

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 5 November 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, as President of the Security Council for the month of November, the United Kingdom has scheduled a briefing on 20 November 2015 on peace operations in connection with the item entitled “Maintenance of international peace and security”.

In order to help steer the discussion on the subject, the United Kingdom has prepared the attached concept note. I should be grateful if this letter and the concept note attached could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Matthew Rycroft

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Annex to the letter dated 5 November 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the briefing of the Security Council to be held on 20 November 2015 on the report of the Secretary-General: the future of United Nations peace operations

1. Introduction

On 20 November 2015, the Secretary-General will brief the Security Council on his peace operations initiative. This will be a first chance for the Council to consider relevant aspects of the report of the Secretary-General entitled “The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations” (A/70/357-S/2015/682), which sets out his response and action plan for taking forward the recommendations found in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/95-S/2015/446).

It is hoped that this briefing might constitute the first of several opportunities for the Security Council to reflect and take action on recommendations and proposals of the Secretary-General. Upcoming Council debates and discussions on the protection of civilians and conflict prevention offer opportunities to discuss in greater detail the recommendations of the Secretary-General’s initiative relating to these themes. There is also work under way by Council members in response to some of the recommendations, notably the work of New Zealand and other Council members who continue to explore ways of deepening Council dialogue with troop- and police-contributing countries, another area in which the Secretary-General has presented proposals for the Council’s consideration.

2. Context

The Secretary-General announced his intention to launch his review at a June 2014 debate in the Security Council on trends in peacekeeping and, more broadly, the evolving nature of conflict. On 31 October 2014, the Secretary-General appointed an independent panel to make a comprehensive assessment of the state of United Nations peace operations and the emerging needs of the future.

The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations examined a broad range of issues facing United Nations peace operations under the broad themes of politics, prevention, people and partnerships. Specific areas included the changing nature of conflict, the growing scale of United Nations peace operations, evolving mandates, prevention and mediation, and challenges to sustaining peace. The Panel also considered managerial and administrative arrangements, financing and structures, analysis and planning, and partnerships. Human rights and the protection of civilians, closer engagement with communities, uniformed capabilities for peacekeeping operations and issues concerning the use of force were also covered, as were rapid deployment, performance, leadership and accountability. The Panel submitted its report to the Secretary-General on 16 June 2015.

On 2 September 2015, the Secretary-General provided his response and agenda for taking forward the recommendations of the Panel.

On 12 October 2015, the General Assembly held a plenary debate on peace operations to consider the proposals put forward in this initiative. On 3 November 2015, the Assembly adopted resolution 70/6, which paves the way for the relevant bodies of the Assembly to consider during the seventieth session the recommendations emanating from the Secretary-General's initiative.

3. **Key recommendations from the report of the Secretary-General directed to the Security Council**

Reform of peace operations requires concerted action by multiple stakeholders. In his report, the Secretary-General sets out a number of steps he intends to take to contribute to the improvement of United Nations peace operations. In his report, he makes a number of proposals to take forward the recommendations of the Panel that are directed to the Security Council, the General Assembly, Member States and other stakeholders.

In the report, ten areas are identified in which the actions of the Security Council will play a key role in strengthening United Nations peace operations. While some are new proposals, others are subject to regular debate in the Security Council or will be the focus of upcoming discussions.

- A. **Pursuit of political settlements** (paras. 12 and 14). The Secretary-General endorses the Panel's call to members of the Security Council to bring their collective political leverage to bear on behalf of political solutions.
- B. **Use of force and its limits** (para. 15). The Secretary-General notes that peace operations are not designed or equipped to impose political solutions through the sustained use of force and that United Nations peace operations are not the appropriate tool for military counter-terrorism operations.
- C. **Protection of civilians** (para. 20). The Secretary-General reaffirms his commitment to informing the Security Council of situations of escalating risk to civilians, capability shortfalls or mission failures to act and calls upon the Council to respond to requests for political and operational support, particularly in contexts where State parties are involved in attacks against civilians.
- D. **Partnerships** (paras. 6, 28-30, 47 and 51). The Secretary-General supports the Panel's emphasis on the need for stronger global-regional partnerships. He makes the case for earlier communication and procedures for consultation, acknowledging the importance of engagement when operations are sequenced or undertaken in parallel. He intends to further institutionalize cooperation with all regional partners. Regarding the African Union, which he describes as the key regional partner of the United Nations, he notes the steps taken to finalize a Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.
- E. **Prevention and mediation** (para. 38). The Secretary-General argues that early engagement by the Council is one of the most powerful prevention tools available and reaffirms his intention to continue to explore ways to bring deteriorating situations to the attention of the Council.
- F. **Sequenced mandates** (paras. 57-59). Noting recent Council efforts to identify priority tasks, the Secretary-General proposes that the Council give further consideration as to how it can better prioritize and sequence tasks for peace operations. He sets out proposals on how the Council might take this forward and indicates his interest in engaging with the Council shortly.

- G. Dialogue between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop- and police-contributors** (para. 61). The Secretary-General calls for sustained dialogue between the Council, the Secretariat and contributors and recommends that it begin before the establishment of a mission. He offers proposals for, inter alia, joint briefings to the Council and troop- and police-contributing countries as an option to facilitate a better understanding of respective perspectives, expectations, capacities and constraints.
- H. Uniformed capability** (para. 91). The Secretary-General calls upon both the Council and the Secretariat to pursue efforts to secure a broader range of capabilities, including specialist functions, and the high degree of operational readiness that are required in high-tempo environments.
- I. Caveats** (para. 98). The Secretary-General intends to inform the Council of incidents of refusal to follow orders given by mission force commanders or police commissioners. Implicit in this idea is the question of how the Council can, and will, respond in such instances.
- J. Sexual exploitation and abuse** (para. 122). The Secretary-General indicates that he will be requesting that issues of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, be added to the agenda of meetings of the Council and he urges the Council to review follow-up action on all reported cases.

4. Focus of the briefing

The briefing will review key recommendations directed to the Council. Given the limited time available, it is proposed to focus the discussion on recommendations related to sequenced and tailored mandates (see section F above) and ways to bring the Council's collective political leverage to bear on behalf of political solutions (see section A above).

Sequenced mandates

Proposals for more tailored and sequenced mandates have been part of long-standing discussions on how to enable mandates that are realistic and achievable and can have a positive impact on a conflict situation. In 2000, the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations called for two-staged mandates, which it saw as a means of enhancing achievability. Under this model, the Council would confirm a mandate only once it had been assured by the Secretariat that the capabilities required for its implementation had been made available. Another approach has been to explore greater prioritization of mandate tasks in response to the increased breadth and greater specificity of mission mandates over the past 15 years. This approach has received recent attention in the context of discussions over the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. A third rationale for sequenced mandates, and one reflected in the report of the Panel ([A/55/305](#)), is the importance of ensuring that mandates are formulated on the basis of an in-depth understanding of the conflict context and the priorities and intentions of the parties and other stakeholders. In this context, sequenced mandates are offered as a way of moving from supply-driven mandates to mandates that are more demand-driven and that adopt a field-centred approach.

The Secretary-General's report includes elements of all three arguments. He argues that a sequenced approach may permit better informed assessments of required

uniformed capabilities. It may permit greater focus on a prioritized set of tasks such as, for example, urgent protection tasks or political engagement. It may permit recommendations of the Secretary-General to the Council to build upon greater engagement with national actors and regional partners on expectations and commitments.

The Secretary-General has set out, for the Council's consideration, possible options to take this approach forward. For example, on the basis of clear political objectives, the Council may decide to establish an initial mandate and request the Secretary-General to return after a defined period with more comprehensive proposals for prioritized mission tasks, including an assessment of the military, police, substantive and support capabilities required for implementation and options for rapid generation and deployment.

The Secretary-General also proposes that the Council may initially restrict a mandate to political, security and protection tasks, with the understanding that any further tasks are contingent on progress on the most immediate threats to civilians. In such cases, the Secretary-General's reports would include a regular assessment of the mission's political and protection effect, the extent to which the mission has the capabilities to fulfil its protection mandate and the additional political and practical support required. Such reports would also track progress towards a political process and identify options for changes to the mission's strategy and mandate where progress is not forthcoming. When political openings occur, the Secretary-General would identify priority actions that a mission could take to support and advance them. Commitments in the Secretary-General's report to enhancing analysis and planning capacity at Headquarters and expanding the use of impact assessments in the field would contribute to this process.

The Council's mandate process and its ability to tailor missions more effectively to conditions on the ground could also be supported through related recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on rapid deployment, enhanced analysis and planning, and more agile field support.

- Under what circumstances could it be most appropriate or useful for the Council to consider a sequenced approach? Are there circumstances under which it would not be advisable?
- What options are there for the Council to better tailor and sequence mandates?
- What implications might such sequenced approaches have for reporting to the Security Council? How might the Council remain abreast of a fast-moving situation and the assessment and articulation of priorities and progress?
- What have been the benefits, to date, of recent Council efforts to prioritize mandates?

Collective political leverage of the Security Council

The report of the Secretary-General endorses the Panel's emphasis on the centrality of political solutions and political will. United Nations peace operations, it is argued in the report, are political instruments to support parties to a conflict in searching for, establishing and maintaining a political settlement. In this effort, the Secretary-General calls for the Security Council to bring its collective political leverage to bear on behalf of political solutions.

In situations where short-term prospects are limited and support from parties, particularly the host State, for a United Nations peace operation is partial or

wavering, the Secretary-General has committed to providing frank assessments and recommendations to the Security Council as to what peace operations can be reasonably requested to deliver and where priorities should lie.

The Security Council has many ways to demonstrate and use its collective political leverage. It can issue press and presidential statements, organize open debates or closed meetings, establish resolutions on thematic and operational issues, mandate operations, impose sanctions and engage in formal meetings with a range of national and regional stakeholders. More informally, it can undertake field visits, consult under the item entitled “Any other business”, engage informally with national and regional actors as well as troop- and police-contributors, and organize Arria formula discussions with non-State actors.

- What steps might be taken to better mobilize the collective leverage of the Security Council?
- How effective are the Council’s public communications? What is its local impact in a conflict situation?
- What are the potential roles of the penholder and/or individual members of the Council in marshalling collective political engagement?
- How might the Council achieve greater impact from its field visits? Should their timing, composition and frequency be reconsidered?
- What additional steps could be taken by the Council and its members?

5. Briefer

The Secretary-General will brief the Council. At this stage, no further briefers are foreseen.

6. Outcome and next steps

The United Kingdom intends to put forward a brief presidential statement on this issue. A draft presidential statement will be circulated for discussion.

7. Procedural aspects

As ever, we will be guided by the note contained in document [S/2010/507](#) on speaking limits. Council members are requested to keep their interventions to less than five minutes.

Further information regarding this briefing can be obtained from Craig Mills (craig.mills@fco.gov.uk), the First Secretary for Peacekeeping of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations.