

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 24 December 2015 from the Chair of the
Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations
addressed to the President of the Security Council**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the concept note (see annex) of the ninth thematic discussion of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, held on 11 December 2015, entitled “Towards a strategic dialogue between the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat”.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex would be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Mahamat Zene **Cherif**
Chair

Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations



Annex to the letter dated 24 December 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note

11 December 2015 Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations thematic discussion entitled “Towards a strategic dialogue between the Security Council, troop-contributing countries/police-contributing countries and the Secretariat”

On 11 December 2015, Chad, as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, will hold a thematic discussion, entitled “Towards a strategic dialogue between the Security Council, troop-contributing and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat”. The discussion will bring together Security Council members and a broad range of Member States, particularly troop- and police-contributing countries. Also invited to brief are Mr. Francois Grignon, Director a.i., Africa Division 1, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Ambassador Gerard von Bohemen, Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations and Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations.

A collective commitment to peacekeeping operations based on a shared understanding of the objectives and mandates of peacekeeping operations, between the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat is critical to successful missions. The complex operating environments into which peacekeeping operations are deployed today, coupled with the security risks that peacekeepers are expected to take on, underscore the importance of a collective commitment to the common endeavour of peacekeeping operations. This can be achieved only through meaningful dialogue between those who create, finance, manage and implement mandates.

Why triangular dialogue matters

A stronger common vision for peacekeeping operations would result in unity of effort, which in turn would strengthen the operations’ strategic, operational and tactical effect. At the strategic level, a common vision will enable the political commitment required to complete difficult missions, including in the face of human and material costs. Operationally, a dialogue that takes into account troop- /police-contributing countries’ experiences would ensure that it is tailored to the specific challenges on the ground. It will also provide early information allowing troop- /police-contributing countries to ensure better preparation of their contributions. Tactically, the obstacle of hidden caveats or other challenges to mandate implementation would be reduced if mandates are the fruit of a well-understood and consulted process. Combined, strengthened triangular dialogue has the potential to enhance the overall performance of peacekeeping operations.

Security Council

As far back as 2001, the Security Council recognized the need for a transparent three-way relationship, laying down principles of cooperation with troop-contributing countries and reiterating its agreement to hold consultations with troop-contributing countries in a timely manner at different stages of an operation

(Security Council 1353 (2001) and [S/PRST/2001/3](#)). In its resolution 1353 (2001), the Security Council recognized that the partnership with contributing countries would be strengthened by greater participation in United Nations peacekeeping of Member States with the greatest capacity and means to do so, and emphasized the importance of troop-contributing countries taking steps to ensure that their peacekeepers were able to fulfil the missions' mandate, while underlining the importance of effective and appropriate Secretariat support to national contingents participating in United Nations operations.

Since then, the Security Council has demonstrated its commitment to work closely with troop-contributing countries, including through efforts to improve working methods in accordance with the note by the President of the Council ([S/2006/507](#)). Later, in the note by the President of 28 October 2013 ([S/2013/630](#)), the Security Council reaffirmed its commitment to making full use of and improving existing consultation with troop- /police-contributing countries with a view to ensuring the full consideration of their views and concerns, to address urgent situations affecting operations, including during transitions from a peacekeeping to a peacebuilding operation, and other major changes, such as withdrawal, scaling down or termination.

Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations

For its part, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, has, since 2010, included language in its annual reports on triangular cooperation. In its reports of 2014 and 2015, the Special Committee recommended that troop- /police-contributing countries be involved early and fully in all stages of peacekeeping operations, in particular in advance of the renewal, adjustment, reconfiguration or drawdown of an operation. In this regard, the Special Committee called on the Secretariat to consult with troop- /police-contributing countries in a timely manner when planning changes in military and police tasks, mission-specific rules of engagement, operational concepts or command and control structures or in early peacebuilding tasks. The necessity is also underlined for the Secretariat to provide the Security Council, troop- /police-contributing countries and other key stakeholders with an early assessment of capabilities, force generation and logistical resource requirements prior to the launching of a new peacekeeping mission or a major reconfiguration of a current peacekeeping mission. The Special Committee also stressed the need to improve the planning, communications and interaction regarding existing platforms for consultations with troop- /police-contributing countries.

Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations

In its report, the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations ([A/70/95-S/2015/446](#)) highlighted the fact that in order to forge a common and realistic understanding of the mandates of peacekeeping operations and what is required to implement them, inclusive and meaningful consultations at a senior level between the Council, the Secretariat and troop- /police-contributing countries were required. In keeping with resolution 1353 (2001) and relevant Presidential Statements (PRSTs), the Panel recommended that the Security Council institutionalize a framework to engage troop- /police-contributing countries and the Secretariat early in the mandate formulation process.

In the context of planning for new missions, the Panel underlined the need to engage potential contributors early, to allow them to make an informed decision on whether or not to contribute. At this and in subsequent stages, the Panel stressed that force-generation efforts should shape planning and potential mandate adjustments. As for cases of mandate renewals, the Panel encouraged regular triangular consultations at senior levels, and encouraged sustaining, reinforcing and institutionalizing existing informal dialogue sessions.

The Panel also encouraged the Security Council and the Secretariat to ensure close and collaborative dialogue with relevant regional organizations prior to mandate authorization.

Secretary-General's agenda for action

In his report, the Secretary-General underscored (see [A/70/357-S/2015/682](#), para. 61), that sustained dialogue among the Security Council, troop- /police-contributing countries and the Secretariat is essential, and that it should begin before a mission is established. The Secretary-General advanced options for strengthening this dialogue, including Secretariat and Security Council briefings to potential contributors on conflict assessment before an operation is authorized, with a view to both allowing potential contributors to consider capability requirements and giving the Council an opportunity to gather views on challenges and opportunities on potential mandated tasks. As the Council moves closer to authorizing or changing the mandate of an operation, the Secretary-General has suggested that subsequent consultations could be held to ensure clarity on priorities, operational implications and required capabilities. Once a mandate is authorized, the Secretariat could continue briefing contributors regularly, seeking their views in assessing progress and explaining any changes or requirements with potential implications for troops and police.

Current state of play

Formal troop- /police-contributing countries meetings chaired by the President of the Council, prior to the mandate renewal, have become standard practice and are incorporated in the programme of work of the Council. The Secretariat regularly holds formal and informal consultations with troop- /police-contributing countries at the expert and permanent representative levels during various planning processes throughout the lifecycle of a mission. This includes when missions face sudden changes in the operational environment (e.g., United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan in 2013-2014), and in the run-up to the establishment of a new mission (e.g., the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)). Relevant troop- /police-contributing countries are also consulted when the Secretariat conducts strategic reviews of the missions in order to ensure that the conclusions and recommendations of the review adequately reflect their views. Most recently, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2241 (2015) on the Sudan and South Sudan, the Secretariat held a meeting with UNMISS troop- /police-contributing countries in order to consult the findings and recommendations of the assessment conducted on security planning in Juba. In the case of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(MONUSCO), a monthly briefing on operational developments has been provided at the expert level jointly to Security Council and representatives of troop- /police-contributing countries.

In addition, over the years, the Security Council Working Group has held meetings both on cross-cutting and mission-specific thematic issues, to which troop- /police-contributing countries are frequently invited, providing another forum for discussion.

While various consultations formats exist, there appear to be limited opportunities for a substantive and meaningful discussion between the Security Council, troop- /police-contributing countries and the Secretariat. With the exception of the dialogue sessions hosted by New Zealand (see below), many of the existing tripartite forums are stilted or formalistic, inhibiting genuine exchanges. Meanwhile, discussions at the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Security Council Working Group, by their nature, remain generally thematic and non-operational. In addition, there is currently no forum in which the Security Council together with the Secretariat may engage potential contributors to share its assessment of a conflict and gather views and information regarding the availability of capabilities from the potential contributors before the Security Council indicates its intention to authorize an operation.

An innovative approach recently taken by the Security Council, on the initiative of New Zealand, are informal dialogue sessions on specific missions. These meetings are held periodically, at the expert level, including ahead of mandate renewals, and are attended by Security Council members, major troop- /police-contributing countries of the relevant mission, and the Secretariat. They constitute an opportunity for the three groups of stakeholders to exchange views on ongoing operations, including on challenges, and provide troop- /police-contributing countries the chance to ensure that the Council is cognisant of their concerns.

Potential areas for development/modalities for engagement

With peacekeeping operations increasingly being mandated in non-permissive environments where political processes may be weak or non-existent, the need for the collective support of all stakeholders for mandates is stronger than ever. A sense of buy-in and ownership by troop- /police-contributing countries over a mission's mandate, and indeed over operational planning, is critical to ensure that the mission performs to the standard expected by the Security Council. New and existing troop- /police-contributing countries should be fully engaged on considerations related to the operating environment into which they will deploy their capabilities, and the Security Council and troop- /police-contributing countries should actively participate in discussions on expectations for uniformed performance.

While the institutionalization of a more robust triangular consultations framework would ultimately be desirable, progress can be made by expanding upon informal good practice as well the establishment of new informal mechanisms for consultation. These could include:

For existing operations:

- The expansion of the informal dialogue sessions initiated by New Zealand to encompass other multidimensional peacekeeping operations with regular

mandate renewals. This would need to involve other E10¹ members hosting such encounters.

For new operations:

- As recommended by the Secretary-General in his report (see [A/70/357-S/2015/682](#), para. 61), the Security Council with Secretariat support could inform potential contributors of its conflict assessment before an operation is authorized with a view to both allowing potential contributors to consider capability requirements and giving the Council an opportunity to gather views on challenges and opportunities on potential mandated tasks.
- This could be complemented by informal consultations by the Secretariat with potential troop- /police-contributing countries for a new mission, including discussions towards a conditional commitment of capabilities, where possible.
- As the Council moves closer to authorizing or changing the mandate of an operation, consultations could be held to ensure clarity on priorities, operational implications and required capabilities.

Challenges and discussion questions

1. What is the assessment of Security Council members on the current practice of consultations? How could Council members engage more actively with troop- /police-contributing countries?
2. What are the challenges to a more inclusive, meaningful and substantive triangular dialogue?
3. In what way should the triangular dialogue on new mandates differ from dialogue on existing mandates? At what point should dialogue on new mandates begin?
4. Can the non-permanent members of the Security Council play a more significant role in facilitating triangular discussions?
5. How does the format of meetings affect the nature of the dialogue, and are the benefits of formal versus informal, expert versus permanent representative meetings?
6. How can informal initiatives be sustained and institutionalized?

¹ Ten non-permanent Security Council members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms.