



Challenges Forum

International Forum for the
Challenges of Peace Operations



UN PHOTO/HARANDANE DICKO



ANNUAL FORUM 2019

Executive Outcome Document

Summary and Preliminary Recommendations

The 12th Challenges Annual Forum was hosted 10 to 11 June 2019 in Montreal by the Government of Canada. More than 120 participants from 30 countries, the United Nations, academia and think-tanks took part in the dialogue over two days. The theme for the Annual Forum was *A4P-Improving on Political Strategy, Peacebuilding, Mission Management and Transitions to Enduring Peace*. Drawing on presentations from senior UN officials, current and former mission leaders from UN missions, experts and researchers, and working group discussions, the Forum provided a platform to examine the reforms and collective action required to advance and maintain momentum for the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative.

About

- ¶ The Annual Forum discussions took place through a series of cumulative dialogues focused on four A4P topics: politics, peacebuilding, mission transitions, and leadership and management.
- ¶ Discussions focused on two key questions: *how* to implement reforms in support of A4P at the policy level and in the field; and *who* is accountable for implementing those agreed commitments.
- ¶ Panel discussions included UN representation from both the Secretariat and the field, as well as representation from regional organizations and academia.
- ¶ High-level representatives included, *inter alia*, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations; Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security; Joanne Adamson, DSRSG MINUSMA; Lt. Gen. Balla Keita, Force Commander MINUSCA.

Introduction

The common refrain throughout the Forum was that there is a need for more engagement on the complex challenges that peace operations continue to face. As such, the two days of discussions continued to provide a venue for collaboration and a platform to inspire creative thinking among a range of stakeholders offering different viewpoints, perspectives and analysis. Many of the challenges identified in the 2018 Annual Forum continue to plague peace operations—disinterest in global cooperation, attacks against civilians, impunity, little willingness to commit more funding and limited resources to carry out complex and challenging mandates. Many missions continue to operate in a restrictive budgetary environment, requiring them to do more with less. This sets up challenges, particularly for the mission leadership team, which are often required to give effect to the authorization provided by the Security Council, despite these limitations.

... it is essential that stakeholders continue to maintain momentum for A4P moving forward. This requires concrete, tangible and measurable results.

This year's Annual Forum set out to examine the implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative from a field perspective. In other words, to examine what support and mandates that missions require from member states and the UN Secretariat in order to implement A4P and contribute to peace. It explored these issues through a series of cumulative dialogues focused on four topics: politics, peacebuilding, mission transitions, and leadership and management. Discussions focused on two key questions: how to implement reforms in support of A4P at the policy level and in the field; and identify who is accountable for implementing those agreed commitments.

This summary report captures some of the discussions and recommendations that emerged during the two-day forum from a range of individuals serving in peace operations and engaged in the reform of peace operations as part of the Challenges Partnership. Video summaries of some key recommendations are available on the Challenges Forum's website (www.challengesforum.org). A full report of the Challenges Annual Forum 2019 is forthcoming.

Action for Peacekeeping – Progress, Challenges and the Year Ahead

It has nearly been a year since Member States, the Secretariat and regional organizations signed up to the Declaration of Shared Commitment for Action on UN Peacekeeping Operations. That Declaration, which has now been endorsed by 155 member states and supporting organizations, continues to guide the efforts of the Secretariat and wider peacekeeping stakeholders in reforming UN peacekeeping.

Mindful of the direction that previous peacekeeping reform efforts have taken (or failed to take), it is essential that stakeholders continue to maintain momentum for A4P moving forward. This requires concrete, tangible and measurable results. It also requires ongoing engagement among the stakeholders—including member states, the Secretariat, field missions and civil society—to assess how things are progressing and what action needs to be taken. Participants agreed that platforms such as the Challenges Forum offered a good opportunity for these discussions. Nevertheless, there could be value in a more formal stock-take in the year ahead. The UN Secretariat intends to put a tracker on its A4P website and is undertaking a gap analysis to move forward with key reforms. But it was acknowledged that the Secretariat also requires the support of member states to act as champions for one of the eight action areas, in order to utilize their political leverage.

...UN peacekeeping can't do everything.
There is also a need for other actors to
step up and undertake tasks that the
UN is unwilling or unable to undertake.

It is well understood that the UN cannot undertake peacekeeping alone; it relies on a range of partners. Throughout the Forum, speakers emphasized the importance of partnerships, particularly with regional organizations such as the African Union. But they also acknowledged that it is important that stakeholders recognize that those partnerships go two ways, with different actors having different comparative strengths and resources to offer. Similarly, UN peacekeeping can't do everything. There is also a need for other actors to step up and undertake tasks that the UN is unwilling or unable to undertake. This requires more dialogue and better communication regarding what UN peacekeeping can do, and what it can't. This is particularly important given some of the ongoing funding and cash flow challenges, which are now having an impact on how missions are planned (rather than being guided by events and needs on the ground).

Politics

The politics strand focused on how the mission and its senior leadership's political strategy is defined and empowered to advance political solutions to the conflict.

Ensuring that peacekeeping missions are prepared and equipped to support the primacy of politics requires preparation. Early assessment missions and the mission leadership team need to engage in some of this preparatory work with the various partners and groups in the country and ensure that there is constant mobilization and momentum for these efforts. This may involve engaging with armed groups and opposition groups, all of which needs to be managed carefully with the host government. It requires sensitivity, planning, communication and transparency. It is important that mission leaders and personnel build relationships with stakeholders, including marginalized groups, before they need to call upon them, rather than viewing this as a 'tick the box' exercise. This also requires an ongoing focus on future political scenarios, in order to anticipate the likely friends of the mission and potential sources of leverage should the political situation change in the future.

It is important that mission leaders and personnel build relationships with stakeholders, including marginalized groups, before they need to call upon them, rather than viewing this as a 'tick the box' exercise.

In order for peacekeeping missions to have a good approach to political solutions, they also require political engagement and support from the Security Council, member states and the Secretariat. For instance, the Secretary-General's reports need to offer a range of different scenarios for missions, not just the preferred option, and they need to be frank in their assessments. The Security Council needs to allow for wider engagement and could consider swapping or sharing pen-holder roles, in order to create the space for more creative thinking. That engagement also needs to continue beyond New York, in the field, in a more sustained manner as well. Unfortunately, the discussions and debates that take place in the Fifth Committee reflect some of these disconnects, as diplomats are often not familiar with the technical aspects of budgeting and financing in missions and are often guided by politics rather than mission needs.

In the case of mission management, several participants queried the capacity of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to engage substantively in progressing political solutions and developing a political strategy, when their attention was often focused on issues of mission

management and headquarters engagement, particularly for larger multidimensional missions. These expectations needed to be clarified, particularly in terms of priorities.

Peacebuilding

The peacebuilding and mission implementation strand focused on how the mission and its senior mission leadership team could more effectively implement peacebuilding as part of a peace operation's political strategy from start-up to exit of a mission.

Effective peacebuilding as part of UN peacekeeping requires change management processes. In other words, that means the mission leadership team should create processes and structures that promote integrated approaches, using 'theories of change' or a strategy on how to manage change with the mission strategic objectives as a desired outcome, for example, joint programming between the mission staff and the UN Country Team (UNCT). There are several frameworks to draw on to assist with these processes, for example, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as well as the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law.

However, those efforts will only be effective if they draw effectively on different national perspectives and needs in an inclusive manner. The UN Country Team offers a valuable resource in this regard, given it is often present in the country well before the deployment of a peacekeeping mission. More comprehensive engagement with the UNCT may also ensure that the peacekeeping mission harmonizes its activities with a range of actors already undertaking activities within the country in support of peacebuilding.

...the mission needs to ensure that its approaches to engagement are inclusive with different groups across society and not just focused on the elites, so that responses are context specific and related to the needs of different constituencies, in particular, youth and women.

Similarly, the mission needs to ensure that its approaches to engagement are inclusive with different groups across society and not just focused on the elites, so that responses are context specific and related to the needs of different constituencies, in particular, youth and women. Several participants cautioned that this isn't just a case of adding women – that oversimplifies things and takes away their agency. There is also a danger in

expecting women to speak with one voice, when women in the community may have several different views.

Established community survey methodologies may allow for better understanding of perceptions across the broader population. Similarly, civil affairs components have an important role in this regard, as they are often best placed to engage more closely with local communities in support of peacebuilding efforts. Again, women's participation is essential if these efforts are to be effective. Effective peacebuilding also needs to be guided by comprehensive analysis of the drivers of peace and conflict.

Effective Mission Transitions

The effective mission transitions dialogue strand focused on how the mission, senior leadership and UN field presence could ensure phased, conditions-based transitions for mission closure and exit.

Transition planning has to be specific and context-specific. It can't be a template that you copy and apply across the board to different missions.

All peacekeeping missions should be considered in a permanent state of transition. Even though it may feel awkward to start transition planning when a mission arrives in country, it is extremely important that this takes place, as it is an integral part of the strategic direction of the mission. Peacekeeping missions consequently need to make sure that they have resources and expertise set aside to carry out the transition planning. Personnel within the mission that are tasked to focus on transitions need to be reaching out to the UN country team, in order to ensure that such planning activities are undertaken together.

Similarly, missions also need to be prepared to deal with 'unplanned' transitions. For instance, there have been situations where missions have been asked to depart (by the host government), or where the mandate has not been renewed or unexpectedly ceased (by the Security Council). Such scenarios can present unexpected challenges for missions, which if not considered, may exacerbate the situation on the ground. Ideally, the mission leadership team should work to avoid these situations, but given that missions operate with the consent of the parties to the conflict and the authorization of the Council, it is a possibility that needs to be factored in. Furthermore, missions operating alongside different partners and parallel forces, may need to consider transition plans when those forces depart.

Every situation is unique. Transition planning has to be specific and context-specific. It can't be a template that you copy and apply across the board to different missions. Transition planning needs to draw on analysis and consultation

with the local communities, host government, parties to the conflict, other international actors and stakeholders. But the mission also needs to ensure it is communicating its plans effectively, in order to manage expectations. This should take place externally, through strategic communications with the host authorities and local population, outlining the tasks and future direction of the mission presence. This is particularly important at the acute phase of transition, when there may be uncertainty within the economy and population about what will happen when the mission departs. Similarly, the mission leadership team needs to ensure it is clearly communicating internally within the mission about expectations and plans, so that staff are clear on their responsibilities and priorities. Constant and clear communication about transition planning—as part of the mission’s strategic communication plan—is key.

Mission Leadership and Management

The coherent leadership and mission management dialogue strand focused on how the mission and its senior leadership could ensure effective peace operations, increase women’s contribution in peace operations, and link mission management with the mandate’s strategic objectives.

As a priority, missions need to ensure they select the right people to serve in leadership positions. Ideally, these should be individuals that show attributes that will enable them to grow with the mission, and work collectively with other members of the senior leadership team. For instance, some mission leaders have not been open to the concept of mentoring or training support to assist them in their role, despite the value this may bring to the mission. Having served as a political leader in a country, does not necessarily mean that an individual is prepared with all the skills and knowledge to lead a peacekeeping mission. Therefore, individuals taking up leadership positions should be open to learning and support.

It’s not simply about adding more women or improving the statistics of women serving in the mission, but it’s about the culture and leadership in terms of women’s meaningful participation and contribution to peacekeeping efforts.

The senior leadership team in a mission also needs to be as inclusive as possible in decision-making and planning processes, in order get as many perspectives and resources engaged. Early efforts to build trust and working relationships with the team

are important. Similarly, ensuring that the leadership team and senior staff are exposed to crisis management exercises can assist in identifying challenges and roadblocks in cooperation. It is important to have a united senior mission leadership team, so that their vision can be communicated and implemented by the mission as a whole.

It is essential that that leadership team is also committed to supporting the participation of women across the mission. It's not simply about adding more women or improving the statistics of women serving in the mission, but it's about the culture and leadership in terms of women's meaningful participation and contribution to peacekeeping efforts. There are barriers to women's participation at different levels of peacekeeping missions (in some cases, due to the criteria). This needs to be considered further in terms of the selection and recruitment processes at headquarters, where there is a bottleneck in terms of highly qualified women that are capable and able to serve in senior roles, but that don't qualify for many of the existing criteria.

Further, it is important to create clear communications strategies to connect the mission team, host nation and all levels of civil society to the vision for the mission and allow for their feedback on the perception of the mission. Some participants suggested that representatives of different sections of the mission such as gender advisers, human rights officers and public affairs staff need to be part of the mission senior management team.

Preliminary Recommendations

These recommendations represent the rapporteur's interpretations of the discussions and do not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Forum. They are not exhaustive of all the ideas emerging from the Forum, but offer a preliminary assessment of some of the key recommendations to emerge immediately following the forum. More detailed analysis and recommendations is forthcoming as part of the final report.

In some instances, these recommendations may mirror existing requests or some reform processes already underway within the Secretariat and in the field, in which case they elaborate further on *how* these reforms should be implemented and *who* is accountable for implementing them. The stakeholders responsible may include Member States (which can express support in the UN's General Assembly bodies such as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and Fifth Committee, or implement domestically), Security Council (through mandates), Secretariat (through the development of guidance and lessons learned), Field Missions (through leadership and implementation in the field) and think tanks and researchers (through further analysis and recommendations).

NO	RECOMMENDATION HOW TO IMPLEMENT	STAKEHOLDER	A4P PARAGRAPH	CONTEXT
1	Undertake a stock-take in 2020 to assess level of progress with A4P implementation.	Secretariat Member States Civil Society	–	Plenary
2	Ensure mission leaders use ‘theories of change’ or change management strategies, to map out the path of the desired change, to support peacebuilding during mission planning and implementation.	Secretariat Member States Think Tanks	13	Peacebuilding
3	Assess how the leadership team can support the SRSG to focus more on political strategy, which may require an examination of the division of responsibilities in the leadership team.	Secretariat Think Tanks Field Missions	4	Politics
4	Analyze and identify the comparative advantages and limits of UN peace operations, mapping the skills and resources that partners such as regional organizations can provide.	Secretariat Think Tanks Member States	18	Plenary
5	Consider more innovative approaches to roles and responsibilities in drafting peacekeeping mandates (e.g. opening up pen-holder roles).	Security Council	5	Politics
6	Consider mandating processes that evolve based on conditions on the ground, rather than a set timetable.	Security Council	5	Effective Mission Transitions
7	Improve strategic communication by sharing mission plans, achievements and milestones with internal and external stakeholders, as a mechanism to build trust and generate support for resources.	Field Mission Secretariat	7	Effective Mission Transitions

8	Develop different planning scenarios with contingencies for 'unplanned' transitions and other possible and challenging developments.	Field Mission Secretariat	17	Effective Mission Transitions
9	Further revise and assess the selection criteria for mission leadership positions, including barriers to women's participation and willingness to learn among candidates.	Secretariat	8	Mission Leadership and Management
10	Ensure early mission planning processes clearly map the different stakeholders, with analysis of how they are perceived by the local community (e.g. government, armed groups etc.) to inform mission management processes.	Field Mission Secretariat	17	Effective Mission Transitions

About Challenges Annual Forum

The Challenges Annual Forum serves as a platform for launching research, concepts and policy initiatives in the area of peace operations reform. The Annual Forum is hosted yearly on a rotating basis by partner organizations. This summary report captures some of the discussions and recommendations that emerged during the two-day forum from a range of individuals serving in peace operations and engaged in the reform of peace operations as part of the Challenges Partnership.

A full report from the Annual Forum will be available in early Autumn 2019.

Attributions

This conference preliminary summary has been drafted by Lisa Sharland, Head of International Program, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and Advisor to the Challenges Forum International Secretariat – with input from Morrell Andrews, Heather Low, Janelle Vincent, and Liza van Jaarsveld at Global Affairs Canada – on behalf of the partners and Forum participants. It does not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Forum, nor those of the author.

Acknowledgements

This report was developed in cooperation with Global Affairs Canada, hosts of Challenges Annual Forum 2019. The Challenges Forum International Secretariat would like to express their gratitude to Global Affairs Canada for all the support and work put in to organizing this year's Annual Forum.

Canada

Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.



Visiting Address: Drottning Kristinas väg 37, Stockholm, Sweden
Postal Address: Sandövägen 1, SE-872 64 Sandöverken, Sweden
E-mail: info@challengesforum.org
www.challengesforum.org
Phone: +46 (0)10 456 23 00



Challenges Forum consists of Partners from:



Hosted by FBA – the Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development – in cooperation with Swedish Armed Forces and Swedish Prison and Probation Service.