

Challenges Annual Forum 2024



CHALLENGES ANNUAL FORUM REPORT 2024
BERLIN, 3–4 DECEMBER

Shaping the Next Generation of Peace Operations

The Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening mandate to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations. The partnership consists of more than 50 organisations in 24 countries, and it provides an impartial and informal platform for dialogue and convenes key actors for deliberations on different approaches to peace. Central to the Challenges Forum founding concept is the hosting of the Challenges Annual Forum. The summary of the discussions held at the Forums constitutes one of the main collective outcomes of the partnership.



More than 120 partners and key stakeholders from over 20 countries, gathered at the abba Hotel in Berlin for CAF24.

Design: Essen International

Photo: Rodrigo Paras, FBA

This report is produced by the Challenges Forum International Secretariat, in consultation with the co-host Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF). It does not necessarily represent the voices of all Forum participants.

1. Introduction

The Challenges Annual Forum 2024 (CAF24) gathered over 120 partners, key stakeholders and participants from over 20 countries on 3-4 December for in-depth discussions on how to strengthen international peace and security and lay the foundation for the next generation of peace operations.

The event took place against a backdrop of growing global polarisation and instability at a time when new and accelerating complex threats require a global response. With the highest number of armed conflicts since 1946¹ and a fractured United Nations (UN) Security Council, the need for collective action is paramount. Compounding these issues are the proliferation of armed groups and violence against civilians including conflict-related sexual violence, weaponisation of new and emerging technologies, escalating climate-related security threats, the spread of mis- and disinformation, all of which cast doubt on the future of a rules-based international order.



Paul D. Williams, Professor, Elliott School of International Affairs and Alexandra Fong, Chief for Policy and Guidance, Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), United Nations.

“Today’s complexities require collaboration that goes beyond borders, sectors and disciplines.”

Sientje Möller,
Parliamentary State Secretary,
German Ministry of Defence

The event was co-hosted by the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) in Berlin in the wake of the adoption of the UN Pact for the Future, and ahead of the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial that will also be held in Berlin in May 2025. The event provided a tailor-made and timely opportunity for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars to discuss how to tackle the evolving challenges to global peace and security, and how to shape the next generation of peace operations. The event aimed to contribute to the upcoming Review of the Future of All Forms of UN Peace Operations, and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR), and to create strategic coherence to sustain peace.

¹ Global Peace Index 2024, Institute for Economics and Peace.

2. A Renewed Beginning for Multilateralism

The Pact for the Future, adopted in September 2024, represents an important milestone for international peace and security. It includes a pledge for a new beginning for multilateralism and a commitment to act in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter and its purposes and principles.

The Pact clearly states that UN peace operations, including peacekeeping operations and special political missions, is a critical tool for the maintenance of international peace and security. In fact, it is argued that peace operations “epitomise multilateralism in action”, building agreement among members of the Security Council, major financial contributors, host countries, relevant regional actors, as well as troop and police contributing countries.

So far, over 120 peace operations involving more than two million peacekeepers have deployed in more than 50 countries across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.²

The importance of enhanced collaboration between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, in particular the African Union and the European Union, has also been highlighted. UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023), which provides the opportunity for the UN to finance AU-led peace support operations, represents an important landmark in this regard.

From the Pact for the Future 2024

Heads of State and Government vowed “To live up to our foundational promise to protect succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we must abide by international law, including the Charter, and make full use of all the instruments and mechanisms set out in the Charter, intensifying our use of diplomacy, committing to resolve our disputes peacefully, refraining from the threat or use of force, or acts of aggression, respecting each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, upholding the principles of political independence and self-determination, as well as strengthening accountability and ending impunity.”

² The Future of Peacekeeping, New Models, and Related Capabilities, El-Ghassim Wane, Professor Paul D. Williams, Professor Ai Kihara-Hunt. (2024)

3. Adapting Peace Operations to Better Respond to Existing Challenges and New Realities

The Pact reaffirms that peace operations are indispensable but that they also need to adapt to better respond to existing challenges and new realities. For over two decades, a number of reviews, such as the Brahimi report in 2000³, the HIPPO report in 2015⁴ and the New Agenda for Peace in 2023⁵, have identified impediments and suggested remedies for more effective, flexible and integrated peace operations. Taking these recommendations, as well as UN doctrine and best practices, into account, the CAF24 aimed to move beyond known obstacles to effective peace operations and explore strategies and models to enable the next generation of peace operations.

The Forum delved into the key political and operational prerequisites for successful peace operations, exploring innovative approaches to mandate design and implementation, and the critical role of inclusive partnerships in achieving sustainable peace. Discussions centered on three priority areas: (I) Sustainable Political Solutions for Successful Peace Operations; (II) Operationalising Adaptable and Effective Peace Operations; and (III) Enhancing Integration and Strategic Coherence in Peacebuilding.



Panelists at the High-level Discussion:
Ensuring Political and Strategic Prerequisites
for Successful Peace Operations.

³ Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305, S/2000/809)

⁴ Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

⁵ Our Common Agenda, Policy Brief No 9, A New Agenda for Peace, July 2023.

3.1 Sustainable Political Solutions for Successful Peace Operations

Peace operations do not operate in isolation. They can only succeed when they are guided by functioning political strategies and consistently supported by concerned member states. Without dedicated political engagement, peace operations risk becoming less purposeful and effective, leading to fragile environments where the root causes of violence remain unresolved. Even when there is only limited progress on the political level, peace operations should seek out entry points and targeted engagement.



The success of peace operations also depends on the UN Security Council providing clear, achievable and sufficiently resourced mandates and dynamic strategic direction. This guidance needs to be continuously adapted to changing circumstances and give the senior mission leadership sufficient room to manoeuvre. Coherent diplomatic support at local, national, regional as well as international level, is crucial for achieving the overall objectives of peace processes. The active involvement of troop, police, and resource-contributing countries is also of critical importance. Regular stocktaking and strategic reviews need to inform both mandate adaptation and implementation. Accountability should to a much higher degree than today be shared between the UN Security Council, host countries and peace operations. Political and operational outcomes are interdependent, and all main actors need to be fully and sustainably committed.

Asmau Benzies Leo, Executive Director,
Centre for Nonviolence and Gender
Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAIN)

Focus: Haiti

Fragmented strategies undermine coherent efforts towards sustainable peace. Despite the deteriorating situation in Haiti and requests from the Haitian government, the UN Security Council has not been able to agree on authorising a new peace operation in the country. Instead, a Multi-National Security Support Mission (MSS), consisting mainly of Kenyan police, has been mandated to support stabilisation efforts in the country.⁶

⁶ CAF 24 Background paper: Sustainable Political Solutions for Successful Peace Operations, Dr. Fifi Edu-Afful, Senior Researcher Conventional Arms and Ammunition Programme, UNIDIR.

Key Takeaways

Security Council's role. The Security Council's inability to agree and act undermines the legitimacy of the UN and of peace operations. The authority of the Security Council should be restored by instituting broader consultations with member states, diversifying penholders and relying more on regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

Supplementary mandating by the General Assembly. While the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the Security Council, there is substantial scope and proven potential for the General Assembly to use its role to mandate peace operations and possibly enforce binding decisions by the International Court of Justice. A shadow penholdership mechanism in the General Assembly should proactively prepare coordinated responses in case of Security Council blockages and vetoes.

More systematic engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission. Mandating peace operations should automatically lead to a consent-based inclusion of host countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda. This would facilitate sustained, long-term peacebuilding support and funding while incentivising cooperative relations between host countries and the international community.

Cooperative relations with host countries. The UN and host countries should build and maintain mutually supportive relationships through demand-driven and inclusive political strategies. Shared commitments should be formalised in a compact between the Security Council, host governments and peace operations, including mutual accountability frameworks.

Regular and inclusive stocktaking. The UN must ensure sustained political support for peace operations by the active involvement of troop-, police-, and resource contributing countries, along with key stakeholders. Regular stocktaking should take place, identifying areas of mandate implementation that require adjustment.

“Normally we talk about the problems in the field, the challenges that the operations face. It is also very important to discuss the decision making regarding the mandates.”

Alexander Marschik,
Former Permanent Representative of Austria
to the United Nations in New York



Discussions in CAF24 Innovation Labs.

a. Mandating Future Peace Operations

The Security Council's inability to agree on the course of action for some of the most alarming conflicts in the world has undermined the legitimacy of the UN. In the Pact for the Future, member states reaffirmed their commitment to reforming the Security Council to make it more representative, inclusive, transparent, efficient, and accountable and to strengthening its relationship with the General Assembly.⁷ However, reform of the Security Council, including limitations of use and scope of the veto, will take time. Increased representation on the Council also means regional groups must review their selection processes. Interim measures can be taken and the authority of the Security Council could be restored by instituting broader consultations with member states, diversifying penholders, and relying more on regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

While the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the Security Council, the UN Charter grants broad rights to the General Assembly.⁸ In fact, over the past 78 years, the General Assembly has engaged in a wide range of activities under Chapter IV of the Charter, including the deployment of mediators, establishment of peace operations, mandating of special envoys, recommendations for the use of force or sanctions, and the creation of accountability mechanisms such as fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry. Some of this practice has taken place through the Uniting

for Peace resolution, a procedure created in 1950 to facilitate prompt consideration by the General Assembly when the Security Council is unable to act.⁹ Others have been part of resolutions passed in the course of the General Assembly's regular work.¹⁰

In cases of Security Council blockages and vetoes, the General Assembly should have a shadow mechanism that could prepare coordinated responses. There is also substantial scope and proven potential for the General Assembly to use its role to mandate peace operations and possibly enforce binding decisions by the International Court of Justice.

The Peacebuilding Commission is an under-utilised tool with untapped potential. Peace operations' mandates should automatically open up for consent-based inclusion of host countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda, and make them, as appropriate, eligible for the Peacebuilding Fund. The Commission could energise country-specific discussions in the Security Council and work as an advisory body to the General Assembly. This would facilitate sustained, long-term peacebuilding support and funding while incentivising cooperative relations between host countries and the international community.

“The lack of reform of the Security Council undermines the level of acceptance of our missions in various host countries. That is because we are seen as emanating from a body that is seen less and less as legitimate and acceptable.”

Jean-Pierre Lacroix,
Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations,
United Nations

⁷ Action 39, 41.

⁸ See Articles 12 and 14, and the International Court of Justice Certain Expenses case.

⁹ A/RES/377(V).

¹⁰ Assembly for Peace: A Digital Handbook on the UN General Assembly's Past Practices on Peace and Security, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, Erica Gaston and Adam Day.

“Respect for the sovereignty of the host nation by involving them in the planning and education of the peace operation is very important. There should be alignment between the national plans and peace missions.”

Jonathan Titus Williams, Deputy Chair of g7+,
Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Sierra Leone

b. Mutually Reinforcing Relationship with Host Governments

It is crucial for peace operations to have a mutually supportive and collaborative relationship with host countries. The changing nature of conflict and the inability of the UN Security Council, host country governments and peace operations to deal with intractable local or regional conflicts have in some cases led to a crisis of confidence and popular pushback. Changing political prerequisites, including non-peaceful transfer of power, and the reversal of host country consent has in recent years forced some UN peace operations to withdraw. Collaboration between missions and host country partners has been undermined by wider political turmoil, which has left populations at risk and led to relapse into conflict.

The UN Security Council needs to balance its priorities with legitimate host country interests and needs, and this must be reflected in peace operations’ mandates. Clear political strategies are essential to maintain this balance. The UN and host countries should build and maintain mutually supportive relationships and co-develop political strategies that include clear, feasible and agreed objectives. These objectives should aim to address protracted conflicts, failed peace agreements and recurring instability. Shared commitments could be formalised in a compact between the Security Council, host governments, and peace operations, including mutual accountability frameworks.



Jonathan Titus Williams, Deputy Chair of g7+, Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Sierra Leone and Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, United Nations discussing political and strategic prerequisites for successful peace operations.

c. Root Causes and Local Level Engagement

To ensure continued collaboration and prevent the decrease of host nation consent, a closer cooperation is needed with counterparts at the regional, national and local level throughout the mission’s life cycle. This inclusive approach builds trust, empowers stakeholders and enhances the legitimacy of peace operations, ensuring that solutions resonate also with those most affected by conflict.

For any efforts to be sustainable, peace operations’ mandates need to address the root causes of conflict. Ignoring root causes often results in superficial peace efforts that merely address symptoms, leaving grievances unresolved and leading to fragile ceasefires and recurring violence. It is important to involve local stakeholders, including women and youth, in decision-making. Excluding those directly affected by conflict risks imposing solutions that neglect local dynamics.



Mona Ali Khalil, Founder and Director of MAK LAW INTERNATIONAL and an affiliate of the Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict and Karin Landgren, Former Executive Director, Security Council Report

Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and Flaminia Minelli, Chief of the Policy and Best Practices Service, Department of Peace Operations, United Nations



3.2. Operationalising Adaptable and Effective Peace Operations



UN peace operations are important and effective tools for addressing challenges to peace and security. However, the manner in which they are planned, deployed and managed has not always allowed them to adjust to changing circumstances and requirements.

Panelists at the panel discussion 'It Takes a Village: Exploring Partnerships for Sustaining Peace'

Key Takeaways

Modular approaches. The UN should adopt a more flexible, adaptive and needs-based modular toolbox approach, drawing on the full range of capabilities within the UN system. This includes rapid deployments and partnerships with regional organisations and international financial institutions. The Fifth Committee should to a higher degree prioritise strategic and political considerations and allow for more flexible resource allocation.

Structural and operational coherence. UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions should align their approaches to planning, budgeting, financing, staffing, leadership, data and information management, strategic communication and reporting. The upcoming Review of the Future of All Forms of UN Peace Operations and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review provide a unique opportunity to revisit organisational structures, promote operational coherence and strengthen institutional learning.

Incentives for organisational change. The UN should break up path dependencies and create incentives for organisational change that address staff concerns and support staff development. Innovative recruitment processes should be developed and staff mobility between UN Headquarters and field missions as well as between the Secretariat and UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes should be encouraged. This will allow the UN to “do more with the same people.”

Regional organisations as part of the toolbox. The role of regional organisations needs to be expanded in the future of peace operations toolbox. Before deploying peace operations, it is crucial to have discussions about the division of labour among institutions (UN, EU, AU) and the intervention logic. UN Security Council Resolution 2719 should be implemented promptly, including accountability and compliance frameworks. The EU should aim to become an enabler of security by supporting other organisations, like the AU, who are often first responders.

a. Strategic and Operational Coherence

Administrative and budgetary hurdles, arising from the arbitrary distinction between peacekeeping operations and special political missions, have been persistent obstacles to necessary change. The structural limitations of the UN system, including different approaches to planning, budgeting, financing, staffing, leadership, data and information management, strategic communication and reporting is a major obstacle for more efficient and effective peace operations.

The reform of the peace and security pillar in 2019 was an important step towards strategic alignment and doctrinal development but much remains to be done. In a world where the UN faces a trust deficit and the global financial environment grows tighter, the UN Secretariat cannot afford to work in silos. The operational and financial barriers must be overcome for the UN to better serve populations in dire need.

The Pact for the Future requested the Secretary-General to undertake a review on the future of all forms of United Nations peace operations, taking into account lessons learned from previous and ongoing reform processes, and provide strategic and action-oriented recommendations for the consideration of member states. Together with the Peacebuilding Architecture Review, this provides a unique opportunity to revisit organisational structures, promote operational coherence and strengthen institutional learning.

Almut Wieland-Karimi, Senior Adviser, Advisory Group of UN SG's Peacebuilding Fund and Daniel Fasnacht, Head, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs



b. Modular Approaches

Many of the recommendations from key strategic reviews of UN peace and security instruments remain unimplemented, especially those of the 2015 HIPPO report to utilise the full spectrum of peace operations in a purposeful and flexible manner. As a result, the Department of Peace Operations, with the support of Germany, commissioned a report on the *Future of Peacekeeping, New Models and Related Capabilities*.¹¹ The report lays out a broad range of multilateral approaches available to the UN in response to threats to international peace and security, and suggests 30 plausible models that can be used independently or combined to implement tasks in the field.

For the UN to shift to a more dynamic toolbox approach, it needs to change the way in which missions are planned, budgeted and staffed. Deliberations in the UN's Fifth Committee (budget committee) need to be more informed by strategic and political imperatives, and not only financial considerations. The policies and procedures currently in place for mission design and mandate implementation drive a path dependency towards the usual and not always the most effective approaches.



Fiifi Edu-Afful, Senior Researcher
Conventional Arms and Ammunition Programme, UNIDIR

11 El-Ghassim Wane, Professor Paul D. Williams, Professor Ai Kihara-Hunt, October 2024.

The UN should adopt a more context-specific and flexible approach to the design of mandates and conduct of operations. This should aim to empower and enable missions to draw much more on capacities from across the UN system and external stakeholders, including partnerships and rapid deployments with regional organisations, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector.

To contribute to organisational change, staff concerns should be taken into account and innovative recruitment processes should be developed. Staff mobility between UN Headquarters and field missions as well as between the Secretariat and UN agencies, funds and programmes should be improved and encouraged. This would allow the UN to “do more with the same people” and would contribute to better integration and organisational development.

c. Partnering with Regional Organisations

The peace operations toolbox needs to be extended to more systematic and sustainable partnerships with regional organisations. Before deploying peace operations, it is crucial to have discussions about the division of labour among key institutions (currently mainly the UN, the African Union and the European Union) and the intervention logic.

“Before different institutions, be it the UN, the European Union, or the African Union, decide what they will put on the ground, there needs to be a discussion about who’s doing what, division of labour, and the objectives that need to be attained.”

Cosmin Dobran,
Director for Peace, Partnerships and Crisis Management,
European External Action Service, European Union

The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 in 2023 allow AU-led peace support operations to access UN assessed contributions. Despite this breakthrough, the AU remains concerned that only 75 % of the operations will be covered and that the remaining 25% needs to be raised through other means. The AU is often deploying missions in highly dangerous and volatile environments in Africa, often with substantial loss of personnel. Several such missions are supported by the EU.

Focus: African Peace Support Operations

The African Union and the African sub-regional organisations have increasingly addressed peace and security threats across the African continent, demonstrating a clear comparative advantage as first responders with the political will to undertake also peace enforcement and offensive operations. Africa will continue to play a key role in addressing the escalating transnational threats of terrorism, violent extremism, asymmetric warfare and organised crime. Broad international partnerships to address these critical challenges should be a priority for multilateral cooperation.¹²

¹² CAF24 Background Paper: African Perspectives on the Future of Peace Operations; Seba Issa, Peace Operations Programme Manager at the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution (CCCCPA)

Efforts are actively underway to unpack and fully operationalise the resolution. A Joint Roadmap was signed in October 2024 focusing on e.g. accountability and compliance. Partners such as the UN and EU should cooperate with the AU on establishing frameworks to effectively deploy and sustain peace support operations, including mission planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The EU should aim to further develop its role as a peace and security enabler through visionary partnerships and targeted support to organisations that function as first responders to crisis.



Helen Wilandh, Specialist UN & OSCE, Folke Bernadotte Academy and Major General BK Sharma, Director General, United Service Institution of India

“African PSOs are the first responders. They are like the firefighters. When conflict erupts in an African region, they deploy where there is no peace to keep.”

Seif Kandeel,
Director General, Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution,
Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA)

Itonde Kakoma | President, Interpeace



3.3. Enhancing Integration and Strategic Coherence for Peacebuilding

The full spectrum of peace operations encompass a wide peace, security and development ecosystem. Mobilising support for nationally-owned and -led prevention and peacebuilding efforts requires cooperation and coordination with a broad set of actors, including the host governments, regional organisations, UN Country Teams, donors, international financial institutions, the World Bank, and civil society. The untapped potential of private sector engagement in peace efforts should also be explored.

“Peacekeeping operations, in our view, can only be successful when they are embedded in the full conflict circle.”

Susanne Baumann,
State Secretary,
German Federal Foreign Office

Key Takeaways

Locally anchored peacebuilding. UN leadership should promote a common strategic vision based on national priorities. Inclusive joint assessments, bottom-up planning processes and nationally owned prevention strategies should be prioritised. An overall shift in mindset is needed to understand sustaining peace as cross-cutting for all UN entities. Local peace champions, including women and youth, should be identified to drive political dialogue and peacebuilding efforts.

Multi-year funding and pooling of resources. Flexible, predictable, multi-year funding would be a game changer for the UN. Pooling resources and linking their use to national prevention strategies would reinforce streamlined approaches. The untapped potential of private sector engagement in peace efforts should also be explored.

Leadership for Peace. UN leaders should be empowered to think creatively, put forward bold proposals and take risks. Foresight and scenario exercises, as well as contingency planning, need to be conducted more systematically and new technology embraced. This shift in mindset requires more systematic support, resources and coaching for UN leaders.

a. Collective Leadership for Integration

The demands on leadership at both the mission and headquarters levels have become increasingly complex. An overall mind shift in the way we think about peace operations and peacebuilding is needed. Sustaining peace should be understood as cross-cutting for all UN entities in their mandate implementation. It means investing in making mandate implementation not only conflict sensitive but also peace positive. Leaders should be empowered to think creatively, put forward bold proposals and take calculated risks. Foresight and scenario exercises, as well as contingency planning, need to be conducted more systematically and new technology embraced. More systematic support, resources and adequate coaching for UN leaders is vital.

In field settings, the UN leadership should promote a common strategic vision based on legitimate national priorities. Joint assessment and planning processes, as well as structural coordination mechanisms, can deepen UN integration through the articulation of shared or aligned objectives and collective outcomes. This is particularly important in transition settings, where peace operations are involved in planned or involuntarily withdrawal and downsizing, and there is a critical need to consolidate and sustain the results achieved by such operations.

“When you are leading a peace operation and going into the country, it is your job to first identify who your peace actors are.”

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini,
CEO and Founder,
Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)



Discussion in CAF24 Innovation Labs

More than structural adjustments and joint assessments will be needed to advance integration. Separate or incompatible systems across entities – whether it is data systems or funding streams – have disincentivised cooperation and hampered integration. Leadership in integrated settings – meaning the SRSG, the DSRSGs and the Reps/Deputy Reps of agencies, funds and programmes – need to promote integration with conviction and invest in a vision and strategic framework shared by the entire UN presence in the country. This includes establishing a working culture of coordination, cooperation, as well as collective risk-taking and risk-sharing.

b. Locally Anchored Peacebuilding

It is time for a paradigm shift in international cooperation, with a focus on locally anchored and inclusive peacebuilding efforts that are effective and sustainable. Peace operations can often be focused on state actors, institutions, and official structures. In the field, however, there is an increasing use of area-based approaches and growing recognition that needs-identification must include local actors from the outset. UN partners need to engage in bottom-up planning processes. Local peace champions, including women and youth, should be identified and systematically involved in political dialogue and peacebuilding efforts.

Focus: Sudan

The peace segment of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus remains its weakest link, and it is hardest to implement when it is needed the most. With the military coup in Sudan in October 2021 in-country conditions changed drastically. Funding dropped dramatically, leaving the nexus lopsided and underfunded while needs at community level quickly increased.¹³

In some cases, donor accountability may hamper engagement with and funding of local actors that are unable to meet the threshold of fixed accountability frameworks. However, the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund incentivises partnering with local organisations and civil society. Adequate accountability for the use of funds should be prudently balanced with needs-based and flexible access to and use of resources.

c. Flexible, Predictable Multi-year Funding

Peace operations and the peacebuilding architecture need to cooperate closely. This requires flexible, predictable and sustained financing. The newly agreed access to assessed contributions for the UN Peacebuilding Fund, initially 50 million USD per year, is a welcomed development. However, the overall access to critical funding and resources have decreased significantly in recent years. This negative trend needs to be addressed and turned around.

Pooling of resources and linking their use, as appropriate, to national prevention strategies would reinforce integrated approaches. This requires an element of risk-taking and collective risk-sharing, and ways of funding that can target the local level and ensure more timely responses to erupting crises.

"The peacebuilding architecture is evolving and will need to further evolve, to really strengthen its partnerships with perhaps less traditional partners - international financial institutions, including the regional development banks, but also the private sector."

Elizabeth Spehar,
Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support,
United Nations

13 CAF24 Background paper: Enhancing Integration and Strategic Coherence in Peacebuilding, Wibke Hansen, Advisor to the Executive Board of ZIF.

Blue Skies: Envisioning the Next Generation of Peace Operation

At CAF24, participants embraced the Pact for the Future's call for enhanced futures thinking through a speculative design exercise that pushed beyond existing horizons. Developed by Martin Wählisch, Associate Professor at the University of Birmingham, the session introduced the Peace Operation Kit 2050 (P.O.Kit50) as a tangible gateway to bold, unconventional ideas for future missions.

From futuristic energy storage to the dialogue cube and empathy-enhancing wearables, the six objects of the P.O.Kit50 offered a hands-on exploration of next-generation peace operations. One participant described the experience as "holding tomorrow in your hands," underscoring the session's impact. By merging innovation, imagination, and collaboration, the exercise challenged traditional approaches and sparked fresh strategies for more adaptive and effective peacekeeping.



"There are powers emerging that no longer believe in multilateralism and want to cut resources. So, we need to explain much better why we need these instruments. But at the same time, we must be critical and honest about our own failures."

Astrid Irrgang, Executive Director,
Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF)

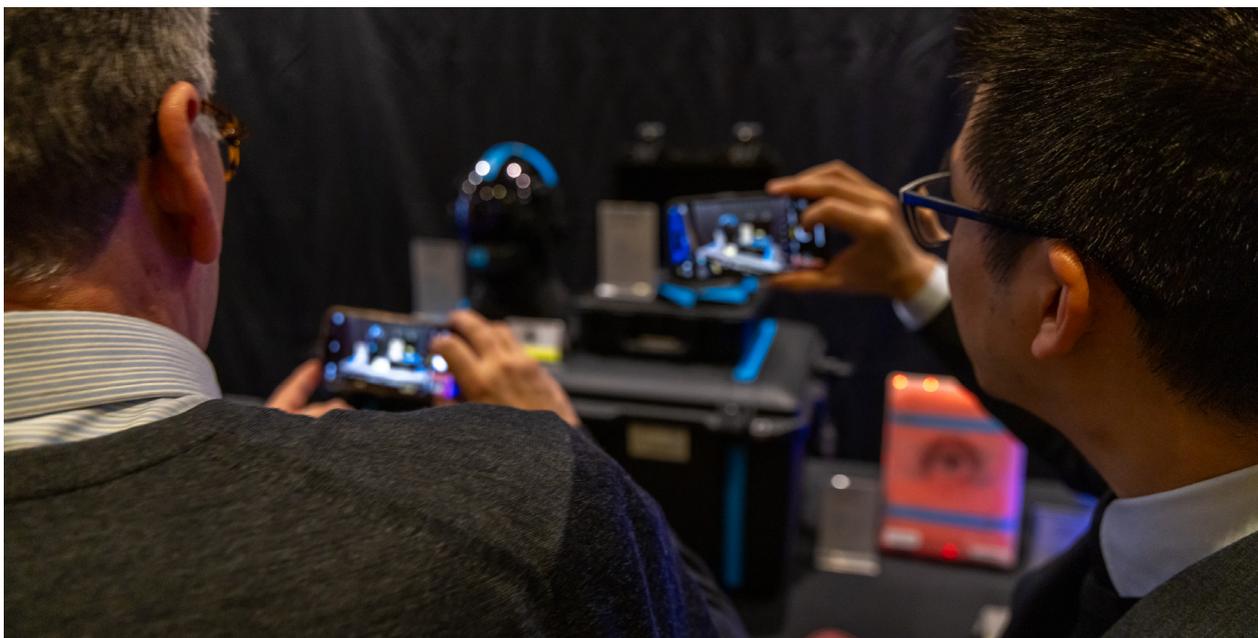


“We stand on the shoulders of a remarkable legacy—76 years of adaptation and innovation in peace operations. Today, yet again, the imperative for review resonates strongly in our collective aim to better prevent and respond to existing challenges and new realities.”

Benoît Pylyser, Director,
Challenges Forums International Secretariat



Participants exploring artefacts in the Peace Operation Kit 2050, to imagine what missions could look like in a distant future.



4. Conclusions and Ways Forward

Despite mounting challenges, the UN retains unparalleled authority and legitimacy to convene key stakeholders when crises erupt. However, peace operations can only succeed when political solutions are actively pursued and host countries are genuinely engaged. They also need to be provided with achievable mandates and adequate and sustained financing. In addition, systematic alignment with wider peacebuilding efforts is key to success. This requires a united Security Council that is willing and able to adapt mandates and consistently support peace operations when new challenges arise. Effective mandate implementation requires a committed and mutual engagement with host countries, neighbouring states, regional organisations, as well as with the civilian populations that peace operations are there to serve.

To better respond to existing challenges and new realities, the UN should adopt a more flexible, adaptive and needs-based toolbox approach, drawing on the full range of instruments and capabilities within the UN system and regional organisations. Member states need to embrace innovation, promote agility and empower UN leaders, so that peacekeeping operations and special political missions can streamline their approaches to planning, budgeting, financing, staffing, leadership, data and information management, strategic communication and reporting.

As peace operations are confronted with complex threats arising from increasing and evolving conflicts, there needs to be renewed investment in diplomacy, prevention, and sustainable peace. The linkages between peace operations and the UN's prevention agenda, as well as Agenda 2030, need to be reinforced. The Pact for the Future emphasised that the three pillars of the UN – sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights – are equally important, interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Peace operations are part of a wider peace-promoting ecosystem. Coherent peace efforts require coordination with a broad set of actors and flexible, predictable, multi-year funding. The untapped potential of partnering with the private sector should be further explored.

The upcoming Review of the Future of All Forms of UN Peace Operations and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review represent a unique opportunity to revisit organisational structures, promote operational coherence and strengthen institutional learning in the UN. They should be seen as part of one overarching reform effort rather than separate processes.

Through CAF24 the Challenges Forum offered an international and informal platform for cutting-edge discussions on international peace and security that generated useful insights and concrete recommendations for future peace operations. The Forum takeaways are intended to inform and contribute to the upcoming reviews and processes and support the development of the next generation of peace operations.

Participants networking at the CAF24



“The Review of the Future of All Forms of UN Peace Operations and the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture provide a unique opportunity for us - for member states, for host nations, for regional organisations, for the entire UN family - to re-engage in constructive conversations on how to best maintain international peace and security, but not only to maintain it and navigate through this world, but to shape this world through better policies, better decision making, and better practice on peace and security.”

Per Olsson Fridh,
Chair, Challenges Forum Partner Meeting and Director General,
Folke Bernadotte Academy

ABOUT THE EVENT

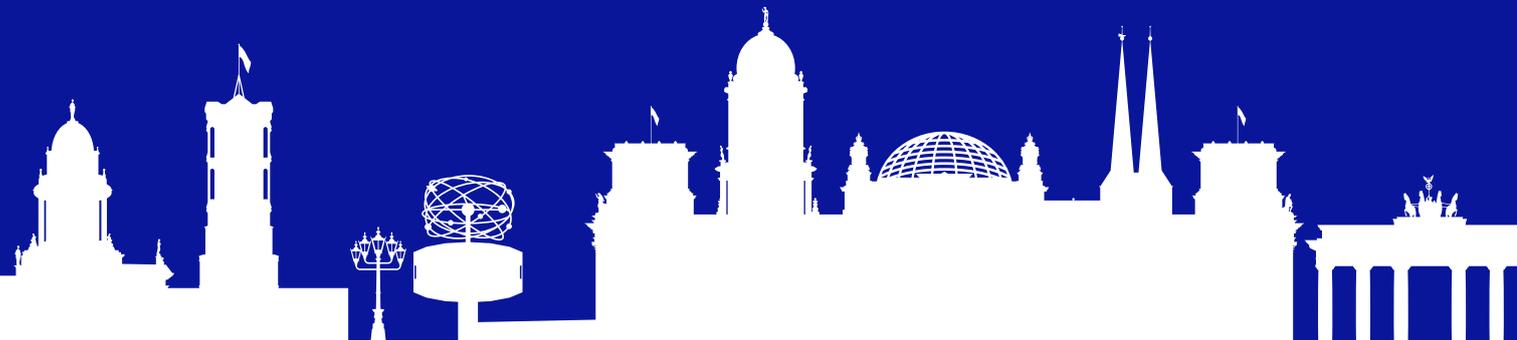
The Challenges Annual Forum serves as a platform for launching research, concepts and policy initiatives in the area of peace operations reform. The Annual Forum is hosted yearly on a rotating basis by partner organisations. The Challenges Annual Forum 2024 (CAF24) was organised by the Centre for International Peace Operations, ZIF, in Berlin.

ATTRIBUTIONS

This summary report captures selected parts of the discussions and recommendations that emerged during the two-day Forum. A range of individuals, with extensive mission experience and engaged in the reform of peace operations, have actively contributed. The report was written by the Challenges Forum International Secretariat together with the host of the forum, on behalf of the Challenges Forum partnership. In line with the Challenges Forum cooperative formula it does not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

ABOUT CHALLENGES FORUM

The Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening mandate to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations. It consists of more than 50 partner organisations in 24 countries.



The Challenges Forum consists of Partners from:

