

United Nations Peace Operations remain one of the most vital multilateral tools for maintaining peace, preventing armed conflict, addressing insecurity, protecting civilians, supporting political transitions and sustaining peace. While peace operations have demonstrated their effectiveness and relevance, they continue to face complex and evolving challenges. The Kingdom of the Netherlands (KNL) reaffirms its commitment to all forms of UN peace operations and to efforts aimed at ensuring their effectiveness in the future.

Current and future challenges

- The operational environment of United Nations peace operations is evolving rapidly and continuously. Political support for missions is under strain, the conflict landscape is becoming increasingly complex, and adherence to international humanitarian law is under pressure. At the same time, the prevalence of non-state and proxy actors is growing, and these actors are employing increasingly sophisticated technologies while adapting their political objectives to shifting circumstances. Consequently, both the operational capabilities required for peace operations and the political pathways toward conflict resolution are becoming ever more challenging to define and achieve.
- The main challenge for peace operations is to adapt flexibly and effectively to this rapidly evolving context, while navigating the different interests of UN members and host states with limited resources. Mandates often lack clarity, are too voluminous, or do not adequately address the fundamental needs on the ground. Peace operations tend to follow structures and procedures that separate prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding into distinct phases, reinforcing standardized models. This approach can hinder the ability to respond effectively to the dynamic and complex nature of modern conflict and to respond to the changing realities on the ground.
- In addition, special political missions, as a configuration of peace operations, - are funded through the regular budget, which is a biennial cycle, but their needs

can arise or change rapidly. This creates difficulties in securing timely and adequate resources, especially during mission start-up, expansion, or transition. And special political missions often lack the extensive support structures found in peacekeeping missions, including backstopping from UN HQ, that affects their ability to react to the volatile environments in which they operate.

Courses of action

- Mandates and political support: Clear and focused mandates and sustained political support are essential for the success of United Nations peace operations. Mandates are most effective when grounded in realistic objectives that respond to local needs and concerns. In addition, support by the host state, the region, and the wider international community to both the political process as well as the peace operation are critical to create the conditions for lasting peace.
- Resources: For all forms of UN peace operations ensuring that there are realistic mandates and matching resources is key. Security Council mandates should be crafted based on a realistic assessment of available resources. Aligning SPM budget cycles with peacekeeping operations: This would shield SPMs from the regular budget's frequent liquidity problems, which can hamper their effectiveness.
- Strategic leadership: In a (political) environment marked by constant change, uncertainty and limited resources, strategic leadership is critical. Both at Headquarters and in missions, adaptability and flexibility is important for success – especially considering the increase of expectations concerning future operations.
- Community-centered approaches: Peace operations should further implement a community-centered approach in which the interests and solutions of affected communities are effectively incorporated. This requires sustained engagement with local communities, civil society, and NGOs,

alongside strengthened training and capacity building to prevent and mitigate civilian harm, including from peacekeepers' own actions. Strengthening accountability for failures to uphold protection responsibilities remains equally crucial.

- Headquarter (HQ) and field interaction: When it comes to successful peace operations, two – complementing – approaches are essential. On the HQ level, the UN must navigate bureaucratic processes and member state interests. With a clear vision, the UN must set out the outlines and necessary preconditions for mission and mandate success. The missions must then assess the vision and mandate and translate these to the Area of Responsibility. In this interaction, three elements are of key importance.
 - First, respect for field leadership. UNHQ's role is to set the objectives, outlines and strategic direction of the mission, while it is up to mission leadership to navigate the complex, fast-changing dynamics on the ground. UNHQ must steer clear of encroaching too much on field-level autonomy.
 - Second, context-specific approaches. Each mission operates in a unique setting with its own challenges and success criteria. A one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective.
 - Third, transparency; open communication between UN HQ, Troop / Police Contributing Countries, and the mission is crucial. Both sides should collaboratively discuss mandates, achievements, and challenges, and share relevant information with host governments and local populations to build credibility and legitimacy.
- Integrated approach: Any future scenario will require the United Nations to work more flexibly and more responsive to the specific context. Greater and more effective cooperation across the peace and security pillar can strengthen context-relevant, responsive, and modular approaches, making full use of the UN's ability to operate along the peace continuum. It is equally essential to bridge the gap between peacekeeping operations and special political missions and invest further in the prevention agenda. Such integration will enable the UN to address complex crises more coherently

and sustainably. In addition, adopting a modular approach allows special political missions to leverage existing in-country capacity, including UN Country Teams, and focus on short-term activities while partners handle longer-term peacebuilding efforts. This approach also promotes contextual adaptation.

- Peace operations and the broader system: For peace operations to be truly effective, they must be embedded within the broader peacebuilding ecosystem and accompanied by inclusive political strategies that address the root causes of conflict. This requires timely and enhanced capacities within UN missions to manage transitions towards peacebuilding and development, in close cooperation with relevant actors. In this context, special political missions can serve as a cost-effective diplomatic tool to ensure continuity during the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and help maintain sustainable peace.
- Partnerships: Furthermore, effective future peace operations should also rely on strategic partnerships. Given these organizations' greater proximity to local populations, access to recourses and networks, and deeper understanding of local realities and dynamics; they are often better equipped to understand root causes of instability. Equitable partnerships with these organization, therefore, remains vital. In the mission planning phase, the UN and regional organizations must conduct joint analyses, as well as collaborate on mission design. Clarity must exist on roles, responsibility and accountability. Furthermore, better leveraging the comparative advantages of regional partnerships also includes the meaningful implementation of resolution 2719.
- Women, Peace and Security (WPS): The WPS agenda should be implemented across all aspects of peace operations, including mandates, budgets, and mission design. Women continue to face barriers preventing them from playing meaningful roles in peacekeeping. Yet it is crucial to create an enabling, respectful and inclusive culture and environment in peace operations to enable women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in all roles and functions. Not only does this approach

increase operational effectiveness, it also contributes to the prevention of, and response to, conflict-related sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. Moreover, strengthening system-wide prevention and response mechanisms, enhancing accountability, and prioritizing survivor-centered approaches remain essential. This includes ensuring accessible and confidential reporting channels, access to justice, and comprehensive, specialized support for victims.

- IFI's: Partnerships with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) should be strengthened around innovative financing to support peace and development. It is particularly important that UN organizations and IFIs operate based on joint conflict and country analyses, and that interventions are, where possible, jointly designed. A key role, in this regard, lies with the Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) who have better access to local leadership, on which cooperation often relies.

T/PCC insights

- The Kingdom of the Netherlands (KNL) values multilateralism and an international rules-based order. Peace operations can make an important contribution to global stability, the protection of human rights and the prevention of conflict. Specific contributions of KNL depend on political prioritization, available resources, political and operational risks and other obligations (to NATO, the EU, and its territory in the Caribbean).
- Peace operations need more realistic and clear mandates in order to be effective. T/PCCs could play a stronger advisory role vis-a-vis the Security Council within the context of mandate renewals. T/PCCs have critical operational insights, and their input is often underutilized. Furthermore, views of T/PCCs could also be voiced through strategic leadership that is apt at navigating uncertainty and complexity and balancing interests with opportunities.
- A shortage of (financial) resources is a continuous concern within peace operations. This has only become more pressing in light of the current

funding situation. For KNL it is key that peace operations are adequately funded, but also that available resources align better with the specific objectives and risks of the mission. In other words, how results can be achieved with less.

- Lastly, looking at the future, peacekeepers will face an increase in hybrid warfare tactics and technological threats. Although not a panacea, peacekeepers need to be equipped to deal with these evolving threats through resources and training. This includes sustained efforts to improve the quality of peacekeepers through higher training standards and better enforcement. In this regard, the key also lies in in-depth consultations between New York, T/PCCs and Mission leadership to determine what is needed to deliver on mission objectives.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the Pact for the Future's call to adapt peace operations to better respond to existing and future challenges. It calls on the UN and all its member states to make full use of the ongoing reform processes to drive structural improvements to the peace and security architecture.