforms affecting peace operations would impact the conduct, planning and evaluation of both current and future peace operations. Second, to support and mobilise the peace operations community around strengthening the A4P agenda. And finally, to provide thinking and recommendations for operationalising the A4P commitments that have been agreed upon in the Declaration of Shared Commitments. It explored each of the issues through a serious of cumulative dialogues focused on four topics, drawing on the themes of discussion that informed the agreement on the A4P Declaration: peacebuilding, mandates and strategic performance, partnerships and protection, and people.

This report captures the diverse experiences of a range of individuals serving in peace operations and engaged in the reform of peace operations as part of the Challenges Partnership, and offers a series of recommendations to inform the implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping initiatives. It examines two key questions guiding the two-day Forum: "what" needs to be done and "how" to implement A4P at the policy and strategic levels.

Recommendations

The recommendations offered below are grouped according to eight 'Areas of Action' identified by the Secretariat to take forward A4P. In some instances, these recommendations may mirror existing requests or some reform processes already underway within the Secretariat and in the field, but they are included since they were raised during discussions as an important part of efforts to strengthen UN peace operations.

Key stakeholders that may be able to action each recommendation have been identified, including Member States (which can express support in the UN's General Assembly bodies such as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and Fifth Committee, or implement domestically), Security Council (through mandates), Secretariat (through the development of guidance and lessons learned), Field Missions (through leadership and implementation in the field) and think tanks and researchers (through further analysis).

These recommendations represents the rapporteur's interpretations of the discussions and do not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Forum. They are not exhaustive of all the ideas emerging from the Forum, but rather, attempt to capture timely, innovative and actionable items for consideration by stakeholders and partners in 2019, including the forthcoming substantive session of the C-34 and Defence Ministerial Conference in March 2019.

Areas of Commitment	No	Recommendation (the 'what')	Stakeholder Action (the 'how')	A4P Para	Context (see report)
Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	**1**	Support the use of peacekeeping assessed funds to enable more programmatic activities in peace operations	Member States | Secretariat	5	Plenary 'Greater support for political solutions' Strand 1 'Peacebuilding and engaging the host government'
	2	Undertake an assessment of missions that have recently transitioned and exited to inform efforts by peace operations to sustain peace, with a focus on how they have addressed root and intermediate causes of peace and conflict	Secretariat | Think tanks/researchers	17	Strand 1 'Peacebuilding and engaging the host government'
	3	Undertake a media sector analysis in the field to inform the development of strategic communications in mission	Secretariat | Field Missions	10	Strand 1 'Creating conditions using strategic communications'
Women, Peace and Security	**4**	Ensure that mission personnel including leadership are accountable for including gender disaggregated data and integrating gender perspectives to inform peace and conflict analysis, planning processes, and reporting on peace operations	Member State | Secretariat | Field MissionsMissions	8	Plenary 'Women, peace and security'
	5	Undertake comprehensive analysis on uniformed women's participation at different stages of peace operations to gain further information on the barriers to their participation and identify mechanisms to encourage T/PCCs to increase women deploying to the field, including various incentives	Member States | Think tanks/researchers,	8	Plenary 'Women, peace and security Strand 2 'Assessing strategic performance'
	6	Support the ongoing inclusion of gender adviser posts within missions and at an appropriate level of seniority throughout mandating and budgetary processes, with mission leadership held accountable for their effective utilisation of these posts in the field	Member States | Security Council |Field Missions	8	Plenary 'Women, peace and security'
Politics	**7**	Assess the type of information and analysis needed from the ground to inform the work of pen-holders and Council members when mandating missions	Think tank/ researchers	6	Plenary 'Setting realistic expectation for UN peacekeeping'
	8	As part of mandate development, the Security Council should engage more substantively with entities such as the Peacebuilding Commission, regional stakeholders and/or 'Groups of Friends', and consider revised working methods or processes to draft more focused mandates	Security Council	5	Plenary 'Greater support for political solutions' Strand 2 'Mission planning and mandate development'

Areas of Commitment	No	Recommendation (the 'what')	Stakeholder Action (the 'how')	A4P Para	Context (see report)
	9	Mission leadership should oversee the development of a mission-wide communications strategy that identifies, among other things, key actors and audiences, and this should be an indicator in senior mission leadership compacts	Secretariat | Field missions	10	Strand 1 'Creating conditions using strategic communications'
	10	Analysis should be focused on 'Peace and Conflict Analysis' as part of planning or mandate development, and include a focus on the drivers of peace as well as conflict, in order to provide actionable recommendations to inform the political strategy of the mission and its contribution to peace and security	Secretariat | Field Missions | Think tanks/researchers	6	Strand 2 'Analysis of the drivers of peace and conflict'
Performance and Accountability	**11**	Examine options to strengthen some of the functions in the Office for Strategic Peacekeeping Partnerships, including through more political and financial support	Member States | Secretariat	13	Strand 4 'Strengthening military advice, oversight and security'
	12	Ensure that vacancy announcements for leadership posts are clear on the required qualities and transparent	Secretariat	13	Strand 4 'Training, performance and leadership'
Protection	**13**	Apply an atrocity prevention lens as part of a peace and conflict analysis to assess the risks to civilians	Secretariat | Field missions	10	Strand 3 'Strengthening protection of civilians'
	14	Increase understanding of the application of International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law among UN military leadership and missions through pre-deployment and in-mission training (including crisis management exercises), with a focus on increasing understanding of the interrelationship between legal considerations, tactical behaviour and political consequences for field missions and T/PCCs	Secretariat | Field Missions	10	Strand 3 'International humanitarian law and human rights'
Partnerships	**15**	Undertake a comprehensive analysis mapping the relative comparative advantages of UN peace operations, and regionally-led peace operations and enforcement missions, in order to clarify mandate strengthens and strategic political objectives	Secretariat | Think tanks/Researchers	18	Strand 3 'International humanitarian law and human rights'

Areas of Commitment	No	Recommendation (the 'what')	Stakeholder Action (the 'how')	A4P Para	Context (see report)
	16	Designate functions and/or focal points within the UN, African Union and European Union (as well as other regional and sub-regional organisations) to serve as a partnerships coordinators	Secretariat | Field Missions	18	Strand 3 'Partnerships'
	17	Provide further support through deployment of experts and funding to ensure missions are complying with the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) when cooperating with national, regional and other parallel or partner forces	Secretariat | Field Missions | Member States	22	Strand 3 'International humanitarian law and human rights' and 'Partnerships'
Safety and Security	**18**	Develop a database of different complex and challenging scenarios that peacekeepers have been confronted with in the field for use in training exercises	Secretariat	14	Strand 4 'Training, performance and leadership'
	19	Utilise the U7 training branch more effectively to conduct in-mission training for military components	Field Missions	14	Strand 4 'Training, performance and leadership
	20	Clearly communicate information on the priority of different training gaps and needs so that Member States can concentrate their support	Secretariat | Field Missions | Member States	14	Strand 4 'Training, performance and leadership
	21	Identify and share examples and case studies of instances where peacekeepers have performed exceptionally in the field, for use as part of training exercises	Secretariat	13	Strand 4 'Training, performance and leadership'
	22	Develop policies and identify programs to support post deployment care for serving peacekeepers	Secretariat | Member States	12	Strand 4 'Strengthening military advice, oversight and security'
Conduct	**23**	Ensure rigorous application of the UN Human Rights Screening Policy in order to ensure Member States do not deploy known offenders	Secretariat | Member States	21	Strand 3 'International humanitarian law and human rights'
	24	Ensure that the needs of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel are more effectively prioritised, including through efforts to identify mechanisms to increase accountability and establishing mechanisms for more transparent reporting and engagement with civil society	Secretariat | Member States	21	Strand 4 'Addressing sexual exploitation and abuse'

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Introduction

The Challenges Annual Forum 2018 was hosted from 27 to 29 November in Stockholm by the Swedish Armed Forces and the Folke Bernadotte Academy. More than 140 participants from 30 countries, the United Nations, academia and think-tanks took part in the dialogue over two days. The theme for the annual forum was *Action for Peacekeeping: Strengthening the Effectiveness of Future Peace Operations*. Drawing on a series of background papers, presentations from senior UN officials, government ministers and researchers, and working group discussions, the Forum provided a platform to examine the reforms and collective action required to implement the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative and strengthen the effectiveness of UN peace operations.

"There is broad agreement that the A4P initiative is an effort to build political support for peacekeeping, rather than outline any substantive new reforms."

Peace operations continue to face an array of challenges. Peacekeepers continue to deploy to missions operating in complex and challenging environments, where military, police and civilian personnel struggle to implement mandates to protect civilians and face evolving threats to their own security. Mission mandates provided by the Security Council often lack focus and clarity, weighed down by too many tasks. And these challenges are often compounded as peace operations are deployed in the absence of a political solution, rather than in support of one. In an effort to address some of these challenges, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, launched the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative during a Security Council debate on peacekeeping on 28 March 2018.

The A4P initiative is focused on developing collective engagement and political commitment towards UN peacekeeping. Throughout 2018 Member States were engaged with the Secretariat in developing a mutually agreed set of principles and commitments to ensure that UN peacekeeping operations are fit for purpose. This included a series of thematic consultations held in New York in June and July among Member States and regional organizations on the broad thematic areas of peacebuilding, performance, people, partnerships and politics (which formed the basis for cumulative dialogue strand discussions during the annual forum). Those consultations informed the development of a *Declaration of Shared Commitments for Action on UN Peacekeeping Operations*, which provides a roadmap for strengthening peacekeeping going forward.

There is broad agreement that the A4P initiative is an effort to build political support for peacekeeping, rather than outline any substantive new reforms. Many of the commitments included in the declaration have already been agreed upon by Member States in the General Assembly or Security Council, and the Secretariat, in the past, yet for various reasons the proposed reforms may not have progressed. As of November 2018, more than 151 member states and regional organizations had endorsed the declaration, providing a wide-base of political support for the initiative. If

the A4P agenda is to be successful in strengthening peacekeeping, then it will require the support of Member States, the Secretariat and other stakeholders in efforts to champion, progress and implement the reforms, including through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. The Forum therefore provided an important platform to discuss what needs to be done to implement those shared commitments moving forward.

This Forum set out to address several objectives in support of strengthening peace operations. First, to provide a platform to discuss how the A4P agenda, and more broadly the ongoing UN peace and security architecture reforms and Secretariat-led reform initiatives would impact the conduct, planning and evaluation of both current and future peace operations. Second, to support and mobilise the peace operations community around strengthening the A4P agenda by providing key findings or recommendations that may be considered by various consultative, legislative and executive bodies within the UN, including (but not limited to) the General Assembly, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), the Fifth Committee and the Security Council. And finally, to provide thinking and recommendations for operationalising the A4P commitments that have been agreed upon in the Declaration of Shared Commitments.

This report captures the diverse experiences of a range of individuals serving in peace operations and engaged in the reform of peace operations as part of the Challenges Partnership. It examines two key questions that guided the two-day Forum: "what" needs to be done and "how" to implement A4P at the policy and strategic levels. It does this in two parts. The first part (Chapter 1) analyses the findings and key recommendations emerging during the plenary, which included keynote presentations and panel discussions from senior UN officials, government ministers, practitioners and researchers. The second part examines the findings from the four cumulative 'dialogue strands' that were convened in parallel throughout the Forum on the topics of Peacebuilding (Chapter 2), Mandates and Strategic Performance (Chapter 3), Protection and Partnerships (Chapter 4), and People (Chapter 5). The key recommendations are summarised in detail at the beginning of the report, in the Executive Summary. The table of recommendations is not exhaustive of all the ideas emerging from the Forum, but rather, attempts to capture timely, innovative and actionable items for consideration by stakeholders and partners in 2019, including the forthcoming substantive session of the C-34 and Defence Ministerial Conference in March 2019.

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Plenary: Action for Peacekeeeping – Turning Commitments into Action

The A4P initiative starts with a commitment to advance political solutions to conflict and enhance the political impact of peacekeeping. It is not

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isolated from wider reform efforts to strengthen multilateralism and conflict resolution. Yet some of the challenges currently undermining UN peace operation are a reflection of broader international trends. In the words of one speaker, multilateralism is in crisis. There is continued and sustained impunity by individuals, groups and some Member States against the international rules-based order, as demonstrated by conflicts and the targeting of civilians in places such as Syria, Yemen, the Ukraine and Myanmar. There are more proxy wars than at any other time in history. There has been resurgence in superpower rivalry in recent years, impeding the ability of the Security Council to reach agreement or even discuss emerging crises in some cases. Participants agreed on the need for more cooperation and coordination to address these problems. In the words of one speaker, the UN is a twentieth century institution facing twenty-first century challenges. It is time to reassert the UN's usefulness.

Peacekeeping has been a flagship undertaking for the United Nations over the last 70 years and remains one of the most visible contributions to multilateralism. Yet it's also one of the UN's most risky endeavours. Expectations among the international community and those on the ground that rely on the protection of UN peacekeepers are often exceedingly high. People expect UN peacekeeping to deliver, yet its very nature as a multilateral endeavour means it is beset by a range of challenges that require political support from Member States to address them.

There have been several reform efforts to strengthen UN peace operations in recent years. The most significant among these has been the review of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), which released its report in June 2015. But like most reform initiatives, the take-up of recommendations has been slow, challenged by the views of different constituencies, structural impediments and perhaps most importantly, political will. The A4P agenda attempts to address some of that by focusing on generating political support for reform initiatives already taking place in peace operations. In the words of one speaker, it is a somewhat highly unusual process, in that there is a general feeling of co-ownership between Member States and the Secretariat. The A4P Declaration should already influence everything the Secretariat does, yet new commitments and resources are needed to take it forward. Importantly, as noted several times throughout the Forum, it's about implementation. Partners of the Challenges community can perform a particularly important role in this regard, to ensure that Member States—including Security Council members—are held to account.

The A4P initiative has focused on three lines of effort since its inception: ensuring realistic expectations for peacekeeping; making peacekeeping missions safer and stronger; and mobilizing 'greater support for political

solutions and for well-structured, well-equipped and well-trained forces'.[1] This section examines the key findings that arose during the Forum discussions drawing broadly on those three lines of effort, along with some analysis of the discussions related to women, peace and security, which were frequently raised by speakers throughout the plenary discussions.

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Setting realistic expectations for UN peacekeeping

There is often a contradiction between the ambition of mandates and the resources provided to implement them. Security Council mandates are supposed to manage expectations and the overall strategic direction of UN peace operations. However, participants noted that most of the work undertaken by Council members and pen-holders occurs behind closed doors, with no clarity on what information was being drawn on to inform the decision-making processes of the Council, nor what information was needed from the ground to better inform pen-holders tasked with drafting mandates. There was general agreement that the Council needed to get better at mandating missions. Several speakers cautioned against processes that simply 'cut-and-paste' mandates for operations. Now that there were regular strategic reviews of missions taking place, it was imperative that the Council acted appropriately on that information and adjusted mission mandates accordingly. Importantly, many argued that the role of the Security Council extended beyond simply mandating peace operations, to engage more substantively in efforts to resolve conflicts and seek political solutions.

It is also essential that the UN carefully manage its relationship with the host nation, ensuring that expectations about what the mission can be expected to achieve are realistic. Host countries have at times obstructed the implementation of peace operation mandates, with consent sometimes being conditional from the outset or waning throughout the lifecycle of some multidimensional missions. Host governments often have their own agendas and in some cases, may manipulate the presence of the mission for their own political purposes (e.g. by limiting the movement of peacekeepers). It is imperative that these risk factors are considered and carefully managed, particularly by the Security Council and mission leadership team.

Participants acknowledged that peace operations continue to operate in environments that threaten the security of peacekeeping personnel and the civilian population, but also limit the ability of the peace operation to implement and deliver on its mandate. Take the example of the UN Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). MINUSMA is operating alongside a range of parallel forces including

1 Remarks by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at Security Council High-Level Debate on Collective Action to Improve UN Peacekeeping Operations, 28 March 2018.

the French Operation Barkhane and the G5 Joint Sahel Force, both of which are conducting counter-terrorism operations in close proximity to the UN mission. Peacekeepers are being targeted by armed groups, suicide bombers, artillery, and improvised explosive devices. Due to this ongoing threat, the mission is devoting significant time and energy to force protection measures, rather than other aspects of the mission mandate. There is consequently a high transactional cost in delivering on mandate tasks in the current operational environment. These considerations need to be taken on board when developing mission mandates, to ensure they are realistic and commensurate with the ground realities and resources provided.

If UN peace operations are to succeed in meeting the expectations of those that deploy them and the civilians they are mandated to protect, then we need to enhance trust between stakeholders engaged in peace operations. Security Council resolutions need to be considered as a social contract between the host nation, Security Council and troop and police contributing countries (T/PCCs). The Security Council and T/PCCs need to enhance their cooperation so that concerns about performance and operations can be addressed. This is essential to building better trust and ongoing efforts to support wider peace operations reform.

Nevertheless, several speakers cautioned that at this particular point in history, the international community cannot be as ambitious as it has been over the last two decades when it comes to UN peace operations. The last few years have shown that there is not enough willingness to commit the funding and resources required to implement some of the complex peace operations being authorised by the Council. A4P affords Member States and the Secretariat an opportunity to close the gap between ambitious mandates and their successful implementation on the ground.

Making peacekeeping missions stronger and safer

Between 2013 and 2017, more peacekeepers were killed in acts of violence than during any other five year period in the UN's 70 year history. That was a key finding that emerged from the Improving the Security of UN Peacekeepers report (also known as the 'Cruz Report') in December 2017. According to one speaker, the ultimate focus of the Cruz Report was on the performance of peacekeepers –particularly the military component. Efforts have been underway to take forward the findings of the Cruz Report throughout 2018, with the development of an Action Plan that is being implemented at Headquarters and in the field for the five prioritised missions in Darfur (UNAMID), South Sudan (UNMISS), Mali (MINUSMA), Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

Drawing on the recommendations emerging from the Cruz report, several speakers noted the importance of mindsets when it comes to the

implementation of the mandate. For peacekeepers, particularly troops, it's about being self-confident, for example, undertaking dismounted patrols where there is a security risk in order to connect with people. This is critical if missions are to effectively protect the civilian population. Such actions may also contribute to force protection by providing early warning of potential threats to personnel as well.

Yet in order for mindsets to change, in the words of one speaker, we also need to take the effectiveness of the military component seriously. The international community is willing to accept things in UN contexts that would not be accepted elsewhere, particularly when it comes to preparedness and performance. Caveats and constraints placed on uniformed personnel by their national government can also interfere with the effectiveness of military component. Any constraints or caveats need to be disclosed and agreed upon before a contingent deploys to a mission. Similar investments are required in the policing components, which have a political role in building capacity and on operations. Frank conversations need to be taking place between the Secretariat and Member States before, during and after operations, in order to address potential shortfalls and setbacks in missions.

In order for missions to be effective, they also need good leadership and staff. Identifying good leaders is critical when establishing peace operations. But training is also important to support and develop skills and knowledge. There was broad agreement that training for leaders and personnel across the mission was essential, yet that not enough was being done to address these gaps. Participants agreed that there needed to be greater emphasis on the importance and value of training, particularly for leadership in the mission, and that training also needed to be conducted on a regular basis in the mission. Unfortunately training programs cannot be supported by assessed funding contributions, limiting the resources available to devote training activities. In the words of one presenter, it presents a bit of a contradiction given how central training is to peacekeeping.

In an effort to ensure peace operations are safer for personnel and stronger in their ability to deliver on mandates, there can be no ambiguity when it comes to protection civilians and preparing for potential threats again missions. There needs to be a clear understanding of the protection of civilians policy among mission personnel, including those staff that might be faced with making decisions during a crisis outside of the mission headquarters or country capital. Strategic communications also has an important function in this regard, in terms of sharing information about mission activities and objectives, and managing perceptions towards the mission. Missions also need to improve their capacities when it comes to situational awareness and information sharing, which support early warning systems that enable missions to better protect civilians, and themselves. Ultimately, peace operations also need to plan to ensure they are adapting to potential new threats, for example, home-made drones that may be armed.

Greater support for political solutions

Efforts to find political solutions that will resolve conflict have no easy, predefined path. Each situation and scenario is different, with some conflicts taking decades, if not longer to resolve. Yet peace operations do not have the luxury of continuing for ever. In many cases, particularly multidimensional missions, the military component is expected to create a space for the politics to work and ensure the civilian population is protected. The size of that space will vary, but generally the time available for political dialogue and engagement is limited. So every party will be pushed to seize opportunities, although in the case of UN peace operations, such momentum will often stall in the absence of the engagement or support of outside parties to the conflict.

Primacy of politics is important, but some speakers noted that the Security Council is not always the place for sensitive political negotiations to take place. For example, as was the case with the UN political mission in Colombia, the political process took place in Havana, not in the Security Council. Peace operations do not necessarily gain legitimacy in the eyes of all the parties from the Security Council. It's easy to suggest that the Permanent Five (P5) members of the Security Council are important, but often what's more important is what initiatives emerge from the countries that are located in the region or that have influence where peace agreements are being signed. Neighbouring countries have a particularly important role in seeking political solutions. We have witnessed that with the regional pressure that has been brought to bear in contexts such as South Sudan more recently as well. Partnerships between regional and sub-regional organisations are also critical in efforts to not only find political solutions, but deliver operationally on the ground in support of peace operations through training, triangular partnerships and co-deployments.

Long-term political solutions also require sustained efforts at investing in peace. Agencies, funds and programs need to be brought in at the earliest phases of a mission, even if it is in a consultative capacity, if there is to be any lasting progress in security sector strengthening, rule of law, human rights or sustainable development. Sustaining peace through UN Country Teams is a long-term process. There is also a need for much greater coherence between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission in this regard. Funding for programmatic activities, such as the rule of law and governance projects, also remained an ongoing challenge within peace operations, with limits on how assessed funding could be utilized in the mission. Several participants noted the importance of ensuring that assessed funds can be used for programmatic activities that support the implementation of the mandate. This was viewed as an important step forward in reducing the gap between progressive rhetoric and actual delivery in the field, particularly when it came to efforts to build and sustain peace. Participants also noted that another critical aspect to success was engaging with women and young people as part of efforts to

find political solutions, as any efforts to seek political solutions without the participation of a broad and representative cross-section of the community was more likely to result into a relapse into conflict in the future.

Women, peace and security[2]

Peace operations provide a valuable vehicle to make progress on women, peace and security (WPS), and similarly, peace operations rely on the implementation of WPS to strengthen their operational effectiveness. The Declaration of Shared Commitments commits member states and regional organisations to: ensure 'the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in stages of peace processes'; systematically integrate 'a gender perspective into all stages of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting'; and increase 'the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions'. None of the commitments are new. Yet despite the international support that has been provided for WPS over the last two decades, the agenda continues to face obstacles within peace operations and beyond. The gap between rhetoric and reality continues to scream at us.

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As one speaker noted, there is growing resistance politically towards gender equality in some parts of the globe and that continues to have an impact on the way the UN conducts peace operations. For instance, it may mean that women do not have an opportunity to meaningfully participate in peace processes, either due to technical barriers preventing their participation or through the application of criteria that blatantly exclude women. These oversights are only likely to diminish the durability of political solutions in the longer-term.

There have been concerted efforts in recent years to increase the number of women in UN peace operations, including through the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy. Yet women's participation rates remain low, particularly in the military and police components (which are around 4% and 10% respectively). Those figures will only improve in peace operations with better analysis and reforms to address the barriers to women's participation. Similarly, it's also important to understand why there are more women deployed at some stages of a peace operations (e.g. during drawdown rather than start-up), and whether the design of missions or their mandates has an impact on individual decision-making processes by women (about deploying), or on national decision-making processes to deploy women. Further analysis examining uniformed women's participation throughout the different stages of peace operations could assist in understanding the barriers to their participation and identify mechanisms to encourage T/PCCs to increase women deploying to the field, including various incentives that may be applied. Programs such as

2 See also Lisa Sharland, 'Women, Gender and the A4P Agenda: An Opportunity for Action?', Background Paper (Challenges Forum, November 2018)

the Elsie Initiative provide a valuable opportunity to understand some of the issues preventing more women deploying to peace operations and ensure that efforts to address them support progress in this area. Women's participation is critical, not only from the perspective of gender equality. In the words of one speaker, women increase operational effectiveness because they bring more options to the table.

The A4P initiative also has very clear language when it comes to integrating gender perspectives into the work of UN peace operations across the full mission cycle. But we know a lot more work needs to be done. Gender adviser posts continue to be cut or downgraded as part of budgetary processes within the UN system, as gender advice is assessed by some Member States to be of a lower priority. These posts need to be supported by Member States during negotiations in the Fifth Committee, and utilised effectively by senior mission leadership in the field. Similarly, gender disaggregated data is needed to ensure that gender dimensions are always considered throughout strategic planning processes in conflict contexts, enabling better metrics that can track potential progress in improving the security of women (and men) on the ground. There also needs to be greater accountability for senior mission leadership to implement such measures on the ground.

Strand 1: Peacebuilding

The peacebuilding dialogue strand focused on a range of issues and actions undertaken by peace operations to support peacebuilding efforts and build sustainable peace. This included the coherence over time of international efforts to promote peace, how strategic communications can support overall mandate implementation, and the rule of law as a core instrument for peacebuilding. This section examines three areas of focus during the discussions: building context-specific missions to promote peace; creating conditions using strategic communications; and peacebuilding and engaging the host government.

Building context-specific missions to promote peace

There is a propensity from the earliest phases of discussions about the deployment of a UN peace operation to focus on the type of model it might follow. For example, will it have a heavy footprint modelled on the approach the DRC, or will it be lighter, focused on capacity-building tasks and building rule of law institutions, like the mission in Haiti? These are fair questions, yet we need to be cautious about relying too heavily on the template of past missions to assess the needs and requirements of future peace operations, as they blind the assessment and planning teams to some of the unique ground realities that require more context-specific approaches. In the words of the participants, we need to move beyond a 'one-size fits all' approach and develop better context-specific peace operations.

There has been some progress in efforts to build more context-specific missions in recent years. The political mission established in Colombia emerged out of the unique political requirements of the ceasefire mechanisms and disarmament processes. Part of the challenge in designing context-specific missions occurs not just in the assessment and planning phase, but often during Security Council mandating processes. Security Council members need to be bolder. They need to ensure that their decision making processes are informed by a range of information and that they engage with stakeholders that have an interest in the resolution of the conflict. In the case of multidimensional peace operations, some participants noted that this required more substantive engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission and a range of regional organisations and actors, who often have an understanding of the drivers of peace and conflict, and are better informed regarding some of the long-term challenges to building peace on the ground. Similarly, mechanisms such as 'Groups of Friends' could offer a means to gather broader input from a range of stakeholders into the design of mandates, providing greater political buy-in and support for individual missions.

Mission mandates also need to focus on addressing the root causes of conflict, which may differ from country to country. In some cases, the mission may need to focus on resolving concerns over cattle-raiding, whereas in other contexts the major concerns may be about displacement from the land or the threats posed by transnational armed groups. Some participants suggested that mission leaders and peacekeepers need an awareness of different concepts of justice within communities, including the application of customary law and how this may impact on the implementation of the mission mandate (some participants went so far as to argue that mandates should incorporate aspects of customary law, although there was disagreement on this point).

If peace operations are to be responsive to evolving situations on the ground, particularly when there is a deteriorating in the security situation, then they needed to be well informed. Regular and collective integrated assessments and planning processes from the inception of the mission and throughout its lifecycle are essential if efforts to minimise violence, resolve conflict and sustain peace were to be successful. In this regard, participants agreed that it was important to ensure the meaningful participation of national and regional actors in those processes, along with the United Nations Country Teams to ensure coherence and integration of efforts. It is also critical to align mandating processes better with funding, resources and donor contributions, in order to close the gap between expectations and reality, and ensure such support is both predictable and realistic to take forward the strategic objectives of the mission mandate.

Perhaps most importantly, in building context-specific missions, participants agreed that there was a need for greater engagement with

national actors as part of the drafting of context-specific, relevant mandates. That needs to include broader engagement with women, youth and different representatives across society. This was important in ensuring that national actors had a reason to be invested in sustaining the peace even after United Nations peace operations had ended. The fear was that without this investment in time and engagement, efforts by peace operations would be diminished soon after the mission has transitioned and exited.

Creating conditions using strategic communications

Strategic communications are a vital 'soft power' tool for peace operations. [3]They are a tool for communicating the aims and objectives of peace operations to external stakeholders, bridging the gap between local expectations and the capabilities of UN peace operations. There is often a need for a shared understanding of the mission mandate among stakeholders – and this is where strategic communications can play an important role. Yet this vital and evolving tool for telling the story of UN peace operations, is often overlooked and underutilised by missions, putting them at a disadvantage, particularly where there are instances of significant disinformation or 'fake news' being spread about the mission.

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The importance of strategic communications was recognised by the HIPPO report in 2015, but significant doctrinal and accountability gaps still exist in missions when it comes to implementing strategic communications. Furthermore, even in missions where there is some form of media monitoring mechanisms in place, it's often not led by the need for data-driven analysis to enable the mission to respond effectively and adjust their approach. Mr. Birnback's paper provided several areas for thought during the discussions, including the need for an international communications-focused change management process to be undertaken in the field and at UN headquarters to enable a shift in mindsets in peace operations when it comes to the importance of strategic communications. Similarly, Mr. Birnback laid out six practical steps to improve strategic communications through the six 'Ms' namely to mainstream strategic communications considerations; modernise capabilities; merge capacities in areas where there is existing duplication; manage roles and responsibilities; measure the impact of strategic communications (through a data-driven, monitoring approach); and strengthen messaging through leadership and across the organisation.

Many participants agreed on the importance of managing local expectations through improved strategic communication. Messaging should be targeted towards specific groups to proactively communicate and to mitigate misinformation. There were differing views on the extent and importance of two-way communication that included all key stakeholders (regional, sub-

3 See also Nick Birnback, 'Under the Blue Flag: Leadership and Strategic Communications in UN Peace Operations', Background Paper (Challenges Annual Forum, November 2018)

regional, national, and civil society actors). Some concerns were expressed about the potential risks of setting up a system to communicate with local stakeholders that failed to take into account some actors (thereby making them feel delegitimised). It was noted that two-way communication that considered public perceptions that informed mission approaches could provide a valuable tool of influence and outreach for the mission, while also supporting efforts to implement key aspects of the mandate (e.g. protection of civilians) and strengthen the security of personnel.

Strategic communications is essential to longer-term efforts to sustain peace. These efforts can be supported by a thorough understanding of the media landscape where a peace operation is deployed. Drawing on that information, participants recommended that peace operations conduct a media sector analysis to find out where local communities were getting their information from in order to have a better understanding of their audience (including youth). UN peace operations have a comparative advantage over other organisations due to their unique international legitimacy (although that is increasingly challenged at times). That affords peace operations a potential platform in countering misinformation. Similarly, mission leadership and personnel would benefit from communications training to enable them to leverage strategic communications as part of their toolbox in the field and to ensure they are well placed to engage with local communities regarding their mission mandate. Missions should also be able to reach back to access expertise on strategic communications for assistance if they are struggling. Ultimately, participants were of the view that mission leadership should develop (and be held accountable to deliver) a comprehensive strategic communications framework that guides the work of the mission around media relations, crisis communications, digital media platforms, traditional media, outreach and international communications. [4]

Peacebuilding and engaging the host government

It is critical that peace operations focus on the primacy of political solutions. Peace operations are not a tool of conflict management but a tool of conflict resolution and should focus on the goal of sustaining peace. Building the capacity of rule of law and governance institutions is an essential part of that work. Without these investments, efforts to find political solutions and establish sustainable peace won't last long after a peace operation has transitioned and exited the country.

The Peacebuilding Commission has the potential to provide an important advisory capacity to the Security Council, particularly during mandate renewals and transitions, yet it is often overlooked. The merger of the Peacebuilding Support Office into the new Department for Political

4 See also Nick Birnback, 'Under the Blue Flag: Leadership and Strategic Communications in UN Peace Operations', Background Paper (Challenges Annual Forum, November 2018).

and Peacebuilding Affairs may afford a greater opportunity for a more comprehensive approach on these issues within the Secretariat, but that also needs to extend to the work undertaken by Member States and the Security Council. Peace operations are tasked with a range of critical peacebuilding tasks, including reforming the security sector, disarming combatants and reintegrating them, and at times, support community policing efforts. All these initiatives need to be undertaken in an inclusive manner that provides access and removes obstacles to the meaningful inclusion of women, youth, and vulnerable groups. The Peacebuilding Fund has an important role in providing predictable and sustained funding and resources in transition contexts, yet it requires additional support from member states.

Efforts to undertake capacity-building activities often require peacekeepers to be leaders and mentors for their national counterparts. These skills need to be developed in peacekeepers. For example, police may be effective at undertaking community policing tasks, but may not be equipped with the ability to transfer those skills or that knowledge to other individuals. These skills need to be fostered, as it is particularly important that the mission foster the capacities of local staff to start undertaking some of these roles. It is also particularly important that women are seen to be visible in these capacities, as they can often serve as vital role models, encouraging other women to engage and participate in national institutions.

Throughout this dialogue strand, discussions kept coming back to the concept of national ownership and its importance. The feasibility of national ownership was contested. Participants disagreed over whether the establishment of national ownership was something that could be realistically achieved by peace operations. National ownership may include the host government, yet the host government may very well be a perpetrator of conflict. There was also disagreement over to what extent other key stakeholders such as civil society actors could feel involved in national ownership. Instead of the concept of national ownership, participants suggested that peace operations should instead focus on prioritising engagement with a range of national actors (including government, opposition groups and civil society). National actors should be given the space to identify and drive peacebuilding priorities to ensure that the mission does not become a substitute to national efforts; hence ensuring sustainable peace.

Despite differing views on the concept of national ownership, participants agreed that there was still a need for peace operations to effectively engage with the host government. This would be more challenging in contexts where the host government was obstructing the mission, potentially limiting the type of engagement. Yet as an actor in the political process, host governments couldn't be overlooked. There were differing views on how the United Nations should consider the relationship between sovereignty on the one hand, and upholding human rights and the rule of law. Some

participants felt that peace operations had a role engaging in discussions about the development of host countries' legislation, while others disagreed, arguing that this might be too invasive, intensely political, and a huge challenge. While sovereignty was important, peace operations had to realise that sometimes claims to sovereignty were used by host countries as a way to block efforts to address the root causes of conflict, or worse still, commit human rights abuses. Peace operations often had to navigate the tricky path of maintaining host nation consent for a mission, while also telling truth to power.

Finally, efforts to support peacebuilding need to be much better coordinated in the long-term. There are important lessons that can be learned from the recent transitions and exits that have taken place in Liberia (UNMIL) and Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI), as well as the forthcoming drawdown in Haiti. These were all multidimensional missions that had complex mandates and a significant opportunity to develop the capacity of each respective country's rule of law and governance institutions. Further assessment of missions that have recently transitioned should be undertaken to inform efforts by peace operations to sustain peace, with a focus on how they have addressed root and intermediate causes of peace and conflict (these may complement work underway to examine lessons learned from UNMIL and UNOCI within the Secretariat).

Strand 2: Mandate and Strategic Performance

The mandate and strategic performance dialogue examined the primacy of politics and political solutions, along with mechanisms for an agreed political strategy for peace. Discussions focused on how understanding the drivers of peace and conflict can enhance the political strategy of an operation, how this understanding can be transformed into achievable mandates for a peace operation, and how an integrated performance policy framework can help measure strategic results and improve strategic (i.e. Security Council) and operational (i.e. field) mission management and mandate implementation. This section looks at the analysis of the drivers of peace and conflict; mission planning and mandate development processes; and assessing strategic performance.

Analysis of the drivers of peace and conflict

With the focus on 'sustaining peace', much more attention is focused these days not only on the drivers of conflict, but also the drivers of peace, that is, what makes societies peaceful. This was one of the outcomes that emerged from the adoption of the 'Sustaining Peace' resolutions, which was also echoed by the findings of the UN/World Bank study on *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Importantly, looking at the drivers of peace can provide a much better focus on what makes a society resilient and better able to withstand shocks and avoid a relapse into

"...looking at the drivers of peace can provide a much better focus on what makes a society resilient and better able to withstand shocks and avoid a relapse into conflict..."

conflict, something which peace operations have to manage in their areas of deployment.

This session included discussion about the importance of peace and conflict analysis as a tool to identify and better understand the drivers of peace and conflict. If undertaken thoroughly, the information from such an analysis can provide vital information on how to plan a mission and utilise its (limited) resources most effectively to reach peace on the ground. Part of this process requires mapping the different actors involved in the conflict, including their power structures, access to resources and influence over security. Rather than focusing on the more traditional drivers of conflict, that analysis should also seek to identify positive influences and how they might be connected with efforts to resolve the conflict. Such information could better inform mission leadership and the Security Council regarding the areas to focus-on in terms of capacity-building and partnerships. Nevertheless, this also means that the peace and conflict analysis must go beyond being an academic exercise, and present actionable recommendations on how the peace operations can help address both drivers of peace and conflict - the essence of a political strategy.

While there is a lot of analysis taking place in the UN, particularly in the context of peace operations, participants acknowledged that a lot of that information is not being applied or implemented on the ground in peace operations. This is often due to a range of factors – stove-piping of different functions, a lack of time, limited information sharing or simply personality differences. Undertaking a peace and conflict analysis could also be sensitive, particularly if there are assessments of different political leaders as part of the process. Although the UN relied on its staff to conduct a lot of its own analyses, participants agreed that it was also important that the UN drew on the contributions of outside stakeholders, who may have wider expertise and networks to draw on, as well as being in a position to be far more frank in their provision of advice (more so than the UN is able to do).

Given the transnational nature of most conflicts, the analysis would also have to encompass a regional and international focus, to map key stakeholders with influence on the mission actors (including those that might wield political influence). Such analysis also needed to ensure it integrated gender perspectives as part of its considerations (including mapping the role and influence of women on peace and conflict). Such information should be drawn on by stakeholders including the Security Council, Peacebuilding Commission, UN country teams and bilateral and multilateral partners, in order to invest in and support some of the institutions and actors that contribute to peace.

Mission planning and mandate development[5]

Mission planning teams should be drawing on peace and conflict analysis to inform their recommendations, and in turn, the development of peace operation mandates. Participants agreed that there was scope for more integrated planning to take place as part of peace operations, which would include military, police and civilian components, but also representatives of UN country teams, in order to prepare for the eventual transition and drawdown of missions. Time also had to be invested in a more integrated approach to planning, so that different teams or functions were not making their own plans in stovepipes (e.g. DDR). Plans also needed to factor in the potential resource implications, so that a thorough assessment of requirements could be presented to the Security Council and Fifth Committee. This would require a stronger planning culture and integrated strategies. But planning was only one part of the challenges, as it was then up to the Security Council to draw on that information and the range of potential options presented when considering the authorisation or renewal of a mission mandate.

Participants agreed on the need for more strategic mandates with clearer political objectives, but recognised that much of this effort required the engagement of the Security Council (particularly the P5). Unfortunately mandating practices as they currently exist detract from the strategic direction that the Security Council provides to peace operations. There is often a tendency in the Security Council to draw on language that has been agreed upon before when drafting resolutions for adoption. Such processes usually minimise the likelihood that there will be disagreement on the direction of the mandate by Council members, given that the language has been agreed to in the past. However, this often leads to preformatted peace operations in the field, with new missions built in the same way as others that deployed before it, and existing missions continuing as they have in the past, with often minimal change to address the shifting strategic situation on the ground. That often contributes to the inordinate length of peace operation mandates, leading to the term 'Christmas tree mandates'. This is one of the reasons the Secretary-General, when launching A4P, declared 'Christmas is over' and urged Security Council members to 'sharpen and streamline mandates'.

Since drafting processes are largely managed by the pen-holder and the P5, other Council members are often at the behest of those Member States in terms of timelines. If the timeline is condensed for consultation (as if often the case), mandating processes may be rushed or fail to consult the multiple stakeholders that are invested in the resolution of the conflict (and that may have some influence), leading to different understandings around the mission's objectives. Furthermore, Council members may overlook some of the ground realities provided by technical assessment visits, strategic reviews

5 See Richard Gowan, 'The Politics of A4P' Background Paper (Challenges Annual Forum, November 2018)

or Secretary-General's reports, which provide actionable information for the consideration and debate of the Security Council in setting the strategic direction of the mission. It's also not clear if the Council is receiving the information it requires from the field to make informed decisions, which may be an area that could benefit from further research and analysis by surveying Council members.

Participants agreed that there needed to be greater scope to incorporate field perspectives into the development and drafting of mandates. Some suggested that the Security Council should engage former Special Representatives of the Secretary-General to provide draft mandates for consideration. Others suggested the appointment of a New York based representative that could act as a conduit between the mission and the field and engage with the Council. Another suggestion was to have Council members engage in table top exercises on mission scenarios, to enhance their understanding of the challenges missions were facing, or more regular visits to the field by Council members. There was agreement that the Council needed to engage more extensively with other stakeholders in the drafting of mandates, which could include developing constituencies of interested Member States – like 'Groups of Friends'—to engage in mandating processes, or working with other interested entities including the Peacebuilding Commission. Some participants suggested that there needed to be a framework for drafting mandates which could guide Council members on what needed to be included, and what was assumed and didn't need to be unnecessarily included.

Some participants argued that mandates should be narrowed and should include more specific requirements to make mission success more realistic, yet others were sceptical about the risk of cutting out too much from mission mandates. There was broad agreement, however, that there needed to be unified understanding of the mandate's objectives. This needed to be communicated clearly by the mission leadership on a regular basis, including to mission actors and other stakeholders in the area of operations, to ensure everyone was on the same page in efforts to build and sustain peace. Discussions also focused on the need for the Security Council to engage with stakeholders on peace operations outside of the renewal timeframes or briefing sessions, which was usually when missions came into focus.

Assessing strategic performance

Assessing the performance and effectiveness of peace operations is a contested concept. Member States often use their own arbitrary measurements to make the case for mandate adjustments or budget reductions, based on their own political motivations. Some argue that a peace operation is unsuccessful if it has been deployed for a long-time, whereas others argue it is still fulfilling a role if it is preventing conflict. Although peace operations

are meant to deploy where there is a 'peace to keep', it is increasingly difficult to use this as a measurement of potential success for peace operations, as many missions operate in environments where there is no peace and they are actively attempting to work with other actors to resolve the conflict.

Despite these challenges, discussions focused on a few ways of measuring how a peace operation is faring in terms of its strategic performance – and what can be done to improve it. Instances of failure are often much easier to identify than successes, as it is difficult to assess if an act of violence has been prevented (where as one occurring is obvious). For instance, one way is to focus on how the mission is delivering on the mandate that has been provided to it. That is, overall strategic impact of the mission and all its components. Most attention in these instances is often focused on the military and police components and their operational and tactical performance, as their role if frequently more visible. There are also more regular evaluations taking place for T/PCCs, both prior to and during deployment. Yet this is much more challenging to measure for civilian components, which often don't benefit from the same levels of training, assessment and evaluation as their uniformed counterparts.

Nevertheless, participants agreed that more data was required to support decision-making about the overall strategic performance of missions. The externally led reviews initiated by the Secretary-General were a good step forward, but often that information is not available to stakeholders beyond the Council (even then, only some information goes to the Council). Some of that information could be helpful to inform decisions around targeting resources to assist missions that may be performing poorly (in the context of broad metrics). Participants agreed that the development of an integrated performance policy framework, as considered by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and supported by the Security Council in Resolution 2436 (adopted in September 2018) was an important step forward that could assist the Secretariat in measuring the performance of deployed personnel. However, such processes and policies could benefit from more data on what makes peace operations effective, including more detailed analysis on the contribution that women's participation makes to the effectiveness of peace operations.

Ultimately, the strategic performance of peace operations will be assessed based on how they contribute to efforts to support political solutions and establish sustainable peace. It is a question we need to continually ask ourselves.

Strand 3: Protection and Partnerships

The protection and partnerships dialogue examined the tools and limits of peace operations in providing protection of civilians on the one hand, and on the other, how to strengthen regional partnerships including burden

sharing. This section looks at the strengthening protection of civilians (POC); the application of international humanitarian law and human rights law; and efforts to strengthen partnerships to support UN peace operations.

Strengthening protection of civilians[6]

"One way to strengthen this preventative approach to protecting civilians would be through an atrocity prevention lens, described as a 'fire alarm'..."

Despite protection of civilians (POC) being an integral part of peace operations for nearly twenty years, it still remains an incredibly challenging aspect of the mandate for peacekeepers to address. This is particularly true in cases where there is no political solution guiding the peace operations, or where the host government, or an element affiliated with the host government, is the perpetrator of attacks on civilians. In these instances, participants noted that there was a need for greater clarity on what was meant by terminology such as the "primacy of politics", as prioritising efforts to seek political solutions may have repercussions for the civilian population.

While military responses to protect civilians were important, participants also noted the importance of improving local, community based capabilities to provide protection for civilians. This had been done before in peace operations, such as MONUSCO, where the mission assisted locals to develop a community alert network, distributing cell phones to locals to contact the mission. That allows for locals to be agents in their own protection, providing the right individuals had access to the communication tools. While such measures are often context specific, they provide an example of some of the innovation that has taken place in the field as part of peace operations when it comes to POC. Local alert networks, if appropriately scoped and applied, could also provide a vehicle to engage and work with women, who are often more likely to be victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Intelligence and information-gathering also offered opportunities to strengthen the ability of peacekeepers to respond when there are threats to civilians. New technologies that gathered information and assisted in analysis could be of particular use and enable resources to be freed to implement other aspects of the mission mandate. However, if such tools or information-gathering processes were to be relied on, then effective systems and procedures need to be put in place in peace operations to ensure that information is effectively analysed and missions are positioned to respond when there is a likelihood of an attack. Efforts to put in place policies on POC and separately, intelligence, go some way to addressing these issues, but more can be done.

One way to strengthen this preventative approach to protecting civilians

6 See Anna-Linn Persson 'A4P and Protection of Civilians – Leadership and Cooperation' Background Paper (Challenges Annual Forum, November 2018)

would be through an atrocity prevention lens, described as a "fire alarm" for preventing attacks against civilians. The atrocity prevention lens requires a systematic, forward-looking approach to conflict analysis that addresses larger patterns. To ensure early action, such analyses must be shared in a timely matter with relevant partners and they must go up the chain of command to reach mission leaders. Empowering the Joint Mission Analyses Centres is one way to achieve this.

Participants also noted that while peace operations have an essential role in providing physical protection of civilians, they also need to bring perpetrators of such crimes against civilians to justice. Seeking justice will improve the reputation of peacekeepers in local communities and thus build trust.

International humanitarian law and human rights

Complex deployments such as the Force Intervention Brigade and the operational of parallel forces conducting counter-terrorism operations in Mali have prompted the need for a clearer understanding of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The Security Council, Member States and T/PCCs need understand IHL's implications for UN peacekeepers and their ability to protect civilians should UN peacekeeping operations "trigger" IHL. For example, in a situation where a peace operation has become a party to the conflict (for example, there are differing views on the role of the FIB), then peacekeepers could potentially be endangering the civilians they are sent to protect. In this instance, if United Nations peacekeepers are considered a party to armed conflict, and they visit a village to carry out humanitarian work, civilians living in the village could become victims of collateral damage if an armed group attacks the peacekeepers there. In this way, participants suggested that better understanding of IHL frameworks in peacekeeping can lead to better protection of civilians. .

Even if a UN peacekeeping operation is not directly involved in the conflict through use of force, a UN mission's support (such as operational or material support) to a party or parties of an armed conflict may also make them a party to armed conflict under IHL. In these instances, mission leadership needs to have an awareness of the legal implications of decisions to offer cooperation to other entities on the ground (for example, under International Humanitarian Law, the Convention on the Safety of UN and Associated Personnel, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court). Consequently, there is a need for an increased understanding of the interrelationship between legal considerations, tactical behaviour and political consequences for field missions and T/PCCs. Aside from the political ramifications, the Security Council, at the strategic level, also needs an understanding of the potential risks of deploying a UN peace operation alongside a parallel mission with a more robust mandate that makes that mission a party to the conflict.

Participants suggested that there needed to be enhanced communication strategies between legal experts and other United Nations actors, through training and workshops for example, to strengthen the United Nations System's understanding of international humanitarian law and its implications for peacekeeping. This was particularly important going forward, as it's likely that future UN peace operations will be required to operate alongside regional operations, particularly in environments where there are asymmetric threats and terrorist activity (or where the P5 decide they don't want to support the deployment of a UN peace operation). Interoperability with different partnership models will become increasingly important.

Discussion also focused on the consistent application of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) and human rights screening of T/PCCs. T/PCCs had a responsibility to identify contingent personnel who may have previously conducted human rights abuses before they deploy (through the policy on human rights screening). Such efforts were vital to ensure that all means were taken to prevent the deployment of peacekeepers that are likely to commit abuse.

Several participants mentioned the need for better screening of the troops that are deployed in UN peace operations, particularly when re-hatting occurs. Additionally, there should be swift withdrawal of a country or countries' troops that have committed sexual abuse or otherwise harmed civilians. Participants recognized that the UN has done this in situations such as the Central African Republic, in which Congolese troops were withdrawn from the peacekeeping operation after allegations of sexual abuse. Such recommendations emphasize the importance of a gender perspective, in that sexual abuse disproportionately harms women and minors.

Partnerships[7]

Partnerships are critical to the success of UN peace operations. In many mission areas of operations, the UN continues to work alongside regional organisations and bilateral partners in the delivery of mission mandates. Often these decisions are driven by operational needs and the political willingness of different Council members to support a UN peace operation. In the case of MINUSMA, the partnership is necessary as a UN peace operation is not positioned to carry out counter-terrorism mandates. In this discussion, participants noted that when deciding whom to partner with, the UN must focus on the potential partner organization's values. The group emphasized that some organizations are driven by interests, and others are driven by values, but in either case a potential partner's values must guide the UN's decision. Participants stressed the importance of UN

7 See Linda Akua Opongmaa Darkwa, 'Improving the UN's Partnerships for Peacekeeping' Background Paper (Challenges Annual Forum, November 2018)

missions demonstrating how the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) was applied and suggested temporary support in the form of expertise and/or funding should be provided to ensure missions fully adhered to the policy.

There were differing views as to whether existing partnership arrangements, particularly between regional organisations and the UN, were working effectively in practice. Some participants argued that the UN is well placed to work effectively with other actors to undertake joint planning and analysis for missions, whereas others thought this required more work, particularly when it came to the implementation phase of missions. It is often not clear who in practice is directly responsible for developing these partnerships, despite all the rhetoric in support of them. One way to ensure ongoing coordination among partners is through the development of specific staff positions within the UN and regional organizations (for example, the African Union and the European Union) that are directly responsible for the development and maintenance of these partnerships. There also needed to be greater understanding among partners, as one participant noted "Just as we need to understand our enemy, we need to understand our allies."

"...as one participant noted 'Just as we need to understand our enemy, we need to understand our allies'."

More work is needed to identify and delineate the different comparative advantages that the UN brings to peace operations over other actors, including regional entities. For example, UN peace operations bring an international legitimacy to their work and may be perceived as more neutral, whereas some regional actors and coalitions are able to undertake peace enforcement activities, which are well beyond the reach of UN peace operations. Such considerations are important to the Security Council when authorising missions and conducting outreach to other organisations. One way to bring more clarity to the comparative advantages of different organisations was to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved in a peace operation from the first planning stages. This will be increasingly important going forward, as the UN continues to rely on external partners to support the implementation of peace operations. The creation of a clear, agreed-upon division of labour, and thus division of responsibilities, from the beginning of a mandate can also help to foster greater accountability among all partners.

Part of the challenges for UN stakeholders was to realise when it should withdraw from or cease to carry out certain peacekeeping tasks that are better left to regional and sub-regional partner organizations. In some cases, such decisions may be driven by realities on the ground. In other instances, it may be due to the decision of a Council member. However, participants noted that even if the UN decreases its involvement in certain peacekeeping tasks to make way for regional or sub-regional actors, the UN should still take an active role in ensuring that the partner organizations are supporting the same work, for example, through training mechanisms and capacity building activities.

Additionally, several participants emphasised the importance of partnerships when it comes to capacity building of regional and sub-regional organizations, as there will be instances when the UN is unable to mobilise political support or interest in deploying to some regions. For example, in considering the comparative advantages, regional organizations may be better placed to deploy in the early phases of a conflict (which may be a peace enforcement action) whereas the UN may be better placed to substantively engage when the conflict has deescalated.

Strand 4: People

The people dialogue strand examined new approaches and lessons learned around training and equipping peace operations personnel for improved performance, discussed scenario-based learning for improved leadership of peace operations, and looked at how to enhance both conduct and safety of peacekeepers. This section looks at reforms required to address sexual exploitation and abuse; training, evaluation, and leadership; and strengthening military advice, oversight and security.

"Sexual exploitation and abuse goes beyond a misconduct issue. It violates individuals the UN is there to protect and undermines the legitimacy of a peace operation's mandate."

Preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse

Sexual exploitation and abuse goes beyond a misconduct issue. It violates individuals the UN is there to protect and undermines the legitimacy of a peace operation's mandate. It is essential that the UN demonstrate consistent leadership and zero tolerance on the issue. The code of conduct that has been put in place for peacekeeping personnel is importance, but sometimes passing this message along through training doesn't seem to be getting through. Small cards that remind personal about the code of conduct of the United Nations have been shown to have a positive impact. It shows that not all solutions need to be complex. But such initiatives also need to be supported by leadership, with platoon leaders in contingents taking a more active role to make clear what actions and conduct is not acceptable in the field. Messages at the top have a limited impact; sometimes those messages need to be reiterated further down the leadership chain.

It is important that the UN focuses more on the victims. The appointment of a Victim's Advocate is a useful first step. But there are limits on what that office can do, particularly given the lack of accountability mechanisms to prosecute instances of sexual exploitation and abuse. Victim's often feel they have no recourse, as the standards of evidence are incredibly high and processes may take years. Participants noted that the United Nations has often focused on the image of the organisation when sexual exploitations cases have occurred rather than the rights of the victims. The process that victims have to go through today to file complaints is very long arduous. It usually requires several interviews. Victims feel insecure and are left vulnerable, and they receive little information or none at all about whether perpetrators have been sanctioned or not. The needs of victims of sexual

exploitation and abuse need to be more effectively prioritised, including through efforts to increase accountability and establish mechanisms for more transparent reporting and engagement with civil society. More also needs to be done to ensure that the Member States support extraterritorial reach and hold perpetrators accountable.

There is also a need for more data and understanding on why instances of SEA are occurring, and whether there is mitigation measures that can be put in place or if a revision of training programs is required. Most cases of sexual exploitations and assault occur in remote places, where perpetrators feel that the risk of getting caught is very low. Some guard posts located in remote places are manned by as few as five soldiers at times. This effectively means that platoon leaders and others that are in leadership are not always present and that oversight is low. This is particularly problematic in situations where some deployed personnel dispute the zero tolerance policy, given their cultural background. One area where there is some evidence that of change is through the deployment of more women to peace operations. Women's participation in peace operations has been shown to contribute to decreased rates of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

"With such a plethora of actors engaged in peace operations training, there remains a need for more comprehensive management of the training architecture in support of peace operations."

Training, performance and leadership

Training UN peacekeepers remains a complex endeavour requiring the cooperation and partnership of a range of diverse stakeholders of varying standards. While the UN takes the lead on setting training standards and delivering training for civilians, it relies on troop and police contributing countries to develop training packages that will prepare their personnel for deployment in the field. Yet despite a range of different packages developed in recent years, many military and police personnel, in particular, continue to deploy underprepared and underequipped for missions.

With such a plethora of actors engaged in peace operations training, there remains a need for more comprehensive management of the training architecture in support of peace operations. Member States should continue to support these efforts within the UN Secretariat moving forward. But equally, more information is needed by Member States on where the key gaps remain and what the key priorities are for funding. Often approaches to Member States for support are piecemeal and ad hoc, making it difficult for decisions to be made about whether to support particular initiatives. The UN – particularly the Department of Peace Operations – needs to provide more information on training needs and gaps, particularly when it comes to partners that may be in a position to support capacity building initiatives or work bilaterally with Member States to build their capacity pre-deployment. T/PCCs also need to feel comfortable identifying when they have training gaps that require assistance.

Furthermore, there is a need for training to be viewed as an ongoing process within peace operations. In the context of military personnel, the

U7 training function may have a particularly important role in this regard but several participants noted that the functions if often underutilised. Similarly, the use of mentors in the field may be of value to other contingent commanders or personnel that are seeking direction or advice regarding what is expected of them. Mobile training teams may also be particularly useful to address urgent capability gaps, although ideally mission leadership needs to make the tough decision to repatriate contingents that consistently underperform in the field. Some participants noted that information on the performance of different contingents should be made publicly available.

In terms of performance, discussion also focused on the importance of ensuring there were effective handovers taking place between mission personnel, particularly given the high-levels of rotation. It often takes personnel several months to get up to speed in their roles, which can be damaging in terms of the institutional knowledge being lost. Allowing for adequate handover periods between personnel replacing one another could minimise lost operating time in the mission.

Unfortunately, a lot of the lessons that have emerged from performance failures in peace operations are not widely shared, meaning there is a missed opportunity for peacekeepers to learn from past scenarios that may prepare them for their operations in the field. Participants shared an example from the field – an instance of women throwing Molotov cocktails and using small children as a shield to prevent retaliation by forces. The troops facing this scenario did not know how to deal with the situation in an adequate manner. Participants suggested that a database should be created of these different scenarios to be drawn on as part scenario-based training exercises. The purpose of these scenarios should allow peacekeeping forces training for deployment to prepare mentally for what they may face, and also provide opportunity for discussions and reflections.

"With a lot of focus on poor performance, it is also important for the UN to consider how it identifies and showcases instances where peacekeepers excel in the field, to provide an example of leadership to others."

Similarly, mission leadership needs to be prepared to address a range of scenarios that may emerge in the field, yet many of them have little time to prepare or undertake training prior to deployment. Crisis scenarios and table-top exercises need to be run in missions on a regular basis to ensure that missions are prepared to respond, and mission leadership should be evaluated against their performance in these exercises, in order to provide greater accountability.

With a lot of focus on poor performance, it is also important for the UN to consider how it identifies and showcases instances where peacekeepers excel in the field, to provide an example of leadership to others. This is not done enough. We hear about the failures, but we often do not hear enough about when an attack is averted on civilians due to work of an effective contingent. Those examples also need to be captured as good practices that can support training programs.

Finally, efforts to recruit individuals to leadership posts in UN peace operations also need to be more transparent and detail clearly the required qualifications as part of the recruitment process, thereby opening up opportunities to a wider pool of candidates, which may also include more women.

Strengthening military advice, oversight and security[8]

Most of the work done to assess the readiness and performance of military personnel is undertaken by the Office for Strategic Peacekeeping Partnerships. The office is also responsible for the implementation and development of Action Plans in support of the findings of the 'Cruz Report'. Yet some participants noted that the office remains severely underfunded, and that the office doesn't have enough funds to travel and carry out inspections in the field in order to evaluate the gaps in capabilities of forces that have or are about to deploy. This is despite its role in support the work of the military components in peace operation. Participants suggested that more could be done by Member States to ensure that the office is adequately funded and resourced to carry out its tasks. Some participants expressed concern at the limits on budgets by the P5 in particular, which do not adequately account for peacekeepers security in certain committees.

Considerable work was underway to implement aspects of the Cruz Report within UN peace operations. This included a focus on the five priority areas of changing mindsets, improving capacity, adopting a threat-oriented and risk management-focused footprint, enhancing accountability, and strengthening post incident responses (including medical and CASEVAC). Work was underway at headquarters and in the field to implement the action plan, but while some of the responsibility rested with missions and the Secretariat, it was imperative that Member States supported efforts to strengthen security as well. One area that was identified in the discussions was around the importance of diversity of teams, particularly the participation of female peacekeepers in various roles within peace operations, as well as the conduct of gender responsive assessments, to improve situational awareness.

Despite these efforts, participants noted that in some instances, the levels of military expertise being provide to senior officials and Secretariat staff was often lacking, with the Office of Military Affairs not well considered by some Member States. OMA often lacks a voice in operations and planning. Participants noted that there are several staff working in OMA that have limited military experience to be in a position to support military operations. Some participants argued that this needed to be strengthened. Furthermore, there was also a need for better awareness among military personnel serving in advisory roles about emerging technologies and how

8 Alexandra Novosseloff 'Improving the military effectiveness and proficiency of peacekeeping operations: A new goal for A4P' Challenges Forum Background Paper, November 2018.

that could be applied in peace operations.

Finally, there was broad agreement that not enough is being done in relation to taking care of personal after deployments, not only in the military, but also in the police and civilian components. It should be recognized that personnel not only risk their lives while on deployments, but that they are also at risk after their deployment due to the ongoing effects of physical or mental injury. The United Nations should take a more proactive role in mitigating these risks and increase the care after the deployments. This should be done in a systematic manner, with Member States, in order to create a proper follow-up system.

Conclusion

"All too often the public debate is seized by stories over 'excessive' mission budgets or how many decades a mission has been deployed, rather than looking at whether the mission has had a positive impact on the ground."

The Challenges Annual Forum provided a valuable platform for discussion on efforts to strengthen UN peace operations through the A4P initiative. The discussions made clear that there are several areas that will require work by all stakeholders to ensure that the political commitments in support of A4P through the Declaration of Shared Commitments are translated into action through implementation.

First, there is a need for greater clarity and understanding regarding what environments UN peace operations are likely to be most effective in, and whether there are other tools available for the international community to deploy. In some instances, deploying peace operations into environments where they are not fit for purpose may actually be endangering their usefulness in the future, as some of the comparative advantages that the UN brings—its unique legitimacy and impartiality—is being eroded in some current operational contexts. Stakeholders need an understanding of how UN peace operations can work best with other partners, in order to contribute to efforts to seek political solutions and build sustainable peace.

Second, we need to consider what actions are required by different stakeholders to strengthen peace operations. In some cases, that requires difficult discussions around priorities and what can be achieved within current resources, rather than pretending that unrealistic mandates can be delivered on. It also requires an honest dialogue on issues related to performance and capabilities of troop and police contributors, civilian personnel and mission leaders. Ultimately, there is a need for an honest discussion between the field, the Security Council, the Secretariat and with host countries on the direction of each peace operation. Independent and Secretariat-led reviews of missions have started some of those discussions, but there is a considerable way to go.

And finally, it's important that we continue to consider whether we are making progress to strengthen peace operations. All too often the public debate is seized by stories over 'excessive' mission budgets or how many

decades a mission has been deployed, rather than looking at whether the mission has had a positive impact on the ground. That's how we should be measuring whether the A4P initiative is making any progress in long-term – by assessing whether it is resulting in measurable change in the field to build and sustain peace in conflict-affected countries where the UN deploys peace operations. The findings and recommendations from the Challenges Annual Forum provide a starting point and may serve as a useful guide to inform ongoing efforts to implement the A4P commitments throughout 2019.