

Russian input to the Review on the future of all forms of United Nations peace operations

Russia supports UN peacekeeping and special political missions, which are unique instruments for maintaining international peace and security. Despite the fact that these UN missions are going through a difficult period today, we are convinced that their important role will remain in demand in the future. At the same time, the growing criticism towards UN missions requires serious consideration and analysis.

To begin with, we would like to emphasize that we consider peacekeeping (PKO) and special political missions (SPM) as significantly different instruments: in terms of mandates, tasks, and types of personnel and means involved. At the same time, many of our recommendations refer to both of these types of UN presences.

We are convinced that the work of peace operations should be based on achieving political solutions that are unique to each conflict, and not on an ideology which is based on so called universal values. The main guideline here remains the UN Charter in its entirety, as well as unconditional respect for the sovereignty of the host state and, when it comes to peacekeeping, the imperative of its basic principles: consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force, except for self-defense and protection of the mandate. The effectiveness of the SPMs and PKOs is based on trust. Now this trust has been seriously undermined. Some host states openly question the impartiality of the missions. Some view them as externally imposed mechanisms promoting an agenda detached from national priorities - or, even worse, as an instrument of pressure. We believe that in these states concerns about sovereignty and national leadership have not been duly taken into account. No one is absolving the UN Security Council of responsibility. However, the Secretariat and field presences must return to genuine impartiality in accordance with Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter. This is the basis of legitimacy. At the backdrop of a systemic crisis in international relations and the process of its reshaping into a more equitable form, it makes no sense to put all the blame on geopolitical contradictions; it is necessary

to take measures to overcome and take into account these differences. Of course, the lack of unity among the Council members in working on the mandates of the SPMs and PKOs complicates the situation. But even in such conditions, the UN can continue to work effectively. In this situation the Secretariat can play an important role, as its recommendations are the ones the Security Council members rely on in their work. We believe that the solutions proposed by the UN should be developed in such a way as to be realistic, acceptable to the parties of conflict, and enjoy the trust of the UN Security Council members. At the same time, we are convinced that the promotion of peace continuum can result in a category of countries-permanent recipients of UN assistance, which will not only become dependent on this kind of assistance, but will also be limited in their sovereignty. There is no need to automatically transfer one form of UN presence to another, for example, a peacekeeping operation to a SPM, etc. The ideal way is after fulfilling the mandate to transfer all responsibility for preventing and overcoming the consequences of conflicts to the states themselves. This is worth striving for.

A separate emphasis should be put on substantive pragmatic dialogue with regional organizations, in particular the African Union. We consistently advocate the development of such interaction on the basis of the UN Charter, primarily its Chapter VIII, and with the consent of the host state. We are convinced that regional organizations which are familiar with the problems of their members firsthand can play an important role in supporting the efforts of states to ensure the well-being and security of their citizens.

We support the idea of the need to adapt PKOs and SPMs to new realities. At the same time, discussions about the future of peace operations should not be limited to currently popular themes. Ten years ago, everyone was talking about drones, a couple of years ago - about disinformation, today artificial intelligence is in fashion. After all, new technologies are just technical tools. At the same time, it is not entirely clear how they can be used directly, for example, in political mediation and overcoming contradictions between the parties to the conflict. The use of technologies should be of an auxiliary nature and complement the traditional functions of PKOs and SPMs, and not replace them.

The study commissioned by the DPO on the future models of UN peacekeeping operations is conducted in the same spirit. The international

community today cannot find the funds to deploy some new missions. And this is not due to a lack of fresh theoretical ideas about peacekeeping models, but to the absence of political decisions. We are convinced that if there is political will to deploy a mission in a specific situation, the UN Secretariat will have enough expertise to prepare a suitable proposal that takes into account the regional and country context, as well as the positions of the main interested stakeholders.

We believe it is necessary to realistically determine what is truly within the capabilities of peace operations, and what goes beyond them and requires the will of the parties to conflict, bilateral assistance or the involvement of regional organizations, including the African Union. It is also important to assess which tasks assigned to PKOs and SPMs actually help to achieve sustainable peace, and which are not significant or, on the contrary, delay the achievement of a fragile balance on the path to reconciliation of the parties. We are convinced of the need to return to smaller, flexible missions focused on political assistance. They should not be overloaded with tasks that reflect the ideological agenda of any group of states. Constantly expanding mandates distract from the key goals of PKOs and SPMs. In this regard, we have for many years consistently advocated for a division of labor in the UN. Without diminishing the importance of activities in the field of peacebuilding, gender and human rights, development and overcoming the consequences of climate change, we are convinced that they should be carried out by specialized UN structures with the relevant expertise. Another challenge faced by SPMs and PKOs is the imbalance between the activities defined by the mandate and financed from the UN budget, and the agenda promoted using extra-budgetary contributions. In the current crisis, it is the core part of the mandate that is subject to cuts and underfunding, for the implementation of which peacekeeping and special political missions have less and less funds. This is not only about posts, but also operational activities. If this problem is not raised and resolved now, then in the near future we may face a critical imbalance in this area. This will harm the legitimacy of the UN presence and its impartiality and effectiveness will be called into question to an even greater extent. At the same time, the issue of excessive reliance of the UN on XB-funding, especially in areas where it is carried out in the absence of an intergovernmental mandate, is relevant not only for UN presences in the field, but also for the Headquarters.

We would also like to note a certain type of special political missions which are expert groups at the sanctions committees. Their work must be strictly defined by the mandate issued by the Security Council. In some cases, such groups were used as an instrument of political pressure or targeted persecution, and not as a mechanism for objective analysis. This predetermined their fate. Impartiality should be key criteria for selection into these groups. It is also important that the selection of both experts of the groups at the sanctions committees and the SPM personnel as a whole be based on a verified geographical balance and exclude manipulations associated with dual citizenship.