

On the eve of the UN peacekeeping defence ministerial in London, Chatham House, the University of Reading and the United Nations Association – UK organized a roundtable discussion on 7 September 2016 entitled ‘Challenges to People-centred Peace Operations’. Participants included UN officials, academics and practitioners. The following are key points and recommendations stemming from the discussions:

Implementation of the three UN review processes that took place in 2015 (High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, Review of the UN peacebuilding architecture, and High-level Review and Global Study of resolution 1325)

- Re-emphasize the paramount importance of integrating peace operations into a wider political strategy in support of the transition towards sustainable peace.
- Move towards a whole-of-UN approach that involves all UN actors on the ground and includes cost-sharing of activities.
- Re-energize and push forward implementation of the reviews, with regular progress updates by both the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Member States and clarity on which recommendations will be taken forward and when.
- Concentrate on instituting sustainable processes to support conflict management in host countries (such as constitutional reform and mediation) as opposed to adopting a narrow focus on situational objectives.
- Set out clear mission requirements and host country responsibilities during initial mandate negotiations.

Strategic use of force

- Move towards a shared understanding of when and how the use of force contributes to mission objectives including the protection of civilians.
- Provide guidance on planning and rules of engagement including ongoing scenario planning exercises to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to the use of force.
- Ensure the continued involvement of troop contributing countries (TCCs) in efforts to match capabilities and needs.
- Promote greater awareness that the protection of civilians does not solely entail the use of force but equally encompasses non-military and peacebuilding tools.

Mission capacity

- Take further steps to improve the quality and accountability of mission leadership, including Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Force Commanders and Police Commissioners, by instituting more robust and transparent recruitment processes such as independent advisory panels to inform the Secretary-General’s decisions.
- Take action to improve diversity of staff at all levels including by increasing the representation of women in leadership roles.
- Confirm the need to promote a performance-based approach to accountability by both missions and TCCs.
- Reinforce UN rapid response and standby arrangements with concrete commitments by Member States.

Training

- Raise the level of DPKO oversight of training standards with a view to improving and harmonizing capacities including in international humanitarian law, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and community engagement skills.
- Ensure external validation of pre-deployment training of military, police and civilian personnel.
- Urge the UK and other Member States that have capacity to continue and increase the provision and funding of military and police training to states that lack capacity.

Local ownership

- Increase clarity on what local ownership and community engagement mean in the context of peace-support operations, in particular those led by DPKO.
- Develop guidelines for UN personnel on how to understand and support local ownership including the different levels of engagement (elites, women, youth, civil society, etc.).
- Support DPKO in engaging with research institutions to analyse and identify best practices with a view to creating an evidence base for strategies and tools.
- Urge UN leadership to promote an environment that enables increased professional development and the institutionalization of lessons learned.
- Provide more funding to train staff on local ownership principles and practices.

Communications

- Stress the importance of including communication objectives and strategies during mandate negotiations.
- Tailor these strategies to different audiences in mission areas and promote two-way communication between missions and local populations.