

The Challenges Annual Forum 2026

8 October 2026, United Nations Headquarters, New York

“Turning the Tide: Building Momentum for Peace Operations in a Demanding World”

CONCEPT NOTE (DRAFT)

On 8 October 2026, the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations together with Denmark will co-host the Challenges Annual Forum 2026 (CAF26) at the UN Headquarters in New York under the theme “Turning the Tide: Building Momentum for Peace Operations in a Demanding World.”

Recent crises have exposed weaknesses in international responses to conflict, while underscoring the continued need for collective and predictable multilateral action. In this context, UN peace operations remain a vital tool for maintaining international peace and security, helping to translate the principles of the UN Charter into action and, in many cases, making the difference between fragile peace and continued war.

Against the backdrop of the Review of All Forms of UN Peace Operations, and the forthcoming appointment of a new UN Secretary-General, CAF26 aims to help build momentum for effective and responsible peace operations at a time of global uncertainty and growing needs.

In the Pact for the Future, Member States expressed continued support for peace operations. Nonetheless, peace operations face mounting political, financial, and operational pressures. Amid increasingly complex and fragmented conflict settings, peace operations are often expected to compensate for limited political engagement, creating a widening gap between what missions are mandated to achieve and the political and financial support available to sustain progress.

Grounded in field realities, CAF26 will bring a 360-degree view of the challenges facing missions today. The Forum will explore how missions can adapt to increasingly complex environments and what functions can realistically be sustained amid growing political, operational, and financial constraints as well as the support required to enable them to deliver on their mandate. It will also examine host country relations and how peace operations can foster more reciprocal and politically grounded partnerships based on clear expectations, shared accountability, and sustained consent.

As the UN enters a period of leadership transition, Member States and UN leaders, through candid dialogue, have an opportunity to champion the central role of peace operations, and reaffirm them as indispensable tools for maintaining international peace and security.

In this spirit, CAF26 will bring together Member States, UN leaders, partners, practitioners, and experts in New York to build momentum for collective and predictable multilateral action. Through practical ideas and recommendations, the Forum aims to help renew and strengthen peace operations so they can continue making a tangible difference for populations affected by conflict.

The Challenges Forum is a global partnership that brings together policymakers, practitioners, and experts to advance more effective peace operations. Through its impartial and informal platform for dialogue, the Forum promotes shared understanding, innovative ideas, and practical policy recommendations.

It is composed of more than 50 partner organisations from 25 countries. Its International Secretariat is hosted by the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development.

