



# Challenges Forum

International Forum for the  
Challenges of Peace Operations

PHOTO: CHALLENGES FORUM



## ANNUAL FORUM REPORT 2019

# Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)

*Improving on Political Strategy, Peacebuilding, Mission  
Management and Transitions to Enduring Peace*



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

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# Executive Summary

**T**he Challenges Annual Forum was hosted 10 – 11 June 2019 in Montreal by the Government of Canada. More than 120 participants from 30 countries, the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), 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.

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. Many of the challenges identified in the 2018 Annual Forum continue to persist in 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.

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 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*

shared commitments made to reforms in support of A4P at the policy level and in the field; and identify *who* should implement those agreed commitments.

## Recommendations

This 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. These recommendations represent the rapporteur's interpretations of the discussions and do not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Annual Forum. They are not exhaustive of all the ideas emerging from the forum, but offer an assessment of some of the key recommendations to emerge immediately following the forum.<sup>1</sup>

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) and other international organisations working in partnership on peace operations with the UN, Secretariat (through the development of policy, guidance, lessons learned and through coordinating mechanisms with troop and police contributors), Field Missions (through leadership and implementation in the field) and think tanks and researchers (through further analysis and recommendations).

1. Video summaries of some key recommendations are available on the Challenges Forum's website ([www.challengesforum.org](http://www.challengesforum.org)).

#	AREAS OF COMMITMENT	RECOMMENDATION 'HOW TO IMPLEMENT?'	STAKEHOLDER ACTION 'WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?'	A4P PARA-GRAPH	ANNUAL FORUM CONTEXT
1	Political Solutions	Consider more innovative approaches to roles and responsibilities in drafting the mandates of peace operations (e.g. opening up pen-holder roles, inclusion of civil society and marginalized groups).	Security Council	5	Political Solutions
2	Political Solutions	Map how different mission leadership teams have shared responsibilities, to identify how to strengthen the role and ability of the SRSG to focus more on political strategy.	Secretariat   Field Missions	4	Political Solutions
3	Political Solutions	Consider mandating processes that evolve based on conditions on the ground, rather than a set timetable.	Security Council	5	Effective Mission Transitions
4	Political Solutions	Improve strategic communication by sharing mission objectives, 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  Mission Leadership and Management
5	Women, Peace and Security	Undertake more comprehensive analysis on the contribution and impact of women in peace operations on the basis of gender disaggregated data.	Member States   Think Tanks   Secretariat	8	Mission Leadership and Management
6	Performance and Accountability	Examine whether existing selection criteria allows for an assessment of a candidate's willingness to be mentored and trained.	Secretariat   Member States	13	Mission Leadership and Management

7	Performance and Accountability	Identify opportunities to support and develop the leadership soft skills in the management team within missions, to strengthen their performance and ability to respond in a crisis.	Secretariat   Field Missions	13	Mission Leadership and Management
8	Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	Ensure mission leaders, in partnership with national actors, use 'theories of change' or change management strategies, based on salient drivers of peace and conflict, to support peacebuilding during mission planning and implementation.	Secretariat   Member States   Field Missions	17	Peacebuilding
9	Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	Include contingencies for 'unplanned' transitions as part of planning scenarios for the mission.	Field Mission   Secretariat	17	Effective Mission Transitions
10	Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	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, regional actors etc.) and their motivations, in order to identify key stakeholders to prioritize engagement with in the development and implementation of a political strategy.	Field Mission	17	Peacebuilding
11	Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	Ensure there is dedicated resource in the mission (eg: In the Strategic Planning Unit) with transition and change management experience.	Field Missions   Secretariat   Member States	17	Effective Mission Transitions



12	Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	Develop baselines for the effective transition of a peace operation, which identify the opportunities and risks at different stages of the mission life-cycle.	Secretariat   Field Missions   Think Tanks	17	Effective Mission Transitions
13	Partnerships	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.	Security Council   Secretariat   Think Tanks	18	Plenary
14	Partnerships	'Twinning' T/PCCs with different capabilities to provide support on performance issues and contingent owned equipment.	Secretariat   Member States	20	Plenary
15	–	Undertake a stock-take in 2020 to assess level of progress and impact in the field as part of A4P implementation.	Secretariat   Member States   Civil Society	24	Plenary

# Introduction

The 2019 Challenges Annual Forum was hosted 10 to 11 June in Montreal by the Government of Canada. More than 120 participants from 30 countries, the United Nations, African Union, 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 officials from the UN and other regional organisations, current and former mission leaders from UN and multilateral peace operations, 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.

Nearly one year has passed 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 156 member states and supporting organizations, continues to guide the efforts of the Secretariat and wider peacekeeping stakeholders in reforming UN peacekeeping. Many of the challenges identified in the 2018 Challenges Annual Forum continue to persist in 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.

Drawing on the findings from the 2018 Annual Forum in Stockholm hosted by the FBA and Swedish Armed Forces, the Challenges Partnership had made several valuable contributions to efforts to progress the A4P initiative in the months that followed the meeting in Stockholm. The Challenges Forum Partnership was asked to brief the UN General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations

(C-34) ahead of its annual substantive session in New York in January 2019. The session provided an opportunity to brief diplomats, as well as military and police advisers, on some of the key findings emerging from the annual forum, that may be useful to consider as part of the deliberations of the committee. The Challenges Forum Partnership was also invited to brief the Security Council during Indonesia's Presidency of the UNSC in May 2019. The open debate on peacekeeping operations focused on the theme 'Investing in Peace: Delivering Quality Training and Capacity Building to Improve Safety and Security and Performance of UN Peacekeepers'. Both of these opportunities ensured the findings emerging from the previous annual forum were shared widely with member states and the UN Secretariat, informing further peacekeeping reform efforts as part of the A4P initiative.

The 2019 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. The annual forum reflected on how to generate and continue momentum for A4P in the future, given the challenges that UN and international organisation partners in peace operations such as the African Union and European Union continue to face in the field. It focused on some of the steps that mission leadership, the Security Council and member states could take to support the reforms.

This report captures the diverse experiences of a range of individuals serving in peace operations and engaged in the reform of peace operations as part of the Challenges Partnership. It examines two key questions that guided the two-day Forum: 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. The report is divided into five sections, with the first section (Chapter 1) examining the findings and key recommendations emerging during the plenary discussions, which included keynote presentations and panel discussions with senior UN and African Union officials, practitioners and researchers. The sections that follow examine the findings from the four cumulative 'dialogue strands' that were convened in parallel throughout the Forum on



the topics of Politics (Chapter 2), Peacebuilding (Chapter 3), Mission Transitions (Chapter 4) and Leadership and Management (Chapter 5). The table of recommendations is not exhaustive of all the ideas emerging from the Forum, but rather, attempts to capture timely, innovative and actionable items for consideration by stakeholders and partners.

### **PLENARY: A4P – Progress, challenges and the year ahead**

The Action for Peacekeeping Initiative (A4P) catalysed political support among the various stakeholders to ensure that UN peacekeeping was fit for purpose for the challenges that it faced in the twenty-first century. Yet more than a year on since the Secretary-General launched the initiative in March 2018, there was a risk that complacency and a lack of political will would see the initiative reach limited success. The mantra at the annual forum in 2018 had been ‘implementation, implementation, implementation’. That applies more than ever. There is an ongoing need to evaluate the reforms taking place, whether they are having an impact on the ground for the people that are affected by conflict and overall mission effectiveness, and how such efforts can be replicated across various missions in the field. Discussions on A4P throughout the forum focused on the importance of generating momentum for the reforms, the need for partnerships to take them forward and the importance of managing expectations when it comes to what UN peacekeeping can achieve – and what it cannot.

Many of the challenges UN peace operations have faced over the last five years remain. Peacekeepers continue to deploy into contexts where there is no peace to keep, where they face threats from spoilers, armed groups, terrorists and in some cases, forces affiliated with the host government, and with a lack of clear mandates and budgetary pressures limiting the resources available to them. Consequently, there is still a need to focus broadly on the four essential shifts that were identified as part of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) back in 2015. First, that lasting peace will be achieved through political solutions. The UN and member states must work together to mobilize efforts to keep peace processes on track. Unfortunately, this is ever more challenging in a global context where multilateralism and the rule of law are under threat. Second the UN and its stakeholders need to take into account

the spectrum of conflict and the role of peace operations as part of a full range of actors, knowledge, expertise and support required to attain and sustain peace. Different conflict scenarios require customised approaches, rather than mandates drawing heavily on other missions as a template for the way forward. Third, global and regional partnerships in security are more and more important. The UN can’t carry out its work alone. Peace operations, particularly those focused on transitions and drawdowns, must work closely with other partners and draw on the comparative strengths they provide. And finally, peace operations require a more field-focused UN Secretariat. It is critical decisions made at Headquarters enable empowerment for the field mission to be able to react quickly when needed. Many of the management reforms initiated by the Secretary-General to delegate authority to the field offer opportunities to deliver on these goals in the years ahead.

UN Secretariat also requires the support of member states to act as champions for each of the eight action areas, in order to utilize their political leverage.

There have been many different reform initiatives in recent years, however challenges remain in taking forward these recommendations. In the case of A4P, part of that challenge rests with the ownership of the reforms. A4P is a shared responsibility between member states and the UN Secretariat. But who has responsibility for taking them forward? What monitoring mechanisms have been put in place? There are 45 commitments in the Shared Declaration that has been agreed to by the majority of member states. These have been divided up into items that (1) member states have responsibility for implementing; (2) the UN Secretariat has responsibility for implementing; and (3) member states and the Secretariat need to jointly deliver on. In other words, the responsibility to deliver on the reforms outlined and agreed to in A4P were shared among the various stakeholders. Efforts going forward needed to ensure the momentum



Challenges Annual Forum 2019: Ameerah Haq (former UN USG), Rania Dagash (UN DPET/DPO), Amb. Ihab Awad Moustafa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt).

continues, progress is tracked and that those responsible are held accountable for delivering on the agreed reforms.

### ***Maintaining momentum and taking stock of progress***

Mindful of the direction that previous peacekeeping reform efforts have taken (or failed to take), participants agreed it was essential stakeholders continue to maintain momentum for A4P moving forward. That requires concrete, tangible and measurable results. It also requires ongoing engagement among 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 platforms such as the Challenges Forum offered a good opportunity for these discussions.

Nevertheless, participants agreed there could be value in a more formal stock-take in the year ahead. At the time of the annual forum, the UN Secretariat has noted at least 91% of the reforms were on track, with almost 40% of them delivered. 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 the UN Secretariat also requires the support of member states to act as champions for each of the eight action areas, in order to utilize their political leverage. Regular engagement with member states and civil society will be an important part of those efforts, which can offer feedback to the UN Secretariat, as well as an exchange of views in the areas where member states could perhaps offer more support. It would also be important to have external evaluations on how the reforms are tracking, to provide a more critical eye to the areas that required further political and financial support to take forward.

Important progress had been made in a number of reform areas due to initiatives that were already underway. For instance, efforts to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers had shown tangible results, with the Secretariat and field missions focused on action plans to take forward the recommendations from the report on 'Improving the Security of Peacekeepers' (also known as the 'Santos Cruz report'). Similarly, the Secretariat has continued to move forward with its efforts to strengthen the performance of peacekeepers, moving to implement the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS). All of these initiatives are contributing to delivering on the A4P initiative, but it would be important that regular stocktakes were undertaken to see where their delivery was working and having an impact in the field.

#### *Developing partnerships to support implementation*

Research partnerships are important in terms of evidence-based research and assessing how effective peace operations are in achieving their objectives. For example, participants discussed some of the findings emerging from research around the effectiveness of peace operations. As part of the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON), researchers had recently travelled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Mali and South Sudan, in order

to examine and identify some of the factors that make peace operations more effective. They found that in order for peace operations to be most effective, political strategies needed to go further and engage meaningfully with a diverse range of organizations and people, efforts to protect civilians needed to involve the host security forces (although they are often very weak, or in some cases, committing abuses), and there is a need for more substantial partnerships with regional organizations, particularly in terms of support the longer term peacebuilding agenda and enduring peace.

...potential value of 'twinning' troop and police contributors with different capabilities, enabling them to leverage off certain strengths...this could help on performance issues.

It is well understood that the UN cannot undertake peace operations alone; it relies on a range of partners. Throughout the Forum, speakers emphasized the importance



Challenges Annual Forum 2019: Karen Finkenbinder (PKSOI, USA).





Challenges Annual Forum 2019: Prof. Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu (University of Ghana), Arthur Cabanetos (Ministry for Armed Forces, France) and Amb. Farid Zarif (former UN SRSG).

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. In the words of one speaker, the partnership between the UN and the AU has never been better. There is a unity of purpose and a willingness to engage. But there is also a need for a longer-term strategy. The financing of AU peace operations remained an ongoing challenge, particularly with differing views among the P5 about providing funding. There was still a long way to go to ensure that the AU peace fund was funded adequately, but work was underway to establish the modalities of the fund, which would focus on prevention, capacity building and peace operations.

Partnerships were also important in the context of A4P in terms of training. Several participants noted the potential value of 'twinning' troop and police contributors with different capabilities, enabling them to

leverage off certain strengths. This could help on performance issues and potentially provide support where there were gaps in contingent owned equipment.

Similarly, partnerships were essential to operations. For example, the operations of different actors in UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) at present highlighted the importance of partnerships in the field. In this instance, the UN peacekeeping mission was focused largely on the peace process and protection of civilians, whereas other actors are supporting the reform of the security sector (the European Union) and undertaking counter-terrorism operations (French Barkhane forces and the G5 Sahel Force). The deployment of parallel forces bringing different comparative advantages in these mission contexts is not necessarily new, but they serve as a reminder of the importance of understanding the mandates, roles and responsibilities of different actors on the ground - and the limits of what UN peacekeeping can do.

### ***Managing future expectations for UN peacekeeping***

UN peacekeeping cannot do everything, nor should they. There is often a need for other actors to step up and undertake tasks the UN is unwilling or unable to undertake. In the words of one speaker, this requires more dialogue regarding what UN peacekeeping can do, and what it cannot do. This is particularly important given the current budgetary situation of the UN with regards to peacekeeping. The unwillingness of some member states to pay their assessed dues has resulted in cash flow challenges, which are consequently having an impact on how missions are planned (rather than being guided by events and needs on the ground). These funding and payment trends are problematic. It is critical member states assess their positions on financing and how they might affect the implementation A4P going forward. This is just as important with regard to reforms requiring member state leadership, as they are likely to require an investment domestically by member states in their contribution to UN peacekeeping.

Looking forward, there is also a need to ensure there are more women contributing to and meaningfully participating in UN peace operations. This requires member states and the Secretariat to look at the barriers affecting women's participation in peace operations. It's not simply enough to say there needs to be more women. Actions need to be taken to ensure they can take part in peace operations, particularly the military and police components, which historically have very few women participants as they rely on member state contributions. This gap in women's participation is one of the reasons for the Elsie Initiative. Societal structures and bureaucratic culture continue to perpetuate women's exclusion from many aspects of peace operations, which is compounded in many instances by rigid deployment criteria. While efforts have been underway to ensure there is more flexibility in the criteria to recruit women into field positions, this doesn't negate the barriers to women's participation that need to be addressed domestically in member states. This is what the Elsie initiative is intending to address, by undertaking barrier assessments of member states to understand why more women aren't deploying and attempt to address those obstacles going forward.

Expectations for UN peace operations remain high in the global community as well as the locals that missions serve. People expect peacekeepers to protect civilians. However, several speakers acknowledged that peacekeepers struggle to do enough to meet the expectations of the communities they serve. It is critical missions communicate the strategic objectives of their mandates, what they are trying to achieve and what they are not in a position to deliver on in order to have realistic expectations of their involvement, and to develop strategic plans to address other priority issues in coordination with the mission. This is particularly important when missions may only be able to offer protection to some civilians in certain circumstances but not all. That's not to say missions shouldn't continue to strive to do their utmost. But they do need to manage expectations, otherwise future peace operations will continue to be perceived as ineffective and failing to deliver on their mandate. Such perceptions will only serve to undermine efforts to take forward A4P in the years ahead.

### **DIALOGUE STRAND 1: POLITICAL SOLUTIONS**

The political solutions strand focused on how the mission's political strategy is defined and how the mission is empowered to advance political solutions to the conflict. Political solutions were emphasised in both the HIPPO report and the A4P Declaration. Peacekeeping is an inherently political tool, but often this is overlooked as operational requirements evolve. Discussions in this strand examined the importance of field-level analysis (especially analysis to understand the drivers of peace and conflict), building relationships with different stakeholders, and linking discussions and developments in New York to the field.

#### ***Importance of understanding national and local conflict dynamics***

Ensuring peace operations are prepared and equipped to recognize and address the primacy of politics requires preparation. Early joint assessment missions need to engage in some of this preparatory work with various partners and groups in the country to ensure that there is commitment for these efforts. There would be value in seeking to engage potential members of the mission leadership team in these assessments as soon as they have been

identified. This may involve engaging with armed groups and opposition groups, which needs to be managed carefully with the host government. It requires analysis sensitivity,

**[Political solutions] also requires the mission to strengthen the already existing drivers for peace.**

planning, communication and transparency.

At their core, political solutions are intended to address the structural and intermediate drivers of conflict but also to strengthen the drivers of peace already present. Mission leaders will be unable to develop a strategy that focuses on addressing these challenges without an understanding of the inequities in society that sow political divisions and leave different communities feeling marginalised and disengaged. It also requires the mission to strengthen the already existing drivers for peace such as traditional community dispute resolution mechanisms or initiatives, and support actors at the national level that seek peaceful resolution to the conflict. Understanding the drivers is essential to ensuring a peace operation's good

offices and political engagement is focused on addressing them. Failing to do so may mean the mission may fail in its mandate. For example, its activities could inadvertently exacerbate some of these conflicts in the longer term, rather than resolving them, or it may mean that a mission is poorly equipped to protect civilians when required.

Considerable efforts need to be invested in understanding the different actors engaged, not just the government, but across the diverse range of society. This may include armed groups or belligerents, women and marginalized groups, which will be essential to engage as part of the peace process. But there also needs to be better understanding of local constituencies and their motivations, particularly women and youth. Missions should seek to engage meaningfully with stakeholders that have been traditionally overlooked, for instance, business leaders, civil society, youth advocates, activists, traditional rulers and marginalised communities. Undertaking a continuous peace and conflict analysis with a robust stakeholder analysis is one way to address this need to understanding different actors interests, power base and actions.

#### ***Building relationships with all stakeholders***

The constituency for a peace operation is a



Challenges Annual Forum 2019: Annika Berg Molin (Swedish Armed Forces, Sweden), Marlien Schlaphoff (ZIF, Germany), Wendi Budi Ruharjo (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia).



continuum. The roles of different actors may change at different points throughout the mission life cycle, whether they be beneficiaries of the mission gaining protection, domestic or international actors in a position of influence when it comes to resolving the conflict, or spoilers seeking to disrupt the work of the mission. All of these actors are stakeholders in the work of the UN peace operation and they need to be meaningfully engaged as the mission seeks political solutions. Participants in the dialogue strand discussion noted some of the lessons emerging from the recent experience in the Central African Republic, which involved not only the UN, but where the African Union was a central actor in the mediation efforts. In that instance, different leaders involved in the political process brought together a range of different armed groups for discussions. This example, as with many others such as recent events in Sudan, demonstrated the importance of providing space for people to respect one another, while seeking common ground.

Even if efforts to bring together the main protagonists of a conflict appear relatively easy, there are likely to be ongoing challenges. Participants acknowledged the emergence of misinformation or intentional disinformation, was a challenge that required mitigation. Social media platforms have opened up the means by which information can be weaponised not only by local actors, but also international ones with an interest in a particular outcome from the conflict. They can easily sway public opinion in areas where there is sufficient technological reach. Such developments not only highlight the importance of mission leaders' understanding the local conflict dynamics of the environment they are operating in and the interests of other international stakeholders, but also the need for them to have the flexibility and agility to get out ahead of the misinformation with planned and coherent strategic communications from the mission.

Preparatory work to build relationships with different stakeholders and partners is also important. Some actors in the mission may be better placed to engage on certain issues than others. For instance, some participants noted it is often easier for peacekeepers from the same region to engage and build relationships with some actors than others, as they may be easier to access and more receptive to the peacekeepers'

perspective. It is also important 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.

Fundamentally this is a political campaign, with the mission leading the efforts to identify and support the constellation of actors who can provide stability and predictability for a society.

Finding political solutions is not simply about getting leaders together. There is a need to encourage more profound movement in society, usually among people who are really tired of war. Fundamentally this is a political campaign, with the mission leading the efforts to identify and support the constellation of actors who can provide stability and predictability for a society.

### *Linking New York and the field*

Peace operations can be compared to an orchestra, with a Security Council as the composer, the senior mission leadership team the conductor, and the mission itself the orchestral components. For an orchestra to perform brilliantly, all of these components need to work together. The same applies when it comes to peace operations, yet often there is a disconnect between those authorising and those financing the mandates in New York, and those implementing them on the ground in the field.

In order for peace operations to more effectively seek and implement political solutions, they also require political engagement and support from the Security Council, member states and the Secretariat. At times, the Security Council and the Secretariat can usefully duel over the different priorities for a peace operation. Missions can build constituencies

to get the things they need, by engaging with member states and lobbying them for changes. But such efforts also need to be accompanied by activities to ensure that they are tracking and communicating their successes, challenges and lessons learned, essentially their added-value. For instance, the UN peace operation is often the best placed entity to demonstrate to donor governments how vital their funding support may be. In other words, missions should seek to show donors and partners why they should justify their funding back to their domestic constituencies. For instance, media, video and drones could be drawn on by the mission to promote the achievements that have taken place in the field and note the gaps required to be addressed.

Discussion in this dialogue strand also focused on the importance of the Security Council enabling more inclusive engagement among its members when it comes to the drafting of peace operation mandates. For instance, some participants suggested that the permanent members (P5) should consider swapping or sharing pen-holder roles with the elected members (E10), in order to create the space for more creative thinking and diverse perspectives. It was noted that there were already some positive developments that had started to take place in the Council in this regard, with Germany now a co-pen holder with the UK on Sudan for instance. However, elected members were generally disadvantaged in providing substantive input to shape mandates due to the dominance of the existing pen holders—which although they brought experience on a file, didn't prioritise inclusiveness in the mandate drafting process—and the speed of the mandate tabling process. This didn't allow for substantive consideration or input from many elected members. Some participants also suggested the Council should look to involve more 'Groups of Friends' in mandating missions, to bring in member states with vested political interests in the mission (as has been done in Haiti, for instance). Such initiatives could lend more weight to the Council's engagement in supporting political solutions. In order for the Council to be well informed and reduce the disconnect with the field, the Secretary-General's reports also needed to offer a range of different scenarios for missions, not just one obvious alternative and preferred option, and they needed to be frank in their assessments.

In order for missions to be effective in implementing their mandate, they also need to ensure there is less of a disconnect between the field and the work of the UN's budgetary committee, also referred to as the Fifth Committee. Participants noted that 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. The introduction of some innovations such as the use of video conferencing had narrowed this gap a bit, not only by informing those diplomats engaged in the Fifth Committee in New York of current realities in the field, but also sensitising mission leadership to some of the politics driving decisions around financing at Headquarters. Mission leadership could seek to engage member states in country on budgetary issues more frequently, in an effort to bridge the gap with representatives in New York, and to ensure the delegates to the Fifth Committee are better informed about ground realities. This already happens within a number of well resourced missions, but there is scope for that engagement to be more frank in offering assessments about mission needs and gaps.

Peace operations can be compared to an orchestra, with a Security Council as the composer, the senior mission leadership team the conductor, and the mission itself the orchestral components. For an orchestra to perform brilliantly, all of these components need to work together.

One of the challenges for mission leadership is they are often focused more on management than using their good offices for political engagement. 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.

## **DIALOGUE STRAND 2: 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. In the context of peace operations, participants agreed there is a need to do better on the prevention side and ensure stakeholders work more effectively together to avoid the need for peace operations in some instances as well as limit the timeframe they are needed for when they are deployed. Discussions in this strand examined the importance of integrating national and local perspectives, ensuring there is an understanding of the drivers of peace and conflict, and applying 'theories of

change' or change management strategies to the work of peacebuilding in missions.

### ***Integrating national and local perspectives***

In undertaking peacebuilding tasks, peace operations are focused on supporting the development and capacity of national and local institutions within the country where they are deployed. Consequently, the mission leadership team needs to ensure it has national ownership as a point of departure. It needs to ensure it doesn't fall into the trap of replacing the views and needs of the locals with its own views on what they think may be required to build peace across society. This requires the mission to listen to those it is engaging with, at the national, regional and local levels.

Efforts to integrate national and local perspectives also need to be intersectional in their approach and not just focused on the elites, otherwise the information and analysis will lack the diversity and input of different groups, which may result in programs that do not sufficiently address the drivers of peace and conflict. Understanding the needs of different



Challenges Annual Forum 2019: Gen. Jai Menon (UN OPSP).

constituencies, including men, women and youth from a range of diverse backgrounds, is essential in developing an approach to peacebuilding activities by the mission. But such efforts need to be substantial and meaningful. Just adding women as token participants, or limiting their engagement to ‘women’s issues’, for instance, takes away their agency and can oversimplify some of the challenges they may face. There are dangers in simply expecting one group to speak with one voice, when the community may in fact have many different views. It is important to engage youth not only because they are a problem, but because they are part of the solution and very effective in peacebuilding processes. They also represent the future of the nation. As some participants noted, if no provision is made for them to participate in peacebuilding initiatives or the economy, youth can be left with few other options than criminality, armed conflict or terrorism.

Efforts to integrate national and local perspectives also need to be intersectional in their approach and not just focused on the elites, otherwise the information and analysis will lack the diversity.

#### ***Understanding the drivers of peace and conflict***

Effective peacebuilding also needs to be guided by comprehensive analysis of the drivers of peace and conflict. In order to understand some of the drivers of peace and conflict, established community survey methodologies can offer an opportunity to understand perceptions and interests of women, youth and the broader population beyond the capital, away from those that may be perceived as ‘elites’. 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.

With many peace operations focused on protection of civilians (POC), understanding the drivers of peace and conflict can be essential to informing efforts by the mission to protect civilians. The role of POC advisers here can be important, along with the work of civil affairs officers, who can engage with local communities to support localised peacebuilding efforts. Gender advisers and youth representatives can also provide real opportunities to engage with a broader constituency about some of the different factors driving conflict and peace to understand the conflict and issues of concern the mission needs to be taking into consideration. Furthermore, understanding and engaging with the local population in their own language can be essential to building relationships and trust with different communities. Several participants noted the need to reach the people where they are, as this is where some of the best ideas to support peacebuilding and understand existing mechanisms in place to protect civilians.

Importantly, the A4P initiative provides a framework to enable collaboration, particularly when it comes to the peacebuilding-related aspects of a peacekeeping mission. In the world of peacekeeping, the UN is the big actor. In the world of peacebuilding, the UN is a small actor. In other words, to build and sustain peace, UN peacekeeping missions need to ensure they are listening and engaging with other actors who may have the lead and expertise.

#### ***Change management processes***

Peacebuilding is an integral part of multidimensional peacekeeping missions, as recognised by the synergies between the Peacebuilding Architecture Review and the HIPPO report in 2015, as well as the A4P Shared Declaration of Commitments in 2018. Peacekeeping mandates regularly include a range of tasks designed to build the capacity of the host government, develop local institutions, support civil society and ultimately build the foundations for sustainable peace. However, there are often disconnects between parts of the mission working towards these common objectives, with a lack of common vision or understanding of the types of actions required to bring about change in society as it attempts to prevent violence and build resilient and



sustainable institutions. These silos present problems for the ability of the mission to deliver effectively on its mandate. There is a need to create structures, incentives and processes, and build capacities, that pull actors together, rather than incentivizing or permitting them to work in silos.

There is also a need to change the mission mindset towards longer-term change and transition so as to integrate peacebuilding from the beginning in the mission plans and its overall political strategy. Effective peacebuilding as part of UN peace operations requires change management processes. The mission leadership teams need to create processes and structures to promote integrated approaches, using 'theories of change' to agree upon a shared idea among the leadership on how to manage change with the mission strategic objectives. Existing frameworks and mechanisms such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law could inform these processes. This might also include joint programming between the mission staff and the UN Country Team (UNCT).

The UN Country Team can be a valuable resource in understanding the stakeholders to engage with to facilitate change, given it is often present in the country well before the deployment of a peace operation. More comprehensive engagement with the UNCT may also ensure the peacekeeping mission harmonizes its activities with a range of actors already undertaking activities within the country in support of peacebuilding. The UNCT may have a strong connection with the host Government as well as civil society, and ultimately, will have to complete or complement many of the peacebuilding activities the peace operation may initiate following the departure of the mission. Further, some participants suggested there is a need to elevate the role of the Resident Coordinator (D/SRSG) and the UN Country Team in the planning, execution and follow on of the mission to ensure peacebuilding is prioritised more effectively in the work of the peace operation. However, the mission needs to ensure it avoids operating in competition with the UNCT. Both entities have comparative advantages that can strengthen the overall approach to peacebuilding at different stages of the mission life cycle.

Efforts to generate change through the implementation of the mission mandate also requires the development of a strategic communications plan. This provides an opportunity for the mission to communicate with the host government and local population about the activities it is undertaking and how it plans to implement change through the implementation of the mission mandate. It also provides a tool to enable expectations to be managed more effectively as the mission moves through different stages of its deployment and eventual exit and transition. Every time a mandate is renewed there is a valuable opportunity to engage and consider what changes may be required in the mission's approach to its mandate and efforts to build peace. Trust among actors involved in peacebuilding on the ground is essential if the peace operation is going to have an opportunity to fulfil its peacebuilding mandate.

### **DIALOGUE STRAND 3: EFFECTIVE MISSION TRANSITIONS**

The effective mission transitions dialogue strand focused on how the mission, senior leadership and UN field presence could ensure phased, condition-based transitions for mission closure and exit. This was particularly timely and relevant, given the recent closure of missions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, the transition of the mission in Haiti, and ongoing preparations to drawdown the mission in Darfur. Discussion focused on the importance of understanding that missions are in a permanent state of transition, the value of communicating and managing expectations, and the challenge of potentially managing the 'unplanned' transition of a mission required to exit earlier than expected.

#### ***Missions in a permanent state of transition***

All peace operations 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 this takes place, as it is an integral part of the strategic direction of the mission. Peace operations consequently need to make sure they have resources and expertise set aside to carry out transition planning. Personnel within the mission tasked to focus on transitions need to be reaching out to the UN Country Team, in order to ensure such planning activities are undertaken together. It is important for

an integrated approach between the mission, UNCT, UN Headquarters, and close coordination with the host country, member states, as well as local, national and regional organisations.

## All peace operations should be considered in a permanent state of transition.

Mission transition is not a standalone phenomenon that happens at the end of the mission – it should be part of the strategic planning process from the very beginning. It is especially important to begin investing in local and national capacities as early as possible to facilitate their eventual take-over of key activities. Unfortunately, this is often overlooked at the early stages of a mission, as attention is generally focused on issues related to establishing the mission, the security environment and operation of the military component, and protection of the civilian population from physical violence. The mission leadership team needs to ensure parts of the mission are planning for the longer-term peacebuilding needs in the countries and

establishing relationships with existing entities in countries undertake peacebuilding and capacity building activities, such as the UNCT, UN agencies and NGOs, to facilitate strong cooperation throughout the life cycle of the mission, and particularly when the mission is in the draw down phase.

### *Communicating and managing expectations*

Every situation is unique. Transition planning has to be specific and context-specific. It can't be a template 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 staff are clear on their responsibilities and priorities.



Challenges Annual Forum 2019: Dr Linda Darkwa (Training4Peace/EPON), DSRG Joanne Adamson (MINUSMA).



Constant and clear communication about transition planning—as part of the mission’s strategic communication plan—is key.

Transitions also present a challenge for peace operations in the context of funding and the local economy where they operate. Peace operations rely on assessed funding, whereas many of the activities undertaken by the UNCT and agencies rely on voluntary funding. It is imperative the international community understands the ongoing funding requirements when it comes to peacebuilding during the transition phase of a mission, which may require a re-alignment of international funding from donors to support different activities that start to ramp-up at the time of a mission’s departure. The establishment of UN joint programmatic activities have shown to be effective tools in transition planning. Expanding programmatic funding (that also draws on assessed funding) can be useful. The Global Focal Point on the Rule of Law, for instance, could be an applicable model for other areas in transition planning. If elements of the UNCT are expected to take on additional work following the exit of a peace operation, they need more resources. Further examination of options and modalities for flexible funding mechanisms are required to support peacebuilding activities during this critical mission phase. Some participants recommended the establishment of a dedicated resource with experience in transition and change management in the mission, to ensure there was an ongoing focus on the transition needs of the mission throughout its deployment.

Transitions also present a challenge for the local economy. Discussions considered the importance of planning for the economic impact of mission closures on the local economy. With the right lead time, some of this impact can be mitigated, in particular with the cooperation of local actors.

Ultimately, the goal of an effective transition by a peace operation is the transfer of responsibilities to national authorities and to build resiliency. It is important to plan for a gradual transfer of responsibilities over to local partners so that the exit of a mission doesn’t happen too suddenly. However, this can’t always be planned for and the mission needs to be prepared to drawdown quickly should circumstances on the ground or in New York

change rapidly and result in an ‘unplanned’ transition.

### ***Managing ‘unplanned’ transitions***

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 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 into the development of different planning scenarios and contingency planning. Furthermore, missions operating alongside different partners and parallel forces, may need to consider transition plans when those forces depart.

Some participants suggested there needed to be more clarity around the conditions that were required on the ground for a responsible exit by a peace operation, although this would be difficult given each mission was context-specific and the drivers of peace and conflict are unique. Nonetheless, mission leadership have an important role in communicating the potential risks of an ‘unplanned’ transition, particularly if it’s likely to trigger a relapse into conflict on the departure of the peace operation.

## **DIALOGUE STRAND 4: 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. Leadership is essential to the effective deployment of peace operations. It is one of the reasons the issue has been a focus of the Challenges Forum partnership over the last decade. Discussions in this strand examined some of the challenges in selecting the best individuals to lead and serve in peace operations, the importance of leaders in building trust and relationships, and the role of mission leaders in supporting women’s participation in peace operations and peace processes.

### ***Selecting the mission leaders***

As a priority, missions need to ensure they select the best 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. Even though some mission leaders may have previously served as a political leader in their own country, this does not necessarily equip them with all the skills and knowledge to lead a peace operation. Individuals taking up leadership positions should be open to learning and support.

[UN Secretariat] should be focused on building leadership teams, not just leaders as individuals in missions.

There have been some positive reforms underway within the UN system to strengthen the selection processes and mentorship programs for mission leaders. But there is scope to do more. While the UN has been working to pair leaders with mentors to support their work, participants suggested mentors could be deployed in missions for short and clearly defined periods of time to provide guidance to the leadership team. Similarly, when selecting leaders, it was important the UN give consideration to how different individuals might work together as a team. It should be focused on building leadership teams, not just leaders as individuals in missions. It is also imperative leaders are held accountable and that all parts of the mission are aware of their role in implementing the mission mandate. Emerging tools such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) might offer opportunities to develop further tools to assess the effectiveness of mission leaders in the field.

### ***Building trust and relationships***

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 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 and a shared change management strategy, so that their vision can be communicated and implemented by the mission as a whole.

Part of the challenge is the senior leadership team is unlikely to have met one another or worked together prior to deploying into the challenging environment of a peace operation. This means they are immediately expected to work together effectively, often in crisis situations, with limited opportunity to develop some of the soft skills that enable individuals to work together effectively as a team. More effort is required by the Secretariat to identify opportunities to develop these skills within the leadership team. It is also imperative mission leaders are willing to take part in leadership and management training that will facilitate the operation of their team. Crisis management exercises offer an important opportunity to test some of those skills in an environment where the team may be under pressure. There is a need to create a collective experiences framework and map out the way forward to improved leadership.

It is also 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.

### ***Supporting women's participation***

It is essential the leadership team is also committed to supporting the participation of women across the mission. The Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy has served as a catalyst to generate some reforms, and the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy sets targets for women's participation in peacekeeping. However, it is 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 peace operations. There are barriers to women's participation at different levels of peace operations (in some cases, due to the eligibility criteria). This needs to be considered further in terms of the adequacy of selection criteria and recruitment processes for missions.

... addressing cultural biases and ensuring the leadership is held accountable for their efforts to increase women's participation across the mission.

Discussions also included a focus on some of the research emerging on women's participation in security institutions. In the context of the military, it shows there is a threshold beyond which the number of women changes the way an organization does business. If the number of women is below that threshold, women will try to get included by conforming to the dominant (usually masculine) norm and they often become the worst offenders against other women in their attempts to conform. It is therefore important the leadership isn't just thinking about adding more women, but also how to ensure women's voices are heard. In the words of one participant, put women at the forefront and deliver. This also requires more series of studies that disaggregate numbers and allow stakeholders to have a sense of who is where and doing what, to assess what impact women's inclusion and participation may be having on peace operations. There is a need to ensure gender disaggregated data in peace operations is more readily available identifying roles and levels of seniority of women.

In the short term there must be an acceptance from leadership to permanently incorporate the meaningful participation of women in the decision process at every level (access). This includes addressing cultural biases and ensuring the leadership is held accountable for

their efforts to increase women's participation across the mission as well as their engagement with women as part of the implementation of the mission mandate.

## CONCLUSION

The Challenges Annual Forum 2019 provided a valuable platform to continue the momentum generated for the A4P initiative over the last twelve months. Like previous forums, it provided a venue for collaboration, creativity and sharing of different views on some of the reform efforts underway for UN peacekeeping, as well as the challenges that need to be prioritized in the field. Discussions also complemented many of the ongoing strategic objectives of the partnership. This included efforts to support the effective implementation of peacekeeping reforms, as evidenced by the findings shared with the wider partnership and international community in this report. The annual forum also considered efforts to strengthen mission leadership, including through a revision of the Considerations for Mission Leadership in UN Peace Operations guidance. The discussions reflected upon several areas that will require ongoing attention by stakeholders when it comes to maintaining momentum for the A4P agenda.

First, peace operations need to prepare for transitions from day one. Missions are in a permanent state of transition as a consequence of events on the ground, the relationships with the host government and the politics in the Security Council. The mission leadership team needs to ensure it maintains a focus on political solutions in the mission, as these can be one of the most effective mechanisms for managing the transition program and schedule of a mission, including the length of time a mission may be deployed. Missions should be seeking to build the capacity of national and local stakeholders and ensure there is resilience in these institutions throughout the mission life cycle. That requires missions to listen and engage in an inclusive manner with a range of diverse stakeholders. It also requires coordination and communication with other international actors and donors to support a common vision to build peace in the country.

And second, it is important peace operations consider the different constituencies of support for their activities and the role of different stakeholders. Mission leaders

should be identifying how to influence those constituencies, whether it be through the decisions made by the Security Council, the financial decisions made in the Fifth Committee to support the mission budget, the T/PCCs that provide troops and police, or the donors funding critical activities that enable and create space to support the work of the mission. This is more critical than ever at a time when there is scepticism about the value of multilateral institutions, the importance of protecting human rights and the work of UN peace operations.



Challenges Annual Forum 2019: Sven-Eric Söder (FBA, Sweden), Jean-Pierre Lacroix (UN USG, DPO), Amb. Smail Chergui (AUC, CPS), Larisa Galadza (GAC, Canada).





## 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.

## Attributions

This conference report has been written 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 Challenges Forum partners and Forum participants. It does not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Forum, nor those of the author.

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Canada

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



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