

Strategic Communications for the New Era of Peace Operations

UN peace operations are increasingly deployed into volatile and inhospitable environments, faced with and targeted by non-traditional and asymmetrical threats that require a range of creative and innovative responses. In order to manage evolving expectations and build lasting support among central constituencies in this environment, a broad-based, well-resourced and accurately evaluated strategic communications plan is required. While this has been accepted in principle by the UN system, UN peace operations have not been able to keep pace with operational demands. Although there has been a shift from crisis communications and traditional public information capacities to more modern strategic communications, a decisively more strategic and innovative approach is urgently required if UN peace operations are to succeed in the implementation of their mandates. Building on the findings of the Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation, as well as the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, a Challenges Forum workshop set out to focus on what is required to ensure that a modern communications approach is fully supported by Member States and embraced by all UN Peace Operations. Based on Panel Discussions on the current challenges, lessons learned and best practices and innovation, recommendations on how to move forward were developed in parallel working groups and further fine-tuned by a smaller expert group the next day.¹

¹ The present policy brief includes a number of recommendations put forward by speakers, Partners and participants during the course of the workshop. The views expressed do not necessarily represent official governmental positions, but is rather a collection of analysis and suggestions intended to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on how to enhance UN peace operations. For more information, including the final programme, presentations and a webcast of the workshop in its entirety, please visit <http://www.challengesforum.org/> (accessed 3 July 2015).

Workshop details

A Challenges Forum Workshop on 'Strategic Communications for the New Era of Peace Operations' was co-hosted by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), in close consultation with the US Department of State, US Department of Defense, US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute and the United Nations Departments of Peacekeeping Operations/ Department of Field Support, in Washington DC on 23 June 2015.

Contributors

The workshop gathered key experts and policy-makers on peace operations and strategic communications, from governments, international organizations, academia and the private sector.



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Introduction: Why Strategic Communications?

The UN has to become better at communicating, and at communicating more strategically. An effective communications capacity, including vibrant and interactive platforms, is an indispensable component of any modern peace operation. It is required to improve the awareness of the work and contributions of these operations and to build support with partners and stakeholders within the host countries as well as the world at large. Strategic communications is a necessity for dispelling misconceptions, managing expectations and protecting the safety and security of UN personnel in today's complex and challenging peace and security environments.

The importance of strategic communications for the new era of peace operations is confirmed by the Report presented by the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to the United Nations Secretary-General on 16 June 2015. Not only is it a recurring theme of the Report, but also one of the formal recommendation reads: 'The Secretariat and missions should put in place at every stage of the mission lifecycle strategies for planning, recruitment, resourcing of mission communications teams aimed at ensuring interactive two-way communications with the local people and ensuring UN peace operations use modern and appropriate communications approaches and technologies'.²

This to a large extent echoes conclusions drawn in the Challenges Forum Report on Designing Mandates and Capabilities for Future Peace Operations that was presented to the United Nations Secretary-General in January 2015.³ The Challenges Forum Partnership, in the Report, notes that in order for the UN to strategically communicate it has to adopt new tools and technologies in peace operations. While traditional communications tools remain important, digital communications tools can improve both the scope and effectiveness of UN peace operations considerably. Interactive two-way dialogues can be used to gain trust and confidence of the host population as well as to improve the UN's situational awareness through information gathering, analysis and dissemination.

Against this background, the purpose of the workshop was first, to explore and also initiate new and innovative thinking and concepts for strategic communications that can be applied in support of UN peace operations. Second, to mobilise support for the prioritisation of strategic communications as a key enabler to alleviate the ever more complex challenges facing modern peace operations and to better protect UN peacekeepers. Third and finally, the workshop aimed to contribute to the important process for review and reform of UN peacekeeping that is ongoing. As such, the workshop



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² *Uniting our Strengths for Peace – Politics, Partnership and People*, Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, United Nations, New York, 16 June 2015, pp. 81-82.

³ Challenges Forum, *Designing Mandates and Capabilities for Future Peace Operations*, (Stockholm 2014), including the Executive Summary translated into the six official UN languages.

gathered UN communicators working with peace operations both at headquarters and in the field together with communications experts from other international organizations, as well as from the private sector and academia, to discuss, first, the current challenges, second, best practices and third, innovation. This is a summary of those discussions and the main outcomes.

UN peace operations do not succeed by the use of hard power.

Panel 1: Peace Operations and Strategic Communications – Challenges Today

The UN is currently not using its full potential when it comes to strategic communications. Yet there is no doubt that identifying stories and telling them in a compelling manner is key to the success of UN peace operations. The first Panel set out to identify what strategic communications can do for UN peace operations, what challenges the UN is facing in realising this optimal role and how to address those challenges.

All Panellists underlined that increasingly deployed to deeply inhospitable environments, peace operations are very likely to be exposed to unpredictable asymmetrical threats. This puts them in a very vulnerable and precarious position where missions often have to be deployed as self-sustaining units behind high walls. In this volatile environment, a Panellist recalled that it is important to remember that ‘UN peace operations do not succeed by the use of hard power’. To the contrary. Peacekeeping is the product of diplomacy, political compromise and partnerships; all of which are essentially driven by good communications. Influencing and/or deterring key audiences is a central part of successful peacekeeping. Thus the UN has to make a concerted effort to not lose proximity to the people that they are sent out to protect.

What is more is that in the faster and more connected world that we live in today, there is no longer an option but to communicate, knowing that nothing stays hidden for long. With digital media widely used, there is no longer a need to be a journalist to create a story that rapidly gains traction around the world. Whilst this puts much larger demands on communications, it also provides UN peace operations with the opportunity to bypass those ever higher walls, bringing peacekeeping closer to the people. Applying new and interactive tools, strategic communications can fulfil a number of functions for the new era of peace operations. As a Panellist emphasised ‘Yes, you should be tweeting!’ But this has to be done, within the larger context of a coherent communications strategy.

With the help of digital media, UN peace operations could use strategic communications as a means to:

- take back the narrative, reaching out and explain why an operation is deployed, what it is deployed to do and how it can do so;
- make the political situation on the ground a reality, giving the people a voice to express their expectation whilst also gathering information and improving the peace operation's situational awareness;
- at the same time hold conversations one-on-one and with large audiences ensuring both the individual and the world what a valuable tool peacekeeping is for maintaining peace and security;
- be one step ahead of, or at least in par with, opponents and avoid having to always play catch-up, defending an operation against accusations and negative press; and
- influence and change behaviours in order to effectively function as the political tool for the resolution of conflict that UN peace operations are set out to be.

For the UN to realise the optimal use of strategic communications for peace operations, several challenges have to be addressed. First, a fundamental mind-set shift has to take place. The UN and its Member States have to be willing to explore new ways in which to achieve the political and social shifts that are necessary to secure, build and maintain peace. They have to recognize that a strategic communications plan is a political document that is as important to a UN peace operation as the mission direction. Second, UN peace operations suffer from a structural flaw whereby there is a disconnect between the headquarters and the field. The decentralised nature of the organization makes it difficult to agree on and apply a common communications handbook and narrative. Third, few missions have the financial and technical resources to develop a viable and effective communications plan with differently tailored messages for different clearly identified target audiences. Press and information officers (PIO) are preoccupied with meeting criticism and responding to accusations as they arise, rarely reporting on actual activities and their impact. And fourth, when missions are able to communicate results and report on success-stories the media tends to show little interest. Failures are more reported on than successes and thus also more known.

An important component in addressing these challenges is to look at already existing partnerships to see how they could be drawn upon. The African Union (AU) has in many ways effectively integrated with the UN, a point in case being the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). With most

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peace operations deployed to the region, what can the UN learn from the AU with regards to strategic communications? One of the Panellists noted that whilst the UN has been very successful with setting up its own radio stations in Africa, the UN needs to re-orient its communications efforts to media that are widely accessible, namely African rather than Western media channels. The AU can help the UN foster a cultural shift in how to engage with national and local audiences through relevant channels, developing a more people centred approach that allows for a demystification of the UN in Africa.

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There are some challenges however in working with African media outlets, both ethical and financial. TV channels are often partisan and journalists lack capacity and orientation, as well as resources to cover Africa—let alone the UN. This nurtures corruption and sensationalism. Media coverage of UN in Africa can be ad hoc, event-driven and lack meaningful depth. African media might report on major events such as the appointment of UN mediators or the announcement of new peacekeeping missions. But there is very little information between those events. To bypass these challenges, the UN has to practice tactical selectiveness and target media to ensure that the missions not only remain impartial, but are also perceived to do so. Moreover, the UN should work more with civil society organizations, helping them to strengthen media, but also communicating through them.

The discussions raised questions about the challenge of pursuing strategic communications efforts in environments that embrace non-freedom of expression, and how this has to be approached in a very tactical manner to avoid being perceived as taking sides in the public space. The issue of spoilers and whether, as well as how, the UN should be using strategic communications to address them was explored. The Panel concluded that in order to be able to respond to spoilers in a timely, effective, systematic and consistent manner the UN needs a robust media secretariat, including a substantial digital media component. This instance should also be able to measure the impact of communications relying on the generation of sophisticated data beyond audience surveys.

At a mission level, a Panellist who was a Member of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations emphasised that the underlying fundamental issue is that in the same way in which words need to be matched by action, actions needs to be matched by words. Above all, UN peace operations have to deliver on their mandates. Only then, will they be able to communicate effectively on how they help bring about change in people's lives. Communicating is not an end in itself but merely a means. Therefore, rather than covering all activities, a mission could focus on a few target areas where some success has already been achieved. This is closely linked to the need to manage expectations better and achieve more clarity in the expression of mandates and their implementation.

Panel 2: Strategic Communications – What are the Best Practices Today?

An awareness of the important relationship between how we communicate and how or whether we are being heard is not new. How communications can make (or not) someone an effective member of society was already established by the Greek writers. It is not the end of trying to influence and shape people's behaviour through communications that has changed; but the speed with which digital media allows us to communicate to such vast numbers of people, as well as the demand for that fast paced and concise information flow. The second Panel set out to explore what the UN can learn from other actors' strategic communications best practices, lessons learnt from both the private sector and non-traditional international actors.

Drawing upon their respective experiences the Panellists agreed that the key to effective strategic communications is 'to remember the basics'. However, it is a dynamic process that can be broken down into the following five often subsequent phases.

1. *Defining success:* Clearly identify what you would like to achieve by communicating strategically. Use this as a basis for making a communications plan that, in as much detail as possible, sets out a path forward with timelines and priorities.
2. *Targeting your audience:* Identify who are the key enablers to the implementation of the communications plan. Whose behaviour are you trying to impact and who will make that difference? You may want to engage actors who are likely to influence your audience but who are not actually your direct audience, for example the media. In this case you need to know both what your main audience wants to hear, as well as how to package that message in a way that appeals to your sub-audience. This requires situational awareness grounded in reliable intelligence and in-depth analysis that allows you to understand the pull- and push-factors as well as the full picture.
3. *Setting out the tactics:* Identify goals and objectives. First, what are you trying to change and what is your theory of change? Second, what is your strategy to achieve that behavioural change? And third, what are your tactics? Social media might be your tactic but it cannot be your strategy. There is a need to think about proactive and reactive communications that allow you to convince audiences of a certain good, but also counter communications that may attack you.
4. *Branding:* Words, tonality, images, personal appearances, colours and symbolism all have to be carefully chosen in order to craft a certain image, feeling and perception. Several images are required that are likely

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to trigger particular feelings in the target audience. This is considerably more complex in an international context where different audiences will receive the same message in different ways. However, there are certain images that are likely to speak to most if not all audiences; a child learning in school will communicate hope, or a child being tortured will horrify.

5. *Messaging:* Do not just say something to be out there. Be focused and nimble. A strategic message is a 'set of statements that prompt a targeted audience to take desired action'. A common mistake is to focus on process rather than on impact. To promote the value of UN peace operations the message conveyed has to be about change they made happen and the people they managed to protect, not on how they work or function to do so. The message has to contain short words that are succinct and thus understood quickly, combining what the communicator and the audience want. A good benchmark is 10-15 words per message.

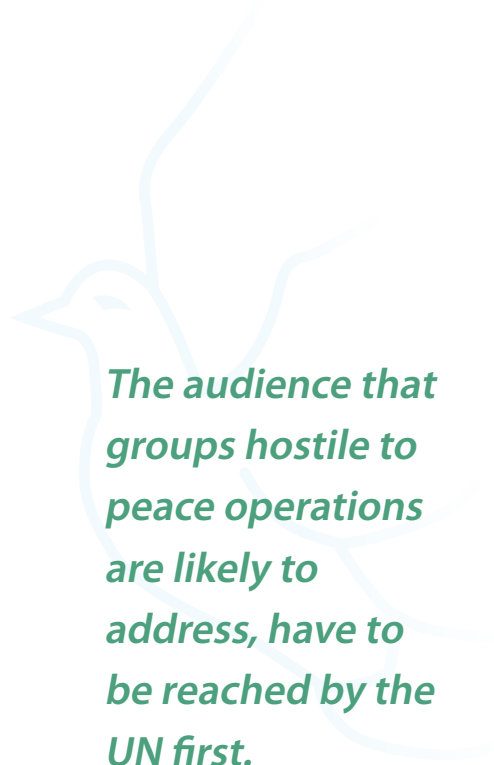
If this is what the UN peace operations should be thinking when formulating their strategies, then what can we learn from those who are using strategic communications to attack peace operations about the messages that the UN should fill their strategies with? Take the so-called Islamic State (IS), a non-traditional actor that is one of today's greatest communicators and arguably one of the most prominent asymmetrical and new threats to the values and norms that the UN is trying to uphold and protect. One of the Panellists asked, how can we create digital peacekeepers that can take on this challenge by learning from some of the attackers' strengths?

First, IS to a large extent remains unknown to those who are not part of it. It is therefore important to understand better how these groups are managed, how they are connected, and most importantly who as well as how they recruit new followers. Initial studies reveal that IS often target people who in one way or another have been rejected by their particular community or society. It can be anyone from soldiers who have been dismissed to doctors that have failed their last exams or professionals who have for long not been, and are unlikely to be, promoted. There is a remarkable intelligence gap here that is yet to be filled, by journalists and scientific research. Second, IS is constantly waging war in digital media outlets targeting its enemies' morale by creating a cyber-caliphate. But IS also uses more traditional media, publishing glossy magazines and books available on Amazon.com, which describe acts of terror and how to rally sympathisers to the cause. There are postcards, pamphlets and other traditional outreach materials available depicting martyrs and means with which they have carried out deadly attacks. Third, IS has a story to tell that is proving to be very seductive. There are some key messages that are strategically very strong that communicate a comprehensive and rigorous political vision combined with an apocalyptic

narrative. Messages are sophisticated, tailored and gender mainstreamed, to ensure that all target groups are attracted. In contrast to such strategies, what is the UN communicating and what story and vision do peace operations tell? And how do they compare to their competitors?

With the emphasis on prevention, the discussions further emphasised that the UN has to address these questions now, before the window shuts. The audience that groups hostile to peace operations are likely to address, have to be reached by the UN first. The target audience should not necessarily be those who are already attacking and fighting the UN, but those who are likely to feed the violence. This is what one of the Panellists referred to as the 'under-belly of the iceberg', meaning violent and non-violent ideological groups and institutions who are less visible but who play a key role in the recruitment of new followers. This can include anything from prison, school and religious associations to relatives and media outlets.

The urgency for the UN to focus on communicating a unified story was also underlined, calling for an effective counter-message and narrative using its perhaps strongest and most globally viable message—namely make peace not war. Facts and images have to express how war is not effective and why. The UN also needs to find ways in which to be quick and agile in its communications efforts, adapting the core message and narrative to the specific target audience in the host countries.



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Luncheon Key Note by UN Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous

Introduced by Ambassador George E. Moose, Vice-Chairman of the United States of Peace Board of Directors.

Mr Ladsous noted that 'we are entering a critical juncture for UN peacekeeping' where it is no longer about monitoring agreements between well-defined partners, but about bringing about those agreements in the first place. This brings with it new security and political challenges such as transnational organized crime, new asymmetric tactics and warfare combined with sometimes non-compliance by host governments with Security Council mandates. To address these challenges, Mr Ladsous reiterated his support for the Report presented by the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to the UN Secretary-General on 16 June, and underlined the role of the UN Secretariat in the work that now follows. Mr Ladsous confirmed that strategic communication is more than ever before a priority. A tailored and dynamic communications strategy based on 'dialogue not monologue' is critical for the support of any mandate implementation. The UN has to be more effective in both communicating and listening to those on the ground. Limits have to be conveyed to manage expectations and success-stories have to be reported on to dispel misconceptions and prevent the creation of spoilers. Such stories are included in the robust digital outreach and advocacy campaign that the UN mission in Somalia is running; the robust communication approach that is currently applied in Mali, combining traditional with new media to help generate more support for the mission; or the national radio station that the UN is running in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—the largest and most popular source of information in the country. Modern techniques and technologies are a prerequisite, in combination with adequate training. However, efforts have to be underpinned by a real cultural shift within the UN, as well as renewed commitments from its Member States.

The full keynote is available for download at <http://www.challengesforum.org/>.

Panel 3: Innovation for Strategic Communications – Moving the Strategic Communications Frontier Forward

Given the fast pace with which media platforms and communications technology have evolved over the last ten years or so, there are plenty of opportunities for the UN to achieve more with less. However, as we have seen many of these opportunities are lost. How can the UN reverse this trend and use innovation to ensure that strategic communications realises its potential as a key tool for the new era of peace operations?

The centrality of digital media to any strategic communications plan and strategy has to be realised.

The Third Panel concurred that modern (21st century) communications techniques and technology that are now standard elsewhere, need to be adopted by the UN and its implementing partners. The primary source of news is increasingly digital channels, especially for the young generation. UN peace operations need to go where their audiences are. Digital media provide any actor with the opportunity to push one's priorities widely, trigger crowdsourcing and reach audiences that are otherwise difficult to reach. It also creates a sense of accessibility and transparency. The centrality of digital media to any strategic communications plan and strategy has to be realised. It has to be included in all decision-making and strategic processes and it has to benefit from the adequate human and technological resources. For this, the UN has to reconsider the roles, responsibilities and resources available to press and information officers (POIs). A Panellist suggested that the UN needs 'digital bluecaps' that are at the same time public information officers and managers supported by new institutional architectures to both generate data and push it out with the aim of countering narratives and disinformation, but also to share the good messages.

Digital media can be used as a tool to generate important up-to-date information in support of decision-making (touched upon in Panel 1). UN peace operations can draw much more upon these tools to enhance a mission's early warning system thereby supporting preventive as well as pro-active peacekeeping. One of the Panellists noted that it could for example in a crisis situation prove life-saving to use a new messaging app called Jott that works without a data plan or Wi-Fi to target people in areas where there is no internet accessibility. Another Panellist explained how the symbiosis between strategic communications and crisis information management was already established in 2005 during the World Summit on the Information Society.⁴ UN peace operations have to be at the forefront of this development, using digital media to bypass traditional communications pillars, identifying new innovations and using them effectively, not only to communicate but also to gather data and other information. Some progress has been made in this regard with the UN Department of Field Support going into the field to help

⁴ For more information <http://www.itu.int/wsis/basic/about.html> (accessed 2 July 2015).

individual peace operations such as MONUSCO develop their own data architecture and provide training for how to master this new media. However, much remains to be done.

This being said it is important to remember that digital media are not an end in themselves. They are means for advocacy and securing as well as strengthening commitments. Thus as a first step, rather than using all platforms out there, a selection has to be made based on a thorough analysis of where the audience is. UN peace operations should use the technologies that work for and are available to them. Similarly, all media channels have to constantly be evaluated to ensure that they remain relevant and cost-effective. As one of the Panellists pointed out since 'digital media is like heroin', messages have to be continuously repackaged to fit those platforms as well as to prevent fatigue. Moreover, every peace operation needs a digital media crisis plan. During a crisis it is better to post a message that says that a crisis is dealt with and more information will follow than to be absent from the media space.

Second, it is clear that the UN has to become better at telling the story of what peacekeeping does for a country or countries, as well as for the world at large. Capturing the added-value and cost-effectiveness in concise messages and symbolic imaging is key to securing the support of both those that UN peace operations are sent out to protect, and those that are making this happen. One way in which to do so, is to allow the peacekeepers themselves to tell their stories and why they make a difference, and reach out to a potential group of supporters that can carry those stories with them to friends and families. Digital postcards and videos can be used to thank those who contribute to peace operations to visualise the results of their support. But echoing previous Panels, messages have to be short and concise.⁵

Third, to generate support and commitment to digital media, the added value of digital media to UN peace operations has to be communicated, notably by show-casing results and evidence of impact. Whilst an overall shift has to take place that allows for the UN to re-locate resources to this area, technology itself is often fast moving and free. What is needed is people who understand and can manage those tools. Each mission needs a digital media officer who works in close cooperation with equals in partner organizations and is supported by digital communicators at headquarters.

The Third Panel concluded by considering what advice they would give to the new UN Secretary-General if appointed as his or her Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and Communications. One Panellist suggested taking one step back to first of all carry out an assessment of the UN's digital media communications capabilities to identify gaps on the basis of which to request a budget to fill those gaps. Another would suggest calling upon digital communications teams from the Member States to share

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⁵ <http://unfoundationblog.org/10-facts-about-united-nations-peacekeeping/> (accessed 2 July 2015).

experiences and best practices with UN colleagues, and one would ask the UNSG to put all weight behind a comprehensive media strategy including an important digital component that supports strategic communications from headquarters all the way down to the mission level.

Conclusion: Digital Media – A Key Political and Operational Tool for the New Era of Peace Operations

There is currently a global momentum for review, reform and development.

The workshop concluded by reflecting on how whilst the UN is facing tremendous challenges, we also live in a time where we can all make a difference. The recently submitted Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations as well as other ongoing review initiatives suggest that there is currently a global momentum for review, reform and development. However, in order to galvanise these processes into action and for a real commitment to change, the results of these processes have to be strategically communicated. It has become clear through the workshop that it is not only about how we communicate, but as much about how our actions communicate. As one of the speakers put it: ‘We have to walk the talk’.

To move forward requires a fundamental shift within the UN but also among the Member States.

The discussions have made it clear that strategic communications is a political and operational prerequisite for the success of any given UN peace operation. We have to be concerned with how extremist organisations, who constitute a real threat to UN peacekeepers and those they are trying to protect, show a sophistication in applying these means, in comparison to which, the UN's ways are archaic. To address these and other threats, a strategic communications platform has to be embedded in all UN peace operations and it has to include a substantial digital media component. A variety of means have to be available to UN peace operations to communicate clear and concise tailored messages to their respective target audiences. The purpose is three-fold: to inform, to influence and to protect. Doing so will strongly contribute to more people-centred and field-oriented UN peace operations as called for in the Report of the UNSG's High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

To move forward requires a fundamental shift within the UN as well as Member States. New technologies must be embraced for the benefit of UN peace operations, which better reflect the new way the world is now communicating. For this to happen, a clear and common understanding of the needs is key. A convincing and common narrative has to be developed that can build trust and compete with the sensationalist negative stories about UN peacekeepers that predominantly make the

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headlines. It is not a matter of brushing bad news under the carpet. It is about communicating the achievements and results of UN peace operations so as to complete the picture and enhance the appreciation of the full spectra of the impact of UN peace operations. The UN has many success-stories of saving people from the savageries of war that are simply not captured, let alone communicated—at least not effectively. The workshop has highlighted opportunities and innovative solutions that are out there but that receive little attention. The UN has to continue building on these efforts and initiatives and UN Member States have to commit to the cause, supporting but also telling the success-stories of peacekeeping.

Without the necessary resources, it will be difficult for the UN to move from reactive and defensive communication to proactive strategic communications. While UN peace operations benefit from the support of the UN Department for Public Information, the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support from a strategic point of view has only six persons supporting more than 124 000 peacekeepers around the globe, without a single dedicated digital media officer at headquarters. All concluding speakers agreed in unison that this situation has to change, and it has to change soon, if the UN is to stay fit for purpose for the new era of peace operations. Hopes were placed in the implementation work that now commenced of the several High-Level Panel Reports, the Force Generation Initiative and the upcoming Peacekeeping Summit to be held on 28 September 2015.

The Challenges Forum Partnership will continue to work on strategic communications with the aim of further sensitising the issue and enhance broader access to information. The workshop is one of the many activities pursued by a Partnership work-strand dedicated to Strategic Communications within the larger context of elaborating on the outcomes of the Reports presented by the several ongoing (and recently terminated) reviews on activities relevant to UN peace operations. A follow-up workshop is planned with a focus on operationalising the outcomes of all the review reports relevant for strategic communications of UN peace operations from a field perspective.

Recommendations

1. The UN should **institutionalise the role of strategic communications** as one of the key operational and political tools of peace operations by integrating it into every aspect from mandate formation, to planning, implementation and exit.
2. Each UN peace operation should **develop its own communications strategy**, based on clear statement of intent and calling upon perception surveys and target audience mapping and analysis. Messages should be tailored to fit what the different target audiences would like to hear and can relate to, and they should be communicated through channels used by the target audiences.
3. The UN has to **develop a narrative and branding for peace operations** going beyond crisis communications, finding innovative ways in which to tell one convincing and attractive story about the achievements of peacekeeping that can be re-told through many different voices and channels. For this purpose it is key for the UN to consolidate information and standardise websites, and begin exploring possibilities for public-private-partnerships and cooperation with the creative community including NGOs.
4. The UN and its Member States has to **recognize and commit to the strategic importance of the digitalisation** of communications for the new era of peace operations by establishing a substantial digital component in all communications strategies matched by the employment of at least one digital media officer at UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support and increasingly also in missions.
5. The UN has to **monitor, assess and measure the impact of strategic communications** for peace operations taking into account three different levels of communication between the mission and the host population, between the missions and headquarters, and between the UN and the world at large. This should seek to inform future communications strategies as well as the Membership of peace operations' efforts, achievements and lessons learnt.
6. The UN and its Member States should **make available the necessary technical and human resources** for the UN and its peace operations to strategically communicate. This includes considering structural reforms so as to strengthen (and possibly also further integrate) the Department of Public Information and the communications functions of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support and ensuring that there is at least one communications strategist in each mission, as well as making strategic communications a central tenant in all senior mission leadership trainings and pre-deployment courses.



INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR THE CHALLENGES OF PEACE OPERATIONS

The Challenges Forum is a strategic and dynamic platform for constructive dialogue among policymakers, practitioners and academics on key issues and developments in peace operations. The Forum contributes to shaping the debate by identifying critical challenges facing military, police and civilian peace operations, by promoting awareness of emerging issues and by generating recommendations and solutions for the consideration of the broader international peace operations community. It is a global network of 47 leading peacekeeping-related organizations in 22 partner countries. www.challengesforum.org