



Taking Leadership to the Next Level: UN Peace Operations 2020

Challenges Forum Workshop

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Wrap up Day 1

Check Against Delivery

1. The Why

Any organization needs leadership in order to go in a particular direction:

- To reach a particular goal
- To do so in a particular way

It is even more important in peace operations given the complexities of the:

- Mandate and the many expectations that this brings
- Operational circumstances with asymmetrical threats etc.

But also that peace operations are made up of so many different pieces. The integrated and multidimensional peace operations of today include:

- Police, military and civilian components, plus a number of other actors such as humanitarian etc.
- Staff from different national backgrounds and contexts

This means that there are two lawyers of culture that intersect at different points throughout the mission lifecycle, that will:

- Interpret the mandate differently
- Define the goals differently
- And see the ways in which to get there differently

In other words, peace operations are, as Oliver Ulich so nicely put it: ‘the perfect storm in terms of demands on leadership’.

It is clear in this context:

- why you need direction
- why you need alignment
- why you need commitment

The three main components of leadership that Adm John Ryan outlined this morning.

2. The What

So what have we learned about what constitutes good leadership?

In addition to all the experiences and expertise that were outlined so nicely in General Robert Gordon’s paper, we have discussed a number of character traits or cultural characteristics as they have also been described. These could be summarised in the three following points.

- **Self-reflection:** Self-reflection to self-improve. You do not only have to be willing to be assessed, but also to actively seek feed-back. You have to try and improve every day. It is about contextualising yourself by seeking out how one is perceived, but also ask why am I perceived in that way? As Ameerah Haq put it, ‘what is it I do that...?’

This takes us to the next point.

- **Listening:** You have to listen to the people around you and try to understand them. Riana Paneras said that leading is not about how many serve you, but how many you serve. We could put this question a bit differently to further emphasise the need to listen.

Namely, leading is not about who serve you, but it is about who you serve. Listening is key if you are to be able to lead in a way that empowers people to feel that success is their own. That realising the vision, which you as a leader set out, was the achievement of those who you led to do so.

This in turn takes us to the last point.

- Risk-manager or risk-taker: A leader has to be a decision-maker that is not scared to take risks. They constantly have to act in situations of dilemmas where they need to balance needs with musts, and vice versa.

So how do you find those leaders? How do you appoint them, and ensure that they stay in those positions and perform?

3. The how

We have heard about the challenge of political considerations today, and political pressure. It will be hard to go around these. Instead we might have to focus on finding ways in which to do the best we can under those circumstances instead. We have to think outside the box through for example redefining profiles. As we have heard today, this can for example mean to appoint not only former ministers of defence and security as SRSGs in the context of peace operations, but to also consider other ministers such as environmental ministers, education ministers, infrastructure ministers and so on.

We have to set precedents with high performing leaders, appointed through better processes and procedures that might make Member States think twice about appointing certain persons who might not be competent for the job; applying a political rather than merit-based process. Put differently, we might want to show-up Member States, outshine political appointees by nurturing high performing leaders within the UN system.

But this is of course the question of Why which we will address tomorrow. And here we can depart from what we learnt today that leaders are not born, but leaders are made. Leading is something that you can learn.

The million dollar question is of course, how to ensure and support that learning. Thank you.