

SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PEACE OPERATIONS KEY TAKEAWAYS

The 2024 Challenges Annual Forum (CAF24) took place in Berlin on 3-4 December and brought together over 120 partners and key stakeholders, including representatives from the United Nations (UN) and regional organisations, to discuss how to shape the next generation of peace operations. Hosted by the Challenges Forum's partner, the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), this year's forum built on the momentum of the UN Pact for the Future and aimed to contribute to the upcoming Berlin Peacekeeping Ministerial, the Review of All Forms of Peace Operations, and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review. Linking these processes will be crucial for ensuring a coherent and integrated approach for sustaining peace.

Participants highlighted that the current geopolitical context and conflict landscape underscores the necessity of rebuilding consensus around peace operations, utilising the full range of available tools and partners. While peace agreements may become more transactional, the UN remains irreplaceable in maintaining peace and security when other actors fail.

CAF24 identified the following takeaways, centred around three thematic areas:

1. Sustainable Political Solutions for Successful Peace Operations

To successfully implement mandates, peace operations need to be grounded in effective and inclusive political strategies which are regularly reviewed. Accountability should to a higher degree be shared between the UN Security Council, host countries, and peace operations.

- **Security Council's role.** The Security Council's inability to agree and act undermines the legitimacy of the UN and of peace operations. The authority of the Security Council should be restored by instituting broader consultations with member states, diversifying penholders and relying more on regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.
- **Supplementary mandating by the General Assembly.** While the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the Security Council, there is substantial scope and proven potential for the General Assembly to use its role to mandate peace operations and possibly enforce binding decisions by the International Court of Justice. A 'shadow penholdership' mechanism

in the General Assembly should proactively prepare coordinated responses in case of Security Council blockages and vetoes.

- **More systematic engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission**. Mandating peace operations should automatically lead to a consent-based inclusion of host countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda. This would facilitate sustained, long-term peacebuilding support and funding while incentivising cooperative relations between host countries and the international community.
- **Cooperative relations with host countries**. The UN and host countries should build and maintain mutually supportive relationships through demand-driven and inclusive political strategies. Shared commitments should be formalised in a compact between the Security Council, host governments and peace operations, including mutual accountability frameworks.
- **Regular and inclusive stocktaking**. The UN must ensure sustained political support for peace operations by the active involvement of troop, police and resource-contributing countries, along with key stakeholders. Regular stocktaking should take place, identifying areas of mandate implementation that require adjustment.

2. Operationalising Adaptable and Effective Peace Operations

To better respond to existing challenges and new realities, the international community needs to upgrade the peace operations toolbox, embrace innovation and agility, and address the barriers that impede rapid recalibration of response models when contexts change.

- **Modular approaches**. The UN should adopt a more flexible, adaptive and needs-based modular toolbox approach, drawing on the full range of capabilities within the UN system. This includes rapid deployments and partnerships with regional organisations and international financial institutions. The Fifth Committee should to a higher degree prioritise strategic and political considerations and allow for more flexible resource allocation.
- **Structural and operational coherence**. UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions should align their approaches to planning, budgeting, financing, staffing, leadership, data and information management, strategic communication and reporting. The upcoming Review of All Forms of Peace Operations and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review provide a unique opportunity to revisit organisational structures, promote operational coherence and strengthen institutional learning.
- **Incentives for organisational change**. The UN should break up path dependencies and create incentives for organisational change that address staff concerns and support staff development. Innovative recruitment processes should be developed and staff mobility between UN Headquarters and field missions as well as between the Secretariat and UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes should be encouraged. This will allow the UN to “do more with the same people.”

- **Regional organisations as part of the toolbox.** The role of regional organisations needs to be expanded in the future of peace operations toolbox. Before deploying peace operations, it is crucial to have discussions about the division of labour among institutions (UN, EU, AU) and the intervention logic. UN Security Council Resolution 2719 should be implemented promptly, including accountability and compliance frameworks. The EU should aim to become an enabler of security by supporting other organisations, like the AU, who are often first responders.

3. Enhancing Integration and Strategic Coherence in Peacebuilding

As peace operations are increasingly confronted with complex threats arising from rapidly changing conflict situations, there needs to be renewed investment in diplomacy, prevention, and sustainable peace. The linkages between peace operations and the UN's prevention agenda, as well as Agenda 2030, need to be reinforced.

- **Locally anchored peacebuilding.** UN leadership should promote a common strategic vision based on national priorities. Inclusive joint assessments, bottom-up planning processes and nationally owned prevention strategies should be prioritised. An overall shift in mindset is needed to understand sustaining peace as cross-cutting for all UN entities. Local peace champions, including women and youth, should be identified to drive political dialogue and peacebuilding efforts.
- **Multi-year funding and pooling of resources.** Flexible, predictable, multi-year funding would be a game changer for the UN. Pooling resources and linking their use to national prevention strategies would reinforce streamlined approaches. The untapped potential of private sector engagement in peace efforts should also be explored.
- **Leadership for Peace.** UN leaders should be empowered to think creatively, put forward bold proposals and take risks. Foresight and scenario exercises, as well as contingency planning, need to be conducted more systematically and new technology embraced. This shift in mindset requires more systematic support, resources and coaching for UN leaders.