



**Challenges  
Forum**

International Forum for the  
Challenges of Peace Operations

# CHALLENGES ANNUAL FORUM 2020

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FRAMING PEACE OPERATIONS IN A CHANGING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

The Challenges Annual Forum 2020 was hosted virtually from 7–11 December 2020. More than 180 participants from 23 countries, the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), regional organisations, academia and think tanks took part in the virtual dialogue during the week, which was co-hosted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI). The theme for the Annual Forum was Framing Peace Operations in a Changing Global Landscape. Drawing on presentations from senior UN officials, current and former UN mission leaders, experts, researchers, and working group discussions, this first virtual forum provided a platform to examine existing challenges to peace operations, exchange views and discuss recommendations to ensure peace operations remain positioned to adapt to the changed needs on the ground.

**These key recommendations offer a summary of the discussions that took place as part of the Annual Forum.** The full report from the event is presented in the separate Challenges Annual Forum Report 2020. Although Covid-19 hastened the speed of political polarisation globally and challenged the nature of multilateral cooperation, peace operations continued to deliver on their mandates across the globe throughout the year. In a year when the UN commemorated 75 years since its establishment, it adapted to work virtually with partners to adopt mandates in the Security Council and deliver training, while also working with troop and police contributing countries to ensure that personnel continued to rotate through missions.

The 2020 Annual Forum set out to examine how to sustain effective peace operations in this changing global context. As the concept note for the forum set out, the pandemic risks undoing decades of peace and development dividends, which may result in a higher demand for peace operations in the future. In this context, participants at the forum sought to formulate recommendations on how peace operations can continue to deliver in this changing global context and adapt quickly to changing needs on the ground.

The findings and key recommendations are the result of the public plenary discussions, as well as the three cumulative 'dialogue strands' on AU-UN Partnerships in Peace Operations, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in Peace Operations and Performance and Effectiveness of Peace Operations. In an environment where there is a need for more multilateralism and more cooperation, not less, participants agreed that Challenges Forum offers an important platform for reflection. The recommendations captures some of the timely, innovative, and actionable items for consideration by stakeholders and partners.



## UTILISING THE FULL SPECTRUM OF PEACE OPERATIONS AND PRIMACY OF POLITICS

Peace operations are delivered by partnerships. All stakeholders involved in peace operations need to continue to provide political support for missions and coordinate with other actors on the ground to support efforts to build and sustain peace. Key recommendations included:

- 1. Strengthen the senior mission leadership appointment process.** The Secretary-General should appoint a panel of former Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and senior mission leaders to identify and appoint future senior mission leaders. The Secretary-General's efforts to appoint SRSGs and senior mission leaders is politicised by member state interests and has resulted in significant delays.
- 2. Develop more structured peacekeeping mandates with a focus on strategic objectives.** Many existing peacekeeping mandates are cumbersome to interpret, including too many operational details thereby limiting the decision-making and flexibility of the mission leadership team. Security Council members should model new peacekeeping mission mandates on more structured and strategic approaches.
- 3. Provide political support for women's engagement in peace processes.** Even when there are quotas for women's engagement in peace processes, women are not always being meaningfully engaged and given an opportunity to influence such processes. The Security Council and field missions should monitor the implementation of these quotas and ensure that women can participate and influence such processes, including by engaging directly with women involved in the relevant process.
- 4. Identify the actors that are undermining peace operations.** The Secretary-General should explicitly identify actors that are undermining the ability of peace operations to carry out their mandates or acting as spoilers to the peace process (e.g. those violating sanctions or deploying mercenaries).
- 5. Undertake a political economy analysis.** The political economy is a driver of peace and conflict. Public financial management is a key element of sustaining peace. Working with country teams and other partners, peace operations should develop an analysis of the political economy and challenges to public financial management in the host country, to understand the long-term drivers of conflict and opportunities to support partners to address them.



## AU-UN PARTNERSHIP IN PEACE OPERATIONS

The AU-UN partnership is essential for the delivery of peace operations on the African continent. Yet there is a need for a much better understanding of the political role and ambitions of the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the AU and the UN. There is scope in these partnerships for greater synergies which focus on complementarity, rather than hierarchy. Key recommendations included:

- 6. Identify joint approaches for conflict prevention and emerging security situations.** The UN Security Council and AU Peace and Security Council should meet as early as possible when a situation of concern develops to identify options moving forward. To support such engagement, both organs need encourage synergies that foster a better division of labour at strategic and operational levels, including through better harmonisation of agendas, joint analysis and mission design, and implementation of communiqués and decisions.
- 7. Facilitate secondments and training opportunities between both organisations.** The UN Secretariat and AU Commission should explore options for joint training, particularly for senior mission leadership. Secondments could ameliorate the differences in capacities between AU Peace and Security Council and UN Security Council and facilitate mutual understanding of how the two institutions work, their roles and comparative advantages. It could also promote shared views and ensure the presence of a counterpart on "each side of the fence" to move cooperation forward.

**8. Examine the role of and engagement with the RECs as part of the AU-UN partnership and decision-making processes.** While much has been done on the AU-UN partnership, the relationship and decision-making processes between the AU and RECs, and the UN and RECs, has received much less attention. This triangular relationship needs to be enhanced at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. The UN Secretariat, AU Commission and think tanks should facilitate further dialogue and study about the role of the RECs when it comes to the AU-UN partnership and peace operations.

**9. Enhance entry points on cross-cutting issues.** The AU and UN should identify areas where cooperation and collaboration can be further enhanced on different thematic issues, such as gender, youth, and DDR.

**10. Utilise the role of the A3 to advance African common positions in the Security Council.** The three African members of the Security Council (A3) have a central role in enhancing the relationship between the AU, RECs and UN. Through greater coordination and engagement, they can serve as an informal and influential bridge between the two Councils.



## PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE IN PEACE OPERATIONS

Peace operations need to more comprehensively deliver on efforts to build and sustain peace. For peace operations to become more people-centred, they do not require new mandates or resources, but rather, a shift in mindset at the leadership level, and organisational change. There is also a need for greater system leadership on peacebuilding coordination. Key recommendations included:

**11. Identify options to improve engagement with host communities.** The Security Council, Secretariat and think tanks should analyse and identify options for how peace operations can better respond and engage with people and communities, in addition to state institutions. This could include informal advisory boards comprised of local community leaders to truly orient missions towards people-centred peacebuilding either at the mission headquarters level or the heads of regional offices level.

**12. Deliver context-specific approaches in support of women, peace and security.** Senior mission leadership and field missions should ensure that efforts to implement and strengthen women, peace and security in missions are context-specific, drawing on the reflections and needs of diverse women in the community.

**13. Build the capacity of youth to influence peacebuilding processes.** Senior mission leadership and field missions should identify and focus efforts on building the capacity of youth through community engagement and peacebuilding activities and encourage the UN Security Council to engage with representatives from civil society, including through informal and formal briefings.

**14. Foster a national dialogue and good governance initiatives.** Peace operations need to harmonise people-centered and state-centered approaches to address growing inequalities. This could take the form of a new social contract or national dialogue between state actors and the local population. The policing component has a particularly important role in fostering engagement between state actors and the local population in their area of operations.

**15. Leverage the role of the Peacebuilding Commission.** This should include continued briefings by the Chair of the PBC and PBC country-specific configurations to the Security Council where the country is the host of a peace operation. The Security Council should also leverage the advisory role of the Peacebuilding Commission as part of its consultations, including its work in advocating more strongly for gender-responsive peacebuilding. Furthermore, member states sitting on both the PBC and Security Council need to demonstrate greater political coherence in their approach to peacebuilding, and particularly efforts to coordinate the work of both bodies.

**16. Develop more innovative funding mechanisms.** The UN, regional organisations, International Financial Institutions and think tanks should explore options for innovative funding mechanisms to support peacebuilding activities, including programmatic funding, scaling up support to UNCTs during transitions, as well as south-south and triangular cooperation.



## PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PEACE OPERATIONS

Understanding the factors that make peace operations effective is critical to ongoing efforts to strengthen mission performance. It can also facilitate ongoing political support for peace operations and their efforts to deliver on peace. Key recommendations included:

**17. Strengthen the culture of continuous learning in peace operations.** Peace operations continue to evolve and need to be responsive to events and developments that affect their ability to deliver on mission mandates. The Secretariat should strengthen a culture of continuous learning in peace operations, drawing on the work being undertaking as part of CPAS, which has the potential to deliver data and lessons that can assist missions to innovate and try new approaches.

**18. Utilise independent reviews, research, and data to shape mission mandates.** In addition to the independent reviews commissioned by the UN Secretary-General, there are a range of research studies and pieces of analysis undertaken by think tanks and researchers which draw directly on engagement with the local communities and peacekeepers in the field. Security Council members should draw on these independent studies and engage in an evidence-based dialogue more regularly to support the drafting of mandates. Field missions and member states should engage with researchers to present on their data and analysis, particularly when there are opportunities to draw on their findings to influence decision-making processes.

**19. Share CPAS data with a range of internal and external stakeholders.** Field missions and the Secretariat should share CPAS data within the broad UN family to inform political decisions at the strategic level, and the broader peacekeeping partnership to assist TCCs and their leadership to improve the quality of their contributions.

**20. Utilise digital technologies and data to make peace operations more adaptive.** The Secretariat should utilise digital technologies and advanced data tools to provide more regular real-time updates and as a potential predictive tool, and ensure it is effectively staffed with expertise to manage data analytics. This will require a cultural shift towards data-driven approaches.

**21. Undertake analysis of the performance of the bodies which deploy peace operations.** One of the key factors determining the effectiveness of peace operations is the degree of political will among partners and the UNSC, although this isn't something peace operations control. The impact of these political processes needs to be better assessed, by researchers and think tanks.

**22. Develop tools to assess the whole effort in a conflict-affected country.** While there are ongoing processes to examine the role of different peace operations, partners and actors, these are siloed. They are an incomplete picture of overall change and effectiveness for a country and host communities. There is a need for researchers and think tanks to undertake analysis of the whole effort to build and sustain peace in a country, in order to identify lessons.

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