

Australia's Submission to the Secretary-General's Review on the Future of United Nations Peace Operations

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UN peace operations - both peacekeeping and special political missions - remain vital tools for maintaining international peace and security. To remain effective in today's rapidly evolving global landscape, these tools need to be refreshed regularly. A forward-looking agenda is essential. Peace operations and their mandates must adapt to increasingly complex threats, the shifting nature of conflict, new technologies, and dynamic changes across the multilateral system.

The Secretary General's Review on the Future of Peace Operations, and the parallel workstreams of UN80, present a valuable opportunity to recalibrate and reposition the UN to better prevent and resolve conflict, at a time when global leadership is essential.

Australia's commitment to the multilateral system and UN peace operations is longstanding. Drawing on decades of experience supporting and leading peace operations in our region and beyond, Australia is committed to driving reforms that modernise operations, preserve critical functions, and strengthen the UN's peace operations toolkit.

Our experience in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, including through regional-led operations in the early 2000s, reinforce the value of regional approaches to peace and security. Regional-led peace support operations are a promising model for the future. While the UN's role may evolve, its political and operational expertise will remain indispensable in supporting new partnerships, capabilities and deployments.

In response to the UN's guiding questions, Australia offers the following recommendations focused on addressing the challenges, adaptations and future requirements for effective UN peace operations.

1. Structural Reform and Reset of the UN Peace and Security Architecture

- a. **Mandates need to provide both clarity and flexibility:** Mandates for peace operations need to provide clear guidance to all parties on the purpose of the mission and the conditions for transition. They also need to provide missions with the flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, including threat environments. Missions risk becoming less effective and losing host nation support if they extend in time or scope and fail to manage expectations.
- b. The Review, parallel UN80 process and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR), provide a key opportunity **to reorganise the UN Peace and Security pillar** with a focus on: 1) Identifying efficiencies; 2) Minimising duplication; 3) Structural changes, which could include merging of departments with overlapping functions and 4) Rightsizing the organisation, including the Office of Military Affairs and Police Division.
- c. Any restructure must **strengthen the integration of peacekeeping, political and operational support functions** by dismantling organisational siloes while safeguarding core technical

expertise. This reset must focus on improving outcomes both in the field and for member states.

- d. **Futures planning:** To ensure mandates are achieved within operational and resource constraints, and ensure readiness for potential future missions, a dedicated futures planning capability is needed to support current and future missions.
- e. **Force Generation for future requirements:** Strategic Force Generation and Contingent Owned Equipment processes will need to become more agile, incorporate new capabilities, and accommodate multinational, modular contingents and new deployment modalities.
- f. **Leadership and Human Resource reform:** System wide Human Resource reform is needed to strengthen capacity and ensure timely and flexible resourcing and recruitment. Part of this reform should focus on leadership accountability, skill sets and team compositions, especially in the field.

2. Strengthen the UN's Toolkit - boost conflict prevention, mediation and integrated planning capacity

- a. **Improve Mission design and planning capacity:** The UN must reinvigorate forward looking and integrated planning to develop creative, tailored options for conflict resolution, across the full spectrum of peace operations. At a field level, whole of mission political strategies and operational plans are essential to improve coherence among mission components and with the UN Country Team.
- b. **Early warning and prevention:** The UN must step up its early warning capacities, including data driven analysis and contingency planning. To meet future needs, the UN requires a high level of readiness to deploy at short notice and backstop missions with technical expertise. In the field, missions should strengthen early warning capabilities and facilitate inclusive dialogue, focused on prevention and building durable peace.
- c. **Primacy of politics:** Political solutions and dialogue will remain the hallmark of future peace operations. It should guide the design of mandates and mission structures, with form to follow function and transition planning integrated from the outset. Peace operations must work in concert with the Secretary-General's good offices, Special Representatives and mediation teams, and strengthen their collective political and mediation capacities.
- d. **Doctrine is important:** The UN and Member States should continue to invest in doctrine to support the adaptation of UN peace operations to new threats, opportunities and technologies.
- e. **UN Policing:** Policing must remain a core element of future peace operations – missions will require more specialised police teams, with enhanced capabilities.

3. Continue to invest in the modernisation of UN Peace Operations

- a. **Technology and innovation:** Efforts must continue to modernise UN tools and capabilities through system-wide digital transformation and innovation. Future missions will realise efficiencies and improve performance through sustained investment in technology, use of AI tools and data analytics. The UN's own data and analytics should inform the Secretary-General's reporting on conflict affected contexts, including by helping to verify information received from other sources.

- b. The **Peacekeeping Performance and Accountability Framework** should remain a priority. Performance indicators and assessments should be better utilised to improve decision making and feedback between Missions, the Security Council and Member States; to inform mandates and transitions, as well as contingent selection and training.
- c. **New threats demand new capabilities.** The UN, in partnership with Troop and Police Contributing Countries will need to continue to upgrade and improve field-based capabilities, including communications security, peacekeeping-intelligence and counter-UAS systems to ensure safety, security and effective mandate implementation.
- d. **Innovation hubs:** Peace operations should strengthen cross-mission collaboration and better harness expertise of UN and non-UN entities, including the Peacebuilding Impact Hub, to develop solutions to systemic issues and integrate new capabilities. An enhanced Peace and Security Innovation Hub/Centre of Excellence should facilitate this approach.

4. The importance of partnerships

- a. **Partnerships can be a force multiplier:** Partnerships which bring together multiple Member States, have the potential to achieve different effects than those provided by individual contributors. The review should encourage innovative models of partnership, such as triangular partnerships, co-deployments, joint training, or combined regional contributions.
- b. **Enabling troop and police contributing countries:** Enabling support for troop and police contributing countries is a valuable contribution to UN peace operations. This can include training, strategic airlift, and equipment to support partners deploy. This should be better embedded in a holistic approach to UN peace operations.
- c. **Support for UN Peace Operations is a whole-of-government endeavour:** Decisions around deploying personnel to UN peace operations and their sustainment, require input and participation from a range of domestic agencies. Interagency support structures will inevitably evolve over time.

5. Mainstream and prioritise the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

- a. Advancing the **full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership** of women in peace operations, including by removing barriers to participation, will be fundamental to the success of future peace operations.
- b. **Women at the peace table:** Missions must enhance efforts to promote women's leadership and influence in peace and political processes. Key to this is deepening collaboration with diverse civil society, including, women-led civil society organisations for effective prevention and peacebuilding efforts.
- c. **Planning and resources:** Gender-responsive planning, budgeting and reporting must be embedded across all components of peace operations. This includes maintaining gender advisers, ensuring training for all personnel and **integrating victim-survivor centred approaches** to address conflict-related sexual violence.

6. The Protection of Civilians must remain an enduring strategic objective in all Peace Operations

- a. Future peacekeeping and special political missions - regardless of the size or model - must retain Protection of Civilians (PoC) as **a cross-cutting political and operational priority**.
- b. **Capabilities and Resources:** Missions with a PoC Mandate must have access to robust capabilities, adequate resources and accountability mechanisms, and be supported by clearly defined objectives, political backing and operational flexibility to respond to diverse threats.
- c. PoC considerations should be **integrated across civilian, military and police components**, and reflected at all levels of planning, analysis and implementation. During transitions, sustaining PoC through local capacity, community engagement and continued UN presence should be prioritised.

7. UN Peacebuilding and UN Peace Operations should strengthen their linkages

- a. **Improved transition planning:** UN mission transitions must be jointly planned, with shared analysis and objectives across the UN's three pillars. This requires closer and more sustained coordination between host governments, the UN Security Council, UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), UN Country Teams, including Resident Coordinators and peace operations. Roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined to minimise duplication.
- b. **Enhancing the role of the PBC:** Host governments should be encouraged to engage with the PBC before, during and after transitions. The PBC can provide political accompaniment, be a pathway to mobilising resources and maintain international attention on peacebuilding priorities.
- c. **Prevention strategies:** Peace operations should support national development plans, and/or national prevention strategies. Mission mandates and activities must be aligned with local priorities, consultation, and plans to ensure sustainability and legitimacy.
- d. **Capacity building:** During transitions, capacity building on tasks that will transfer to national/local authorities must be a priority. Joint structures should be set up with national counterparts to facilitate sustainable transitions. Realistic economic considerations also need to be factored into transition planning processes and longer-term financing strategies.