Chapter 3.
Facilitating and Supporting the Political Process

SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the centrality of successfully facilitating and supporting political processes. It underscores the political nature of a peace operation, and the need to bring political processes and solutions to the forefront. UN peace operations should be part of a comprehensive political solution to resolve conflict. In essence the chapter discusses the need for political issues to have primacy in all mission considerations. In the absence of such political engagement at every level, including at the strategic level, the prolonged presence of a mission is likely to freeze a particular political situation. The mission, and the MLT in particular, therefore need to carefully navigate a crowded political environment which lies at the centre of gravity of a sustainable peace.

The chapter discusses a set of five **operational-level outputs**, each with its own set of activities, risks and benchmarks, which together contribute to the overall outcome of successfully facilitating and supporting the political process.

1. *Host Country Engaged and Relations Promoted.* This output highlights the need to engage with national partners to ensure that the mission meets people's needs at the national and local level, and to help sustain consent and national/local ownership. The host government is the principal partner in this endeavour. Interaction between the mission and the host government should be strengthened with a view to restoring government control, keeping the peace process alive and managing any potential relapse into violent conflict.

2. *Peace Process Supported.* This output serves as a reminder that negotiating a political settlement is usually a complex and delicate process. The content of the settlement is likely to determine the challenges that will arise during the implementation phase. A peace operation can only succeed if the conflict parties are genuinely committed to resolving the conflict through a peaceful political process. It is essential that women and youth are able to meaningfully participate in the peace process.

3. ***Legitimate State Authority and Institutions Strengthened.*** This output serves to re-institute the social contract between the government and the population. It is critical that the reform of state institutions are sustained through the longer-term development phase to keep the country from slipping back into a situation in which public trust is eroded because of weak institutions and poor governance.

4. ***National Reconciliation Promoted.*** This output reflects the principle that, ultimately, political leaders and the population at large must desire reconciliation more than conflict in order to achieve a sustainable peace. Reconciliation, however, is a long-term process. The mission's continued engagement on this front—for example by way of monitoring consent and progress, and mentoring change—will be critical. The role of the mission is to help consolidate legitimate institutions, not a particular group or party. This requires sensitivity in handling the changing relationship between the mission and the host government.

5. ***Peaceful and Credible Elections Held.*** This output reflects the fact that elections are often an integral part of the political settlement and constitute an important benchmark in the peace process. The holding of peaceful and credible elections and the creation of a sustainable electoral management body is thus a vital part of a political transition and the legitimacy of governance, as well as an important element in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Each of these five outputs generates a set of **considerations**, which reflect the inevitable polarities inherent in trying to advance political solutions for resolving conflicts. These point to the need to balance conflicting issues, such as:

» broadening political engagement with stakeholders beyond the host government while recognizing that this may cause sensitivities and tensions;

» weighing specificity on key provisions in peace processes likely to be contentious and vagueness that allows the process and negotiations to mature;

» working with host government counterparts to address urgent needs to provide security and basic services with the need to foster legitimate state authority;

» promoting peace or national reconciliation efforts at the expense of justice; and

» holding early elections to show progress in the political process but that may not be deemed to be free, fair nor credible by the population.

Ensuring the Political Primacy of Peace Operations

Peace operations are an essentially political undertaking. They remain, "above all, a political instrument, which works to expand political space for the implementation of peace agreements achieved by peacemakers".[12] They are both driven by and the drivers of a political process. Therefore, despite the increasingly complex security environment in which most UN peace operations operate, political solutions must guide all operational responses. As the 2015 High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations noted: "lasting peace is achieved through political solutions and not through military and technical engagements alone".[13] At times, interacting directly with actors that have leverage over spoilers in the field can be faster and more decisive than military or security responses.

UN peace operations should be part of a comprehensive political solution to resolve conflicts. In the absence of such political engagement at all levels, including at the strategic level, the prolonged presence of a mission is likely to freeze a particular political situation, which is not its purpose, and potentially jeopardizes the mission's own legitimacy and efficacy.

Contemporary intra-state conflicts are very complex, with transnational elements and a proliferation of proxy actors, regional actors and other vested parties. The mission, and particularly the MLT, needs to carefully navigate a crowded political sphere. This requires the MLT to use its political influence and advocacy to address the structural and immediate causes of conflict and instability as well as the causes of peace. To do this the MLT, always being mindful of the principle of national ownership, must engage with the conflict parties (including those that may stay outside of the peace process) and key national partners such as civil society organizations (CSOs) and the local population in order to promote the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts. The HoM is the lead facilitator on the ground, communicating with interlocutors on the political front, such as the host government, the parties to the conflict, and regional partners. At the same time, all mission actors must be aware of the political context and the implications of their actions and decisions.

The political process usually comprises a range of activities: negotiation of an enduring and comprehensive peace agreement between the parties to a conflict; supporting and facilitating an inclusive political process

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12 UN General Assembly, 'Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations', 10 December 2013, para. 23.
13 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, 'Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: Politics, partnership and people' [the HIPPO report], 17 June 2015, p. 10.

that can move the country from a post-conflict state to a sustainable peace; supporting the host government to extend legitimate state authority; the holding of peaceful and credible elections that will strengthen the democratic processes; and national reconciliation. All these activities have become core mandated tasks for most peace operations.

Given the political dimensions of these processes, the mission's leadership must be politically attuned and ready to look beyond its everyday professional perspectives to the underlying political imperatives. For example, the political nature of providing police assistance, as well as supporting and working with national police services, requires the Police Commissioner (PC) to establish good working relations with the national political authorities as well as the Political Affairs section in a mission. The same is true for the military. This may run somewhat counter to the inclination of uniformed services, which see themselves as more apolitical, but finding the right (political) entry points for important national reform measures is critical for successfully moving the process forward. Conversely, senior uniformed leaders who are not attuned to the politics of the peace process can cause more harm than good.

Pre-conditions for success

- All major parties to the conflict are committed to an all-inclusive peace agreement as well as a dynamic and inclusive political process. Willingness to maintain and build the peace by those previously engaged in the conflict is fundamental but is not a given, and often needs the close attention of external actors.
- The peace agreement ending the conflict in the country addresses the concerns of significant parts of the population and tries to tackle the underlying causes of the conflict. In particular, the agreement must address the rights and concerns of hitherto disadvantaged groups; this includes giving recognition to gender-related issues.
- The mission leadership has a holistic and nuanced understanding of the factors and structural causes underlying the conflict as well as the continuing political tensions in the country in the period after the agreement. Such an understanding must emanate from a rigorous peace and conflict analysis; it should also be premised on and give precedence to national and local concerns and knowledge.

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Benchmarks

Short-term

- Regional and international support mobilized.
- Political strategy developed in consultation with UNHQ based on the peace and conflict analysis is communicated to mission personnel and enjoys support of Security Council and key bilateral or regional actors.
- Key sectors of society have begun to participate in an inclusive process of national reconciliation that builds local stakeholders' confidence in the political process. The process has taken into account the concerns of women and those previously ignored by the country's political mainstream.

Medium-term

- The mission's Political and Civil Affairs personnel are fully deployed and have strong links throughout society.
- Increased political leverage by the international community on parties and spoilers.
- Violence against civilian population is decreasing.
- DDR, a main enabler of the peace process, has commenced and is broadly supported by the former conflict parties, national and local leaders, communities, civil society and the international community.
- The host government is developing the necessary capacity to uphold and extend state authority and build legitimate, representative institutions that deliver needed services to the population.
- An independent civil society is developing the necessary capacity to demand accountability and legitimate representative institutions.

Long-term

- Peaceful and credible elections have been held, giving rise to a representative government.
- National/local mechanisms for peaceful settlement of conflicts established and being used, including meaningful participation of women.
- Security and justice provided to all, in line with the rule of law, irrespective of ethnic, political or gender considerations.

Outputs

In summary, the five outputs that contribute to ensuring the political primacy of the peace operation are:

1. Host Country Engaged and Relations Promoted
2. Peace Process Supported
3. Legitimate State Authority and Institutions Strengthened
4. National Reconciliation Promoted
5. Peaceful and Credible Elections Held

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3.1 Host Country Engaged and Relations Promoted

Peace operations face high expectations in the host country, including among national security actors and the local population. For this reason, it is essential to engage with national partners to ensure that the mission meets people's needs at the national and local level, and to help sustain consent. The host government is the principal partner in this endeavour. Interaction between the mission and the host government should be strengthened with a view to restoring government control, keeping the peace process alive and managing any potential relapse into violent conflict. The host country's military and police leaders play key roles in supporting the national political processes. Accordingly, the mission's FC and Police Commissioner will need to closely engage with the leadership of the national security organizations to reinforce UN messaging and approaches to the political process at the highest level.

At the same time, direct community engagement is necessary to improve the mission's understanding of local realities, and to help design better political and protection strategies. The mission should, in close collaboration with the UNCT, also act as a bridge between the local population and the host government, thereby facilitating a more inclusive and sustainable political process. With the support of national partners, the mission can deliver more effectively and help promote national/local ownership. At the community level, the UN military but to a larger extent the UN Police component regularly engages with cross-sections of communities, and with the national police. In doing so, it strives to strengthen those relations which are central to creating safe and secure communities, thereby enabling an environment in which political processes are more likely to succeed.

3.1.1 Operational activities

The mission's operational activities to support this output include:

- Managing the host country's expectations concerning the mission's objectives and deliverables.
- Developing a political strategy to guide and inform the mission's responses and ensure that the peace and conflict analysis, identifying drivers of peace and conflict as well as interests and power basis of key stakeholder, continually informs and shapes the political strategy. Local perspectives—particularly those of women—should be mainstreamed in the design and implementation of such political strategies.
- Providing advice and support to the host government to re-establish state authority.
- Consulting with the local population on its protection needs and

concerns to gain improved situational awareness.

- Ensuring that an appropriate mix of male and female personnel are well-placed to engage with the host government and local communities to allow the mission to interact with all stakeholders within society.

- Promoting relations between the host government and the local population through confidence-building measures.

3.1.2 Benchmarks

Short-term

- Key national partners/focal points identified.
- Direct communication channels with key national partners/focal points (government officials and local population)—including women and youth—established.
- Training and capacity-building activities to enhance national capacities initiated.

Medium-term

- Relations between the host government and the mission promoted.
- Joint programmes implemented/support to host government and local population provided in accordance with the UN HRDDP.

Long-term

- Legitimate state authority restored and/or extended, core government institutions functioning effectively.
- Trust and social contract between the local population and the host government re-established.

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3.1.3 Responsibilities and coordination

The HoM is expected to maintain a channel of communication with high-level government officials in order to support the political process and reinforce the principle of consent. Mission personnel, including the UNCT, are also expected to work closely with national counterparts to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills. In addition, employing national staff as Community Liaison Assistants can facilitate the military and police components' engagement with the local community. The Civil Affairs team also plays a key role in gathering data and delivering information from the field to senior leaders. Strong coordination is required on the part of the MLT to ensure unity of vision and message.

3.1.4 Resources

To perform its political functions effectively, the mission will require a strong political and civil affairs team to keep abreast of political developments in the host country, identify potential tensions, and use the mission's good offices to engage with government counterparts, community and/or traditional leaders and civil society. Programmatic funding for quick impact projects can also be tapped to build confidence in the mission, the mandate and the peace process. Substantive and political support from DPO, DPPA and other entities in the UN are also available.

3.1.5 Challenges and risks

- The mission's limited presence and resources make it difficult to access population in remote areas.
- Risks are heightened in a scenario where the host government is complicit in attacks against civilians and/or the host government obstructs mission operations.
- Managing the expectations of the host government and sustaining strategic consent for the mission.

3.1.6 Considerations

- Engagement should not be limited to consultations but, wherever possible, the mission should work closely with national and local partners to promote national/local ownership and the sustainability of results.

- There will often be tension between the wishes of the central government and those within local and civil society. Missions can be too focused on dealing with the host state's government, as their principal partner, at the expense of understanding and promoting the needs of the people outside the capital.

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3.2 Peace Process Supported

A peace operation can only succeed if the conflict parties are genuinely committed to resolving the conflict through a peaceful political process. A mission deployed in the absence of such a commitment runs the risk of becoming paralyzed or, worse still, being drawn into the conflict. The signing of a ceasefire or peace agreement is an important indicator of whether the parties are ready to engage in political dialogue. At times, however, agreements are signed as a result of international pressure. The true worth of an agreement lies in its level of implementation. Negotiating a political settlement is usually a complex and delicate process. The content of the settlement is likely to determine the challenges that will arise during the implementation phase. There may be immediate windows of opportunity to address transitional justice that close later. Relevant senior leaders, particularly the DSRSG, should be part of any initial transitional justice discussions between the justice and human rights sections. More broadly, in some instances there may be tensions between the need for frank reporting on human rights issues and the overall objective of advancing the peace process.

It is essential that women and youth are able to meaningfully participate in the peace process, as both victims of conflict and important drivers of recovery and development. The MLT should meet regularly and maintain dialogue with women and youth groups, local communities and civil society more broadly to establish a transparent dialogue on gender-related issues within the peace process. The MLT should also engage with the national authorities and advocate the importance of gender equality and women's participation in national institutions and political and electoral processes. Peace will only be sustainable if women are included, feel secure and have their human rights upheld and protected. The MLT has an obligation to lead by example and to champion policies and strategies—both within the mission and in all dealings with national and local authorities—that incorporate gender and youth perspectives at the political and organizational levels. This includes leveraging political engagement at the highest political levels, particularly with the host authorities.

Contemporary conflicts are often marked by a fluid constellation of actors. In some cases, spoilers may emerge to obstruct or derail the peace process. Spoilers are actors who believe that the "peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests".[14] They can range from sceptics of the peace agreement or political process, to terrorist groups who use violence to undermine the implementation of

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14 Stephen J. Stedman, 'Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes', *International Security*, 22/2 (Fall 1997).

the peace agreement. Such spoilers may be found at all levels, and both inside and outside the forum of peace negotiations. It is important to understand the motives of sceptics, and even the less committed spoilers that may change their position, so as to engage them in the peace process and strengthen their incentives for supporting a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict. Spoilers that use violence are often represented as non-state armed groups (NSAGs), a subset of which are "proscribed armed groups", often labelled as terrorist groups. It is common for national and international organizations to prohibit political engagement with such groups even though they are stakeholders in the conflict and have established viable relationships with local communities (*see 4.5 Public Order Established*).[15] It is important to note that UNHQ has recently developed guidance that allows for engagement with NSAGs to enable peace operations to support the political process and carry out their protection mandates.[16]

If or when members of the MLT are involved in negotiating settlements, a number of issues should be considered:

- The political and military strengths of the parties are often unequal.
- Those who support the political process should be supported to capitalize on the drivers for peace identified in the previous analysis.
- The structural causes of the conflict must be addressed; these tend to be pervasive and include long-standing factors and differences that have permeated the politics and culture of a society.
- Interest-based causes are likely to exacerbate a climate conducive to violent conflict or its further escalation in competition for resources.
- While the symptoms of these causes of conflict may have to be dealt with in the short term, their solutions require thorough analysis and a long-term, structured approach.
- As with structural, intermediate and immediate causes and drivers of conflict, the mission must also explore the drivers or causes for peace that exist in societies, including, for example, traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms. Actors with an interest in changing the narrative of conflict from the use of violence to the use of accepted resolution mechanisms need to be engaged at the national, regional or community level.
- Disagreements over implementation—especially with regard to sensitive processes such as SSR/DDR and power- and resource-sharing—can undermine peace processes.

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15 Ralph Mamiya, 'Engaging with non-state armed groups to protect civilians: A pragmatic approach for UN Peace Operations', International Peace Institute, October 2018.
16 UN DPKO and UN DFS, 'Aide Memoire: Engaging Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGS) for Political Purposes', 2017 [internal document].

- Unrealistic goals and timetables can complicate or undermine implementation; realistic, measurable goals that enhance accountability are preferable.
- Without host-government leadership, local politicians and leaders might conduct their affairs while disregarding the peace process. Hence, it is essential to map and understand the interests and incentives of key stakeholders.
- Political processes should include all parties with the power or ability to cause violent obstruction, as well as marginalized groups such as women and minorities who may have been victimized or excluded in the past.
- The active engagement of the civilian population through public dialogue and civil society mechanisms is a key factor in the success of any peace process.
- Any peace process must be supported by an effective strategic communication plan that helps to deliver credible and easily understood messages about the objectives of the process and is able to manage expectations about the pace and dividends of its implementation.

3.2.1 Operational activities

The operational activities of the mission to support this output include:
- Establishing confidence-building measures.
- Utilizing the instrument of peace and conflict analysis at the national (and, where applicable, local) level, to understand the drivers of peace and conflict and the interests of key stakeholders.
- Ensuring the political strategy is informed by continuous analysis to explore opportunities and manage obstructions to peace.
- Analysing the influence of neighbouring and regional activities on the political dynamics in the host country.
- Developing strategic partnerships with influencing parties who have leverage over others, in order to create and sustain space for the peace process.
- Addressing political tensions at the community level, in close cooperation with the UNCT, and supporting local conflict-resolution initiatives.
- Ensuring the inclusion of women and youth in the peace process.
- Establishing a strategic communication strategy.
- Establishing verification mechanisms to ensure compliance and deal with violations.
- Ensuring that the political process addresses social cohesion, inequalities and marginalization and contributes to a more sustainable peace.

3.2.2 Benchmarks

Short-term

- Ceasefire and/or peace agreements signed, and compliance mechanisms established.
- Joint confidence-building measures implemented.
- Strategic communication strategy planned.
- Marginalized groups are represented in the peace process.

Medium-term

- Established mechanisms for resolving disputes are being used, and violence against civilian population and institutions is decreasing.
- Factions are communicating with each other in a productive dialogue.
- The population considers that it is being included in the process, as verified by various polling and survey tools.
- The ability to provide basic policing, security and justice functions is developed.
- The number of violations is decreasing, and their severity is at such a level that they can be partly managed by the national authorities.
- The host government is able to extend its authority to large parts of the country.

Long-term

- The use of political violence has ceased.
- Governmental institutions are addressing grievances and implementing a transitional justice process.
- The rule of law is respected by the population and governmental institutions are abiding by it.

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3.2.3 Responsibilities and coordination

The roles of the mission in and its responsibilities to the peace process need to be clearly spelled out and widely communicated. The MLT should allocate time to gain an understanding of peace and conflict dynamics and drivers, as well as the interests of the various adversaries. Within the mission, the HoM is responsible for all efforts pertaining to the political aspects of the peace process. The HoM and relevant members of the MLT should be constantly involved in the political process, in close

consultation with UNHQ and the facilitators and/or guarantors of the peace agreement. It is important that senior military and police commanders work under the SRSG's direction when supporting the political process. Close coordination between the political, military and police components is crucial in this respect, not least when establishing and applying dispute-resolution mechanisms.

3.2.4 Resources

Sufficient resources must be allocated to support the mandated tasks, including adequate communications and key experts who can conduct sensitive negotiations and assess compliance. DPPA's Mediation Support Unit (MSU) can be called on to enhance the mission's capacity to conduct and support negotiations. The MSU can help support mission leaders and train their teams (including Political and Civil Affairs Officers) in negotiation and mediation techniques, and strengthen local dispute-management capacities through its own work and that of its partners. The long-term success of a political process will also depend on marshalling donors to provide the financial and material support required to keep the process on track.

3.2.5 Challenges and risks

- Lack of political will in the peace process or withdrawal of consent by one or more of the major parties.
- Parts of the population feel excluded or marginalized from the peace process.
- The expectations of the population, including those of former belligerents, are not met in a timely manner.
- The peace process does not sufficiently address the structural causes of the conflict nor does it explore the drivers of peace already existing in society.
- Lack of national ownership of the process.
- Lack of political will and/or engagement on the part of the international community, and at times having to reconcile competing regional interests with the Security Council mandate.
- Regional developments or instability spill over or have a negative impact on the peace process.
- Limited capacity within host government's national authorities.
- Lack of understanding in the population of the role of the UN in the peace process, particularly its limitations.

3.2.6 Considerations

Peace accords lay out long-term roadmaps for sustainable peace and achieving state resilience but, beyond statements about reform, they often leave details related to the machinery of government relatively vague. Several trade-offs should be considered.

Balancing short- and long-term needs

The short-term need to provide security and basic services usually takes precedence over long-term development and issues of governance. Initially, engagement with the host government tends to focus on the agencies responsible for security and service delivery. To achieve long-term governmental effectiveness and sustainability, however, other functional executive agencies such as ministries of finance, planning and trade need to be included, along with legislative bodies. In addition, to put in place the building blocks for responsive and representative government, avenues for citizen participation need to be opened up sooner rather than later. The peace process needs to balance these needs, and the mission should be aware of what is being negotiated, as this will affect its concept of operations.

Addressing urgent needs while fostering state legitimacy

A related trade-off is between meeting urgent needs and fostering the legitimacy of state institutions. It is important to find ways to include public agencies and officials in planning, budgeting and decision making so that citizens perceive their government as responsive to their needs and those of the country. However, the government's capacity is likely to be weak, or else high-level officials may be more interested in political power and patronage than in effectively fulfilling their service-delivery responsibilities. The mission needs to balance its urgent support for local authorities against ensuring that its partners are developing legitimate capacities and have not committed egregious human rights violations.

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Weighing specificity against ambiguity

Another trade-off is between specificity on key provisions that are likely to be contentious and vagueness that allows the process and negotiations to mature. Efforts to push towards specificity may lead political actors and their supporters to entrench themselves behind firm positions, which can delay implementation of peace agreements and even reignite violence. Without political structures and procedures that enable actors to work out ambiguities and disagreements peacefully, vague and ambiguous provisions may sow the seeds of future governance problems. However, if the focus is on interests rather than political positions, specificity may not be a problem as a detailed focus may prevent later complications or disagreements.

3.3 Legitimate State Authority and Institutions Strengthened

In a post-conflict transition environment, state authority must be strengthened to re-institute the social contract between the government and the population. The trust that citizens invest in the state by participating in elections and submitting to the government should be met with institutions that are seen to be sufficiently capable, legitimate and able to assume responsibilities, maintain order and ensure public safety. It is critical that these state institutions are sustained through the longer-term development phase to keep the country from slipping back into a situation in which public trust is eroded by weak institutions and poor governance.

Extension of state authority is a core function of UN peacekeeping. Large, multidimensional missions now frequently use (or at least project) force not merely to fend off direct attacks from spoilers, but as part of deliberate strategies to expand and secure the authority of a government in contested territories.[17] However, while security is an essential precursor to a sustainable peace, state authority includes a broader notion than just strengthened security. A range of other mission activities contribute to the extension and consolidation of state authority, including support for strengthening the rule of law and improving public administration, SSR, and human rights promotion (*see Chapter 5*).[18]

3.3.1 Operational activities

The activities of the mission to support this output include:

- Contributing to improved security, including in contested areas.
- Facilitating broad dialogue on the nature of political institutions and good governance.
- Helping to build a general public consensus on the roles and constitutional/legal mandates of political institutions.
- Supporting the restoration of an accountable public administration, especially in areas dealing with natural resources, land, property rights and other potential causes of conflict.
- Helping to build the state's capacity to tackle corruption in governmental institutions.

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17 New York University Center on International Cooperation, 'Building on Brahimi: Peacekeeping in an era of Strategic Uncertainty', April 2009.

18 See UN DPO, 'Presence, Capacity and Legitimacy: Implementing Extension of State Authority Mandates in Peacekeeping' (2017).

3.3.2 Benchmarks

Short-term

- Agreement on appropriate laws, accountability mechanisms and responsibilities for public institutions.
- Public information mechanisms initiated that generate transparency and build wider trust.
- Decline in violence associated with political discord, including conflict-related sexual violence.
- Extension of state authority over its territory, including contested areas.

Medium-term

- Peaceful democratic processes (including elections, decision making, creation and enforcement of law, and service provision) are taking root.
- Civil education campaigns implemented in formal programmes and mass media.
- A strong capacity-building strategy has been initiated to ensure durability of government structures, public administration and a competitive, professional bureaucracy.
- Proper administration of natural resources restored.
- Transparent budget process and taxation system established.
- Broad dialogue on desired political institutions facilitated.

Long-term

- Where they exist, arrangements are in place to allow traditional institutions to function alongside formal institutions and jurisdictions.
- The capacity of oversight bodies is enhanced and transparent.
- National and international policies and responses are better integrated with long-term development frameworks.
- Meaningful input by civil society actors established such that the judiciary and all branches of government are accountable and open to questioning.
- Strong local capacity developed, and professional bureaucracy lives beyond the term of first post-conflict administration.
- Emergence of markets in core commodities food and shelter.
- Supporting the development of a free and open political culture underpinning a strengthened state authority.

3.3.3 Responsibilities and coordination

Through its Rule of Law and Human Rights sections in particular, the mission should support the work of agencies such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and other international actors such as the World Bank, to help the national authorities extend their authority. Coordination functions may vary depending on sectoral expertise. The mission should add value to this process through its work in support of the political process, as well as its network of political and civil affairs staff throughout the country. The mission should also ensure that its country analysis includes the structural causes of corruption, and advocate for appropriate attention to address them.

3.3.4 Resources

Implementing activities to support the extension of legitimate state authority requires a sound understanding of the socio-political dimensions of the host country. Therefore, personnel with relevant expertise will be critical to provide effective technical advice to the mission and to host-country counterparts. Such activities can also be resource intensive. Peacekeeping operations have tapped into programmatic funding such as quick-impact projects, trust funds and increasingly, where possible, the Peacebuilding Fund, to support local or regional state capacities and deliver peace dividends. However, these are not sustainable. The MLT can play an outsize role in mobilizing long-term support and partnerships with UNDP, the World Bank and/or bilateral donors.

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3.3.5 Challenges and risks

- The strength of responsible institutions may be compromised and may not be an immediate priority if humanitarian concerns are more pressing.
- Traditional and/or transitional institutions and functions at the local level may be better equipped and more trusted than the nascent state bureaucracy.
- Donor fatigue becomes a real risk over the long term. The preference of most donors is to support the most visible and politically positive phases, which occur early in the process.

3.3.6 Considerations

Respecting national ownership while promoting international standards

The strength and legitimacy of traditional structures may prove to be more reliable and adaptable than international standards. However, customary systems may not always respect international standards that the state has signed up to and/or may violate the mandates of international actors.

Balancing short-term, easily achieved goals and long-term, sustainable goals

The peacekeeping operation might run a public information campaign based on winning public support, which may require a series of easily achievable, high-profile "wins". The hard-fought reforms and less glamorous development of a viable bureaucracy, however, are likely to prove more supportive of a durable peace.

3.4 National Reconciliation Promoted

National reconciliation is a key priority in a post-conflict setting because it is critical to attaining a lasting peace and political stability. The political process, supported by the work of the mission, must create enough opportunities and space for this to take place. Reconciliation is a long-term process. In the immediate term the mission can provide crucial political leadership that inspires the parties to a recently ended conflict. Ultimately, however, the leaders and the population must desire reconciliation more than conflict in order to achieve a sustainable peace. Domestic political institutions retaking control is an important phase as conflict gives way to development but unless this is accompanied by the long process of reconciliation, challenges can very easily resurface. The MLT's continued engagement on this front—for example by monitoring consent and progress and mentoring change—will be critical. The role of the mission is to help consolidate legitimate institutions, not a particular group or party. This requires sensitivity in handling the changing relationship between the mission and the host government.

3.4.1 Operational activities

Operational activities by the mission to support this output include:

- Contributing to a secure environment free from violent conflict and social disorder.
- Engaging with the host government's leadership to promote national dialogue and reconciliation over the recent past, including supporting truth and reconciliation commissions.
- Acting as a bridge between local communities and host authorities to rebuild trust and engaging the civilian population in all stages of the process through traditional social mechanisms or democratic representation.
- Ensuring that the civilian population begins to consider itself secure and able to live without fear in the new political dispensation.
- Providing training and capacity-building for key societal figures and youth who are managing the reconciliation process or are part of it, taking account of their independence and how representative they are of the different parties and actors, and the level of female representation.
- Capacity building for national/local media as they provide critical support for the reconciliation process.

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3.4.2 Benchmarks

Short-term

- Agreements among relevant groups, such as a power-sharing agreement, peace accord or amnesty, have been signed and are credible and durable.
- Key legitimate and credible persons have been identified who will be involved in the reconciliation.
- Training programmes in legal, conflict-resolution or mediation skills have been put in place for those individuals who will manage the reconciliation.
- Advocacy and education programmes to promote and explain the reconciliation process have been put in place and are working effectively.
- Evidence of increasing perceptions of security among the local population.
- Women and youth are appropriately represented and are at the forefront of the reconciliation process.
- Inclusive discussions on the drafting of a new constitution are under way.

Medium-term

- Laws have been promulgated or modified to allow successful implementation of the agreed reforms.
- The process of restoring civil society activities and participation has begun.

Long-term

- Domestic political institutions are robust enough to manage the effects and results of the reconciliation process (e.g. reintegration of former combatants, criminal sentences for those found culpable, forgiveness and/or amnesty).
- National and international policies and responses are better integrated with long-term development frameworks.

3.4.3 Responsibilities and coordination

The mission must support the creation of national reconciliation and enable a secure environment in which it can take place. In addition, the HoM can provide a sustained political voice to underpin the process and to nudge the parties and local populace in this direction. At the same time, the HoM needs to be mindful of what constitutes a sustainable pace for the local population. The HoM is responsible for coordinating the international community's efforts towards national reconciliation, particularly within the UN system, and the role of UNDP, OHCHR and others in bringing together different groups in reconciliation efforts. The HoM should therefore be aware of some of the programmatic tensions in this regard.

3.4.4 Resources

In coordinating the international system's efforts, the MLT should help to convene international stakeholders, including regional and subregional actors, international financial institutions, the UNCT and relevant Member States to support the reconciliation process. The MLT should also do its utmost to generate not just donor interest but engagement in supporting the often-fragile process of national reconciliation. In this context, advocating and pinpointing concrete projects to donors would be one way of supporting the process. Another would be to show some creativity in the way key donors could be invited to support a special fund at the disposal of the HoM for initiating political support and reconciliation functions. Under such a scheme, which has been implemented in some peacekeeping operations in the past, the HoM would be accountable to those donors for how funds are allocated and for furtherance of the more political aims of the peace process.

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3.4.5 Challenges and risks

- National reconciliation is a long-term endeavour and peacekeeping operations can only provide a helping hand in starting and supporting the process. There can be frequent breakdowns or reversals due to disagreements between the parties. While the time horizon of the mission is necessarily shorter and based on its time-limited mandate, it must always take a long-term view. Exit strategies are needed for the handover of its political functions and support for national reconciliation to other organizations on the departure of the mission.

- National reconciliation processes do not necessarily result in the most just political dispensation. They require constant management, and great sensitivity and judgment. Political stability sometimes has to be balanced against justice, but this requires a nuanced approach as there is no simplistic trade-off between peace and justice.

- If possible, the exact role of formal judicial bodies in the context of reconciliation should be negotiated and settled before any specific measures are taken, otherwise ongoing judicial investigations and proceedings may be compromised.

- An uncoordinated relationship with judicial entities could lead to untimely prosecutions or the undoing of a locally managed reconciliation process.

- Reconciliation risks establishing a regime of revenge and a reanimation of tensions. At the same time, general pardons can undermine the accountability of individual actors. Attempts by the parties to provide amnesties for war crimes, violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and crimes against humanity should not be condoned by the UN.

- National reconciliation processes resulting in regimes that combine democratic and non-democratic elements can affect the political culture and challenge political stability.

- The lack of a constructive relationship between citizens and political parties, and political parties driven by narrow interests, can undermine the promotion of national reconciliation.

- Premature withdrawal of a mission in order to meet the requirements of a timely exit strategy before reconciliation has taken root would jeopardize the long-term peace process.

3.4.6 Considerations

Understanding both the national and the multi-locals of the conflict

Missions tend to focus on the national level with national partners, but it is important for the mission leadership to recognize that conflict often has multiple local manifestations and is experienced differently across national populations. It is essential to understand local conflict dynamics by regularly reaching out to engage with local populations whose views may be at variance with those at the national level.

Peace and justice

Peace and justice are fundamental to ending violence and preventing its recurrence. Building a durable peace involves addressing the underlying causes and sources of peace and violent conflict, along with sequencing justice activities. If the process is hastened, it risks igniting a short-term tension between peace and justice. Justice is not just about respecting the victims and punishing the perpetrators; it is also about re-establishing trust in institutions and reconstituting the fabric of an atomized society. The MLT may also need to consider a situation in which actors on the ground insist on addressing issues through national customs, but progress is not made over an extended period.

Promoting international advocacy while supporting national ownership

There will inevitably be tensions between those international partners and donors that urge national reconciliation on the parties and the inclination on the part of local partners to favour a slower, more gradual process of national reconciliation.

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3.5 Peaceful and Credible Elections Held

Many post-conflict countries are governed by transitional political arrangements until the first elections are held. National authorities are often appointed rather than elected and are put in place through a brokered agreement by the parties to the conflict. Thus, they may not be fully representative of or recognized by the population.[19] The holding of peaceful and credible elections and the creation of a sustainable electoral management body is thus a vital part of a political transition, as well as an important element in the promotion and protection of human rights. As such, elections are often an integral part of the political settlement and constitute an important benchmark in the peace process. As these elections often take place in a context with a history of violence, the mission and national actors (based on conflict systems analysis) need to mitigate risks and strengthen the conditions for democracy and sustainable peace. Thus, elections need to be accompanied by a range of other actions, such as the consolidation of political parties, the development of local democracy and the promotion of free media, grassroots-level empowerment and a vibrant civil society.

While the peaceful conduct of elections is a significant event in the transition to recovery and long-term stability, it is only one element in this process and should not automatically lead to the withdrawal of the peacekeeping mission. Efforts to enhance governance should seek to address legacies of deep mistrust between the government and marginalized groups, helping to repair what is often a broken relationship. The pre- and post-election periods are also likely to entail a spike in activity for the mission, as tensions may rise. Furthermore, most multidimensional operations are mandated to provide active support in a variety of ways to the preparation and conduct of the vote.

In planning its support, the MLT should prioritize respecting and monitoring the compliance of stakeholders with the various political agreements that underpin the holding of national elections. Failure to abide by these agreements can undermine the conduct of elections. Alongside the political effort, a security plan that fits into the overall electoral plan should be developed, involving the mission's military and police assets.[20] In addition, the mission must ensure that the international community supports its electoral-assistance efforts at the political, financial and logistical levels.

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19 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, 'Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict', 11 June 2009.

20 UN DPO and UN DFS, 'Guidelines on United Nations Police Support to the Provision of Security in Electoral Processes', 15 February 2013.

3.5.1 Operational activities

The activities of the mission to support this output include:

- Advising on the type of electoral system to be implemented.
- Supporting creation of the security-related conditions to allow for peaceful and credible elections to take place, including through demining.
- Supporting the conduct of voter registration.
- Providing technical assistance, such as legal advice, training of election staff and assistance with developing dispute-resolution mechanisms.
- Conducting public information campaigns about the electoral process.
- Handling and defusing threats to the political and electoral process posed by spoilers.
- Collaborating with other UN agencies to design electoral assistance projects.
- Providing security and logistics support during the election process, including moving and securing electoral materiel.
- Planning for domestic and international observation of elections.
- Providing political and technical support to the process of government formation.

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3.5.2 Benchmarks

Short-term

- National election commission and other relevant institutions established and functioning.
- Effective electoral dispute-resolution mechanisms in place.
- Political parties formalized and sensitized, and an environment with a free media conducive to the safe conduct of elections achieved.
- Electoral districts mapped, voter registration database created, and voter registration commenced.
- Voter education programme/campaign established to ensure participation by both men and women, and including people from minorities and marginalized segments of society.
- Plans made to provide security in vulnerable and/or key areas deemed to be threatened by spoilers.
- Finances, logistics and security support agreed for the conduct of elections.
- Donor engagement and practical support determined.

Medium-term

- Legislative framework that can provide for the conduct of peaceful and credible elections in place.
- Transitional mechanisms developed with UNCT to transfer election support from the mission to UNCT and, in the longer term, to national authorities to conduct elections without international support.
- Wide-ranging public information strategy geared to sensitizing voters and other electoral stakeholders implemented.
- Security support, including patrolling, guarding and securing key installations and polling places, provided.
- Transparent elections conducted in a credible manner and peaceful environment.

Long-term

- Arrangements for out-of-country voting (where appropriate) put in place.
- Those elected are perceived as representative by the majority of the population.

3.5.3 Responsibilities and coordination

Depending on its mandate, the mission can play an important role in assisting in the organization of elections by providing international expertise and by placing logistical and security assets at the disposal of the national authorities. However, this presents a dilemma in terms of capacity building and cost-effectiveness, since the shorter the time for preparations, the greater the pressure will be for the mission to take a lead in this area (for example, by distributing election materials). In addition, the mission should play a leading role in coordinating donor and international support for the elections and, if this is not already the case, seek to have this included as part of its Security Council mandate. This is required in order to create coherent support for the elections, which are fundamentally a complex logistical and security exercise that requires an integrated effort.

Close contact should be maintained with DPPA's Electoral Assistance Division, which provides support to the focal point for electoral-assistance activities (currently the USG for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs). The focal point is responsible for ensuring UN system-wide coherence and consistency in the provision of electoral assistance.

Within the mission, efforts to support elections are often led by an electoral component, which should work closely with and coordinate the activities of all other relevant components. These may include the military and police components, the Political, Civil Affairs, Public Information, and Human Rights sections, as well as other relevant UN agencies. In view of the political significance of and sensitivities associated with elections, the mission leadership, especially the HoM, should be actively engaged throughout the process.

3.5.4 Resources

Peacekeeping operations, which often have significant resources at their disposal, can play an important role in supporting a national electoral management body. This includes the provision of logistical resources for the transportation and storage of electoral material. Even more importantly, with its military and police assets, the mission plays a vital role in supporting and maintaining a secure and stable environment for the conduct of elections. In all of its efforts, maximum attention should be paid to building national capacity and encouraging sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

3.5.5 Challenges and risks

- Selecting the most appropriate electoral system that is both sustainable and has national ownership.
- Security incidents and/or acts of violence destabilize the process.
- Lack of political will and/or capacity to conduct a credible process.
- Non-availability or withdrawal of financial, logistical or institutional support.
- Non-participation in or boycott of elections by a significant party, faction or group.
- Failure to deal with electoral fraud, leading to rejection of the results by national and/or international players.
- Return to office, through success at elections, of political figures who may have played a negative role in the recently ended conflict. This is particularly relevant if elections take place shortly after the end of hostilities.
- Inadvertent creation of a more disruptive, politically divisive environment in the country that harms the prospects for reconciliation.

3.5.6 Considerations

Early or well-organized elections

While elections may need to be held soon after the end of a conflict to demonstrate that political progress is being made, their early conduct may significantly undermine the potential for them to be peaceful and credible. Great care must be taken in deciding on the timing for holding elections.

Balancing comprehensive participation with the selective exclusion or disqualification of spoilers

The decision to include or exclude spoilers should also be carefully evaluated as it can have a significant impact on the overall credibility and acceptability of the electoral process as well as the long-term inclusivity of the wider political and democratic processes.

Balancing electoral efficiency and national ownership

There is always a need to strike a balance between providing international support to encourage the timely, efficient and peaceful holding of elections and leaving national authorities to take the lead, at the risk of timelines not being met and the technical conduct of elections being of lower quality. However, the principles of building capacity and encouraging sustainability and cost-effectiveness should be at the heart of all electoral assistance, even at the risk of the process being less smooth than it might be with greater international involvement.

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