



Challenges Forum

Sustaining Peacebuilding Support Beyond UN Peacekeeping Operations

Challenges Forum's Roundtable at Stockholm Forum



On 7 May 2024, the Challenges Forum hosted a roundtable discussion focusing on how to sustain peacebuilding beyond UN peacekeeping operations. The session was part of the 2024 Stockholm Forum for Peace and Development, hosted by SIPRI.

Recent empirical evidence from 16 UN peacekeeping operations shows that state-building gains in security, governance, and economic development often cannot be sustained after the departure of peacekeeping operations. With the recent withdrawal from Mali (MINUSMA) and upcoming closures of several missions – such as MONUSCO, MINUSCA, UNMISS – the question is if there is enough enhanced capacities and resources within UN Country Teams and/or special political missions to assume residual tasks from departing peacekeeping operations.

As part of the Challenges Forum work stream on transitions, this brainstorming session aimed to discuss how, and through which modalities, the UN system could provide more flexible and tailored support to countries in transition, and how to avoid that the hard-won gains of a country, supported by the efforts of a peacekeeping operation, are lost.



Pernilla Rydén, Director CFIS, **Benoit Pylyser**, Senior Strategic Adviser CFIS and Professor **Richard Caplan**, Oxford University.



Neha Sanghrajka, Senior Conflict Sensitivity Advisor, UNOPS and SRSG **Catriona Laing**, UNSOM.

Key Takeaways from the Discussion

State-building indicators mostly improve during the time of peacekeeping operations, both at national and local level. After the departure of a UN field mission, there is generally a drop in these indicators. Much is known about successful transitions, but implementation has been lacking. Furthermore, peacekeeping missions often cover vast geographical areas making it complicated to fill the vacuum. Hence, peacebuilding activities need to expand their scope. In recent years, UN reforms have targeted transition gaps, and much progress has been made – in both practice and guidance on transitions – but the Organization

is still grappling with transition issues. Following the recent adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2719 (2023) more residual tasks and responsibilities of departing peacekeeping operations are likely to be handed over to regional bodies such as AU.

The discussion highlighted that:

- Mission exit strategies should be part of engagement plans when missions are deployed.
- Transitions need to be properly planned with focus on building capacities and strengthening national ownership.
- Transition is not an end-state, it is a process of handing over responsibilities when peacekeeping and special political missions' drawdown.
- Transitions are complex change management processes, in fragile contexts, and should be anchored in political strategies and solid partnerships.
- The UN Transitions Project should be further institutionalised in the regular structures of the Organization.
- Upcoming UN reform should improve modularity of responses, making tools more flexible, tailored, and adaptive, both in mission and non-mission settings.
- Bureaucratic and budgetary barriers need to be removed so UN in-country presences could draw on capabilities across the whole UN system.
- Peacebuilding architecture should be more impactful during transitions, the recent one percent peacekeeping budget allocation is welcome, but not enough.
- UN Resident Coordinators have key roles facilitating transitions, but they need more support, both in terms of capacity and funding.
- To avoid transition gaps, better coordination and strategic coherence between UN, International Financial Institutions and donor countries is needed.

While UN peacekeeping has been under a lot of scrutiny, the discussions in Stockholm emphasised that UN field missions work and save lives. It was therefore deemed important to continue strengthening and maintaining UN Chapter VII missions as a viable tool for peace and stability. Finally, it was also highlighted that UN peacekeeping has often been deployed in the “wrong contexts” and/or with insufficient mandates. Some participants questioned how much the success of UN peacekeeping depends on the tool itself vis-à-vis other considerations including politics.



Flaminia Minelli, Chief of the Policy and Best Practices Service, UNDPD; **Jago Salmon**; and **Per Olsson Fridh**, Director-General FBA.



DSRSG/P **Guang Cong** UNMISS and **Jair Van der Lijn**, Director Peace Operations and Conflict Management Programme, SIPRI.