

Federal Republic of Austria

Contribution to the Secretary-General's Review on the Future of All Forms of United Nations Peace Operations

Austria welcomes the initiative by the Secretary-General, as mandated by the Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1), to undertake a strategic review of the future of all forms of United Nations peace operations. This review was a priority for Austria during the negotiations and is seen as a crucial step toward adapting the UN's peace and security toolbox to evolving needs. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this process and would like to offer the following observations and recommendations.

1. The continuing relevance of UN peace operations

Austria remains a staunch supporter of United Nations peace operations as **a vital tool for the maintenance of international peace and security**. Despite growing geopolitical tensions, shrinking resources, and increasingly complex mandates, peace operations are an irreplaceable expression of multilateral engagement in conflict prevention, stabilization and peacebuilding. However, they must be equipped to respond to current realities, both operationally and politically.

Peace operations cannot substitute for political processes; they must be firmly anchored in them. A **renewed focus on political solutions, prevention and mediation**, should guide future engagement.

2. Mission adaptability

UN missions must also be **more flexible and adaptive**. Current planning, mandate formulation and mission configuration processes often lag behind fast-moving dynamics in conflict contexts. Austria supports greater agility in mandate adaptation, more effective transitions between mission types, and sustained UN engagement beyond drawdowns, in line with the **peace continuum approach**.

Austria supports the **focus on modularity and adaptability** as proposed in recent independent reviews. Future peace operations must be scalable and flexible, including the ability to reconfigure based on context shifts and transitions. In this regard, we highlight the importance of mandates that emphasize inclusive governance, early warning, and national peace architectures, including prevention strategies developed and owned by national actors.

3. Mandates

Peace operations need to be **realistic** in their scope and ambitions, **context-sensitive** in their design, and **politically supported** by host countries, regional partners, and the wider international community. We underscore the need to **tailor mandates** more precisely to the situations on the ground and prioritize clear, achievable objectives.

UN peace operations must also be understood as part of a **broader continuum of engagement**, working in coordination with humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding

actors. This requires planning and **mandates that go beyond short-term stabilization** and support a coherent, long-term approach to sustaining peace.

a. Centering protection of civilians

The **protection of civilians** must remain a central pillar of UN peace operations and a key consideration in the assessment, planning and deployment of all future models of peace operations. Drawing on previous independent assessments, it will be crucial to define how different tasks, models and scenarios can contribute to protection.

In this context, Austria encourages the UN Secretariat to do **contingency planning** for situations where civilians are at risk to enable preparedness to respond, including through **proactively offering recommendations** on potential peace operations to deploy and protect civilians in situations of concern.

Finally, Austria encourages the Secretariat to facilitate the **development of comprehensive guidance and policies for missions** on protection across the full spectrum of UN peace operations and those deployed in parallel. This includes ensuring that all missions are considering and planning for the protection of civilians, irrespective of the mission mandate, but also giving further consideration to deploying alongside other missions led by regional organizations, coalitions, etc. means when it comes to the protection of civilians (particularly peace enforcement).

b. Human Rights, WPS and YPS

Austria supports the continued **integration of human rights monitoring, child protection and women, peace and security (WPS)** mandates in all relevant missions throughout all phases of their deployment. Mandates must go hand in hand with capacities — including sufficient staffing, training and coordination mechanisms.

c. Climate, Peace and Security

Austria emphasizes the need for the review to address the **growing interlinkages between climate change, peace and security**. Climate-related risks such as water scarcity, food insecurity, displacement and competition over natural resources increasingly act as threat multipliers, exacerbating fragility and undermining peacebuilding gains.

UN peace operations are often deployed in regions highly exposed to climate impacts. To remain relevant and responsive, future missions must be equipped to:

- **Integrate climate-related risk assessments** into conflict analysis, planning and mandate implementation;
- **Strengthen the capacity of missions to anticipate and mitigate climate-induced risks**, particularly those affecting vulnerable groups such as women and youth;
- **Work in partnership with specialized UN agencies**, regional organizations and local actors to enhance resilience and sustainable resource governance;
- **Ensure that mission operations themselves are climate-sensitive**, by reducing environmental footprints and promoting sustainable logistics.

Austria also supports the inclusion of **climate-security advisers** or focal points in relevant UN missions and encourages stronger institutional links between the climate and peacebuilding communities within the UN system. Addressing climate-related security risks must be an integral part of a forward-looking peace operations agenda – not a separate track.

4. Integrated Mission Planning

On 1 April 2025 the UN Secretariat issued the **DPO-DPPA-DOS Guidelines on “The Mission Concept and Mission Plan”**. While the new guidance is an important step, UN missions still lack an integrated approach to translating that guidance into whole-of-mission plans.

Most current UN peace operations do not have an effects-based, cross-component mission plan grounded in an integrated mandate analysis. This shortfall leaves mission components planning in silos and impedes measurable progress toward integration and mandate implementation.

This gap is one the UN Secretariat and Member States can close together by:

- **Designating a single focal point** for integrated mission-level planning within the UN Secretariat to guide and oversee integrated planning across all UN peace operations;
- **Formally establishing integrated mission-level planning positions** in every UN peace operations, resourced and empowered to coordinate integrated planning across civilian, military, and police components;
- **Convening a joint UN Secretariat–Member States working group** to craft a unified process for developing integrated mission plans, building on the April 2025 Guidelines;
- **Inviting Member State experts** to participate and support the review of forthcoming policy documents on Mission Planning Units and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) before their promulgation, ensuring the two instruments are mutually supportive;
- **Informing Member States** on a regular basis on progress against the above actions.

5. Strengthening inclusive engagement and partnerships, in particular with regional organizations

Austria sees great value in enhancing strategic partnerships between the United Nations and **regional and sub-regional organizations**, in line with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. In particular, we emphasize the importance of a predictable, coherent, and mutually accountable partnership with the African Union and other regional actors engaged in peace support operations.

We encourage the Secretary-General’s review to explore ways to strengthen such partnerships, including through:

- Joint planning and analysis frameworks;
- Common standards for the protection of civilians and human rights;
- Predictable and sustainable financing, including through assessed contributions in line with UNSC Resolution 2719 where appropriate;
- Strengthened coordination and division of labor in fragile contexts.

At the same time, regional partnerships must be based on mutual respect, clarity of roles, and shared accountability. We encourage the review to explore how the UN can better leverage the **comparative advantages of regional organizations** without outsourcing core responsibilities or compromising on protection and normative standards. Austria also underlines that regional peace support operations should systematically include clear mandates to protect civilians, adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law, and incorporate accountability mechanisms.

Experience shows that the relationship between UN peace operations and host countries, as well as their **engagement with local communities**, is central to success. Strengthening **community engagement, trust-building, and transparency of mission objectives** should be an integral part of future mission design.

6. Aligning peace operations with UN reform

Austria encourages the Secretary-General to link, where necessary, the review with broader reform processes like the UN80 Initiative. At the same time, the review should not be entirely subsumed within the UN80 process. In terms of linkages, this includes ensuring:

- Strengthening synergies between peacekeeping operations, SPMs, long-term development efforts and UN Country Teams;
- Enhanced system-wide coherence;
- Fully leveraging the capacities of the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund;
- Continued emphasis on accountability, transparency and results-based performance assessment.

7. Process of the Review

- Finally, Austria sees great value in informal consultations between the Secretariat and Member States. Transparency will be instrumental to ensuring the review's legitimacy, particularly in the implementation of some of its potential recommendations;
- we also strongly encourage the Secretariat to include perspectives from external actors, including academia, civil society, and think tanks. Such outreach should extend to people and organizations with direct experience in or around UN peace operations, and represent diverse geographic, cultural, and normative backgrounds;
- The process of the review should not be rushed but take the necessary time to consider all political, financial and operational aspects necessary.