

### Box 1.1 The Review of International Civilian Capacities

Civilian personnel play an increasingly central role in international peace operations, whose growing multidimensional mandates include a broad array of peacebuilding tasks. Today, civilian personnel, including international staff, national staff, and UN volunteers, constitute approximately 17 percent of all UN staff deployed in peacekeeping operations around the world. Yet vacancy rates across these missions average 27 percent, reflecting the many obstacles the UN still faces in identifying and deploying civilian experts. These high vacancy rates present operational and strategic challenges for missions on the ground and may ultimately affect mandate implementation and peace consolidation.

Recognizing this gap in civilian capacities, in March 2010 the UN Secretary-General appointed a senior advisory group, chaired by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former head of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to conduct an analysis of how the international community can broaden and deepen the pool of civilian experts to support postconflict peacebuilding. Its report, *Civilian*

*Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict* (also known as the Guéhenno Report), was published in February 2011. The Guéhenno Report identifies four key principles for improving international civilian capacities: stronger national ownership, enhanced global partnerships, greater efficiency in identifying and deploying expertise, and increased nimbleness in delivering these capacities on the ground. Following the release of the report, the Secretary-General formed a steering group led by Susana Malcorra, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, to implement its recommendations.

Important progress has been made, and as an initial step toward creating a civilian partnership cell to link the UN and other international civilian capacities, Under-Secretary-General Malcorra has recommended the creation of an online Web portal to strengthen information-sharing on supply and demand. However, challenges remain and further work is needed to improve the deployment of civilian capacities. In August 2011 the Secretary-General released a report on the UN's civilian capacities that identified a

series of priority activities for the UN over the next year, including the development of guidelines for deploying national capacities, increased efforts to strengthen partnerships, and using the principle of comparative advantage in implementing mandates.

Before its closure in July 2011, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) had one of the largest civilian staff components of any UN peacekeeping mission. Yet UNMIS encountered many obstacles in hiring national staff, who represented less than 1 percent of civilian staff in the mission.<sup>1</sup> The new UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has been identified as a testing ground for implementation of the Guéhenno Report's recommendations, and has received requests from the government of South Sudan to enhance its civilian capacity-building activities.

Momentum must be maintained for increasing the pool of civilian experts, improving their deployment, and reducing the civilian capacity gap. Failure to do so may ultimately come at the expense of the ability of missions to fully support peace consolidation.

Note: 1. Sharon Wiharta and Stephanie Blair, "Civilian Roles in Peace Operations," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2010: Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security* (Solna, Sweden: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 104.