



Challenges Annual Forum 2025 (CAF25)

Adapt and Advance: Renewing the impact of Peace Operations

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In recent years, the international community has repeatedly warned that rising geopolitical tensions and deepening polarization are eroding the effectiveness of United Nations (UN) peace operations. Existing approaches to the management of missions and the implementation of mandates have struggled amidst worsening political gridlock and mounting operational challenges. Numerous recommendations have been put forward on how to address these growing pressures, many which have not been implemented. Today, the UN faces a severe liquidity crisis, exacerbating these challenges and raising fundamental questions about the ability of the UN to sustain peace in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The implications are far-reaching and certain regions, such as West Africa and more specifically in the Sahel region, are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of ineffective governance. In these contexts, the stakes are high, and the cost of delay is too great. Against this backdrop, the need for bold, practical adaptation is urgent. Peace operations must evolve and the time to act is now.

The UN is undertaking a review of the future of all forms of UN peace operations as requested by the General Assembly in the *Pact for the Future* at the same time that it is examining how to make the Organization as a whole fit for purpose as part of the UN80 initiative. These processes provide a unique opportunity to reflect on the experience of peace operations and related reform initiatives to identify the necessary shifts required in how peace operations are understood, planned, and managed as well as the structural changes that may be needed to enable a new approach to peace operations that is better positioned to achieve goals and deliver tangible results. Peace operations continuously need to be recalibrated to ensure coherence across the entire conflict cycle. Fostering sustainable peace requires a

comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of instability, promotes social cohesion and human rights, and supports inclusive development.

The 2025 Challenges Annual Forum (CAF25) will contribute to the Review by examining how conflict and instability are evolving, define key political and operational prerequisites for success, and generate concrete, innovative proposals to adapt and strengthen peace operations, with a particular focus on West Africa and the Sahel. Through discussions grounded in best practices and lessons learned, CAF25 aims to reposition peace operations to build resilience, prevent conflict, and promote lasting stability.

Through three innovation labs, CAF25 will explore critical transformations in peace operations, including leveraging new technologies, enhancing the role of regional actors, and shifting toward long-term peacebuilding, focusing on cases from the region. These discussions aim to support the UN's ability to deliver on its core mandate—advancing peace and security through cooperation, prevention, and inclusive engagement.

1. *Strengthening the role of regional organizations in addressing armed conflicts and regional instability.*

Regional organizations play a crucial role in addressing armed conflicts and regional instability, leveraging their proximity and contextual understanding to respond more effectively to emerging challenges. By working closely with local stakeholders and international partners, regional organizations have the potential to help build trust, foster stability, and promote sustainable peace. Their role in conflict prevention, mediation, peace operations, and post-conflict reconstruction could be particularly valuable, allowing for more targeted and effective responses to armed conflicts and regional instability. UN Security Council resolution 2719 (2023) marked a milestone in enhanced collaboration between the African Union and the UN on peace and security, but conceptual, political, and operational challenges to the practical application of the resolution have not yet been fully resolved.

- *What are the main challenges for conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction in West Africa/Sahel, and how can these challenges be addressed?*
- *What is needed to support the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023) on financing for AU- and African-led peace support operations?*
- *In what ways can regional organizations effectively collaborate with international partners and local stakeholders to promote sustainable peace?*

2. *Integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies into peace operations and peacebuilding efforts.*

An increased focus on long-term peacebuilding initiatives that address the root causes of conflict, promote social cohesion, protect civilians, and support inclusive development requires broad and sustained reform of peace operations. The complex interplay between climate change and conflict needs to be addressed by analyzing climate-related risks and opportunities, supporting climate-resilient development, and promoting sustainable natural resource management. By incorporating climate

change considerations into peacebuilding initiatives, peace operations can help reduce the likelihood of climate-related tensions and conflicts, promote sustainable livelihoods, the protection of civilians and support long-term stability. This approach requires collaboration with local stakeholders, international partners, and climate experts to develop effective and context-specific solutions.

- *How can integrating climate change considerations into peace operations and peacebuilding initiatives contribute to sustainable peace and prevent relapse into conflict?*
- *What are the key challenges and opportunities for peace operations in promoting resilience to climate-related security threats?*
- *Which partnerships do peace operations need to form to address the link between climate change and conflict?*

3. Leveraging new technologies to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of peace operations.

New technologies offer significant opportunities to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of peace operations. Tools such as geographic information systems, drones, and artificial intelligence can improve situational awareness, facilitate data-driven decision-making, and enhance the safety and security of peacekeepers. Additionally, digital platforms can facilitate communication with local communities, support remote monitoring, and enable more efficient logistics and supply chain management. By leveraging these technologies, peace operations can respond more effectively to emerging challenges, improve their impact, and better support sustainable peacebuilding efforts. At the same time, these technologies also present growing challenges to peace operations, as they are already widely used by actors that oppose and undermine the peace processes, including through the dissemination of mis- and disinformation and hate speech.

- *How can new and emerging technologies be used to enhance the effectiveness and adaptability of peace operations?*
- *In what ways can digital technologies narrow digital divides and improve communication and engagement between peace operations and local communities?*
- *How can peace operations be strengthened to meet the technological threats and disruptions caused by adversaries to peace processes, including mis- and disinformation and hate speech?*

In a world of rising global tension and limited resources, the 2025 Challenges Annual Forum seeks to reposition peace operations, drawing on accumulated best practices, and strengthening their ability to build resilience, reduce the risk of conflict, and promote lasting peace and stability.