Challenges Forum

International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations

ANNUAL FORUM REPORT 2020

Framing peace operations in a changing global landscape

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

Produced by Challenges Forum 2020
Author: Lisa Sharland, Head of International Program, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and Advisor to the Challenges Forum International Secretariat
Graphic Design: Global Reporting
Photo: Challenges Forum

This report was developed in consultation with the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI), all co-hosts of the Challenges Annual Forum 2020. It does not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Forum, nor those of the author.

Contents

Executive Summary

The Challenges Annual Forum 2020 was hosted virtually from 7–11 December 2020. Some 180 participants from 45 organisations in 30 countries, the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), academia and think tanks took part in the virtual dialogue throughout the week, which was co-hosted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI). The theme for the annual forum was ***Framing Peace Operations in a Changing Global Landscape***. Drawing on presentations from senior UN officials, current and former UN mission leaders, experts, researchers, and working group discussions, this first virtual forum provided a platform to examine existing challenges to peace operations, exchange views and discuss recommendations to ensure peace operations remain positioned to adapt to the changed needs on the ground.

The virtual nature of the 2020 Annual Forum served as an ongoing reminder of the global challenges which continued to shape peace operations. At the field level, missions were required to adapt and operate amidst a global pandemic. While peace operations worked to mitigate the risks from Covid-19 in mission environments, the pandemic also highlighted the fractures within the multilateral system, with an ongoing shift in the balance of power at the global level and increasing polarisation among different communities and countries. Such divisions continued to have an impact on the way the UN Security Council and Secretariat, AU, regional organisations, and Member States negotiated and reached agreement on the deployment and operation of peace operations.

This year's Annual Forum set out to examine how to sustain effective peace operations within this changing global landscape. It explored these issues through a series of online plenary sessions with a range of speakers including Ministers, current and former officials from the UN and AU, as well as three cumulative dialogues managed by each of the co-hosts which focused on: the AU-UN partnership (ISS); peacebuilding and sustaining peace (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia); and the performance and effectiveness of peace operations (NUPI). The overarching purpose of these online consultations was to identify opportunities to strengthen collective engagement and political support to improve peace operations.

The key objective of the 2020 virtual Challenges Annual Forum was to formulate concrete policy recommendations on 'how' to reform peace operations in this global context, while also identifying which actors would be best positioned to take forward such reforms.

Recommendations

This report captures the discussions and recommendations that emerged throughout the virtual forum. In some instances, these recommendations may mirror existing requests or 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, regional organisations and processes, or implement domestically); Security Council (through mandates and thematic resolutions); and other international organisations working in partnership on peace operations with the UN (AU Peace and Security Council); UN Secretariat or AU Commission (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).

Plenary: Utilising the Full Spectrum of Peace Operations and Primacy of Politics

Peace operations are delivered by partnerships. All stakeholders involved in peace operations need to continue to provide political support for missions and coordinate with other actors on the ground to support efforts to build and sustain peace. Key recommendations included:

1. **Strengthen the senior mission leadership appointment process.** The Secretary-General should appoint a panel of former Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and senior mission leaders to identify and appoint future senior mission leaders. The Secretary-General's efforts to appoint SRSGs and senior mission leaders is politicised by member state interests and has resulted in significant delays.[1]

2. **Develop more structured peacekeeping mandates with a focus on strategic objectives.** Many existing peacekeeping mandates are cumbersome to interpret, including too many operational details thereby limiting the decision-making and flexibility of the mission leadership team. Security Council members should model new peacekeeping mission mandates on more structured and strategic approaches.[2]

3. **Provide political support for women's engagement in peace processes.** Even when there are quotas for women's engagement in peace processes, women are not always being meaningfully engaged and given an opportunity to influence such processes. The Security Council and field missions should monitor the implementation of these quotas and ensure that women can participate and influence such processes, including by engaging directly with women involved in the relevant process.

4. **Identify the actors that are undermining peace operations.** The Secretary-General should explicitly identify actors that are undermining the ability of peace operations to carry out their mandates or acting as spoilers to the peace process (e.g. those violating sanctions or deploying mercenaries).

5. **Undertake a political economy analysis.** The political economy is a driver of peace and conflict. Public financial management is a key element of sustaining peace. Working with country teams and other partners, peace operations should develop an analysis of the political economy and challenges to public financial management in the host country, to understand the long-term drivers of conflict and opportunities to support partners to address them.

1 The Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) recommended that '[T]he Secretary-General should establish an ad hoc independent group of former senior field leaders to hold informal discussions with potential candidates for mission leadership, ensure that they understand the requirements and demands of the role and advise him or her on their suitability to be considered for mission leadership, prior to formal Secretariat interviews', see UN Document A/70/95-S/2015/446, p.83-84.

2 The A4P Declaration includes a commitment for "clear, focused, sequenced, prioritized and achievable mandates by the Security Council" (paragraph 5).

Dialogue Strand 1: AU-UN Partnership in Peace Operations

The AU-UN partnership is essential for the delivery of peace operations on the African continent. Yet there is a need for a much better understanding of the political role and ambitions of the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the AU and the UN. There is scope in these partnerships for greater synergies which focus on complementarity, rather than hierarchy. Key recommendations included:

6. **Identify joint approaches for conflict prevention and emerging security situations.** The UN Security Council and AU Peace and Security Council should meet as early as possible when a situation of concern develops to identify options moving forward. To support such engagement, both organs need to encourage synergies that foster a better division of labour at strategic and operational levels, including through better harmonisation of agendas, joint analysis and mission design, and implementation of communiques and decisions.

7. **Facilitate secondments and training opportunities between both organisations.** The UN Secretariat and AU Commission should explore options for joint training, particularly for senior mission leadership. Secondments could ameliorate the differences in capacities between AU Peace and Security Council and UN Security Council and facilitate mutual understanding of how the two institutions work, their roles and comparative advantages. It could also promote shared views and ensure the presence of a counterpart on "each side of the fence" to move cooperation forward.

8. **Examine the role of and engagement with the RECs as part of the AU-UN partnership and decision-making processes.** While much has been done on the AU-UN partnership, the relationship and decision-making processes between the AU and RECs, and the UN and RECs, has received much less attention. This triangular relationship needs to be enhanced at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. The UN Secretariat, AU Commission and think tanks should facilitate further dialogue and study about the role of the RECs when it comes to the AU-UN partnership and peace operations.

9. **Enhance entry points on cross-cutting issues.** The AU and UN should identify areas where cooperation and collaboration can be further enhanced on different thematic issues, such as gender, youth, and DDR.

10. **Utilise the role of the A3 to advance African common positions in the Security Council.** The three African members of the Security Council (A3) have a central role in enhancing the relationship between the AU, RECs and UN. Through greater coordination and engagement, they can serve as an informal and influential bridge between the two Councils.

Dialogue Strand 2:
Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in Peace Operations

Peace operations need to more comprehensively deliver on efforts to build and sustain peace. For peace operations to become more people-centred, they do not require new mandates or resources, but rather, a shift in mindset at the leadership level, and organisational change. There is also a need for greater system leadership on peacebuilding coordination. Key recommendations included:

11. **Identify options to improve engagement with host communities.** The Security Council, Secretariat and think tanks should analyse and identify options for how peace operations can better respond and engage with people and communities, in addition to state institutions. This could include informal advisory boards comprised of local community leaders to truly orient missions towards people-centred peacebuilding either at the mission headquarters level or the heads of regional offices level.

12. **Deliver context-specific approaches in support of women, peace and security** Senior mission leadership and field missions should ensure that efforts to implement and strengthen women, peace and security in missions are context-specific, drawing on the reflections and needs of diverse women in the community.

13. **Build the capacity of youth to influence peacebuilding processes.** Senior mission leadership and field missions should identify and focus efforts on building the capacity of youth through community engagement and peacebuilding activities and encourage the UN Security Council to engage with representatives from civil society, including through informal and formal briefings.

14. **Foster a national dialogue and good governance initiatives.** Peace operations need to harmonise people-centered and state-centered approaches to address growing inequalities. This could take the form of a new social contract or national dialogue between state actors and the local population. The policing component has a particularly important role in fostering engagement between state actors and the local population in their area of operations.

15. **Leverage the role of the Peacebuilding Commission.** This should include continued briefings by the Chair of the PBC and PBC country-specific configurations to the Security Council where the country is the host of a peace operation. The Security Council should also leverage the advisory role of the Peacebuilding Commission as part of its consultations, including its work in advocating more strongly for gender-responsive peacebuilding. Furthermore, member states sitting on both the PBC and Security Council need to demonstrate greater political coherence in their approach to peacebuilding, and particularly efforts to coordinate the work of both bodies.

16. **Develop more innovative funding mechanisms.** The UN, regional organisations, International Financial Institutions and think tanks should explore options for innovative funding mechanisms to support peacebuilding activities, including programmatic funding, scaling up support to UNCTs during transitions, as well as south-south and triangular cooperation.

Dialogue Strand 3:
Performance and Effectiveness of Peace Operations

Understanding the factors that make peace operations effective is critical to ongoing efforts to strengthen mission performance. It can also facilitate ongoing political support for peace operations and their efforts to deliver on peace. Key recommendations included:

17. **Strengthen the culture of continuous learning in peace operations.** Peace operations continue to evolve and need to be responsive to events and developments that affect their ability to deliver on mission mandates. The Secretariat should strengthen a culture of continuous learning in peace operations, drawing on the work being undertake as part of Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS), which has the potential to deliver data and lessons that can assist missions to innovate and try new approaches.

18. **Utilise independent reviews, research, and data to shape mission mandates.** In addition to the independent reviews commissioned by the UN Secretary-General, there are a range of research studies and pieces of analysis undertaken by think tanks and researchers which draw directly on engagement with the local communities and peacekeepers in the field. Security Council members should draw on these independent studies and engage in an evidence-based dialogue more regularly to support the drafting of mandates. Field missions and member states should engage with researchers to present on their data and analysis, particularly when there are opportunities to draw on their findings to influence decision-making processes.

19. **Share CPAS data with a range of internal and external stakeholders.** Field missions and the Secretariat should share CPAS data within the broad UN family to inform political decisions at the strategic level, and the broader peacekeeping partnership to assist Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) and their leadership to improve the quality of their contributions.

20. **Utilise digital technologies and data to make peace operations more adaptive.** The Secretariat should utilise digital technologies and advanced data tools to provide more regular real-time updates and as a potential predictive tool, and ensure it is effectively staffed with expertise to manage data analytics. This will require a cultural shift towards data-driven approaches.

21. **Undertake analysis of the performance of the bodies which deploy peace operations.** One of the key factors determining the effectiveness of peace operations is the degree of political will among partners and the UN Security Council (UNSC), although this isn't something peace operations control. The impact of these political processes needs to be better assessed, by researchers and think tanks.

22. **Develop tools to assess the whole effort in a conflict-affected country.** While there are ongoing processes to examine the role of different peace operations, partners and actors, these are siloed. They are an incomplete picture of overall change and effectiveness for a country and host communities. There is a need for researchers and think tanks to undertake analysis of the whole effort to build and sustain peace in a country, in order to identify lessons.

Introduction

The Challenges Annual Forum 2020 was hosted virtually from 7-11 December 2020. More than 180 participants from 23 countries, the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), regional organisations, academia and think tanks took part in the virtual dialogue during the week, which was co-hosted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI). The theme for the annual forum was ***Framing Peace Operations in a Changing Global Landscape***. Drawing on presentations from senior UN officials, current and former UN mission leaders, experts, researchers, and working group discussions, this first virtual forum provided a platform to examine existing challenges to peace operations, exchange views and discuss recommendations to ensure peace operations remain positioned to adapt to the changed needs on the ground. This report offers a summary of the discussions that took place as part of the Annual Forum.

Peace operations demonstrated their flexibility despite the challenges presented by Covid-19 throughout 2020. Although Covid-19 hastened the speed of political polarisation globally and challenged the nature of multilateral cooperation, peace operations continued to deliver on their mandates across the globe throughout the year. In a year when the UN commemorated 75 years since its establishment, it adapted to work virtually with partners to adopt mandates in the Security Council and deliver training, while also working with troop- and police-contibuting countries to ensure that personnel continued to rotate through missions. Peace operations continued to show that they remained a flexible tool to respond to a range of emerging security challenges.

The 2020 Annual Forum set out to examine how to sustain effective peace operations in this changing global context. While the evolving global landscape presents many challenges, it also provides opportunities to transform peace operations to deliver better and adapt to changing needs on the ground. As the concept note for the forum set out, the pandemic risks undoing decades of peace and development dividends, which may result in a higher demand for peace operations in the future. In this context, participants at the forum sought to formulate recommendations on how peace operations can deliver in this changing global context and adapt quickly to changing needs on the ground.

The report is divided into five sections, with the first and last sections (Chapters 1 and 5) examining the findings and key recommendations emerging during the public plenary discussions. The remaining sections examine the findings from the three cumulative 'dialogue strands' that were convened throughout the virtual Forum on the topics of AU-UN Partnerships in Peace Operations (Chapter 2), Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in Peace Operations (Chapter 3) and Performance and Effectiveness of Peace Operations (Chapter 4). In an environment where there is a need for more multilateralism and more cooperation, not less, participants agreed that Challenges Forum offers an important platform for reflection. The table of recommendations captures some of the timely, innovative, and actionable items for consideration by stakeholders and partners.

Top from left: H.E. Mrs Retno L.P. Marsudi, Mr Sven-Eric Söder, Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide, Dr Jakkie Cilliers, Ms Victoria Holt, Ms Marie Louise Baricako, Mr Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Mr Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Mr Volker Türk.

Utilising the full spectrum of peace operations

The opening panel discussion was moderated by Dr Björn Holmberg, Director of the Challenges Forum International Secretariat, with the participation of Mr Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Peace Operations, and Mr Sven-Eric Söder, Director-General of the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden, with statements from H.E. Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, H.E. Ms Retno L.P. Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and Dr Jakkie Cilliers, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa.

This was followed by a High-Level Conversation moderated by Dr Björn Holmberg, Director of the Challenges Forum International Secretariat with Marie Louise Baricako, Chair of the INAMAHORO Movement, Women & Girls for Peace & Security, Member of FEMWISE Africa and African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), former HIPPO Member, Volker Türk, Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination, Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General, Victoria Holt, Vice President, Henry L. Stimson Center, and Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. Discussions in these sessions focused on building political support for peace operations, as well as efforts to advance women, peace and security, and ensure that peace operations are more gender responsive.

The panellists noted that efforts to resolve global conflict, defend human rights and facilitate humanitarian responses continue to face an array of challenges. Despite calls by the UN Secretary-General throughout 2020 for a global ceasefire as Covid-19 continued to ravage the globe, new conflicts continued to emerge throughout the year, including in Nagorno Karabakh and the Tigray region in Ethiopia. Across the globe, the regard for international human rights and International Humanitarian Law has reduced, with state and non-state actors operating with impunity and civilians continuing to bear the brunt of conflict. There are fears that 2021 will result in the worst humanitarian crisis since the UN was founded. Many countries will face the threat of famine in 2021, with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs suggesting that 235 million people will be in need with anticipated increases in extreme poverty in parts of the globe. This is due almost exclusively to Covid-19. As one speaker noted, this is a much tougher environment than what some of the original peace operations were designed to address. But this is also an important area where the Challenges Forum can contribute. At a time when larger countries are questioning the relevance of the UN, innovative thinking is required to look at how we can garner support for the full spectrum of peace operations.

> Covid-19 has highlighted and exacerbated many of the fractures that were emerging in the multilateral system. In the context of peace operations, there have been some positive developments.

Building political support for peace operations

Covid-19 has highlighted and exacerbated many of the fractures that were emerging in the multilateral system. In the context of peace operations, there have been some positive developments. Business continuity was ensured, even though that was not something that could have been assured. Although some field operations and missions were interrupted, the UN was able to deliver despite the pandemic. However, this was not without an impact on peacekeeping missions or the communities where they serve. The UN worked closely with stakeholders to mitigate the spread and risk of Covid-19 spreading in mission environments, with particular attention paid to ensuring that communities were protected and that the health and safety of personnel was carefully managed. Yet the global spread of the pandemic meant most countries were affected. Throughout 2020, more than a thousand peacekeepers contracted Covid-19, with several personnel dying from the virus. Covid-19 is also likely to have a longer-term impact on security globally. With many countries affected significantly by Covid-19, some states are likely to retreat from the international system whereas others may require peace operations to resolve instability and conflict. For instance, in Africa, it is likely to take several years for many countries to recover from Covid-19, due to contractions of local economies. Consequently, instability is likely to increase, as will demand for outside assistance. The pandemic has highlighted the evolving nature of global security at many levels.

For peace operations, a lack of genuine political will continue to remain an impediment to mission effectiveness. Political solutions must be at the heart of peace operations. This is something that was highlighted by the HIPPO report, yet it remains a challenge for many peace operations to deliver on. Part of the challenge is that peace operations require ongoing political support from different stakeholders to fulfil their mandates. Different partnerships and coalitions are required. These include partnerships with organisations such as the African Union, European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Organisation for American States (OAS), as well as the UN. In the context of Colombia, Latin American countries have been very involved through the OAS, providing observers, and investing in the peace process from day one. They will continue to play an important role in any transition process. Nonetheless, regional responses are not necessarily a panacea for addressing political concerns, as they are not always united in providing support. Political support therefore needs to be tailored to each context.

In addition to political support, the efforts of peace operations need to be as coordinated as possible with other actors on the ground, drawing on the different

comparative advantages that each organisation or mission brings to the situation. While efforts to strengthen coordination under the 'One UN' system have made some progress, the system still needs to get better at linking up its different lines of work on peace, security, and development, bringing together the UN Country Teams, peacebuilding entities and those working on the Sustainable Development Goals. Part of the challenge here for the senior mission leadership in peace operations is navigating how to lead different systems where you may not necessarily have control.

Demonstrating effectiveness is one way that peace operations are likely to garner greater support within the international community, but that is also contingent on strong engagement among stakeholders on the political front. Panellists agreed that the international community knows what needs to be done to strengthen the effectiveness and performance of peace operations. It is laid out in various research studies and plans of action including Secretary-General's reports, the HIPPO report, and A4P. Missions need integrated and evidence-driven analysis, they need to be prepared for different scenarios, and they need nimble and adaptable configurations. Focus need to be on continued implementation, with the political support of stakeholders.

However, peace operations require big thinking and creativity as well. For instance, using renewable energy in missions can act as a catalyst for economic development and sustainable peace, but that requires more creative approaches to the way missions currently operate. Similarly, there is scope for more partnerships with International Financial Institutions, but missions need to be positioned to work effectively with other entities. Peace operations can deliver, but they need to focus on their area of added value and how to work most effectively with other partners to leverage the advantages that they bring.

Advancing women, peace and security

Over the last twenty years, peace operations have provided a vehicle to progress and implement several aspects of the WPS agenda. For instance, the promotion of greater involvement of women in political efforts, at national and local levels. This is crucial if peace operations are to follow through on their objectives to build peaceful solutions that are more sustainable and accepted. Some peace agreements and processes now have quotas for women's participation (e.g. Mali, the Central African Republic and South Sudan). This is a positive step, however more work is required to ensure that women are engaged meaningfully as part of these processes, rather than simply being pushed to the margins. The Security Council needs to engage and provide more political support to these efforts as well. Missions are working to get women registered as voters and as candidates in electoral processes. The African Union is also engaged with its support for the WPS agenda. This needs a push, however, from the UNSC and various deliberative bodies. But it also needs the support of the constituency in terms of funding. Voluntary funding can make a huge difference in bringing resources to key activities in support of WPS.

> For political support for WPS to be sustained, there is also a need for more gender-responsive leadership, and for this to be integrated across the work of a peace operation.

For political support for WPS to be sustained, there is also a need for more gender-responsive leadership, and for this to be integrated across the work of a peace operation.

For political support for WPS to be sustained, there is also a need for more gender-responsive leadership, and for this to be integrated across the work of a peace operation. For instance, in the Colombian peace agreement, there were more than 100 provisions on gender. There was a focus on the reintegration of women who are ex-combatants. There was also acknowledgement that there can be risks for women leaders and women human rights defenders in these settings. It is important to be clear on the role of peace operations in these contexts and ensure that women are involved at every stage in the process. Peace operations need to work with communities to understand the challenges that women are facing, and how they might be able to work together to address them. Such solutions need to be driven from the community, with a diverse representation of women involved, with the support of mission leadership and other actors on the ground. Important to involve the community from the start. Women need to be involved.

One dimension of this engagement has been the continuous efforts to increase the number of women serving in peace operations. As one panellist noted, women in peace operations are important as their participation contribute to greater diversity and overall mission effectiveness. But several speakers noted that it is also important from a human rights and equality perspective. The adoption of the first standalone resolution on women in peacekeeping in August 2020—under Indonesia's presidency—was an important development. In that resolution, the Security Council committed again to working with member states, including troop- and police-contibuting countries, to increase the number of women serving in peace operations, while also encouraging ongoing efforts to address the barriers to their participation. The adoption of a presidential text—which was co-sponsored by all members of the Council—represented a departure from the adoption of other recent WPS resolutions, which have been contentious due to differences over other aspects of the WPS agenda.

Efforts to increase the participation of women in peace operations have had some progress in recent years. The number of women serving as police officers and military officers are now on target and in line with the goals set by the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, however more work is required to reach the targets set for formed units. This requires the Secretariat to continue its advocacy with member states and encourage them to provide female candidates as part of formed units. It also requires domestic reforms within security institutions to increase the pool of female candidates and ensure that women have equal opportunities to deploy to peacekeeping missions. But there is also a need to address women's needs in missions, including juggling their family responsibilities and ensuring they have access to medical services and gender-sensitive facilities.

Dialogue strand 1:
AU-UN partnership in peace operations

The AU-UN partnership strand focused on how to strengthen the partnership between the AU and UN in peace operations, while also examining what lessons can be learned (if any) from the partnership for other regional organisations. The discussion was framed by introductory remarks from the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa, which took the lead in facilitating the discussion.[3]

Strategic and operational role of different actors in the partnership

The political partnership between the AU and UN has grown in understanding and collaboration in recent decades. It has moved from an idea on paper to a whole of system engagement. It is a partnership that remains essential for the delivery of peace operations on the African continent. This continues to demonstrate itself in a range of mission environments, where the AU and its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) work with the UN to deliver on mandates, including in present contexts such as Sudan and Somalia. Similarly, more than 70% of the UN Security Council agenda is focused on Africa.

Nonetheless, the partnership continues to grapple with a range of challenges due to different institutional cultures, approaches to strategy, and different budgetary and accounting processes. For instance, the AU and RECs are more willing to deploy more robust peace operations than the UN in many cases, meaning there is a tendency to rely on regional organisations to deploy into more challenging security environments. The partnership between the AU and UN is even further complicated in environments where different actors are delivering peacebuilding, as the institutions do not align as clearly. There is broad agreement that African leadership and ownership on issues pertaining to Africa is a precondition for a successful AU-UN partnership. However, it is less clear to what extent the AU and UN are viewed as 'peers', with the AU often viewed as the less influential or 'junior partner'.

At the strategic level, the AU-UN relationship is institutionalised with regular annual meetings between Council members. More recently, these have focused on strategic issues, including developments in South Sudan and the political agreement in the Central African Republic. The AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) has a broader mandate than the UN Security Council, as it also includes a more extensive peacebuilding role (which overlaps to some extent with the UN's Peacebuilding Commission). This offers opportunities for the UNSC and PBC to learn from. At the strategic level, there are a range of mechanisms including the AU-UN Annual Conference, which brings together high-level officials including the Secretary-General and AU Commission Chairperson each year. There were differing views among participants as to whether there was a need for greater engagement between the UNSC and AU PSC at the strategic level, or whether the focus should be directed on enhancing operational partnerships.

There is considerable scope to enhance the partnership further at the operational and tactical levels. In the context of mission environments, this is an area where the UN Country Team (UNCT) can play a critical role, bringing together different actors and stakeholders across the peace, security, and development spectrum. There is also scope to further enhance cooperation between the AU and UN at the

3 See Gustavo de Carvalho and Priyal Singh, Partnerships and Peace Operations in Africa: Pursuing better UN-AU relations, Challenges Forum Background Paper, December 2020.

tactical level, particularly through the collaboration and engagement of different stakeholders on thematic issues, such as gender, youth and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR).

While there has been considerable focus on the AU-UN partnership, there has been less examination of the relationship with Regional Economic Communities (RECs), despite their role in leading and supporting peace operations. Participants suggested that the relationship with RECs on the African continent, as well as ad-hoc coalitions, require further exploration and examination, particularly in the context of emerging ad hoc security coalitions (such as the G5 Sahel Force). There has been a significant shift in the last few years with the establishment of UN regional offices in Central and West Africa, which have 'acted as catalysts' for engagement. These offices have facilitated engagement with the AU and the RECs. However, despite this progress, the potential integration of RECs has not been fully realised as part of the partnership.

> Strengthening and clarifying the mutual character of the relationship between the UN Security Council and AU Peace and Security Council is particularly important to encourage synergy and decrease tension.

Formal versus informal engagement mechanisms

Strengthening and clarifying the mutual character of the relationship between the UN Security Council and AU Peace and Security Council is particularly important to encourage synergy and decrease tension. It is important to support the partnership with a more consistent and frequent dialogue. In this regard, participants noted the need for exploring further formal mechanisms to facilitate this strategic relationship and agree on division of labour at the strategic and operational level. Through the better use of technology, regular virtual meetings at the working level could complement the annual high-level in person meetings. In addition, the AU Deputy Commissioner, Panel of the Wise, and AU Mission to the UN in New York are key resources for expanding the level of engagement.

There is scope to innovate and explore a range of formal and informal mechanisms to strengthen the AU-UN partnership even further. At the strategic level, formal and informal interaction between the UN special envoys and the special envoys and representatives in regional and sub-regional organisations are important in creating political and strategic synergy, which mutually reinforces the political leverage. At the working level in the various secretariats, there is scope for greater collaboration, which can help bridge the different institutional cultures. Some participants suggested that secondments between the AU and UN could ameliorate the differences in capacities between the AU Commission and UN Secretariat. Such initiatives could also promote shared views and ensure the presence of a counterpart on 'each side of the fence' and provide a range of different views to move cooperation forward. In the case of the UN, such exchanges could draw not only on staff in the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), but also those serving in the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA), UN Development Program (UNDP) and UN Country Teams (UNCT). Additionally, joint training between officials of both organisations could also facilitate greater engagement and relationship building. For instance, at the leadership level, the UN Senior Mission Leaders' Course and other leadership programs could be extended to include the participation of potential AU leaders and officials.

Informal engagement also takes place largely at the member state level through the role of the three non-permanent African representatives on the UN Security Council (the 'A3'). The potential role of the A3 in leveraging further engagement and partnerships between the AU and UN remains underexplored. For instance, some participants suggested that the A3 could represent the interests of respective RECs during informal briefings or consultations taking place on the Council. While these would not necessarily be formal mechanisms, they would nonetheless represent an opportunity to draw on a wider range of views. Similarly, informal mechanisms such as 'Groups of Friends' and the work of various civil society actors could be coordinated in New York and Addis Ababa to support the partnership and engage with a wider range of views about how to bridge the

The CFIS team, dedicated to lead the virtual event from the Stockholm office.

gaps and cultural differences between the two organisations. Some participants recommended that the President of the UNSC and Chairperson of the AU PSC should have informal meetings at the start their terms to harmonize their agenda and develop the relationship further.

Towards a more enduring partnership

There is no doubt that funding will remain a key obstacle to building a more comprehensive partnership between the AU and UN when it comes to deploying peace operations, or the 'Achilles Heel' in the relationship. There are concerns that the AU is doing the UN's heavy lifting, creating an ongoing reluctance by some within the AU to support the UN in the absence of more sustainable funding support. While some participants acknowledged that the change in US presidential administration may open opportunities to further progress the discussion on sustainable and predictable funding, discussions in this dialogue strand focused on some of the other areas where the effort can be invested in building a more sustainable and predictable partnership between the UN and AU.

One area of opportunity that was highlighted focused on the strategic convergence of priorities on cross-cutting issues. For instance, the different complementarities between the AU and UN on issues such as women, peace and security, and youth, peace and security. The work in progressing these agendas could offer opportunities to harmonise AU-UN capacity building efforts, including those targeted at gender mainstreaming and WPS. Again, these avenues offer another opportunity to work closely with civil society organisations, which may further bridge the gap between organisations and facilitate relationships and partnerships at different levels. Similarly, UN Country Teams can also offer a platform to facilitate more sustained engagement, given their links with civil society organisations across the globe. Joint analysis, mission design and programming are also important entry points for improved and continuous maintenance of partnership in a sustained manner moving forward. With a shared analysis of the situation and common understanding of what each can achieve, there is a stronger likelihood of delivering effectively. Ultimately, member states will need to continue to drive the partnership and urge the Secretariats of the UN and AU to continue to work closely together.

Dialogue strand 2:
Peacebuilding and sustaining peace in peace operations

The peacebuilding and sustaining peace strand focused on how peacebuilding efforts can best adapt to the changing global landscape and how peace operations operating along a continuum with longer-term peacebuilding can optimise their impact on the ground.[4] The discussion was framed by introductory remarks from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which took the lead in facilitating the discussion.

Elevating peacebuilding as part of peace operations

Building on the 2015 Peacebuilding Architecture Review and HIPPO report, as well as the adoption of twin resolutions on sustaining peace in 2016, member states have supported efforts at headquarters to bring greater coherence to the UN's approach to peacebuilding. These have included lending support to widespread reforms of the development system, empowered roles for Resident Coordinators in the field, as well as enhanced roles for the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Peacebuilding and sustaining peace are also one of eight key priority areas of the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Agenda. However, despite this widespread political support, member states have not been consistent in their support for bringing greater political coherence and system-wide approaches to peacebuilding efforts. Peacebuilding is still often an afterthought in the mandating of peace operations, or only considered seriously when missions are beginning to transition. And even if member states are advocates of a greater focus on peacebuilding, they may not consistently demonstrate this approach across different UN bodies. For instance, member states sitting on both the PBC and Security Council need to demonstrate greater political coherence in their approach to peacebuilding, and particularly efforts to coordinate the work of both bodies. But this is not always the case.

To strengthen the implementation of peacebuilding tasks as part of operations, considerations around sustaining peace need to be incorporated at the earliest stages of mission assessments, planning and mandate design. This needs to include robust peace and conflict analyses—which includes consideration of gender and youth dimensions—and be linked to political processes. This is imperative to ensuring that missions are supported by adequate resources to deliver on such tasks. It requires integrated planning from a range of different actors, including those that may fall outside the standard planning processes, but that will nonetheless have an important role in supporting the peace operation to deliver on its mandate. From the outset, stakeholders need to consider the desired end state when the peace operation departs and work backwards to identify what steps are required to reach that end state. This requires a focus on peacebuilding from the beginning of the mission, rather than as a stepping-stone to an exit strategy. Only then will peacebuilding and sustaining peace be fully implemented into the work of peace operations in a sustainable way.

4 See Sarah Abdelgelil, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in Peace Operations: Focusing on impact in the field, Challenges Forum Background Paper, December 2020.

People-centred resilience inclusive of women and youth

For peace operations to be truly people-centred, they need to bridge the divide between state institutions and the local population. For too long, peace operations have focused their engagement almost exclusively on state institutions, to court their ongoing support for the peace operation. Working with host state counterparts can often appear comparatively easier than understanding the complexity of different local conflicts and concerns. However, such approaches are only likely to bring about short-term solutions. Peace operations need to engage in these top-down approaches, but they need to be supported by a range of 'bottom-up' engagement programs that work to empower and include the local populations in efforts to build peace, rather than simply focusing on the elites in the country.

The policing component can act as an important bridge in this regard. Community policing activities offer an important vehicle for engaging with host state counterparts in the technical aspects of peacebuilding, while supporting their engagement with local communities to understand their concerns and needs. Some of the community oriented policing activities in northern and central Mali provide a good example of these approaches.

Efforts by peace operations to focus on people-centred resilience also need to recognise the different needs and requirements of individuals in the community, particularly those that are part of groups that have traditionally been marginalised or overlooked as part of peace processes. This is particularly true of women and youth, although applies to many other different minority groups. There is a strong need to ensure that women and youth are considered throughout the continuum of peace operations. There are a range of different tools for missions to draw on in delivering such support, including through the PBC and PBF, such as the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives of the Peacebuilding Fund. While women and youth may be referred to collectively as overlooked groups that need to be consulted, it is important to remember that their needs and their agency are often quite different, based on the different structures of power, influence, and access to resources in society. The Youth, Peace and Security agenda –captured through the adoption of three Security Council resolutions—has highlighted the importance of peace operations more systemically engaging with youth in their countries of operation. Missions need to consider opportunities to work with partners to support youth entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, which are essential to building resilience across constituencies of the population that are key to ongoing peace and stability.

Missions also need to orient their accountability and operational culture towards the local population. Although missions report regularly to the Security Council and UN Secretariat in New York, or the AU PSC and Commission in Addis Ababa, they are ultimately responsible to the people they are serving in the host communities; those that they may be mandated to protect and work together with to build and sustain peace. This requires missions to focus on addressing issues of social cohesion and grievances, rather than focusing solely on the technical aspects of peacebuilding. It requires an understanding of the peace and conflict drivers in the country, and how they might be addressed or mitigated. Many of these elements may not be effectively picked up in peacekeeping mandates. Participants suggested that missions could consider informal advisory or sounding boards comprised of local community leaders to truly orient missions towards people-centred peacebuilding. Furthermore, missions could encourage the Security Council to hear from local representatives – including women, youth and other actors. Such efforts would further encourage the Security Council to consider how they are putting people at the centre of the discussion.

Operationalising peacebuilding with relevant instruments and actors

Peacebuilding is undertaken by a plethora of actors in different mission environments, including the UN, regional organisations, civil society organisations and non-government organisations. Understanding what these different actors bring to the table, and how they contribute to efforts to address the drivers of peace and conflict in a mission environment, is an ongoing challenge for senior mission leadership. It is also a challenge for member states, who lack agreement on the extent to which peace operations should play a role in peacebuilding or fail to understand its potential catalytic role. This is further compounded by a lack of clarity within peace operations on their core role in

sustaining and building peace. This can create confusion, and may mean that different organisations are not leveraging and building on the comparative advantages of others to support a more coherent approach to sustaining and building peace. With responsibility so widely dispersed, accountability becomes an ongoing challenge.

There is scope for the UN Security Council to be more engaged on the peacebuilding aspects in peace operations. Some participants noted that this is an area that remains largely underexplored, despite the potential of the Council to have an important and influential role, and work closely with other actors such as the PBC and PBF. A more coherent approach in the Council could also facilitate and put pressure on different parts of the Secretariat to build a more analytical capacity within the UN to enable the provision of smart, targeted and prioritised support to peacebuilding efforts on the ground. Efforts underway within the UN to analyse and manage data on peacekeeping effectiveness may also provide an entry-point for greater engagement in assessing progress on different peacebuilding tasks.

Efforts to operationalise peacebuilding within peace operations also require a focus on the role of the UN Country Team. The UNCT serves as an important point of continuity throughout the deployment of a peace operation and is an essential resource for engaging with host communities and constituencies in support of peacebuilding efforts. More work is required to examine how UNCTs could be scaled up during times of transition, when a greater range of peacebuilding functions might need to be temporarily assumed by other actors to support countries at these critical turning points.

Discussions in this dialogue strand also focused on the idea of 'good peacebuilding donorship'. In other words, how do we ensure that funding and financing is directed at the peacebuilding tasks that require support and are likely to provide sustainable outcomes on the ground. Several participants noted the recommitment and pledging conference in January 2021 for the Peacebuilding Fund as a potential opportunity to member states to demonstrate their commitment to the sustaining peace agenda. Funding remains an important but poorly understood tool for catalysing peacebuilding in different mission environments. It needs to be better understood through the lens of the local population. Innovative funding mechanisms to support peacebuilding activities, including programmatic funding, as well as south-south and triangular cooperation, also need to be explored further.

Dialogue strand 3:
Performance and effectiveness of peace operations

The performance and effectiveness of peace operations dialogue strand reflected on effective mandate implementation and how the global landscape is affecting the performance of peace operations. The discussion was framed by introductory remarks and the background paper from the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI), which took the lead in facilitating discussion.[5]

Measuring the effectiveness of peace operations

In recent years there has been a substantive focus on the delivery and performance of peace operations. This focus has been driven partly by political pressure from member states to reduce the overall costs of UN peacekeeping. But it has also been compounded by the length and duration of some peacekeeping missions, which in some instances have been in place for decades, with no clear sense of the strategic direction of the mission or what plans are in place for its eventual exit. In other words, what end state are peace operations trying to achieve? The well-publicised failures of some missions to deliver on their mandate to protect civilians have contributed to pressure to examine the overall effectiveness of peace operations. These factors were among some of the reasons that the Security Council adopted a thematic resolution focused exclusively on peacekeeping performance in September 2018 (resolution 2436), and why performance is one of the eight thematic areas of the A4P Agenda.

Having a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the effectiveness and overall performance of peace operations is important in garnering more political support for peace operations.[6] However, there is considerable scope to better quantify, demonstrate and communicate the effectiveness of peace operations. Various research findings conclude that peace operations contribute significantly to preventing civil war, but do not end conflicts on their own; that peace operations have a high cumulative positive impact on longer-term economic and development; peace operations have been most successful when accompanied by strong political support ; and most peace operations are state-centric, rather than people-focused; but that peace operations also have not met international and local expectations (particularly when it comes to protecting civilians).

Importantly, effectiveness needs to be measured in the context of larger efforts to resolve conflict and transition to peace. Peace operations cannot be judged on their ability to achieve their own mandated objectives. Digital technologies offer an opportunity to input and share real-time data in

5 Cedric de Coning and Jenny Nortvedt, Performance of Peace Operations, Challenges Forum Background Paper, December 2020.

6 This is something that the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) has attempted to address. By working collaboratively with more than 40 research institutions to qualitatively analyse the effectiveness of peace operations with a common methodology, the network has undertaken analysis on the effectiveness of missions in contexts such as South Sudan, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. EPON defines effectiveness 'as the overall strategic impact of a peace operation, understood as reducing conflict dynamics in the area of operation over a particular period of time, in the context of its mandate and resources'.

these contexts (which is something that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System is utilising). However, for such technologies to work effectively, there is also a need to have a workforce that is qualified in handling and managing data. If such capabilities were better harnessed, then digital technologies can become a more predictive tool for missions and may better enabled decision-makers to act. Furthermore, data and information can also be used to bring together stakeholders in missions and those working with them, to work towards a common goal.

> The Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) launched in 2018. It allows missions to adjust their activities in response to the data that has been collected and how it impacts performance.

Utilising the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) launched in 2018. It allows missions to adjust their activities in response to the data that has been collected and how it impacts performance. It is contributing to heightened awareness in peace operations of why peace operations are taking actions, and how they contribute to overall shared goals. The data from CPAS is expected to improve for evidence-based information sharing and reporting by the SRSG and mission leadership. However, this will continue to require the support of senior mission leadership to ensure that CPAS is being utilised. Cultural change is also needed within missions to enable quicker 'buy-in'. There are examples of where this has happened. For instance, the Force Commander in MINUSMA was shown CPAS results and decided to align Force Commander Evaluations with CPAS for a more synchronised picture of the military component.

There is also scope for CPAS data to be utilised more comprehensively across mission environments and by a greater range of stakeholders. It has dispelled the myth that peacekeeping performance was just something directed at the military component in a mission. For CPAS to be utilised more effectively, missions should be allowed to share information with other stakeholders for better political decisions at the strategic level and across the UN system. CPAS has potential to systematise and map different actors and processes across missions. There is a degree of harmonisation across missions in terms of approach and measuring different metrics in a more methodological manner, enabling analysis of larger sets of data in different mission contexts. CPAS also have the potential to inform on progress and prompt course corrections, however this requires the ongoing support and commitment of mission personnel to engage with the system.

The collection of real-time data through CPAS has also raised some questions about the need for clarity about how the data is going to be utilised and fed into the Security Council mandating process, given the levels of interest among member states in wanting to understand what is happening in the field. It is generally understood that Secretary-General's reports are watered down considerably as part of the UN clearance process, meaning they provide limited value to member states when assessing what changes may be required to mission mandates. CPAS could complement the Secretary-General's reports and provide input into the mandating process. It could also provide a tool for the Secretariat and senior mission leadership to brief the Security Council, based on data, in a format that is much more difficult to dispute, given that it is based more clearly on evidence-based reporting. Furthermore, CPAS could be used as a tool to support troop- and police-contibuting countries, by providing feedback to leadership and contingents on their contributions, and how they can be strengthened.

Developing a culture of evaluation, research, and analysis

Discussions in this dialogue strand also focused on the need to strengthen a culture of analysis and transparency in peace operations to support strengthened performance and effectiveness. There are a plethora of different researchers and organisations undertaking analysis on the ground, looking at the implementation of the mandates of peace operations and their overall contribution to sustaining peace (although many of these research projects have gone virtual throughout 2020). These projects can offer real value to member states, particularly

those in the Security Council that are engaged in mandating processes. External research often speaks truth to power and can lead to more focused discussions about the changes required in peace operations. However, there is scope to better utilise and draw on these findings as part of the mandating process.

Some participants suggested that member states could engage more strategically with researchers on their findings ahead of mandate renewals. This would enable them to hear directly about developments taking place in missions, as well as a range of views on what implications these are likely to have on the mission's overall performance. Similarly, the Secretariat could also consider incorporating some of these independent research findings into their reporting to member states, offering scope to 'validate' findings from multiple sources, or even developing more strategic partnerships with research organisations. But part of this responsibility also rests with researchers, who need to circulate and share their research findings. Mission personnel and the missions often provide support to researchers conducting field visits, but they do not necessarily receive the findings, sometimes even if requested.

The culture of learning also needs to extend to how missions engage with the communities that they serve in the field. Several participants noted the importance of missions seeking feedback and engaging with NGOs and researchers undertaking surveys of the host communities, in order to seek their views and perceptions on how the mission is delivering, and whether this meets their expectations. This is critical to any people-centred approach by a peace operation.

Top from left: Dr Björn Holmberg, Mr Rolliansyah Soemirat, Dr Cedric de Coning, Ms Annette Leijenaar, Mr Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Mr Ian Martin, Ms Karin Landgren, Amb. Said Djinnit.

Conclusion: Peace operations in a changing global landscape

The concluding high-level panel discussion was moderated by Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Challenges Forum Patron, member of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Mediation, former USG for UN Peacekeeping and former president of the International Crisis Group, with the participation of Ambassador Said Djinnit, Special Advisor ACCORD, former UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, former UN Special Representative for West Africa, and first Commissioner for Peace and Security at the AU, Ms. Karin Landgren, Executive Director Security Council Report, former special representative of the UN Secretary-General in Liberia, Burundi and Nepal, and Mr. Ian Martin, former special representative of the UN Secretary-General in East Timor, Nepal, and Libya, member of the HIPPO review panel.

All the panellists acknowledged that the HIPPO report is still just as relevant today. However, there was a certain irony that no new peacekeeping mission had been established since the HIPPO report (although there have been several special political missions that have had their politics defined for them). Peace operations need to be grounded in political solutions and be people-

centred in their approach, and they need to work with other actors and entities to build institutions and sustain peace. However, peace operations are shaped by the multilateral environment in which they operate, and multilateralism is facing challenges in the current global landscape.

Divisions and polarisation in the Security Council undermine the delivery of clear strategic direction from the Security Council. There is often no shared narrative among the members of the Council, meaning those in the field are hearing different views and national positions, rather than clear advice. There are problems when Security Council members commit themselves to action in the Council, 'then act at odds with that bilaterally' (for instance, breaching Libya sanctions, recognising Western Sahara, or using mercenaries in mission contexts). Several panellists suggested that there would be merit in the Secretary-General calling out those members who are undermining peace operations. However, it was difficult to find a conflict that did not have the involvement of the P5. Reports of the Secretary-General often fail to shed light on these problems, for fear that they will cause offence to member states. Furthermore, interference from different international actors means there is limited room for peace operations to play a particular role.

In most cases, the Security Council does not have to invent a political solution, as peace operations will deploy based on a deal or peace agreement, so the strategic direction has been identified. However, as one panellist noted, there are two problem areas: where there is no original political deal or it has been abandoned; or where Council members compile too much direction, 'too much extraneous matter' into a resolution. The 'spat' over the UNAMA resolution which went from twelve pages to three pages, shows how little language is required in mission mandates. While there have been some improvements in the drafting of Security Council mandates recently, with examples of more structured and coherent approaches (e.g. MINUSCA is one good example), this is not consistent across the board. The Council needs to have a higher level of trust to leave things to the SRSG and Secretariat.

There were differing points of emphasis among the panellists over which institution should identify the political strategy, namely whether it should be the Security Council or the Secretary-General. Mandates are crafted in the Security Council, but they begin with the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General and Secretariat. However, the Secretariat is also under political pressure. Therefore members of the Council need to listen to this advice, while also considering the independent reviews that have been undertaken, which may propose initiatives that the Secretary-General may not have felt in a position to make as strongly and clearly. For instance, the recommendation by the independent review that the Force Intervention Brigade be wound down, probably would not have been provided by the Secretariat. Adopting a more strategic resolution—which articulates priorities — will also provide space and flexibility for the mission to adapt their political approaches and circumstances change on the ground. In the context of AU-UN partnerships, it is important that the Council seek the input of the region into any strategies or adjustments in approach that the UN Security Council is seeking at this early stage in the process.

Clear mandates also need to be accompanied by effective mission leadership. The quality of the Head of Mission and their rapport with the host country is an important factor in how successful a mission is likely to be in the implementation of its mandate. However, the Security Council is making difficult for the Secretary-General to make political appointments in certain mission environments, such as in Libya and Sudan. There is less political space for the Secretary-General to appoint political leaders. There are crucial political situations that do not currently have SRSGs. Panellists offered one recommendation that was drawn from HIPPO, namely that the Secretary-General should have a 'panel of the wise' of former SRSGs that would interview and recommend potential senior mission leaders. This would shield the Secretary-General from member state pressure to some extent through the advice of a third party. According to some of the panellists, the Secretary-General has to want to distance himself from the transactional aspects of appointing a Special Representative if that approach is to work. However, this is one of the currencies that is utilised by the SG to trade in, so there may be reluctance for a more formal appointments process. By contrast, the Chairperson of the AU is not meant to consult the AUPSC. The AU Chairperson has more authority to appoint special envoys.

Panellists discussed the value and importance of the UN working collectively and in partner-

ship with regional organisations (such as the AU), as well as the value of UN regional offices. They acknowledged that UN officials were more likely to get access to the relevant political leaders with the support and engagement of regional organisations. But that this engagement was needed throughout the mission lifecycle, including as part of assessment missions. The AU and UN need to be an 'orchestra' rather than 'dissonant' music. The AU Commission and the UN Secretariat also require the flexibility to discuss situations when they develop.

> Regional offices led by the UN enabled a different type of engagement to that of a head of mission in the country.

Regional offices led by the UN enabled a different type of engagement to that of a head of mission in the country. But it has developed as an odd framework for UN engagement, as they have only been established in some regions (e.g. West Africa, Central Africa). Where they are in place, they have enabled reporting in some contexts where such country-situations may have been off-limits to the Security Council, but the panellists acknowledged that is probably the reason there has also been pushback against expanding their use.

The panellists in this session also focused on several areas where peace operations required reform in order to better reflect the continuum of different mission footprints, and their objectives in support efforts to build and sustain peace. For instance, there is a need for a political economy analysis of the situation where a mission is operating. The political economy can be a peace and conflict driver. Consequently, public financial management is a clear element of sustaining peace (e.g. in Liberia, there was a failure to address the elite capital).

Nonetheless, there is limited appetite for creating more structures. The current global landscape means it will be difficult to find agreement and bring together different interests and politics. Instead, senior mission leadership and missions will need to be creative, identify the stakeholders they want to work with and start collaborating more effectively to deliver on their mandates. Peace operations need to focus their engagement with the UNCT, in order to understand the breadth of the root causes of the conflict. The UNCT also needs to be involved in the planning of peace operations, given their significant role in sustaining peace, particularly after a mission has transitioned and departed. Some have been doing excellent jobs in helping the host governments to create architecture for sustaining peace. Missions also need to listen to the local population and host communities. These actors have an essential role, but they are often overlooked. Sometimes it is difficult for the SRSG to get outside the bubble and connect with the local population. But these are exactly the type of skills and characteristics that need to be identified and sought in senior mission leaders. There is also a need for strong support for more regional efforts and joined up approaches, particularly those that take place outside of formal structures.

In conclusion, the panellists noted that peace operations are steadily improving in terms of the way they use intelligence and technology, but the way they are currently conceived, they don't yet have responses to cyber security threats, pandemics (only incidentally), terrorism, the use of mercenaries and contractors, sanctions violations, or organised crime. In the words of one panellist, "We don't find solutions to those questions within peace operations" partly because they are not receiving enough attention in the Security Council. There are many blackout issues which won't be discussed by the Security Council. Member states need to figure out how to get over the bureaucratic obstacles and respond in flexible ways.

In the final session, the co-hosts acknowledged that the Challenges Annual Forum 2020 provided a valuable platform to connect and reflect on some of the strategic challenges facing peace operations. The virtual platform provided a venue for innovation, collaboration, creativity and sharing of different views on some of the reform efforts underway to strengthen peace operations, enhance partnerships, build and sustain peace and improve performance and effectiveness.

About Challenges 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 five-day virtual forum from a range of individuals serving in peace operations and engaged in the reform of peace operations as part of the Challenges Partnership.

About the author

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 the co-hosts – on behalf of the Challenges Forum partners and Forum participants.

Acknowledgements

This report was developed in cooperation with the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI), all co-hosts of the Virtual Challenges Annual Forum 2020 as well as with the support of Andreas Andersson and Sarah Abdelgelil, consultants to the Challenges Forum. The Challenges Forum International Secretariat would like to express their gratitude to our Partners for all the support and work put in to organizing the event.

ISS INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

NUPI Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

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

Challenges Forum

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:

- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Canada
- China
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- France
- Germany
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Jordan
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Russia
- South Africa
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- United Kingdom
- United States of America
- Uruguay
- World Federation of United Nations Associations

FBA

Challenges Forum International Secretariat is hosted by FBA – the Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development – on behalf of the Challenges Forum Partnership.