

# Is Christmas Really Over? Improving the Mandating of Peace Operations



Council members confer with the Director of the Security Council Affairs Division ahead of a 24 February 2018 meeting. (UN Photo/Mark Garten)

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## Introduction: Better Process for Better Mandates

A core task of the Security Council is to adopt peace operations mandates and assess their implementation. Council members meet throughout the year to discuss the challenges and achievements of missions with a range of mandates, from a verification mission with unarmed observers in Colombia to a 16,000-strong peacekeeping operation authorised to use force to protect civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Central as mandate-crafting is to its work, the Council has been criticised for “Christmas-tree mandates” that respond inadequately to realities on the ground, are circumscribed by political and cost considerations of member states rather than driven by what the situation demands, and lack strategic focus.

Mandates are not the only factor in the success or failure of a peace operation. Domestic and

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regional political dynamics, the performance of civilian and uniformed personnel, the availability of resources, and the engagement and support of senior leadership at headquarters and at the mission are important contributing factors. However, mandates are among the few elements entirely under the purview of the Council, which could invest in rethinking how mandates are designed and reviewed.

At a Council open debate on 28 March 2018, Secretary-General António Guterres announced the launch of “Action for Peacekeeping” (A4P), an initiative aimed at renewing states’ political commitment to peacekeeping operations. Guterres urged Council members to put an end to mandates that look like “Christmas trees”, trailing streams of templated components. “Christmas is over”, he declared, calling for sharpened and streamlined mandates and pointing out as one example that the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) could not possibly implement its 209 mandated tasks. “By attempting too much, we dilute our efforts and weaken our impact. I hope that our mission reviews will help to end this mandate inflation,” he said.

Since that open debate, much has happened within the framework of the A4P initiative. The UN Secretariat partnered with ten member states to lead broad consultations on five priority areas: politics, partnerships, performance, people and

peacebuilding. Once consultations were concluded, the Secretariat, in consultation with member states, proceeded to draw up a Declaration of Shared Commitments that had by the end of 2018 been endorsed by 151 countries and four intergovernmental organisations.

The member state consultations on politics were led by Côte d’Ivoire and the UK. At a 25 June 2018 meeting, many member states underscored the primacy of politics in guiding peacekeeping operations and expressed overall agreement about the need to improve the mandating process. Issues raised included the need for more realistic mandates, the importance of consultations with relevant stakeholders and the interest in setting clear strategic objectives for peacekeeping operations. Although the Declaration was informed by the statements made in that meeting, Council members have not agreed on how the Council might adjust its own practices. A draft resolution on mandating circulated by Côte d’Ivoire and the Netherlands in mid-November 2018 was met with reluctance by some permanent members collectively to set parameters for the mandating process and was put on hold at the end of the year.

What follows is the case for improving the mandating process, and ideas to help those in the Council and beyond chart a way forward to making mandates more realistic and achievable.

## The Role of the Council in Mandating and Overseeing Peace Operations

Mandates are the legal and political basis for the deployment of peace operations—and much more besides. Mandates are the mission’s broad marching orders, identifying its overall “deliverables”. They can be an instrument for coordinating regional and international presences, a de facto contract with the host government, and a powerful messaging tool. Whereas most mandates of peacekeeping operations are established by the Security Council, in the past the General Assembly has done so as well, setting up the first UN Emergency Force interposed between Egyptian and Israeli forces in Gaza

and the Sinai in response to the international crisis over the blockade of the Suez Canal in 1956, and the UN Security Force in West New Guinea in 1962 to monitor a ceasefire agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands and support the work of a UN transitional administration.

In 2015, the number of UN peacekeeping and special political missions reached a historic high with more than 128,000 civilian and uniformed personnel serving in 39 missions across four continents, according to the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO). Several have now

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ended, and more, like the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), may end soon, but the bulk of Council meetings still pertain to the mandating and oversight of peace operations. The Council regularly renews the mandates of 11 of the 14 peacekeeping operations and six special political missions deployed at the close of 2018. Two peacekeeping operations have open-ended mandates and do not report regularly to the Council. They were the first and second such operations to deploy: the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO, 1948) and the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP, 1949). The mandate of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK, 1999) is also open-ended, although Council members are briefed regularly on its implementation.

Most mandates are renewed annually, with a few exceptions. The UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) has traditionally been renewed every six months. In recent years, more exceptions have appeared, with six-month renewals of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). In its final year, 2010, the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) was renewed every four months. In the case of MINURSO and UNISFA, the shorter mandate periods are intended to pressure the parties to re-engage in the political process. In certain circumstances—such as unresolved differences among Council members or while the Council awaits developments in a negotiating process or the outcome of a strategic review—the Council has renewed a mandate unchanged for a short period (a “technical rollover”) to accommodate the need for extra time.

In addition to peacekeeping operations, this analysis will consider the mandates of field-based special political missions (SPMs) in Afghanistan, Colombia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Libya and Somalia, which emanate from Council resolutions and are renewed regularly. SPMs can also be established through an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the President of the Council, as was done in the case of the UN regional offices in West Africa and the Sahel, Central Africa and Central Asia. There are examples of a wide range of missions established by the General Assembly (such as the

UN Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala, MINUGUA) or by the Secretary-General, as in the case of the offices of the Special Coordinators for Lebanon and the Middle East Peace Process.

The Council is briefed regularly by the head of mission, who normally introduces the most recent periodic report of the Secretary-General, adds newer developments on the ground, and describes progress and setbacks in mandate implementation. In a few settings, the political lead is not with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of mission, but with a different official altogether. In those cases, which include UNFICYP and MINURSO, the Council will usually hear from both ahead of the mandate renewal. Although the head of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), who is the Force Commander, rarely briefs the Council, a representative of the Department of Peace Operations usually briefs the Council alongside the Special Coordinator for Lebanon. Briefings vary in frequency from quarterly meetings on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), to semi-annual meetings on MINURSO and UNISFA. The frequency of meetings, as well as whether reports are to be submitted in writing or can be delivered orally, depends on the specificity of the mandate and the initiative of Council members or the Secretariat in requesting additional meetings. Although most such meetings include a briefing in the open chamber followed by closed consultations, it is the practice to discuss UNIFIL, MINURSO, and UNISFA mostly in consultations.

For peacekeeping operations, the basis for any mandate renewal is a Secretary-General's report circulated around 21 days before the end of the mission's mandate. An advance copy of this report goes to Council members before its formal publication in all six official UN languages. Given the disparity of resources and global diplomatic presence, particularly among elected members, the report plays an important equalising role in providing detailed information to every Council member. It is then presented to the Council by the Special Representative or a

Secretariat representative around 15 days before mandate expiry. In the past, mandating resolutions would simply endorse the proposal laid out in the Secretary-General's report, but this practice was discontinued sometime in the 1990s. In the case of SPMs, the Security Council tends to request reports of the Secretary-General less frequently than for peacekeeping operations, and mandate renewal discussions can be based merely on the briefing by a high-level official.

Some of the analysis put forward in the Secretary-General's reports since 2017 has been informed by independent strategic reviews conducted at the initiative of the Secretariat or the Council. These reviews often have an external lead and a “red team” composed of non-UN experts in peace operations to challenge the review's assumptions. The Council's access to the analysis and recommendations contained in these reviews has varied. Some of the review reports have been shared with the Council and made public, mainly where the Council initiated the review. This was the case of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), UNAMID, UNFICYP and UNAMA. However, in most cases only a summary of the analysis and a selection of recommendations have been conveyed to the Council in the Secretary-General's report.

Depending on what is at stake in the mandate renewal, local and international NGOs may conduct advocacy around critical issues by publishing reports, writing letters to the Council, organising events, or holding bilateral meetings with Council members.

Around 12 days before the mandate renewal of a peacekeeping operation, Council members hold a private meeting with troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs) at which the Secretariat presents the Secretary-General's report. These meetings now take place earlier in the renewal cycle: when the practice began in the 1990s, they would take place a matter of days before the adoption of the resolution, when discussions were unlikely to have an impact on mandate negotiations. Currently no TCC/PCC meetings are held for missions with open-ended mandates (UNTSO, UNMOGIP and UNMIK), or for UNISFA, given that 92 per cent of its uniformed personnel are from a single country, Ethiopia. Such meetings used



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to take place annually before the renewal of the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, but no meeting was held in 2018 before the renewal of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti, which includes over 1,200 police. These meetings are supposed to encapsulate the collective nature of peacekeeping—based on a “triangular” relationship involving the Council, the TCCs/PCCs and the Secretariat—but have been criticised as lacking interactivity and not resulting in incorporating advice from TCCs/PCCs on the mandate. Some Council members have also criticised the unreadiness of TCCs/PCCs to discuss substantive issues in these meetings. In an effort to address this, in 2015 New Zealand, and then France, started convening informal meetings of the main TCCs/PCCs, Council members and the Secretariat on some peacekeeping operations with the objective of enhancing the frankness of the discussions with TCCs/PCCs. Although this practice has continued on some files, it is far from systematic, and relies on the willingness of the penholder or another particularly engaged elected member. In the 2018 session of the General Assembly’s Special Committee for Peacekeeping Operations (C34), Pakistan and the UK presented a non-paper on triangular cooperation which highlighted the importance of keeping a mix of formal and informal meetings and improving existing mechanisms instead of creating new ones. These conclusions were incorporated into the 2018 report of the C34.

The actual negotiation of the mandating text takes place over ten days, on average. Generally, Council members are represented by diplomats known as “experts”, normally at the level of Secretary, and the involvement of permanent representatives is rare unless compromise is particularly difficult to achieve. The penholder—almost always a member of

the P3 (France, the UK and the US)—will circulate the first draft and usually call for a first meeting to read through the text. While all Council experts generally convene in person for one or two rounds of negotiations, a large part of the negotiations may take place via emails or bilateral exchanges between the penholder and other Council members. An exception to this practice occurred in 2018 with the holding of five rounds of negotiations on the renewal of UNAMA, led by the Netherlands as the penholder. Although the use of Groups of Friends was more common in this connection in the past, today three Groups of Friends (on Afghanistan, Haiti and Western Sahara) and the Contact and Drafting Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina negotiate Council drafts before their circulation to all Council members. In recent years, it has proven difficult to reach consensus in some of these configurations as a result of divergent priorities among their members, limiting what could otherwise be a valuable mechanism that includes key actors who do not sit in the Council. Engagement with host states, although not institutionalised, is usually undertaken bilaterally by the penholders and other interested Council members. Similarly, although Secretariat officials follow the negotiations and engage directly with the penholder and other member states throughout the process, their role in the drafting of mandates remains informal.

Penholders generally bring an especially strong knowledge of the relevant country situation—often as a result of historical and continuing ties and interests which influence their positions. In addition to their institutional memory, longstanding links and diplomatic presence in the host state, it is not uncommon for these states to dispatch their own experts (from New York or their capital) for regular, self-financed visits to the operations

where they hold the pen, sometimes inviting other P3 members. The fact that other permanent missions do not or cannot prioritise the exposure of their experts to field missions further increases the gap between the penholder and other Council members and the reliance on the analysis and options put forward by the former. Some elected members have begun to invest expanding their relevant regional presences and in field visits for their experts, however. In early 2019, some E10 diplomats joined France for the first time on one such visit to the DRC.

Most resolutions renewing Council mandates are adopted unanimously. Although Council members may be divided over elements of the mandate, importance is ascribed to unanimity (that is, sending a unified message) when adopting mandates. After the vote, Council members may explain their vote, but not all do so systematically.

Although the Council authorises the deployment of peacekeeping operations, how this decision translates into field-level implementation is heavily influenced by negotiations in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, which is responsible for administrative and budgetary matters. Every year in May-June, the committee adopts the budget of peacekeeping operations, with effect from 1 July. The budgets are based on proposals from the Secretary-General and are first considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), which holds hearings and issues recommendations to the Fifth Committee. The process can border on being a review of the mandate of a particular mission, given the level of detail (post by post) considered by the committee and the ACABQ. The rigidity of the staffing tables approved by the General Assembly limits the flexibility of missions to adapt to new or changing needs.

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## The Longstanding Gap between Mandates and Reality

The 2018 report of the C34 stressed the need for “congruity among mandates, resources and realizable objectives.” It highlighted the importance of providing peacekeeping operations with “clearly defined mandates, objectives and command structures, adequate

resources based on a realistic assessment of the situation and secure financing in support of efforts to achieve peaceful solutions to conflicts”. As relevant as it is today, the difficulty of designing achievable mandates has featured in peacekeeping discussions for a long time.

As early as 2000, the report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, which was chaired by Lakhdar Brahimi, expressed concern about the ambiguity of mandate language, which stemmed from compromises required to build consensus in the Council over peace

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operations. The Brahimi report argued for “clear, credible and achievable mandates”. It also raised concerns over the disparity between mandates and resources, especially in respect of force levels. The report warned that in advising the Council, the Secretariat must not set force and other resource levels according to what it presumed to be politically acceptable to the Council, noting that such self-censoring and consequent under-resourcing sets the UN up for failure.

The critique laid out in the 2015 HIPPO report, which built on the Brahimi report of 15 years earlier and subsequent practice, was more broad-ranging. It observed that mandates had become lengthier, more specific and prescriptive, and at times less realistic, manageable and achievable. It maintained that “too often, mandates and missions are produced on the basis of templates instead of tailored to support situation-specific political strategies”. The Secretariat and the Council have been unable to overcome the so-called “Christmas-tree mandate” dilemma, in which identical language for many tasks routinely appears in mission mandates. This, the HIPPO report noted, is influenced by the lack of restraint of Council members—and those lobbying them—in pushing specific issues without due consideration given to the prospects of success in performing certain mandated tasks. The HIPPO report called on the Council to resist the inclusion of tasks in mandates unless they are founded upon a clear and convincing rationale, justified by well-identified needs and the feasibility of timely implementation. It warned against those recommendations from the Secretary-General that reflect an arbitrage of departmental interests rather than genuine prioritisation.

In the last few years the Council has embraced, at least rhetorically, the need to prioritise tasks within the mandates it authorises. At present, of the 17 peace operations whose mandates are renewed regularly, eight articulate some sort of prioritisation. In some cases, the prioritisation is clearer. The mandates of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and MINUSMA

differentiate between sets of priority tasks and other tasks that are “mutually reinforcing”. These mandates include references to the implementation of secondary tasks as long as they do not impede the mission’s capacity to implement priority tasks (MINUSMA) and request the Secretary-General to reflect the prioritisation in the deployment of the mission and to align budgetary resources accordingly (MONUSCO). In other cases, the reference to priorities is less clear. While prioritisation provides useful guidance to the mission leadership, some argue that retaining most mission tasks, even as secondary, fails to address the problem posed by “Christmas-tree mandates”. In the Declaration, the Secretary-General committed to proposing to the Council parameters for the sequencing and prioritisation of mandates. The Brahimi report argued for mandates to be sequenced in the initial stages of mission establishment to allow the Secretariat to identify troops for deployment. Brahimi also recommended that the Council keep in draft form any mandating resolution that contemplated a sizeable force until the Secretary-General was able to confirm that such commitments had been received. The report warned against deploying partial forces incapable of solidifying a fragile peace, which “would first raise and then dash the hopes of a population engulfed in conflict or recovering from war and damage the credibility of the UN as a whole.”

The HIPPO report, too, proposed a two-stage, sequenced mandating process, and did so with broader scope, looking beyond the issue of troop availability. Its recommendation was aimed at helping design more effective, situation-specific missions with realistic, streamlined and prioritised tasks. This would require Secretariat proposals to be prioritised on the basis of “a realistic assessment of political commitments, the comparative advantage of UN peace operations and others, the conditions on the ground and realistic prospects of success.” The HIPPO report advocated establishing “an initial mandate with an overall political goal, a limited number of initial priority tasks and an explicit planning mandate that requests the Secretary-General to return within six months with a proposal for sequenced activities based on a limited number of achievable benchmarks for mission performance.” This would allow

for an initial presence on the ground, with time for consultations with the host government, civil society and, to the extent possible, parties to the conflict, and for the development of detailed assessments with partners. The initial proposals should then be adjusted in light of available capabilities and resources, as well as discussions among the Council, TCCs/PCCs and the Secretariat to forge a common understanding about the mission, “ideally in a fairly informal and interactive format”.

Although the Council has embraced the notion of sequencing in principle, it has found sequencing difficult to apply to existing missions. While no new UN peacekeeping operation has been established since 2015, a sequenced approach was, in a way, taken in the design of the UN Mission in Colombia in 2016 and its successor, the UN Verification Mission, established in 2017. Their mandates were quite distinct, and they responded to different needs expressed by the parties during the negotiation of the peace agreement. The UN Mission in Colombia was responsible for the monitoring and verification of the laying-down of arms, and it coordinated a tripartite mechanism that monitored and verified adherence to the definitive bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreed to by the parties. Its successor, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, is mandated to verify the implementation of several measures of the peace agreement, including the political, economic and social reincorporation of the former members of the guerrilla group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP); personal and collective security guarantees; and comprehensive programmes on security and protection measures for communities and organisations in conflict-affected areas.

It is worth noting that the sequencing of the Colombia missions was possible in part because this approach came from the parties themselves, on an issue that is before the Council at their request. A potential risk of sequencing, however, is that existing budgetary practices and the current financial climate could mean forgoing permanently some critical tasks not championed by key member states, such as human rights monitoring or rule of law-related tasks, if they are not included from the outset of UN involvement in a conflict situation.

## Weaknesses in Mandating

Council members have developed working methods that frame the way the Council undertakes mandating. However, some of these practices are counterproductive and ultimately hamper the outcome that the Council aims to achieve.

### The limited quality of information and analysis

The work of the Secretariat and the missions on the ground in conveying frank information and analysis to the Council is essential to a good mandating process. One of the most quoted lines of the Brahimi report is that “the Secretariat must tell the Security Council what it needs to know, not what it wants to hear”. This was echoed in the HIPPO report, which argued that the Secretariat must be frank in its assessments and not bow to concerns about what the market can bear but provide options setting out what can be achieved with varying levels of resources.

Secretary-General’s reports, particularly those before a mandate renewal, are key to the Council’s decision-making processes. Over the years, Council members have complained that the reports, which mostly consist of fact-based narratives, lack strategic focus and could be a better source of analysis and recommendations at a critical time. It is common for these reports to present options for the Council even when only one option is manifestly feasible, and there have been instances of influential Council members applying pressure to shape the content of these reports.

After the Council started requesting independent strategic reviews of some peace operations in 2017 at the initiative of the US, the Secretariat itself began to commission reviews of longstanding missions. These reviews consisted of a small inter-agency team of UN staff, led by a former or current senior UN official. In most cases they included a “red team” tasked with challenging the assumptions underpinning the review in the early stages of the process. The independent strategic reviews were designed with the stated aim of examining in depth the conditions for success of each operation and informing a strategic dialogue with member states on the efficiency, role and perspectives of UN peacekeeping. However, some Council members have been frustrated by the limited engagement between

the Council and the review teams, and the fact that the reviews are intended as guidance for the Secretary-General, and usually not shared with the Council. It has also become apparent that the Secretariat continues to experience pressure from member states to shape the findings of some reviews. On 21 September 2018, the Council adopted resolution 2436 which, building on language from the Declaration of Shared Commitments, requested the Secretary-General to ensure that pertinent findings of future reviews be shared with the Council and with relevant member states, as appropriate, alongside the Secretary-General’s integrated analysis, strategic assessment and frank advice.

### Council members have not taken up the concept of a spectrum of peace operations

One of the signal contributions of the HIPPO report was its call for flexible use of the full spectrum of UN peace operations. It argued that the sharp distinctions—in budgets and management—between peacekeeping operations and SPMs should give way to a continuum of responses and smoother transitions between different phases of peace operations. Despite this recommendation, the distinction between peacekeeping operations and SPMs appears as sharp as ever, with no momentum towards a change in the terminology used in the Council and the C34 or the relevant funding mechanisms (as discussed earlier, SPMs are funded through the UN’s regular budget and peacekeeping operations through their own support account). As far as the Secretariat is concerned, although the review of the peace and security architecture led to the establishment of a Department of Peace Operations (DPO) in January 2019, the management of field-based SPMs (such as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya) remains with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). UN staffers backstopping all peace operations are co-located, however, which is expected eventually to help overcome old mindsets with turf-related tensions and template approaches.

### National interest can trump mandate implementation

Despite their obligation to accept and carry out the decisions of the Council, member states may prioritise their national interest

over implementing Council mandates. Member states involved in the conflict may fail to cooperate with the peace operation, TCCs/PCCs may not strictly adhere to the mission’s chain of command but instead respond primarily to their own capitals, and members, including the P5, may unduly influence the Secretariat to shape or to block the options put before the Council.

### The disconnect between mandates and resources

The disparity between mandates and resources regularly becomes apparent in the negotiation of budget resolutions in the Fifth Committee. This happens notwithstanding the fact that the central role of the P5 in the budgetary process—both as members of the committee and of the ACABQ, although the members of the latter are supposed to be appointed in their personal capacity—would be expected to promote coherence. An important trend over the last few years has been the push from the US and others to reduce the peacekeeping budget. In addition to financial pressure, some Council members have used the budget process to address substantive issues. Recently, Russia and China, for example, have let language in Council negotiations pass regarding human rights or the protection of women while leading the charge to significantly defund some of those positions in the Fifth Committee, a process that sparks less attention and media coverage than Council negotiations.

At \$1.11 billion, the 2018-2019 approved budget for MONUSCO was a full \$38.8 million less than the Secretary-General’s proposal, and \$32 million below the ACABQ recommendation. Although it is unusual for Council briefers to raise the impact of budgetary decisions on their ability to lead on the implementation of mandates, a rare example of this took place after the new MONUSCO budget was adopted. On 26 July 2018, MONUSCO head Leila Zerrougui told the Council that the budgetary reduction “further compounds the impact on our operational ability following last year’s budget cuts. I do not mention that to make a plea for more resources; we all know the new financial reality facing all peacekeeping missions. I highlight it because it is important that we collectively understand that while MONUSCO’s resources continue to shrink, its mandate remains the same and expectations only continue to grow”.

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Sometimes the disconnect between mandate and resources is already clear before the mission's budget is discussed in the Fifth Committee. For example, resolution 2448 added a new task to the mandate of MINUSCA, to provide limited logistical support to the armed forces of the Central African Republic (CAR), while stressing that the mission was to perform this task “by reallocating approved resources”.

### Limited institutional cross-pollination

Despite the collective nature of peace operations and the need to keep a wide array of stakeholders on board, the mandating process does not encourage engagement with other actors, even those closely affiliated with the Council, such as the Military Staff Committee (MSC), the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and the chair of the relevant sanctions committee. Although only the P5 are members of the MSC, all Council members' military advisors participate in its biweekly meetings. The MSC schedules relevant mission-specific meetings ahead of mandate renewals, but it works more as a forum for military-related discussions than fulfilling any type of collective advisory role. While not intended to work in this way, the MSC could be used as a sounding board, particularly when the Council considers adjustments to troop and police ceilings or mission mandates.

The PBC was created in 2005 as an advisory body to the Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to maintain attention to post-conflict countries and help prevent their relapse into conflict. However, it has struggled to carry out this function and provide relevant advice to these organs. Recent years have seen renewed interest in enhancing and fulfilling its advisory role, particularly to the Council.

The Declaration included a commitment to “strong coordination, coherence and cooperation” between the Council and the PBC during peacekeeping mandates, as appropriate. On 18 December 2018, the Council adopted a presidential statement on the PBC's advisory role to the Security Council on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The statement was drafted by Sweden, which served for two years as the coordinator of Council-PBC stock-taking sessions. The presidential statement encourages the PBC to present concise, targeted, context-specific and applicable recommendations to

the Council, upon its request, in particular ahead of relevant mandate discussions. It also encourages it to continue to align its work with the Council's calendar and relevant meetings (a practice that the PBC has sought to adhere to following a 2016 working methods review). The PBC and its country-specific configurations (CSCs) are considered well placed to convene meetings with international financial institutions, the UN country team, regional organisations, and civil society during the months preceding mandate renewals, but this cannot be achieved without allowing for the time and space for such strategic advice to be developed. Although there are good practices in this regard, such as the Council-PBC relationship during transitions on Liberia and Sierra Leone, engagement between the Council and relevant CSCs could be sought more systematically in critical moments regarding, for example, Burundi, CAR, Guinea-Bissau and the Sahel. An important development occurred in October 2018 when Morocco, the chair of the CAR CSC, wrote to the Council after a consultative process presenting observations for the Council's consideration before MINUSCA's mandate renewal. PBC and CSC chairs, particularly those who carry out visiting missions regularly, could also convey inputs ahead of mandate renewals through informal meetings with Council members. Since 2012, Council members have organised an annual Informal Interactive Dialogue (IID) with the PBC, usually on thematic issues.

### The role of the penholder and its limitations

In recent years, the P3 have divided most situation-specific agenda items among themselves, each taking the role of the so-called “penholder”. This informal arrangement, often presented as a way to promote continuity and efficiency, goes beyond the drafting of Council outcomes. It tends to discourage members from taking initiatives on country situations for which they do not hold the pen, and when new crises emerge, elected members often expect one of the P3 to take the lead. Furthermore, penholders themselves can be reluctant to acknowledge negative trends in countries within their sphere of influence.

According to the 2017 iteration of Note 507, which compiles the Council's working methods, “more than one Council member

may act as co-penholders, when it is deemed to add value, taking into account as appropriate the expertise and/or contributions of Council members on the subjects”. The issue of co-penholders is raised regularly in working methods discussions, with the idea of an E10 member joining the P3 in that task. In mid-2018, Russia submitted to the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions a draft that would establish an annual review of penholder/co-penholder arrangements to extend those responsibilities to all Council members. On 13 November 2018, the E10 and incoming five Council members sent a letter to the Council president emphasising the need for fair burden-sharing and an equal distribution of work among all Council members. The signatories advocated making better use of the expertise developed by the chairs of sanctions committees by automatically enlisting them as co-penholders on the related dossiers, should they so wish. In January 2019, several co-penholder arrangements were introduced, including Germany and the UK for Libya sanctions and UNAMID.

### Difficulties in operationalising the primacy of politics

The HIPPO report emphasised the centrality of political solutions in the design of peace operations, and stressed that the political strategies that underpin peace operations should enjoy the support of a united Security Council as well as of regional entities and others vested in ending a conflict. The Brahimi report had already stressed the importance of the Council's translating its statements into action, saying that it was “incumbent that Council members and the membership at large breathe life into the words that they produce”. The Council has underlined that the primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the UN's approach to the resolution of conflict, including through mediation, the monitoring of ceasefires, and assistance in implementing peace accords. A 14 May 2018 presidential statement stressed that political solutions should guide the design and deployment of UN peacekeeping operations, that they are the cornerstone of mandate implementation and remain key to reaching sustainable peace and security. In that statement, the Council recognised “the need to weigh the



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full range of responses, when addressing a situation which may endanger international peace and security, and to deploy UN peace-keeping missions and pursue peacebuilding efforts only as an accompaniment, not as an alternative, to a political strategy that addresses, among other elements, the root causes of conflict". Despite overall support for this concept, Council members have struggled to make it operationally coherent. Although the Council has a broad range of tools at its disposal—including political messaging, imposing or threatening to impose sanctions, conducting visiting missions and directly interacting with the main stakeholders—these are not deployed always tactically in pursuit of the overall political goal.

Council members have historically valued unanimity in mandating resolutions. As

the table below shows, the Council rarely adopts non-unanimous resolutions to renew mission mandates, although the year 2018 was an outlier, with four such examples. In general, considerable effort goes into reaching consensus. In some cases, members explain their abstentions (or dissenting votes by elected members) by criticising the drafts in blue as unbalanced (such as in the case of MINURSO), or as exerting undue pressure on the host government (UNMISS). In December 2016, there was a rare abstention of three permanent Council members (France, Russia and the UK) who questioned the terms under which the mandate of the UN Mission in Liberia was renewed before its closure. Although unusual in mandating resolutions, Council members close to a conflict party have at times

not voted in favour of a particular renewal (UNFICYP). The non-unanimous votes are rooted in substantive disagreements, but in explaining their votes, Council members not supporting the draft in blue have recurrently expressed frustration with the penholder's handling of negotiations. As the table reflects, most mandating resolutions that were not adopted unanimously were drafted by the US.

The last mandate resolution to be vetoed was the two-week technical rollover of the mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia in June 2009, which was vetoed by Russia, with four members abstaining. In exerting its leverage the Council is also handicapped when unanimous support is shallow and glosses over profound divergences among Council members.

### NON-UNANIMOUS MANDATING RESOLUTIONS SINCE 2010

Mission	Penholder	Resolution	Vote	Meeting Record
MINUSCA	France	Resolution 2448 of 13 December 2018	13 in favour, 2 abstentions (China, Russia)	S/PV.8422
MINURSO	US	Resolution 2440 of 31 October 2018	12 in favour, 3 abstentions (Bolivia, Ethiopia, Russia)	S/PV.8387
MINURSO	US	Resolution 2414 of 27 April 2018	12 in favour, 3 abstentions (China, Ethiopia, Russia)	S/PV.8246
MINUJUSTH	US	Resolution 2410 of 10 April 2018	13 in favour, 2 abstentions (China, Russia)	S/PV.8226
UNMIL	US	Resolution 2333 of 23 December 2016	12 in favour, 3 abstentions (France, Russia and the UK)	S/PV.7851
UNMISS	US	Resolution 2304 of 12 August 2016	11 in favour, 4 abstentions (China, Egypt, Russia, Venezuela)	S/PV.7754
MINURSO	US	Resolution 2285 of 29 April 2016	10 in favour, 2 against (Uruguay, Venezuela), 3 abstentions (Angola, New Zealand, Russia)	S/PV.7684
UNMISS	US	Resolution 2252 of 15 December 2015	13 in favour, 2 abstentions (Russia and Venezuela)	S/PV.7581
UNMISS	US	Resolution 2241 of 9 October 2015	13 in favour, 2 abstentions (Russia, Venezuela)	S/PV.7532
UNFICYP	US	Resolution 2114 of 30 July 2013	13 in favour, 2 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Pakistan)	S/PV.7014
UNFICYP	US	Resolution 2089 of 24 January 2013	14 in favour, 1 abstention (Azerbaijan)	S/PV.6908
UNAMID	UK	Resolution 2063 of 31 July 2012	14 in favour, 1 abstention (Azerbaijan)	S/PV.6819
UNFICYP	US	Resolution 2058 of 19 July 2012	13 in favour, 2 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Pakistan)	S/PV.6809
UNFICYP	US	Resolution 1953 of 14 December 2010	14 in favour, 1 against (Turkey)	S/PV.6445
UNFICYP	US	Resolution 1930 of 15 June 2010	14 in favour, 1 against (Turkey)	S/PV.6339



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## Weaknesses in Mandating

### Navigating relations with host states

One of the main features of discussions about peace operations in the Council is the challenge of securing host-state consent and deploying operations in environments in which government-affiliated forces are among those targeting civilians. One example was resolution 2303, adopted on 29 July 2016 with four abstentions. While the resolution did not mandate a new mission, it provided for the deployment of a police component to Burundi which was never deployed, given the government's opposition. Government hostility towards peace operations, which can escalate in critical times, has been a serious impediment in recent years in Darfur, the DRC and South Sudan, among other theatres.

The Council could seek more active engagement with host state representatives, which formally rarely goes beyond the latter's participation in briefings in line with rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure, after which Council members often withdraw into closed consultations. In order to address this issue, the Declaration reflects the commitment "to consider options for further direct engagement between host governments and the Security Council". In addition to more direct and interactive discussion with government representatives in New York, Council members could conduct visiting missions before a peace operation is established to discuss initial expectations and

commitments with the government and other relevant actors.

The HIPPO report argued for the development of compacts between the UN and the host government as a package of measures to be reviewed together with mandate renewals. A 2015/2016 DPKO initiative to develop compacts between peacekeeping operations and host governments as a way to secure common understanding of and commitment to mandates and status-of-mission agreements has not been actively pursued. In June 2018, the Secretary-General proposed the development of a Pact for Peace in Mali, building on recommendations from an independent strategic review of MINUSMA. The review had proposed such a pact between the government of Mali, the Security Council, the UN and international partners, under which assistance would be associated with progress on clear benchmarks, including good governance and political reforms. While the Council requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate steps to allow for the swift conclusion of the pact in resolution 2423 on 28 June 2018, it made no reference to its own role, or that of international partners, in the pact's creation or implementation.

### Council responsiveness to changing realities on the ground

There is a question as to whether the Council should be asked to review mandates in

response to ground-level changes. Mandates are almost always reviewed at the end of their cycles, irrespective of developments on the ground. Even though important factors may change (for example, the unravelling of the political process or the emergence of new threats to civilians), Council members may not wish to reassess mid-cycle the appropriateness of mandates.

There are cases where the deterioration of a particular situation has made a change in mandate unavoidable, as in South Sudan in December 2013. Mandates are also amended and renewed off-cycle when there is a new peace agreement whose implementation the peace operation will be required to support, again as in South Sudan in October 2015. An example mentioned above is the push by the US for shorter mandates (six months as opposed to the usual one year) in situations where they feel that they can pressure the parties in a conflict to reengage in the political process. However, these shorter mandates also add pressure to mission administration and planning and fuel insecurity among the mission ranks, making it difficult to recruit new staff. In most cases, rather than focusing on frequent mandate adjustments, it would appear more important that the Council's understanding of a situation stays up to date, and that the Special Representative or Special Envoy feels that the mandate covers the necessary bases at any given time.

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## Action for Peacekeeping: An Opportunity to Re-engage

In March 2018, the Secretary-General announced the need for "a quantum leap in collective engagement" on peacekeeping. Soon afterwards, the Secretariat asked ten member states to lead broad consultations on five priority areas: politics (Côte d'Ivoire and the UK), partnerships (Ethiopia and France), performance (the Netherlands and Rwanda), people (Bangladesh and Uruguay), and peacebuilding (Brazil and Indonesia). Member states' consultations led to the adoption of a Declaration of Shared Commitments prepared by the UN Secretariat and endorsed by 151 member states and four organisations by the end of 2018. Although the Declaration was not directly negotiated

by member states, there were extensive discussions to make sure that key stakeholders, including TCCs/PCCs and permanent members of the Security Council, would endorse it. On 25 September 2018, the Secretary-General convened a high-level meeting on Action for Peacekeeping in the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly, which included the participation of several heads of state and government.

The process, which was aimed at achieving the highest possible number of endorsements, generally avoided controversial elements by building on agreed language and broad statements. This was the case with its language on the use of force, human rights

protection, and partnership with regional organisations. It seems that the process, which was received with interest by member states, was also shaped by their interest in protecting their different spheres of influence (whether in the Council or the C34) and avoided commitments to significant innovation. A reference to the Secretary-General's commitment to report all caveats and their operational impact to the appropriate UN organs was deleted from the final draft.

The Declaration includes the commitment "to provide clear, focused, sequenced, prioritized and achievable mandates by the Security Council matched by appropriate resources; to seek measures to enable greater

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## Action for Peacekeeping: An Opportunity to Re-engage

coherence between mandates and resources; and to support the implementation of Security Council resolutions through bilateral and multilateral engagements”. This provides an opportunity for Council members and other member states to undertake a much-needed reflection on the mandating process.

Follow-up language in the Declaration was intentionally vague, leaving it up to member states to determine how to translate these commitments into positions and practices in the relevant UN bodies (the General Assembly and the Security Council). The Declaration includes the commitment to meet periodically “in relevant formats to review progress, including at field-level”. What this will mean in practice has not been spelled out, and is likely to depend on committed Council and C34 members initiating dedicated discussions.

This will not be easy, given that peacekeeping discussions are readily bogged down by institutional tensions particularly between the C34 and the Council. The annual negotiation process in the C34 is an example of the change-resistant policies of some key member states, and Council negotiations have been affected by the wish of some members

to foreground the role of the C34 in the peacekeeping policy-making landscape. During the negotiation of a 14 May 2018 Council presidential statement on peacekeeping operations, a source of division was the level of detail in the statement regarding tasks to improve peacekeeping. Another illustration of these dynamics was the letter that Russia sent to the Secretary-General endorsing the Declaration of Shared Commitments while expressing reservations over the inclusion of language tying human rights efforts to the protection of civilians and using for that purpose “all necessary means”, and references to engagement with civil society and the local population. In the end, government positions on peacekeeping, while being justified on institutional grounds, reflect tensions around the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference, which are often at the forefront of Council discussions. Perversely, its current inefficiencies make the system more appealing to those wary of international interventions.

A draft resolution on mandating was circulated by Côte d’Ivoire and the Netherlands in mid-November 2018. The draft, which was originally intended to welcome the Declaration and the “Action for Peacekeeping”

reform initiative and focus on parameters for the mandating process, soon faced opposition from Russia and the US. Russia refused to engage on the draft, reiterating concerns with some of the content of the Declaration. The US opposed the effort, arguing that it would limit the freedom of manoeuvre of penholders in carrying out their duties. Although elected members expressed support for the initiative, other permanent members also raised questions about the need for a resolution on the mandating process, and the effort was put on hold at the end of the year, when the Netherlands left the Council. Côte d’Ivoire has committed to continue pursuing this initiative in 2019, and other Council members may join the effort.

With almost universal endorsement and buy-in at the highest levels of a broad range of governments, the Secretariat has been able to conceive, through the Declaration, a new basis for a conversation. Notwithstanding its broad support, the fate of the draft resolution on mandating illustrates that there are still significant differences among member states. The ultimate impact of the Declaration will depend on whether member states treat it as a departure point.

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## Improving the Mandating Process

Much can be done to make the mandating process more inclusive and results-oriented. Although a resolution on mandating would send an important signal, Council members have the possibility of enhancing the process with every mandate renewal—that is, as often as 20 times a year. Before the current trend of mandate inflation, the Council was able at times to craft focused and effective mandates with realistic objectives and a clear political direction, as in the cases of the UN Preventive Deployment Force in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor.

The challenge is to learn from what works and rein in unhelpful dynamics. The modifications proposed below would not require formal decisions or lengthy negotiations but rather the leadership of a few Council members, permanent or not, willing to question

the way business has been conducted and facilitate a fresh process.

### **The need for strategic discussions on objectives rather than tasks**

Well-established mandate cycles provide a tentative timeframe that can be used to forge a common strategic approach among Council members ahead of these renewals, but such exercises are uncommon. Most discussions among all Council members regarding mandate renewals happen only after a first draft resolution has been circulated by the penholder to the full Council. The time pressure generated by the pattern of late circulation to all Council members raises barriers to significant reflection. The fact that much of the subsequent negotiation takes place over email or in bilateral discussions also tends to preclude the collective development of strategic thinking.

Penholders have led a recent trend in

resolutions that state more clearly in resolutions the strategic objectives of peacekeeping operations (including MONUSCO, MINUSMA and MINUSCA). This has not been systematic, and the focus on tasks is unchanged.

In general, the mandating process could benefit from a discussion among all Council members—and others—about the overall direction of the mission before the proper negotiation of the renewal resolution. Before beginning to negotiate language in drafts, the Council, working with the Secretariat, could start the mandating process by addressing—and as far as possible agreeing on—the main objective(s) for the mission. The scripted quality of consultations, and their closed nature, limit their potential to be used in this regard. Strategic discussions could help shift the current focus on delineating tasks, or outputs, to intended outcomes. A more strategic

# Improving the Mandating Process

articulation of objectives would spark questions about how every mandated task and mission component supports the achievement of those aims. Higher-level engagement early in the process would be needed, with permanent representatives or their deputies working with senior Secretariat staff on strategic objectives before Council experts negotiate the draft text. Ahead of the annual session of the C34 in February-March, the Secretariat prepares a guiding document, for information purposes only, which includes mostly technical suggestions regarding language. While the negotiation of the report of the C34 remains a responsibility of member states, this approach, which is considered helpful ahead of the negotiations, could be replicated ahead of mandate renewals.

## Allow more time to negotiate mandates

Elected and sometimes also permanent members complain that penholders allot too little time for substantive contributions to a new draft. Many countries seek inputs to draft mandate resolutions from the permanent mission in New York, departments in the capital (in the foreign affairs and defence ministries) and embassies in the country or region concerned. It is unrealistic to expect the process of consolidating their inputs to happen in just a few days.

Note 507 includes provisions on the early circulation of drafts and the holding of in-person meetings to negotiate drafts. Most of this language was only included in the third, most recent, version of the note. It establishes that the negotiation of Council outcomes “should be carried out in an inclusive manner that will allow participation of all members of the Council”, encourages the penholder or co-penholders to circulate drafts “as early as possible”, and encourages them to present and discuss the draft with all members of the Council “in at least one round of informal consultations or informal-informals”. This has not materialised sufficiently in practice. Penholders complain that, absent a deadline by which the draft needs to be adopted (which is often the mandate’s expiration date), negotiations would go on forever, with the risk of opening important aspects of the draft to criticism. The short timeframe makes all Council members pick their battles and not focus unnecessarily on detail. However, by accepting artificially tight timelines to

negotiate drafts, Council members are choosing to ignore what could be a critical source of feedback and new ideas.

## Increase Council members’ understanding of how language translates into action

A better understanding of how mandates are implemented could result in restraint by Council members in pushing specific issues when disconnected from operational considerations. Most Council interaction with mission-based actors is with the head of mission and, once a year, the heads of military and police components; engagement with the heads of other mission components is limited. Between 2012 and 2017, Council members held four Arria-formula meetings with the heads of human rights components, which allowed an informal exchange to strengthen understanding of how human rights components contribute to the implementation of missions’ mandates. Another forum for better understanding mandate implementation is the Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians: at its meetings, OCHA, which acts as the expert group’s secretariat, presents possible language for inclusion in an upcoming mandate renewal, explaining the rationale behind different language proposals. The Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security has also proved a useful forum ahead of mandate renewals and Council visiting missions. Council members could enhance interaction with senior mission leadership, including protection advisers, to reinforce their understanding of the impact of mandate wording on the ground.

Some thematic issues have champions that prioritise their mainstreaming and general advancement. A Council member, or group of members, could assume a similar role with regard to mandating, and work with the penholders to identify best practices. This could also help maintain consistency on mandating, which is handled by diplomats covering the different country-specific files.

The Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, which is chaired by an elected member, can play a role in increasing Council members’ understanding of how language translates into action. However, the impact of the Working Group is highly dependent on the engagement of its chair, and its role is often limited to the holding of thematic

discussions throughout the year. In the same way in which other subsidiary organs of the Council and the C34 of the Fifth Committee organise field trips, the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations could organise an annual familiarisation trip to visit several operations. Arrangements should be put in place to allow all Council members to take part, irrespective of their financial capabilities.

## Changing the routines to prioritise better

The drafting process often starts by updating the previous mandating resolution. Given the short timeframe in which negotiations are held (usually with initial discussion among permanent members and late circulation to the full membership), there is a tendency to preserve already “agreed language” on issues susceptible to controversy and to add new paragraphs as proposed by Council members, without deleting provisions that are no longer relevant. Council members could consider starting the mandating process by analysing the old text with input from the Secretariat and assessing the contribution of mandate elements to the overall objective of the mission. This exercise could take place before a first draft is circulated. On the basis of advice from the Secretariat and the missions on the ground, Council members would be able to develop a multi-year frame of reference that flags, from the outset, anticipated needs of the host country and the projected adjustments over time to the mandate of the peace operation deployed there. The financial process should also be sufficiently responsive to prevent the protective front-loading of posts and resources for fear that if not budgeted at the outset, they will prove difficult to add later.

## Using benchmarks to assess progress against objectives

Benchmarks have been a useful tool for pacing and evaluating the work of peace operations. On several occasions, missions have used the elaboration of benchmarks to agree on shared objectives with the host state and other local partners and develop a joint vision regarding the different actors’ roles and responsibilities. The New Horizon peacekeeping reform initiative in 2009 highlighted the importance of distinguishing between core benchmarks for which peacekeepers are responsible and broader targets that reflect wider progress in peace consolidation and rely on the



# Improving the Mandating Process

performance of others. Benchmarks have also been used to inform transition processes and mission exit strategies, even if these decisions are ultimately driven by political and financial considerations. Even though most peace operations have developed benchmarks that were at some point endorsed by the Security Council, Council members have not been systematic in using them to assess progress or redefining them as a situation evolves.

## Sustained attention and political engagement beyond the mandate renewal

The Council has been able to have a positive impact on conflict situations when it delivered unified messages directly to the parties, either through visiting missions or demarches by its president, or to the public more generally, in press statements or comments to the press. It could invest more effort into communicating the outcome of Council discussions effectively to the parties, provided there is a common message. In recent years, several Council members have tried to promote the idea that every meeting held in consultations during their presidency conclude with some press elements that, although informal, can be agreed quickly at the meeting and are later delivered by the president of the Council at the media stakeout. Doing so means that they are broadcast worldwide and can be accessed via UN video archives. This and other efforts to make sure that key messages reach their intended audience could be incorporated into the Council's practice more systematically.

The pressure of time leads Council members, once the mandate resolution is adopted, to shift their attention immediately to other pressing issues. It might be helpful, rather than considering adoptions an end in themselves, to view them as a stage in a process. Ideally, the Council would consistently exercise its collective leverage, and that of its members, throughout the lifespan of peace operations using a variety of formal and informal mechanisms at its disposal, such as the ones mentioned above. Once a mandating resolution is adopted, Council members could also allocate time to discuss the concrete steps that they can take, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to support its implementation. Similarly, formal and informal meetings with TCCs/PCCs should be convened

not only ahead of the mandate renewal but throughout the mandate cycle.

The issue of the Council's sustained attention and political engagement beyond the mandate renewal is especially relevant where a UN peacekeeping operation does not have the lead in facilitating the political process. The situations in the CAR and South Sudan, for example, underline the need for the Council to increase its formal and informal interaction with those driving the peace process. While the Special Envoy for South Sudan of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) briefs the Council regularly, this has not been the case as much with other regional mediators involved in the CAR or Sudan-South Sudan. Given the Council's observance of strict rules limiting the participation of non-UN officials in consultations, Council members could hold informal interactive dialogues with those involved in facilitating peace processes, including member states. Sometimes Council members have issued invitations but scheduling has proven challenging, it took several attempts to discuss progress in the political process in the CAR with AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui in early 2019.

## Revisiting the concept of Groups of Friends

Groups of Friends emerged in the mid-1970s as constellations of countries both inside and outside the Council that were involved directly in peace efforts or in the implementation of peace agreements. Although some of these groups were divided along the lines of the conflict itself or favoured one party to the conflict, they could also be helpful in providing international backing for peace efforts and linking up the Council's work with that of other, outside, actors. Learning from historical examples and the current limitations of the few Groups of Friends that still discuss draft resolutions, Council members could rethink how modified Groups of Friends configurations, including regional actors, particularly engaged Council members, and other member states, or neutral actors, could be mobilised in support of political solutions.

## A strengthened role for the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations

The Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations was established in 2001 as a result of

one of the recommendations in the Brahimi report regarding the need to institutionalise the advice from TCCs to the Council, including during the mandate formulation process.

The Working Group became a forum where Council members could discuss peacekeeping issues, along with TCCs (and later PCCs). All C34 member states (154) are invited to participate in its meetings.

The Working Group's impact has been greater when its discussions, which are more often thematic than country-specific, link strategically with Council discussions and decision-making processes. While the Working Group has been involved in the strategic and action-oriented discussion of issues (including the negotiation of resolution 1353 and a Note by the President of the Council in 2001), it has not done so recently. Members could consider holding meetings of the Working Group ahead of mandate renewals, as was done when, under the chairmanship of Senegal, the Working Group held a meeting focused on challenges in implementing MINUSMA's mandate on 8 June 2017, ahead of the mandate renewal at the end of that month.

Discussing peacekeeping issues in a broadened forum would also help respond to the problem of the persistent gap between those who decide on the mandates of peace operations and carry their financial burden and those who deploy the troops and police for their implementation. The current context could be an opportunity for strengthening engagement with the wider membership. As an example, the Council could use its Working Group to draw lessons on how it agrees on strategic objectives for peacekeeping operations, designs mandates, and monitors the capacity to achieve them. The Working Group could submit recommendations for the Council's consideration after engaging with a broad range of actors, including Secretariat officials and TCCs/PCCs. At times of tensions between the C34 and the Council, this could be a useful bridging exercise.

For this strengthened role to be possible, measures could be taken to promote continuity in the Working Group, whose work is largely influenced by the varying capacity of its rotating chairmanship (usually an elected member which contributes significantly to peacekeeping). This could be achieved through a co-chair or chair/

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## Improving the Mandating Process

vice-chair system in which E10 members with non-contiguous terms overlap for one year with their predecessor and successor. Although this would constitute a departure from past practice it could be particularly effective in increasing the capacity of the Working Group and its relevance.

### Devising a systematic way to address strategic reviews

One of the early manifestations of the current push for peacekeeping reform was the US request for independent strategic reviews of several peace operations. Most reports of reviews sought by the Council were shared with it. On 7 February 2018, Council members held an informal interactive dialogue with the lead consultants for the external assessment of the structure and staffing of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and related resources. A representative of the Department of Political Affairs also participated in this discussion. In cases where the review was initiated by the Secretariat, the

Council only had access to a summary of findings and selected recommendations conveyed by the Secretary-General. Despite the general interest of Council members in the outcomes of subsequent reviews, whether requested by the Council or initiated by the Secretariat, this type of interaction has not been replicated. Council members could discuss with the Secretary-General what kinds of information, analysis and options developed by external reviews are pertinent to feed into the Council's deliberation on mandates.

### Encouraging coordination with the UN country team

In the current context of budgetary pressure and with the recent termination of missions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia and pressure to close UNAMID, MINUJUSTH and MONUSCO, the Council routinely refers to the need to develop exit strategies. Missions have been encouraged to map out existing capacities, lay out financial and political challenges, and identify courses of action to

sustain the progress achieved. In integrated missions, the role of the triple-hatted Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator is central to continuity. The UN country team is expected to play a more significant role when a mission finishes its work. Recognising that the Council does not mandate UN agencies, funds and programmes, the interaction between the Council and country teams is nonetheless limited in light of their significant investments. It is unclear how the reform of the development system, particularly regarding the role of Resident Coordinators, will affect this process, but interaction with country teams could usefully be deeper than the usual relatively short meeting during Council visiting missions. Whether through existing channels of communication, such as the PBC, or new ones, members of the Council could make an effort to engage formally and informally with representatives of the UN country team, particularly as transitions get under way.

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## Time to Deliver

This is a critical time for peace operations. As multilateral tools to address intractable conflicts come under increased scrutiny, it is vital to sharpen uptake of what works and deepen action on what needs improvement. Despite marked divisions on other files, peace operations still represent an area of broad agreement for the Security Council, at least on the surface, with perceived successes including the recent closure and transition of several operations.

The Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations includes commitments to provide clear, focused, sequenced, prioritised and achievable mandates; enable greater coherence between mandates and resources; and support the implementation of Council resolutions through bilateral and multilateral engagements. Those three critical actions will require the exertion of political will by Council members.

Better mandates and better mandating processes will not by themselves solve the very significant challenges that peace operations face today. However, they can contribute to addressing the existing divisions between those designing mandates and those implementing them and bridge the gap between expectations and reality.

Revising the mandating process should be a core element of the current push to improve the effectiveness of peace operations. With recent efforts to reform peace operations has come a broadening of the concept of performance. This was traditionally used to refer to the capabilities and preparedness mainly of uniformed personnel, but over the last few years, TCCs/PCCs have promoted an understanding of the concept of performance, whether in the C34 or the Council, that includes the work of the Council in crafting well-defined,

realistic and achievable mandates. Mandating is thus to be considered a core element of mission performance.

The present report has discussed how the Council's own working methods can be a hurdle for the emergence of collective thinking and results-based decision-making. An investment in transforming existing practices could lead to significant returns if the Council is able to become more accountable towards those in need and those deployed to implement its mandates. For this to happen, the Council would need to be willing to exert political leverage throughout the lifecycle of peace operations and become more strategic in prioritising mission objectives. In doing so, the Council will send a strong signal to TCCs/PCCs, the Secretariat and host states about its seriousness regarding reform and contribute to rebuilding trust in the mandating process along the way.

# Selected UN Documents on Peace Operations

## Security Council Resolutions

[S/RES/2436](#) (21 September 2018) was on peacekeeping performance.

[S/RES/2378](#) (20 September 2017) was on UN peacekeeping reform.

[S/RES/1353](#) (13 June 2001) included a statement of principles on cooperation with troop- and police-contributing countries.

## Security Council Presidential Statements

[S/PRST/2018/20](#) (18 December 2018) was on the PBC's advisory role to the Council.

[S/PRST/2018/10](#) (14 May 2018) was on peacekeeping operations.

[S/PRST/2017/27](#) (21 December 2017) laid out the elements related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace to be considered when reviewing the mandates and configuration of peacekeeping missions.

[S/PRST/2015/26](#) (31 December 2015) underscored the importance for peacekeeping of sustained cooperation among the Council, the Secretariat and TCCs/PCCs.

[S/PRST/2015/22](#) (25 November 2015) took note of the recommendations of the HIPPO report and the Secretary-General's implementation report.

## Secretary-General's Reports

[A/72/573](#) (3 November 2017) was on the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

[S/2017/454](#) (26 May 2017) was on options for authorisation and support for AU peace support operations.

[S/2015/682](#) (2 September 2015) was on the implementation of the HIPPO report.

[S/2000/809](#) (21 August 2000) was the Brahimi Report.

## Security Council Letters

[S/2018/1024](#) (13 November 2018) was a letter by the E10 and the five incoming Council members emphasising the need for fair burden-sharing and an equal distribution of work among all Council members.

[S/2018/934](#) (18 October 2018) was from the chair of the CAR CSC, Ambassador Omar Hilale of Morocco, containing observations for the Council.

[S/2018/815](#) (31 August 2018) was from Russia addressed to the Secretary-General on the "Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations".

[S/2015/446](#) (17 June 2015) was the HIPPO report.

## Note by the President of the Security Council

[S/2017/507](#) (30 August 2017) was a compendium of the Council's working methods.

## Security Council Meeting Records

[S/PV.8360](#) (21 September 2018) was the meeting at which resolution 2436 was adopted.

[S/PV.8349](#) (12 September 2018) was a debate on peacekeeping reform during the US presidency.

[S/PV.8218](#) (28 March 2018) was an open debate on peacekeeping, chaired by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte.

[S/PV.8051](#) (20 September 2017) was a high-level open debate entitled "Reform of UN peacekeeping: implementation and follow-up", organised by Ethiopia.

[S/PV.8033](#) (29 August 2017) was an open debate organised by Egypt on UN peacekeeping operations and their potential contribution to the overarching goal of sustaining peace.

[S/PV.7918](#) (6 April 2017) was a briefing on peacekeeping operations held at the initiative of the US.

## General Assembly Documents

[A/72/19](#) (15 March 2018) was the final report of the C34.

# Useful Additional Resources

A New Partnership Agenda. *Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping*, Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, July 2009.

Adam Day and Jake Sherman, *Political Solutions Must Drive the Design and Implementation of Peace Operations*, IPI Global Observatory, 20 June, 2018.

Adam Day, *To Build Consent in Peace Operations, Turn Mandates Upside Down*, UN University Centre for Policy Research, 19 January, 2017.

Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations, available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p-declaration-en.pdf>

Richard Gowan, *The Politics of A4P*, Challenges Forum Policy Brief 2019: 3 February 2019.

Richard Gowan, *Political Gap in Reform Agenda Leaves Questions on A4P Mechanisms*, IPI Global Observatory, 19 July, 2018.

Richard Gowan, "The Security Council and Peacekeeping" in Sebastian Von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, eds., *The UN Security Council in the Twenty-First Century*. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2016).

Karin Landgren, *Nailing Down the Primacy of Politics in UN Peacekeeping: An Insider Perspective*, IPI Global Observatory, 16 August, 2018.

*The Security Council and UN Peace Operations: Reform and Deliver*, Security Council Report, May 2016.

Lisa Sharland, *How Peacekeeping Policy Gets Made: Navigating Intergovernmental Processes at the UN*, International Peace Institute, May 2018.

Jake Sherman, *Action for Peacekeeping: Will Political Consensus Lead to Change in Practice?*, International Peace Institute, September 2018.





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