

# Review on the future of all forms of United Nations peace operations

## Contribution by the Republic of Latvia

### Questions for all Member States

*1. What are the main challenges confronting peace operations today and what challenges are expected to be faced by peace operations in the future?*

International community faces increasingly complex and interlinked challenges. While UN peace operations have an impressive track record and remain a critical tool in the hands of international community, they also face significant challenges.

Modern conflicts are increasingly protracted, internationalized, involve non-state actors (terrorist groups, militias, transnational criminal networks) and blurred lines between war and peace, with an alarming rise in civilian displacements. These conflicts are fragmented, fluid, driven by grievances, resource competition or ideological extremism, making traditional peacekeeping approaches less effective.

One of the key challenges confronting UN peace operations today is the lack of strategic realism and prioritization. Mandates are often overly ambitious, misaligned with political realities on the ground. This usually dilutes the effectiveness of the peace operations and leads to unfulfilled expectations.

Diverging views in the Security Council and among wider UN membership, as well as questions pertaining to the political support from the host nations hamper efforts to address these issues to unlock full potential of the peace operations. Consequently, there is a growing tendency not to involve the UN in peace resolution and rather preferring bi-lateral or multi-lateral peace agreements between global and regional players.

Additionally, UN peacekeeping requires niche capabilities and personnel from troop contributing countries (TCC), that are in very limited supply and are also on different national or international tasking. Another challenge is the capability gap among TCCs.

The rise of different transnational armed groups and terrorist tactics, especially in countries lacking sufficient state power, has an impact on peace operations. Missions lack robust countermeasures to address challenges such as trafficking and financing of terrorism. Peace operations in the future will need to navigate increasingly complex political dynamics, where they will need to maintain impartiality, effectiveness and access.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) remains one of the challenges of UN peace operations undermining their legacy of peacekeeping. Strengthening of vetting, training, and disciplinary procedures, support for victims, improvement of transparency and accountability are the challenges to tackle.

Currently disinformation campaigns erode mission credibility, while cyberattacks and hate speech pose new risks, with insufficient tools and training to effectively counter them.

Likely UN peace operations will be confronted in the future by number of challenges, driven by changing global landscape, like shifts in the nature of conflicts, geopolitical tensions, misuse of technological advancements and impact of climate change and environmental degradation. Further weakening of the universal norms, rising competition over the cooperation and potential lowering of accessible funding could

further strain UN peace operations, pushing towards *ad hoc* solutions and coalitions, therefore undermining strong existing UN mechanisms.

*2. How can United Nations peace operations adapt in response to current and future challenges (e.g., in terms of political and substantive work, mandates, operational and administrative requirements, capacities)?*

First and foremost, UN peace operations need realistic and adaptive mandates. Local absorption capacity needs to be considered. UN should strengthen further collaboration with regional organizations. Coordination and not duplication with other engagements is essential. Clear exit strategies need to be planned from the very beginning of the deployment of a mission. UN peace operations should be deployed in support of viable political processes, not as substitutes for them. The mandates should be reviewed and adapted based on political and operational conditions regularly. Need to avoid “Christmas tree” mandates overloaded by political bargaining. At the same time, protection of civilians and critical civil infrastructure are key issues and need to be addressed in the corresponding mandates of future operations.

UN peace operations should foster deeper integration and cooperation with the involved parties and have a more pronounced role in conflict mediation. Deepened cooperation with EU, AU, ECOWAS is essential. Modular configurations: modular units, rapid forces, modular deployments in hybrid with AU, specialized teams.

Deteriorating peace and stability globally accompanied by limited budget raises the importance of effectiveness. Therefore, a transparent and results driven monitoring and evaluation system that takes in account current needs must be at the core of the implementation process of peace operations. Budget flexibility on the other hand would allow to react to the findings from monitoring and respond to the needs in a more efficient way. Duplication of any formats should be avoided whilst consolidation of logistical hubs, systems could be enhanced.

In order to improve UN peace operations’ effectiveness and enhance their performance and accountability, UN should more implement data driven evaluations, training and equipment upgrades. Safety and protection of the peacekeeping personnel should be improved by better intelligence, technology (surveillance drones) and development of the rapid deployment capabilities.

*3. What could United Nations peace operations be expected and mandated to do in the future? Under what conditions are United Nations peace operations least likely to be effective in achieving their objectives? Under what conditions are United Nations peace operations most likely to achieve their objectives?*

Peacekeeping cannot substitute for peacebuilding or political will.

In the future, the UN might be required to maintain and monitor peace in recently concluded conflicts, where hybrid activities and sabotage/subterfuge are still very prevalent. Additionally, sea zones could be monitored by the UN in order to maintain safe shipping or the removal of mines/explosives that could be littered after a conflict has concluded. The clearing of vast territories that have been littered with mines or explosive devices might also be a mission that UN peacekeepers are mandated to do. UN peace operations might be required also to act in a protracted conflict area or addressing climate-security risks.

Peace operations cannot work in silos. They must be part of broader peacebuilding, humanitarian and development efforts.

Positive long-term impact of activities cannot be achieved without the implementation of local, national and/or regional mechanisms and structures that help to sustain peace and stability during and after the implementation of a project or programme. Development cooperation efforts therefore gradually should move towards partnerships (instead of donor-recipient approach) and focus on monitoring the priorities and needs of partners. This perspective could be explored also regarding the peacekeeping operations in suitable contexts.

Key for achieving the objectives is mandate realism and adequate resources.

*4. What could be the role of partnerships, with regional organizations, international financial institutions, or other actors, in future United Nations peace operations? What are the opportunities and challenges presented by partnerships, and what principles should underpin them?*

The largest cooperation needs to happen for tasks in the civil sector where uniformed UN peacekeepers will not suffice. Particularly engagement with local communities, information campaigns and communication, providing basic services and necessities. Regional organizations often have deeper understanding of the realities on the ground and local context. Their involvement can also increase the acceptance of peace operations. Cooperation with regional partners, international financial institutions can bolster operational capacity, financial mobilization and peacebuilding sustainability.

EU is a vital and multifaceted partner for the UN that often has parallel deployments with UN peace operations. In African continent trilateral involvements with African Union. Cooperation and collaboration between EU, AU and UN needs to be strengthened and duplications in efforts avoided.

Main challenges remain coordination complexity, different mandates and priorities, capacity gaps, funding. The main principles to underpin the partnerships should be clear mandates and roles, transparency and accountability. It is also important to engage local stakeholders and civil society alongside regional and international partners to promote legitimacy and sustainability. Additionally, private entities can assist in intelligence gathering and sharing where appropriate.

Latvia supports engagement of stakeholders from various sectors to approach cross-cutting issues such as climate, health etc. and support work towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is crucial to address the underlying root causes of fragility through a strengthened operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus. Latvia provides humanitarian and development assistance to populations in fragile contexts mainly through contributions to multilateral efforts. This allows for efficient coordination, transparency, and effective prioritization in the context of increasing needs and deflating resource availability. In the context of a persisting funding gap, it is crucial to step up global response, including engagement with emerging donors, in particular countries within G20, as well as international financial institutions.

UN peace operations should operate in synergy with humanitarian and development objectives, embodying such principles as respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, local ownership and sustainability, inclusivity and gender responsiveness. Localization should be central in all HDP nexus efforts to allow for effective context specific response to immediate needs on the ground and increase local actor agency long-term.

## **Questions for current and former Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries**

*9. What factors shaped your country's decision to become a T/PCC to United Nations peace operations? What factors and considerations will determine whether your country will remain an active T/PCCs in future United Nations peace operations?*

In Latvia's case the decision was shaped by the commitment to contribute to global security and cooperating with partners in other regions besides the Euro-Atlantic area. Additionally, it was an opportunity for Latvia to expand on a set of skills within our armed forces that are difficult to acquire and exercise elsewhere, UN observer posts for example.

*10. How would you assess the degree to which your views as a T/PCC were, or are, taken into consideration with regard to the mandates of United Nations peace operations and their implementation?*

Thus far Latvia's contributions and views have been respected in large part due to the professionalism that our armed forces show while on deployment. This can vary per country as smaller countries that can provide only a relatively small national contingent have to be placed within a larger countries' contingent. In Latvia's case our positions and views have been aligned with our supporting partners.

*11. From your perspective as a T/PCC, what are the most pressing challenges confronting the United Nations peace operations that you are involved in?*

Latvia is currently involved in two UN peacekeeping operations (UNIFIL and UNTSO), previously we were also contributing to MINUSMA. One of the core challenges for TCC is operating in increasingly and unpredictably volatile environment, characterized by asymmetric warfare, terrorism and hybrid threats potentially resulting in higher casualties and targeted attacks. Troops are exposed to improvised explosive devices, ambushes and non-state actors, sometimes including hostile local population. Language barriers have proved to be challenging as limited knowledge of particular language makes it more difficult for peacekeepers to work in a specific operational area. Additionally, issues sometimes arise similarly to other nations, where the mandate can be limiting for the full execution of a task. Furthermore, health risks, including climate exacerbated diseases can seriously challenge and affect overall mission success.

Ensuring the health and life of soldiers and at the same time continuously guaranteeing the quality of performance of high-level service duties could be the biggest challenge for both individual soldiers and units.

*12. Based on your experience deploying peacekeepers, what capabilities and support would be needed for deployments in the future?*

UN peace operations are operating in volatile and complex environments. To remain efficient, they need to be supported by adequate capabilities. There is a need for context-sensitive analytical tools. Peace operations need to be politically-driven, technologically equipped and locally anchored.

Protection of civilians is one crucial task, where community-based protection models with involvement of local actors are needed. One of the main capabilities is also a necessity for intelligence gathering. This can be done through Unmanned Aerial Systems or specialized reconnaissance units/capabilities deployed to the mission. However, these capabilities are few in number and rarely deployed on UN peacekeeping missions. Additionally, UN peace operations should be supported by real time surveillance, data analysis and human intelligence (HUMINT) as well as secure

information-sharing mechanisms. Countering disinformation and misinformation is an additional field where support and capabilities are needed. Conflict dynamics are becoming increasingly complex, but technology advancements provide new opportunities.