



15 August 2025

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Department for UN policy, conflict and migration

Swedish opinion on the review of UN peace operations (based on questions from the UN Secretariat).

UN peace operations should be run and developed in accordance with the three overarching principles of (1) credibility and legitimacy, (2) increased operational efficiency and impact, and (3) integration, coordination and partnership. These positions of principle shall apply regardless of whether the UN operations are carried out by the UN or by other providers, in whole or in part.

Prevention is central for peace operations, and they should always involve a policy for transition and a clear exit-strategy (after the operation has been completed).

The UN80 initiative, together with the Review of UN Peace Operations, and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review should be seen as a critical opportunity to renew, reform, streamline and adapt peace operations to meet evolving needs and challenges. As many as possible of the UN's instruments for upholding international peace and security should be integrated with a single chain of command, thus constituting one coherent peace operations toolbox. This would facilitate more integrated responses, strategic operational alignment, and the use of all available instruments, leading to improved delivery on the ground.

Questions from the Secretariat of the United Nations

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?

Disregard for the UN Charter, the rules based international order and principles of international law as well as the current geopolitical polarisation hinder unified Security Council action, which makes global political backing for UN's peace operations difficult. It also challenges the UN as a broker and guarantor for international peace and security.

Political peace processes and agreements are often difficult to implement due to several complicating factors, i.e. unrealistic strategic objectives, lack of effective decision-making processes, and non-effective implementation incentives.

Peace operations are often held accountable for critical issues that are part of the host country's responsibilities, such as lack of results and political progress, drawn-out peace agreement implementation, continued violence and insecurity, and accelerating crime and corruption.

Peace Operations face increasingly complex and sophisticated threats stemming from climate change, new technologies, transnational organised crime, and mis/disinformation and mal information (MDM).

Third party states, non-state armed groups and non-UN actors (regional forces, private military companies) are filling security gaps, complicating the conflict environment, and challenging cooperative arrangements.

The operational environment and the work of peace operations are difficult, unpredictable and challenging. Member states need to factor this in and be more resilient, realistic and responsible in their approach to and the conduct of peace operations.

Today, the UN is faced with a liquidity crisis (with 2,7 billion in unpaid assessment as of April 2025), and the world counts the highest number of conflicts since the end of the Cold War, and the largest forced displacement

crisis (with 123.2 million people forcibly displaced by the end of 2024 according to UNHCR) since World War II. In this context it is particularly important to ensure payments from member states to the UN budget in due time, and coherence between the current review and reform processes, including the UN80 initiative and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review.

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)?

Political strategies: UN Peace Operations should always be anchored in comprehensive and inclusive political strategies. The UN Security Council, peace operations and host countries should to a higher degree be accountable for their respective contribution to the operation.

People-centred approaches: Mandates should be implemented with the meaningful participation of local communities and affected populations, including women, men, girls and boys, to ensure an inclusive understanding of peace operations' mandates and the promotion of shared ownership and accountability for results.

Peace operation integration with other instruments: Peace operations should be integrated with broader UN peacebuilding and development efforts to ensure coherence and sustained impact. UN leadership should promote integrated conflict analysis and planning processes and build systems that can anticipate emerging threats and enable timely, risk-tolerant innovation, that promotes learning from failure.

Modular approaches. The UN should adopt a more flexible, adaptive and needs-based modular toolbox approach, drawing on the full range of capabilities within the UN system. This includes rapid deployments and partnerships with international financial institutions and with regional- and subregional organisations. Flexible, predictable, multi-year funding would be a game changer for the UN, which also has been underlined in the UN80-reform process.

Structural and operational coherence: With more modular approaches to mission mandates, coherence and unity of purpose with other UN and international actors becomes more important. Streamlining financing,

budgets, planning, leadership, staffing and data and information management, strategic communication and reporting for peacekeeping, special political missions and non-mission settings would greatly facilitate a more flexible toolbox.

Strategic communication: Peace operations need to communicate to host countries and communities on the scope and limitations of their mandate, and counter MDM also categorized as “harmful information”. Beyond demonstrating successes and impact, the UN can also lead by example in transparently reporting when expected results have not been achieved.

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?

Inclusive peace processes: Peace operations are most likely to succeed when they are deployed in contexts where there is a credible political process, such as a peace process or a political transition, and when the host country trusts in the UN mission, and its ability to implement its mandate. Missions anchored in robust collaboration with local, national and regional partners deliver better results, which are more responsive to the needs of the local population and thus carry greater legitimacy. Gender mainstreaming needs to be an integral part of the design and implementation of peace operations, in line with UNSC resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Flexible, resourced mandates: With more creative mandates, adequate resources, and realistic timelines, UN field missions will have the operational freedom and flexibility to effectively adjust to fast evolving threats, needs and contexts. Adequate funding for mandate implementation has a direct impact on the performance of peacekeepers and the credibility of peace operations, including for core tasks such as protecting civilians, and preventing conflict-related sexual violence.

Digital capabilities: The UN should prepare for threats posed by new and emerging technologies by investing in digital defence, intelligence, and communication capabilities.

Protection of civilians: Whenever a peace operation is deployed, there is an expectation for it to protect civilians. Protection of civilians should remain a central imperative for the UN and feature in the mandates of future peace operations and UN presences, including through civilian presence and tools in non-peacekeeping settings. Legitimacy and support for peace operations can be further strengthened when serious violations such as human rights abuses, sexual and gender-based violence, and child abuse is addressed resourcefully and in a transparent manner.

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?

Strategic partnership platform for crisis response: When the UN Security Council has defined a threat to international peace and security and agreed to address it with a selection of instruments, it should serve as a call to the wider international community (e.g. international organisations, regional organisations, AFPs, IFIs, non-governmental and civil society organisations) to mobilise around a major threat and crisis response. Such a platform could enable quick and strategic responses, while respecting the integrity of the involved organisations. Such an approach has the potential to bridge several of the current divisions, and it could take international partnering to a new level, marking the UN's 80th anniversary year.

Partnerships: Joint missions between the UN, AU, EU, and others—assisted by joint analysis, planning, financing, training, interoperability, and normative alignment – should be supported. UN Security Council Resolution 2719, allowing for UN-financed AU and African Peace Support Operations should be implemented in adequate contexts, including accountability and compliance frameworks. AU-led peace support operations often act as first responders and can enjoy greater host-state acceptance and cultural relevance, offering tailored responses to regional dynamics, thus complementing the UN's role.

Broadening resource mobilization: As peace operations are increasingly confronted with complex threats, there needs to be renewed investment in diplomacy, prevention, and sustainable peace. The linkages between peace operations and the UN's prevention agenda, as well as Agenda 2030, need to

be reinforced. Partnerships with IFIs, private sector, and civil society could invigorate resource streams beyond traditional assessed contributions. Development finance can support stabilization efforts, embedding peacebuilding into broader development strategies. Public-private partnerships can support renewable energy and climate resilience in mission areas.

Transitions: IFIs can play a key role in bridging the financial cliff that often ensues when peace operations wind down and the UN transitions to development engagement, by ensuring continued investments in governance, economic recovery, and infrastructure in fragile and conflict-affected states.

5. Please share any other observations that may benefit the review

Leadership: UN commanders should be further empowered to think creatively and put forward new proposals. Foresight and scenario exercises, as well as contingency planning, need to be conducted more systematically and new technology embraced. This shift in mindset requires more systematic support, resources and coaching for UN commanders.

Questions for current and former Troop- and Police-contributing countries (TCC/PCC).

9. What factors shaped your country's decision to become a TCC/PCC to United Nations peace operations? What factors and considerations will determine whether your country will remain an active TCC/PCCs in future United Nations peace operations?

Main drivers for Sweden's contribution to peace operations are the principles of international law, a rules-based world order, countries' right to self-defence and the fact that dialogue sometimes requires the support of instruments of power from states that are not involved in the conflict.

Sweden has a long tradition of involvement in UN peace operations and has provided military units and personnel since 1956. After Sweden discontinued its troop contribution to MINUSMA in Mali in 2023, the numbers of Swedish uniformed personnel in international UN operations are limited, above all due to new priorities in a deteriorating security situation following the Russian full-scale illegal invasion of Ukraine. However, it is of utmost importance for Sweden to continue to support UN peace operations. Our

efforts are currently focused on financial contribution to UN budget for peace keeping operations, police contributions, law enforcement, capacity development, expert- and training support, etc.

Continued support with troops will depend on UN needs as well as how these needs match available national capabilities and personnel resources. The possibility of contribution with already existing niche capabilities for limited duration and together with likeminded partners would likely be preferable when considering future troop contributions. More flexible rules regarding for example UN Military Experts on Mission (UNMEM) would also facilitate Sweden's the continuous contributions to UN system (c.f. question 10).

Future UN peace operations require robust mandates and a leadership willing to utilize these mandates. Peacekeeping and peace enforcement are also two vitally different concepts; the choice of mission must be carefully considered, and the subsequent peace operations should be properly organized and equipped. Addressing these factors would not only render UN peace operations more fit for purpose but also constitute a pull factor for member states and their armed forces.

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?

Sweden's experience contributing to UN peacekeeping operations has at times witnessed a divergence when it comes to interpreting a mission's mandate, along with a reluctance to make full use of the given mandate and the implicit toolbox that the mandate provides.

The possibility as a member state (PCC) of the UN to be able to influence the mandate and its implementation in UN peace operations is limited. The Police Advisory Group to the UN can to some extent be used for follow-up of implementation of an operation.

During our time as TCC to MINUSMA, the UN generally took our needs and limitations into account, e.g. relating to operational planning and the tasks that were given to our contingent. However, we also noted a lack of a clear military structure within the mission, which resulted in commanders

making decisions and carrying out day-to-day activities independently as opposed to as a joint mission. This led to a reduced operational effect.

Regarding UNMEM, smaller member states such as Sweden would benefit from a more flexible system concerning contributions of individual staff. Sweden has for example since long contributed with UN Military Observers (MILOBS). However, our military personnel are often requested elsewhere, and UN regulations limit our possibilities to contribute with a wider range of staff – namely our highly professional non-commission officers and reservists. We would also like to contribute with experienced and physically and medically fit personnel above the age of 55 years. Furthermore, a developed rotational system for MILOBS would be welcomed, as this would facilitate member states rotating national contributions with other member states. A relaxation of these rules would be mutually beneficial, permitting smaller countries to make commitments over longer periods, either nationally or on a rotational basis with other member states. In parallel, it would likely render the UN's footprint more reliable over time.

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?

Credibility and legitimacy are crucial. Factors that need to be taken into consideration is the need for operations to take place within the framework of a political process or strategy, compliance with rules, respect for international law including international humanitarian law and human rights law, the rule of law, gender equality, zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and the possibility of accountability.

For UN peace operations to become more effective and operational, a combination of clear mandates, adequate resources, joint contextual understanding and adaptation, coordination, use of technology and a focus on long-term perspectives and peacebuilding is required. Increased integration, coordination and coherence between relevant actors is a prerequisite for the desired impact of the efforts and for addressing the underlying drivers of armed conflict through political dialogue, diplomacy and assistance.

On a more technical level, “the military toolbox” would benefit from being more unified. Interoperability is vital for a peacekeeping-/peace enforcement

mission's coherence, efficiency, and force protection. UN peace operations would benefit from an oversight of standards to better develop capabilities. Similarly, observers should have well-established common standards regarding e.g. information gathering, reporting, force protection and medical support.

Addressing the issue of Mis-, Dis- Mal-information and Hate speech (MDMH) will be critical to reduce the levels of violence against UN peacekeepers, assuring continued host nation consent, and safeguarding the decision-making ability of the organization. Attribution and accountability for actors engaging in MDMH is key. Additionally, establishing and maintaining adequate security arrangements for UN peacekeepers and staff will also be a determining force generation factor.

Further, while the UN and member states struggle to send an adequate number of women to UN peace operations, Sweden notes the benefits of including female officers especially in activities involving engagement with the civilian population (women and children) – including in the collection of intelligence. This requires comprehensive actions within the respective armed forces, in order to limit unnecessary obstacles that hamper female officers' careers. Only so can more women be made available for peace operations.

Regarding our MILOBS in UNMOGIP, the fact that the conflicting parties have differing views on the mission result in security and duty of care challenges. For example, our observers on the Indian side are often deployed to field stations alone or with support staff not speaking English, with an unclear health referral system and a limited freedom of movement. Regarding UNTSO, we note that current UN activities do not match the political and security developments that have taken place in the area. The mission would profit from an overview regarding its activities and mandate.

Security issues in the field and the lack of information and transparency in security planning are the biggest challenges. The security challenges primarily apply to those seconded in the field, it should however be noted that as a seconding organization there is a need for more clarity and assurance around the security arrangements.

Furthermore, the UN's recruitment processes are also perceived as outdated (compared to the EU). The UN should be better at utilizing the skills and

expertise that Sweden provides. The recruitment process should be developed technically but also strive for a faster process.

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

Via our contributions to MINUSMA, we have noted the need to address certain structural challenges embedded in the UN peace operations architecture. Such challenges concern e.g. limited access to secure and interoperable command and control systems. UN peace operations would benefit from being more intelligence based and shortfalls are noted regarding the UN's intelligence capability. This implies developed standards and force compositions that encompass a common understanding of information gathering and analysis. Advanced technology should also increasingly be used in UN peace operations and utilized in a wider operational perspective (e.g. small and midsize drones, more advanced weapon- and surveillance systems, increased digitalisation).

UN peace operations would also benefit from optimizing resources, critical enablers and planning for mobility of manoeuvre units (e.g. QRF), which would allow for higher operational modus, increase force protection, and in turn better deliver on the mandate. This process needs to be facilitated by an adequate political and military leadership, as well as well-trained staff.

Force protection should also be assisted by more ambitious standards regarding personal recovery and medical service. This would in many cases imply a developed UN MEDEVAC capability by air, or that UN bases are established in more locations and with more qualified medical assets. Host countries as well as UN forces would also benefit from an increased capability regarding counter-IED and EOD.

Noteworthy is also the fluctuating level of training that Sweden as a TCC has been exposed to. Prior to deployment to UN peace operations, training is vital. Not least, the Swedish Police has developed training capacity to enhance capabilities and provide support to PCCs. The Swedish Police Authority will continue this support and be in close contact with the UN to provide for support when needed and appropriate.