

Peace Implementation Network

Programme for International Co-operation and Conflict Resolution

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**Command from the Saddle:**

# **Managing United Nations peace-building missions**

Recommendations Report of the Forum on the  
Special Representative of the Secretary-General:  
Shaping the UN's role in Peace Implementation



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Programme for International Co-operation and  
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## Preface

One of the most important lessons from the international community's efforts to support war-to-peace transitions, in areas as diverse as Cambodia, Bosnia, El Salvador, Mozambique and the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is the absolute necessity of basing a high-level official with decision-making authority in both political and operational matters in the conflict area. The United Nations was one of the first to recognise this imperative, partly based on the experiences of successive Special Representatives of the Secretary-General assigned to lead field-based peace-building missions. In such situations, every aspect of the UN's engagement can have an impact on the political process and developments at the political level will often require an immediate response from the UN. In the rapidly changing political circumstances associated with an ongoing peace process, the UN must be able to act as the sum of its parts, and not as separate parts. Achieving this poses a very practical challenge to the UN, with its multitude of agencies, funds and programmes.

On 8 – 9 July 1998, the role and function of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in United Nations' peace-building missions was examined at a special forum held in New York. The Secretary-General's 1997 reform proposals, which had laid a foundation for strengthening the UN's contribution to peace-building, provided the impetus for holding the Forum. In bringing together a limited number of past and present SRSGs and key Secretariat officials, the Forum aimed to compare SRSG experiences in a variety of situations over the past decade, identify operational strengths and weaknesses of UN field-based peace-building missions, and distil best practices for application in the future. Drawing on the observations and recommendations of participants, this report focuses on practicable suggestions to both the Secretariat and SRSGs aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of SRSG-led missions.

As the senior United Nations representative in the field and a functional extension in the field of the Secretary-General, the SRSG is a potentially valuable asset to the Secretary-General in pursuit of the reform process. Away from UN centres such as New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, the UN Secretariat is generally not represented at a senior political level except where SRSGs have been appointed. An SRSG in the field faces, in miniature, many of the same difficulties facing the Secretariat on a global scale, in particular the challenge of how to coordinate the decentralised UN system. The Forum participants all agreed that the implementation of the Secretary-General's reforms would make a direct contribution

to their work in the field and many suggested ways that an improved SRSG function could enhance UN effectiveness, a key objective of the reform process.

The Forum on the SRSG was the first such meeting between a group of SRSGs, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as custodian of the Resident Co-ordinator System and leader of the UN Development Group, also participated in aspects of the meeting. Approximately 40 UN staff from these departments, as well as the UNDP-Emergency Response Division, the DPKO-Lessons Learned Unit, and the Office of the Co-ordinator of Humanitarian Affairs also attended the Forum.

The Forum was organised by the Peace Implementation Network, a project of the Programme for International Co-operation and Conflict Resolution at the Oslo-based Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science. As Chair of the Programme and co-chair of the Forum itself, I would like to thank the Government of Norway, the Government of Canada and the MacArthur Foundation for providing funding to cover the costs associated with holding the Forum. The Peace Implementation Network is also supported by the United Nations Development Programme.

This report has been prepared by Fafo, based on the views and recommendations of the 15 participants in the Forum. The report was circulated in draft form to all participants and revised in light of their comments. The Department of Peace-keeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office of the Co-ordinator of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme were particularly helpful in providing detailed comments on the draft report. While there was in fact broad agreement on many issues, the report is not meant to reflect a consensus among participants as much as to present the broad range of experience, analysis and recommendations presented during the two-day Forum.

Like the Forum itself, this report is concerned principally with UN operations in the field and ways in which the Organization can strengthen its peace-building missions through the SRSG function. Only peripherally does the report refer to the much wider ongoing policy debate over the UN's engagement in peace-keeping and peace-building. Of course, the views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the official views or positions of the participants, donors or the United Nations.

In the short period since the Forum was held, the UN has begun to address a number of the issues raised by Forum participants. DPA, DPKO, OCHA and UNDP in particular have provided us with details of such steps which we have integrated into this report. The quick response and the overall high level of support for the SRSG Forum and this recommendations report by DPA, DPKO, OCHA and UNDP is further evidence of the depth of commitment within the Organisation to the reform process initiated by Secretary-General Annan.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his direct involvement in the Forum. The idea to bring together such a group emerged from a meeting between us in July 1997, and without his encouragement the Forum would not have taken place. Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette deserves special thanks for agreeing to co-chair the Forum. Her active involvement in shaping the agenda and throughout the two days of discussions is indicative of the high priority she gives to enhancing the UN's operational effectiveness in peace-building and improving system-wide co-ordination. My gratitude also goes to the participants for the energy and interest with which they engaged us and each other on the Forum subjects. Their analyses of the main challenges facing the UN as well as the strategies they have employed to support peace-building in war-torn societies led to the recommendations contained in this report.

Terje Rød-Larsen  
Chair

Fafo Programme for International Co-operation and Conflict Resolution

January 1999



Photograph by Robert Zash © 1998

From left to right:  
Deputy Secretary-General, Ms Louise Fréchette; Secretary-General, Mr.Kofi A. Annan; Chair, Fafo Programme for International Co-operation and Conflict Resolution, Mr.Terje Rød-Larsen.



Photograph by Robert Zash © 1998

From left to right:  
Norwegian State Secretary, Dr.Janne Haaland Matlary; Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Mr.Bernard Miyet; Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Bosnia Herzegovina, Ms Elisebeth Rehn

# List of Participants

Mr. Kofi A. Annan  
Secretary-General

Ms Louise Fréchette  
Deputy Secretary-General

Mr. Aldo Ajello  
former SRSG for Mozambique

Mr. Jean Arnault  
SRSG for Guatemala

Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi  
former SRSG for Haiti,  
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan

Mr. Alvaro de Soto  
Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Mr. Shaharyar M. Khan  
former SRSG for Rwanda

Mr. Gerd Merrem  
former SRSG for Tajikistan

Mr. Bernard Miyet  
Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations

Mr. Olara A. Otunnu  
Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
for Children and Armed Conflict

Ms Elisabeth Rehn  
SRSG for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr. S. Iqbal Riza  
former SRSG for El Salvador,  
former SRSG for Bosnia and Herzegovina,  
Chef de Cabinet, Executive Office of the Secretary-General

Mr. Terje Rød-Larsen  
former Special Co-ordinator in the Occupied Territories

Mr. Mohamed Sahnoun  
former SRSG for Somalia,  
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in Africa

Mr. James Gustave Speth  
Administrator, UNDP

Dr. Janne Haaland Matlary  
State Secretary,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Mr. Robert Fowler  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative  
of Canada to the United Nations

# Executive Summary

The July 1998 Forum on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) sought to explore and improve the policies and practices of the United Nations in peace-building by facilitating a dialogue amongst senior UN practitioners with experience leading post-conflict peace-building missions.

## The issues

Forum participants were asked to consider four principle questions:

- What are the Secretary-General's requirements of an SRSG?
- What are the primary sources of authority for an SRSG?
- What is the relationship between the SRSG and the rest of the UN system?
- What are the key managerial and administrative issues facing SRSG-led missions?

This report reflects the observations of participants in response to these questions, the strategies and approaches they used to carry out their assignments, and suggestions made on the basis of their experience to enhance the effectiveness of future SRSG-led missions. While there was broad agreement on many issues, the report is not meant to reflect a consensus among participants as much as to present the broad range of experience, analysis and recommendations presented during the two-day Forum.

## The context

The participants described the SRSG as being appointed in exceptional circumstances, either when the “normal” instruments available to the Secretary-General have proven insufficient or when the UN has been asked to play an exceptional political, peace-keeping or peace-building role. As attested to by the experience of the participants, SRSGs have been assigned to a variety of post-conflict peace-building situations and circumstances, including the leadership of peace-keeping operations and verification missions. In addition, SRSGs have often been made responsible

for co-ordinating peace-building activities. In all of these post-conflict peace-building situations, the overall task of an SRSG is to promote lasting peace and help prevent the resumption of conflict.

### **SRSG: At the hub of UN field operations**

The SRSG is often at the centre of the operational relationships in the field among the UN Secretariat, the wider UN family of agencies, funds and programmes, other international organisations, the parties to the conflict and donor countries. In addition, the SRSG is often the international community's senior representative in the field.

### **Peace-building: Meeting human security needs**

In most cases, the tasks of post-conflict peace-building involve a complex combination of human security needs: from basic security (which may be promoted by peace-keeping) through relief and rehabilitation (humanitarian aid), to reconstruction and socio-economic advancement (development assistance) and (re)building credible and functioning public institutions (elections, governance and public administration assistance). In overseeing efforts to meet these needs, each SRSG will have available to him or her varying levels of political, institutional and financial resources, determined in large part by the Security Council with input from the Secretariat, as well as by the donor community. In the mission area, SRSGs will operate alongside a distinct group of national and international actors, each pursuing distinct interests.

### **“Navigation by sight”**

As a result of the wide variation from mission to mission in the availability of resources and the political dynamic, centralised planning and management from UN Headquarters is not very practicable: an SRSG will almost always have to “navigate by sight” from the mission area. The Secretariat needs to combine maintaining responsibility for overall policy and oversight with decentralising of decision-making related to operations. In the politically volatile circumstances of most mission areas, this is a complicated balance to strike and is not easily achieved.

## **SRSG: Diplomat and manager**

Given the complexities of the job, the success of an SRSG mission will depend greatly on the personality and experience of an SRSG. To paraphrase the Secretary-General, an SRSG must be part diplomat and part manager. He or she must be capable of negotiating between the parties and the members of the international community, as well as managing a mission whose functions are directly related to the progress of the peace process on the ground. An SRSG must be a communicator, actively seeking to engage the parties to the conflict and the international community in the process of peace-building.

The participants agreed that despite these demands SRSG missions are often not launched with the proper tools necessary for an SRSG to do the job as effectively as possible.

## **Recommendations: Defining the SRSG role**

Participants spoke in detail about a wide range of areas in which the Secretariat could effect or propose improvements. For example, mission mandates issued by the Security Council too often do not permit the UN to use resources flexibly in response to an evolving political environment. The Secretariat could review a range of mission mandates to identify language or instruments endorsed by the Security Council for some missions that could be suggested as standard features in future mandates (*see recommendation i*). In support of the mandate, written terms of reference from the Secretariat need to be provided to an SRSG which clarify his or her role *vis-à-vis* the other actors involved in peace-building including the parties, donor countries, other international organisations and the UN family of agencies (*see recommendations ii–iii*). It was recommended that the SRSG represent the UN at multilateral meetings related to the conflict, and in relations with the World Bank and donor countries on matters connected to the peace process (*see recommendations x–xii*). The key elements of the SRSG role should be communicated to the heads of the various institutions, to the parties and publicly (*see recommendations iv and v*).

## **Recommendations: Strengthening operational relationships**

Within the UN system, the flow of information between the Secretariat, Security Council, General Assembly and the mission could be improved in a number of ways (*see recommendations under vi*). The authority of the SRSG could be enhanced through, for example, involving the SRSG in meetings between the Secretary-

General and the parties, member states or Heads of Agencies as well as through visible support from the Secretary-General within and outside the UN system (*see recommendations under vii, and xiii–xv*). In addition, participants emphasised the importance of improving mechanisms to address policy differences and disagreements which arise between the SRSG mission and UN family in the mission area, and between the mission and the Secretariat (*see recommendations xvii –xix*). Consideration of the role of the SRSG should be included in the development of the Strategic Frameworks initiative, and in ongoing discussions about how to improve co-operation between the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions in post-conflict situations (*see recommendation xx*), and options need to be developed concerning the institutional relationship between the SRSG and the UN Resident Co-ordinator system (*recommendation xvi*).

### **Recommendations: Improving mission management and administration**

In the area of mission management and administration (*recommendations xxi – xxix*), participants suggested a review of management structures of previous missions with a view to developing management options (and draft job profiles) for use by the Secretariat in planning and recruiting for future missions. The establishment of a rapid-response administrative team within the Secretariat was recommended as a means of expediting the establishment of SRSG missions, as was a review of the headquarters budget formulation and approval process. The participants called for SRSGs to have greater input in staff recruitment and for SRSGs to assume a greater degree of decision-making authority for implementing approved budgets. They also underlined the importance of improving the financial instruments available to an SRSG for channelling donor funds (i.e. voluntary contributions) to peace-building activities.

### **Supporting UN reform**

In general, participants in the Forum focussed their recommendations on ways to improve UN operations in the field within the parameters of present policies and structures. Frequent reference was made to the Secretary-General's reform proposals and the way in which the recommendations made throughout the SRSG Forum related to the on-going reform process. Fundamental changes in policy, which in some cases may be necessary, require consensus among Member States. Building such consensus takes considerable time, and may prove impossible to achieve. In

the meantime, there was widespread agreement among participants that significant gains in effectiveness and efficiency can be gained by improving systems that already exist. The recommendations contained in this report have been made in this context.

Readers will find recommendations included at the end of each section or sub-section of this report. In addition, a consolidated list of all recommendations can be found beginning on the following page.

## **Participation in the Forum**

Participants in the SRSG Forum included the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, senior officials from the Departments of Peace-keeping Operations and Political Affairs, and UNDP, as well as SRSGs (past or present) or Heads of Missions from the following mission areas: Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mozambique, Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Rwanda, Somalia and Tajikistan (*see list of participants on page 9*). The SRSG Forum was organised by the Programme for International Co-operation and Conflict Resolution of the Oslo-based Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science.

## List of recommendations<sup>1</sup>

The follow recommendations were made by individual participants during the two-day Forum. The Forum did not seek to build consensus on all recommendations. Rather, the purpose was to reflect the range of thinking articulated by a group of present and former senior United Nations officials with experience in leading field-based peace-building missions.

### **The Mandate and Terms of Reference**

**pp. 22–24**

- i. *The United Nations must be able to deploy in a flexible manner the various instruments made available to peace-building missions by the Security Council. A review of mission mandates issued by the Security Council should be undertaken to identify elements and/or language that facilitated or limited such flexibility. The Secretariat should use the review to identify precedents where mandates contained elements permitting the UN the flexibility needed to respond to changing circumstances. The Secretariat should draw on the review in proposing language for future mandates. Further, the Secretariat should consider the degree to which UN engagement should be conditioned upon having the flexibility necessary to respond to political developments in the mission area.*
- ii. *(\*) Every SRSg should be provided by the Secretariat with a written description of the duties and responsibilities associated with his or her appointment. Such “terms of reference” should cover not only his or her immediate substantive areas of responsibility as head of mission but also the degree of responsibility that the Secretary-General wishes him or her to have for relations with the parties, donors, and other international organisations. The terms of reference should also state in clear terms the SRSg’s role vis-à-vis the UN system active in the mission area.*
- iii. *A “check list” of essential elements for inclusion in a terms of reference and possible language should be developed to enable comprehensive terms of reference to be drafted quickly once the Secretary-*

<sup>1</sup> A (\*) next to a recommendation indicates that action has been initiated or taken. Details are provided in the corresponding section of the report.

*General has decided to appoint an SRSB. In this connection, a review of previous terms of reference or, where lacking, the duties and responsibilities undertaken by SRSBs should be undertaken.*

- iv. Key aspects of the terms of reference should be incorporated into the initial public statement made by the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General when an SRSB has been appointed.*
- v. In addition, heads of relevant UN agencies, international organisations, donor countries and the parties should receive targeted letters from the Secretary-General that include the principle responsibilities of the SRSB, particular in the areas of inter-Agency co-ordination and relations with the addressee. Agency Headquarters should convey this information to their representatives in the field.*

### **The Secretary-General and the Secretariat**

**pp. 24–25**

- vi. Improve the flow of communications from Headquarters to the field, in particular by providing SRSBs on a timely basis:*
  - a. Relevant statements of the Secretary-General, Security-Council and General Assembly;*
  - b. Reports from meetings relevant to the mission held at Headquarters either internally, with Member States, or other interested parties;*
  - c. Responses to field reports, especially those of a political nature or where guidance is requested;*
  - d. Reports of developments in other missions or aspects of the Organization's work that might affect an SRSB-led mission.*
- vii. Means by which the Secretary-General can show support for and thereby strengthen the position of the SRSB vis-à-vis the parties, members of the international community, and the UN system:*
  - a. Publicly issued statements of support, either in press interviews or through the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General;*
  - b. Letters to Heads of Agencies at the beginning of an SRSB's appointment and subsequently. Such letters are normally conveyed to the field and can have a measurable impact in improving co-operation;*

- c. *Convening Heads of Agency meetings, chaired by the Secretary-General;*
- d. *Inviting an SRSR to be present with the Secretary-General when matters critical to the mission are discussed with the parties, Member States, the Security Council or other actors;*
- e. *Within the Secretariat, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General can be instrumental in seeing that matters of concern to an SRSR are addressed promptly by the bureaucracy. Parallel support from the heads of DPA and DPKO is equally crucial, both in conveying the Secretary-General's support for an SRSR to the parties and Member States but equally within the Secretariat bureaucracy and wider UN system.*

### **The Parties**

**pp. 25–26**

- viii. *In considering candidates for an SRSR post, the Secretary-General should weigh any previous relationships or contacts with the parties against the particular nature of the mission. On balance, such relationships will usually allow a newly appointed SRSR to consolidate his or her position on behalf of the UN more quickly.*
- ix. *An overview of how the UN has supported peace-building efforts around the world should be provided to an SRSR at the time of appointment. Such an overview will help an SRSR offer the parties practicable UN responses to the conflict based on previous experience. Where the UN is involved in the negotiations phase, such an overview may also be helpful in demonstrating to the parties how similar issues have been addressed with UN assistance in other contexts.*

### **The International Community**

**pp. 27–29**

- x. *The SRSR should be charged with representing the entire United Nations family at multilateral meetings related to the conflict. Participation of individual agencies and programmes should be as part of the SRSR's delegation to the meeting.*

- xi. Relations with the World Bank concerning policy co-ordination should be the responsibility of the SRSB. The SRSB should head a unified UN delegation to World Bank-led Consultative Group meetings.*
- xii. While donor countries will wish to maintain bilateral relations with individual UN agencies, the SRSB should be responsible for the UN's participation in donor-related policy co-ordination mechanisms and consultations. The SRSB should lead UN delegations to donor conferences.*
- xiii. As a matter of systematic practice, an SRSB should be called to UN Headquarters at critical junctures to participate in consultations with Security Council members. Similarly, SRSBs should visit senior officials in donor capitals to build support for the United Nations overall role in the peace process, and support UN agencies' efforts to mobilise resources for projects in the mission area.*

### **The UN System**

**pp. 29–30**

- xiv. As noted previously, an SRSB's Terms of Reference should clearly state his responsibilities vis-à-vis the UN system, and should be communicated by the Secretary-General to the UN family. UN agencies watch closely the statements and actions of the Secretary-General, or more generally of the Secretariat, for signs of an SRSB's relative strength or weakness with Headquarters. The Secretariat should be conscious of this, supporting the SRSB in appropriate ways when necessary.*
- xv. A review should be made of UN inter-agency co-ordination structures and mechanisms employed by SRSBs in peace-building missions. The review should describe the various mechanisms developed and seek to assess which approaches have functioned best and why. The review should be made available to newly appointed SRSBs to provide possible models for inter-agency co-ordination.*

### **SRSB – UN System Relations in the Field**

**pp. 31–34**

- xvi. (\*) A policy review should be undertaken to examine options for different possible relationships between the SRSB and the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator. The review should take into*

*consideration how rationalising or regularising UN co-ordination under the leadership of an SRSG, consistent with the mission's mandate, can support both the Strategic Frameworks initiative and the overall objectives of the Resident Co-ordinator System. The Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator should be closely associated with supporting the policy framework for UN assistance set by the SRSG.*

- xvii. A mechanism needs to be developed at Headquarters to resolve persistent policy differences affecting operations in the mission area. Such differences may arise between an SRSG and the agencies, between the SRSG and Secretariat departments, and between Secretariat departments with responsibility for peace-building missions. In addition to relevant Secretariat departments and UN agencies, the Deputy Secretary-General should also take part in such a mechanism.*
- xviii. Given the inevitability that disagreements will arise between an SRSG and UN agencies, from time to time the Secretary-General will need to intervene with the heads of agencies in support of the SRSG. Such interventions should reinforce the priorities of the Organisation in the mission area, particularly when agencies are pursuing objectives that are at odds with or risk undermining efforts to achieve the political goals of the mission.*
- xix. In this connection, efforts to enhance co-ordination in the field should be mirrored by a parallel process of improving policy consultations at Headquarters and between Headquarters and the agencies on matters relevant to SRSG-led missions. Such co-ordination could also help ensure that SRSGs in the field are fully informed of relevant policy and activities of UN actors which may not be operational in the mission area, including the UN High Commission for Human Rights and the Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict.*
- xx. (\*) Circumstances under which SRSGs are appointed largely parallel those in which the Strategic Frameworks approach may be applied. More systematic consideration of the role of the SRSG should be integrated into the Strategic Frameworks initiative as well as into the ongoing examination of ways to improve co-operation between the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions in post-conflict situations.*

## **Mission Management and Administration**

**pp. 35–42**

- xxi. (\*) *Review senior management structures adopted in previous and ongoing missions, with particular attention to the role of the Deputy Chief of Mission and the relationship between the senior military, civilian/political and administrative positions. Develop options that can be drawn on by the Secretariat and SRSG-appointees in planning future missions;*
- xxii. *Draft staff profiles for use in planning the managerial structure of a mission as well as recruitment. As a rule, profiles should be drafted with input from the missions;*
- xxiii. *SRSGs should be consulted throughout the recruitment process and, where feasible, involved in interviewing candidates;*
- xxiv. *Staff without previous experience in peace-keeping or peace-building should receive informational materials and training prior to joining the mission in the field.*
- xxv. *To ensure that a newly appointed SRSG will have adequate support in the establishment phase of a mission, an advance team led by a senior administrator should be sent from Headquarters and remain in the mission area until a Chief Administrative Officer and related support staff are recruited.*
- xxvi. (\*) *A review should be undertaken, in consultation with relevant General Assembly bodies, to determine how the budget approval process for newly established missions can be compressed;*
- xxvii. (\*) *A greater degree of decision-making authority related to the commitment and expenditure of funds, including procurement, should be devolved to the field. A review should be undertaken to determine the policy and operational ramifications associated with devolution, as well as to identify precisely what would be required to enable devolution to take place.*
- xxviii. *A review should be undertaken of ad hoc peace-building activities carried out (or proposed) by missions. In the past, these activities have included public information and advocacy to explain the goals of the mission; facilitation of meetings involving the parties, donors and/or international organisations as well as local and international NGOs; small demonstration projects; people-to-people initiatives, etc. Such*

*activities should be classified according to existing budget lines and made standard features of mission budgetary submissions. If such activities are not anticipated in a mission's approved regular budget, it can be very difficult to re-programme funds to cover such costs.*

- xxix. In addition to a mission's regular budget, voluntary contributions from donors can often be used to finance peace-building activities. SRSG's require a source of funds for peace-building activities that can be used in a flexible manner to build support for the peace process and meet unplanned challenges. Donor countries are often willing to provide funds for this purpose. A review should be undertaken to identify the financial instruments (i.e. "trust funds") through which voluntary contributions may be received for the purpose of funding peace-building activities proposed by an SRSG. The review should identify which offices and programmes of the UN presently implement such instruments, the programme support costs and procedures associated with these instruments and the average time required to establish each instrument. The review should constitute a sort of guide, enabling an SRSG to establish quickly a mechanism suitable to his or her mission. The review should also make recommendations to improve the transparency of such instruments.*

# 1. Background: The SRSG function in UN peace-building missions

The United Nations Secretary-General's 1997 reform proposals include a number of measures aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of field-based peace-building operations.<sup>2</sup> These operations, or missions, are normally headed by senior officials chosen by the Secretary-General, who generally hold the title "Special Representative of the Secretary-General" (SRSG).

## **Appointed in unusual circumstances...**

SRSGs are appointed only in exceptional circumstances, either when the "normal" instruments available to the Secretary-General have proven insufficient or when the UN has been asked to play an exceptional political, peace-keeping or peace-building role. In a variety of situations and circumstances, SRSGs have been responsible for conducting supportive diplomacy and mediation related to conflict prevention and resolution, heading peace-keeping operations and verification missions, and coordinating peace-building activities. Within the UN system, the SRSG has often been at the centre of the operational relationships in the field among the UN Secretariat, the wider UN family of agencies, funds and programmes, other international organisations, the parties to the conflict and donor countries.

While an SRSG may be appointed to head both peace-keeping and peace-building missions, the Forum on the SRSG focussed mainly on the latter. In particular, the Forum focussed on the appointment of an SRSG at a time when the parties to the conflict have reached some form of political agreement. The nature of

<sup>2</sup> See *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme of Reform*, Report of the Secretary-General 16 July 1997; In the section on peace, security and disarmament, (Part V, para. 119/Action 4), the Secretary-General integrates peace-building activities under the SRSG: "(a)n integrated approach is particularly important in the field...It is for this reason that the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary General is so vital" and "In the field, the Special Representative of the Secretary General will have authority over all UN entities". Secretariat coordination is also made a priority, particularly between DPA, DPKO and OCHA. DPA, as convener of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security is established as UN focal point for post-conflict peace-building (Part V, para. 120). In addition, the Secretary-General's report integrates the development assistance activities of the various UN funds and agencies in the field under the Resident Co-ordinator (para. 188/Action 13).

the “agreement” may vary widely, from a comprehensive and detailed peace settlement, to a tentative understanding or set of agreed principles, to only a cease-fire. Whatever form the agreement takes, it marks at least a tentative end to the fighting and a new phase in the peace process. The SRSG’s overarching purpose is to help prevent the re-occurrence of violent conflict and to help advance the peace process.

### **...to implement policy set by the Security Council and the UN Secretariat...**

The specific range of the United Nations’ responsibilities in peace-building missions is usually mandated by the Security Council or, less often, by the General Assembly. A mission’s mandate is a negotiated text and will often reflect a least-common-denominator political consensus among Member States and/or the parties to a conflict. For this reason, mandates will generally serve more as a sketch rather than a blueprint for an SRSG, defining the contours of the mission but not providing detailed guidelines for implementation. For missions established after the parties have reached a negotiated end to their conflict, mandates may be based on the role for the United Nations stipulated in the agreement. Here too, while the role of the UN may be clearly identified, the process and mechanisms for implementing that role will likely remain vague or may not have been addressed.

The SRSG’s role in implementing the mandate is defined by the Secretary-General through the specific terms of reference or instructions issued to an SRSG at the time of his or her appointment. In virtually all circumstances, an SRSG, acting on behalf of and within guidelines and instructions provided by the Secretary-General, will have considerable responsibility for bringing a practical and functional interpretation to the mission mandate through the deployment of the various instruments at his or her disposal.

### **...with a limited set of instruments...**

These instruments may include both military and civilian components. Military instruments, generally referred to as a peace-keeping component, are today available only on the basis of a Security Council resolution which will define the role of peace-keeping troops. An SRSG is unlikely to have much flexibility in deploying troops for purposes not specified in the mandate, regardless of whether the mandated purpose is later judged by the UN or other actors to be inappropriate to the political situation on the ground. Other instruments, such as humanitarian and development aid and various forms of technical assistance may be mobilised through the UN

system. In theory, these instruments may be used with much more flexibility by an SRSG because they do not require Security Council approval. In practice, there are constraints here as well. For, example, it is UN policy that political conditionalities should not be imposed on life-saving humanitarian assistance.<sup>3</sup> There is somewhat more flexibility in the area of development aid. In addition, there are the practical difficulties inherent in any effort by the Secretariat to co-ordinate the activities of the UN system. Even though an SRSG is nominally the head of all UN operations in the mission area, his or her real authority is limited by the decentralised nature of the UN system where agencies enjoy a considerable degree of independence from the Secretariat. Bringing coherence to the UN presence in the field is a major challenge faced by any SRSG.

### **...alongside a number of national and international actors...**

Each SRSG-led mission faces a unique set of diplomatic, humanitarian, development and, at times, also military challenges; each mission must interact with a distinct set of national and international actors each pursuing distinct interests in the mission area; and each mission will be provided with varying levels of political, institutional and financial resources. Because of this, an SRSG will almost always have to navigate by sight.

### **...SRSGs have common objectives...**

At the same time there are certain common objectives that SRSGs will be expected to pursue. In most circumstances, SRSGs will be called upon to help consolidate the peace process by working to bring all parties to the table, including those who may have been excluded during previous phases of negotiations. SRSGs should also help advance the political process by identifying priorities, building support for these priorities, co-ordinating other actors involved in the peace process and mediating between different interests.

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 10, *Draft Generic Guidelines for a Strategic Framework Approach for Response to and Recovery from Crisis*, October 1997.

**...and should bring to the job similar diplomatic and managerial skills.**

An SRSG must be part diplomat and part manager. An SRSG's political functions require, first and foremost, diplomatic skills in negotiation, mediation and consensus-building not only among the parties to the conflict but also among the wider circle of those members of the international community important to the peace process. When appointed at the Assistant-Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General level, an SRSG is likely to be the highest ranking international diplomat in the mission area. Equally, the SRSG must be able to manage effectively the mission for which he or she is responsible, and also to indirectly establish a degree of authority vis-à-vis the other parts of the UN system active in the mission area. Frequently, an SRSG has been sent to the field well before the necessary support structures (from an office, to staff, to budgetary resources) have been mobilised by the UN. Therefore, unlike most other actors who are based in well-established institutional environments, an SRSG must be able to develop quickly a vision of how he or she can contribute to the peace process, engage in the diplomatic consultations required to lay the groundwork for this contribution, and simultaneously build a functioning mission apparatus.

## **2. The Forum on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General: Comparing past experience to strengthen future peace-building missions**

### **SRSGs face numerous constraints...**

The starting point of the Forum on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General was that certain limiting features associated with SRSG-led missions are unlikely to change. For example, mission mandates, subject to international diplomatic negotiation, are unlikely to become much clearer, nor is the Security Council likely to allow much greater flexibility in the use of troops contributed by Member States or to confer greater authority on an SRSG. The inter-governmental underpinnings of the UN system will continue to make it very difficult to establish a clear hierarchy in field missions in a manner that would permit an SRSG unambiguous authority with all UN agencies. Similarly, financial resources will continue to be limited, and only in unusual circumstances are donor countries likely to agree that an SRSG be responsible for allocating donor funds to UN agencies. Proposals for changes in these areas are long-standing, but so far there is insufficient support among Member States for making such sweeping changes.

### **...but individually have developed a range of mechanisms and strategies for overcoming systemic weaknesses.**

However, such constraints have not prevented SRSGs from making substantive contributions in establishing an effective and decisive role for the UN. The Forum therefore sought to learn from SRSGs how they translated their mandates and terms of reference into action, in spite of these common limiting features. And, having identified various approaches, participants were asked to consider what concrete and realistic steps could be taken by the Secretariat to improve the support mechanisms and operational frameworks for SRSGs and their missions.

The Forum on the SRSG asked four principle questions:

- What are the Secretary-General's requirements of an SRSG?
- What are the primary sources of authority for an SRSG?
- What is the relationship between the SRSG and the rest of the UN system?
- What are the key managerial and administrative issues facing SRSG-led missions?

This report reflects the observations of participants on these questions, the strategies and approaches used to carry out their assignments, and suggestions made on the basis of experience to enhance the effectiveness of future SRSG missions.

### **3. The Secretary-General's requirements of an SRSG**

In order to ensure the relevance of the Forum to actual United Nations policy making, the Forum invited the Secretary-General to speak about his requirements and expectations of an SRSG.

Secretary-General Annan discussed the demands, as well as the limitations, on SRSGs. Appointed on an *ad hoc* basis, in exceptional circumstances, an SRSG's role could be said to be defined by its lack of definition. SRSGs must act with ingenuity and flexibility consistent with a policy framework generally received from the Security Council and often characterised by only a weak consensus concerning the UN's role. In such a context, individuals matter greatly, and the success or failure of UN initiatives can rest on an SRSG's performance.

#### **The first responsibility is to implement the mission's mandate.**

An SRSG's first responsibility is for implementation of the mission's mandate. Given that they reflect the outcome of often complex and contentious negotiations, mandates are likely to contain ambiguities and compromises. When a mandate does not enable the UN to do what had been expected in the formulation of the mission, the Secretariat may return to the Security Council to question, clarify or seek authorisation to go beyond the established mandate (as was done in the Bosnia case). Realistically, however, one could not expect the Security Council to produce very clearly defined mandates.

#### **In translating a mandate into UN action, SRSGs must be able to bring a practical and functional interpretation to a mission's mandate.**

The UN, including SRSGs, have to work with ambiguous mandates and only in unusual circumstances could one foresee that a mandate would be renegotiated in mid-stream. This means that in order to accomplish the main goals defined for the mission by the Security Council, an SRSG must be able to bring a practical and

functional interpretation to the mission's mandate. In doing so, the Secretary-General stressed that an SRSG was expected to follow closely the evolution of the situation on the ground, and to take initiatives in solving problems and building confidence. The SRSG is perceived as an extension of the Secretary-General and derives influence from that relationship; therefore in political situations there must be a consistency of approach between the SRSG and the Secretary-General.

### **Four dimensions to an SRSG's work**

The Secretary-General identified four broad categories that encompass much of what he expects from SRSGs.

- First, SRSGs must be effective diplomats able to assume a third-party role in resolving disputes and at the same time be willing and able to bring the full weight of the international community to bear on a problem, including offering negative assessments when necessary.
- Secondly, SRSGs must be practical but also visionary managers, capable of both effective planning and quick decision-making in rapidly changing political circumstances.
- Thirdly, an SRSG must be an effective communicator with the ability to convey persuasively his or her vision and the willingness to engage directly and personally the people of a war-torn society.
- Finally, the Secretary-General identified what he termed the moral dimension of the work of an SRSG. An SRSG speaks for the highest ideals of the international community, and is often asked to do so in the most inhospitable of circumstances, where war, violence, hatred and even genocide have left indelible marks on every person and every family.

## 4. The primary sources of authority for an SRSG

An SRSG faces an unusual set of circumstances: appointed at a politically pivotal moment in a conflict situation, he or she will not, at least in the initial period, have an existing institutional structure to use as the principal base of authority. An SRSG will be appointed to establish a mission in a conflict area where there are already a number of local and international actors. A mandate may define what is expected of the UN, but that mandate alone will not necessarily induce this group of actors to comply with or even support the efforts of an SRSG. An SRSG will always have to prove himself or herself on the ground by demonstrating that he or she can solve problems, contribute to advancing a peace process, work effectively with a broad range of actors, and bring a reasonable degree of harmony to UN operations. How does a newly appointed SRSG achieve these things given the limits that have been discussed previously in this paper?

**SRSGs have five principle sources of authority that can provide the strong foundation required to support the UN's peace-building contribution.**

Participants in the SRSG Forum covered five primary sources of authority:

- the Mission's mandate and the SRSG's Terms of Reference;
- the relationship with the Secretary-General and the Secretariat;
- the relationships with the parties;
- the relationship with the international community;
- the relationship with the UN system.

Each SRSG will come to a mission with a different set of advantages, with strengths in some areas but not in others, requiring him or her to consolidate existing relationships and build from the ground up in others.

## **These sources of authority are mutually reinforcing and interlocking.**

SRSGs have discovered that these sources of authority are mutually reinforcing and interlocking, signalling to the various actors the degree to which an SRSG has broadly based credibility and influence. For example, the members of the international community will judge an SRSG's usefulness in part by his or her access to the parties and the degree to which he or she can effectively lead the UN system. Having close relations with key Members States, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund reinforces an SRSG's standing with the parties who see the SRSG as an important source of advice and support, or as a mediator or channel for conveying information to the international community. And, the UN system is far more likely to co-operate when an SRSG is seen to have solid relations with the major external political actors and donors as well as the parties. The inverse is also true: if an SRSG becomes irrelevant to the informal and formal political consultations among members of the international community and the decisions that are subsequently taken, then the UN risks losing its influence with the parties and therefore its ability to help set the agenda for the political and socio-economic aspects of the peace process. If an SRSG loses influence with the parties and the donors, UN agencies and programmes are also less likely to co-operate.

## **4.1 The mandate and terms of reference**

### **Mandates may be ambiguous owing to political compromises, but nevertheless reflect an important consensus of Member States.**

The mandate and terms of reference are the starting points for an SRSG, defining the scope of the United Nations engagement and the SRSG's responsibilities respectively. As previously noted, mandates represent political compromises and may not provide the degree of clarity that the UN or an SRSG would like. However, even with their ambiguities, mandates reflect a consensus among key international actors and therefore may provide an important degree of legitimacy and potential authority for an SRSG. In some cases, such as when the UN is requested in specific terms to lead a verification process, the mandate will provide not only a general political framework but also the operational framework. Yet, no matter how much formal

authority is conferred upon the UN by a mandate, on the ground the SRSB must translate the mandate into real authority. This process is not automatic, and the SRSB will need to establish credibility through those other sources detailed below.

While recognising that the UN Secretariat has a limited ability to determine mandates, participants in the Forum urged that, at a minimum, certain considerations be reflected in mandates. A sufficient degree of flexibility should be built into a mandate in order for the UN to be able to respond to changing circumstances in the mission area. In a rapidly evolving political environment, a narrowly defined mandate can quickly be surpassed by events. In such a situation, the United Nations may be unable to act even though it may wish to do so. In light of the negotiations process associated with determining mandates, it can be impractical to try to modify the mandate at a pace that keeps up with events. In its negotiations with Member States, and ultimately when determining whether the Organization can make a constructive contribution in a conflict area, the UN Secretariat should consider not only whether the resources will be sufficient, but whether those resources may be deployed with a sufficient degree of flexibility at the discretion of the Secretary-General to permit the United Nations to respond to changing political requirements.

**The terms of reference from the Secretary-General to an SRSB can provide strong signals concerning the SRSB's role in the peace-building process.**

The terms of reference, or set of instructions, handed to an SRSB upon appointment represent a potentially important source of authority, particularly vis-à-vis the wider UN system. Nominally the head of UN operations in the field, the SRSB will have to establish that authority in practice. The terms of reference can provide a boost to an SRSB by detailing in clear language the role that the Secretary-General expects him or her to play. To date, SRSBs have often lacked written terms of reference, other than a general letter of appointment and/or a public statement by the Secretariat at the time of appointment. Particularly where neither the mandate nor relevant agreements between the parties define the UN's role clearly and in operational terms, the terms of reference can be used to signal both the UN system and other international actors the Secretary-General's priorities for the mission and the SRSB.

While the particulars of each terms of reference will differ according to the requirements of the Secretary-General and the conflict situation, there is a common set of issues that should be addressed in each terms of reference. In particular, a terms of reference should specify the SRSB's role vis-à-vis UN agencies and programmes, particularly as concerns inter-agency co-ordination, representation of the UN at

meetings related to the conflict, as well as relations with the parties, the donors and other international organisations. The terms of reference should also cover the range of substantive issues with which the Secretary-General wishes the SRSG to become involved. In some cases, for example, an SRSG may be designated as the principle focal point within the UN for the conflict and granted wide discretionary authority; or the SRSG may have mainly an implementation role, with a department at Headquarters (such as DPA or DPKO) retaining principle responsibility for policy development. It is important that the nature and scope of an SRSG's role be clearly articulated to avoid confusion either within or outside the UN. The language employed in a terms of reference will inevitably be scrutinised closely, particularly within the UN, for indications of the support that an SRSG can expect to receive from the Secretariat and especially the Secretary-General.

## **Recommendations**

- i. The United Nations must be able to deploy in a flexible manner the various instruments made available to peace-building missions by the Security Council. A review of mission mandates issued by the Security Council should be undertaken to identify elements and/or language that facilitated or limited such flexibility. The Secretariat should use the review to identify precedents where mandates contained elements permitting the UN the flexibility needed to respond to changing circumstances. The Secretariat should draw on the review in proposing language for future mandates. Further, the Secretariat should consider the degree to which UN engagement should be conditioned upon having the flexibility necessary to respond to political developments in the mission area.*
- ii. (\*) Every SRSG should be provided by the Secretariat with a written description of the duties and responsibilities associated with his or her appointment. Such "terms of reference" should cover not only his or her immediate substantive areas of responsibility as head of mission but also the degree of responsibility that the Secretary-General wishes him or her to have for relations with the parties, donors, and other international organisations. The terms of reference should also state in clear terms the SRSG's role vis-à-vis the UN system active in the mission area.<sup>4</sup>*

- iii. *A “check list” of essential elements for inclusion in a terms of reference and possible language should be developed to enable comprehensive terms of reference to be drafted quickly once the Secretary-General has decided to appoint an SRSG. In this connection, a review of previous terms of reference or, where lacking, the duties and responsibilities undertaken by SRSGs should be undertaken.*
- iv. *Key aspects of the terms of reference should be incorporated into the initial public statement made by the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General when an SRSG has been appointed.*
- v. *In addition, heads of relevant UN agencies, international organisations, donor countries and the parties should receive targeted letters from the Secretary-General that include the principle responsibilities of the SRSG, particular in the areas of inter-Agency co-ordination and relations with the addressee. Agency Headquarters should convey this information to their representatives in the field.*

## **4.2 The Secretary-General and the Secretariat**

### **Relationships that are both substantive and symbolic...**

Throughout an SRSG’s tenure, the relationship between the SRSG and the Secretary-General is conveyed to the UN and other relevant actors in both substantive and symbolic ways, both of which may have a significant impact on an SRSG’s authority on the ground. Clear indications of the Secretary-General’s support, particularly at crucial moments, help an SRSG leverage co-operation from other actors on the ground. Possible mechanisms for conveying such support are noted in the recommendations section below.

<sup>4</sup> A significant step in this direction was taken in late August 1998 with the issuance by DPKO of a Directive for Special Representatives of the Secretary-General heading multidimensional peace-keeping operations. DPKO reported that the Directive was intended for use as a general framework, with adjustments made on a case-by-base basis to meet the requirements of specific mission. The Directive represented the consensus of members of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security.

### **...requiring timely communication and closely co-ordinated action.**

During the Forum, the Secretary-General noted that on political issues an SRSG must act consistently with the approaches taken by the Secretary-General. He acknowledged that the communication flow between Headquarters and the fields was not always sufficient. Normally serving in relatively remote areas, SRSGs are highly dependent on the Secretariat for information. Participants commented on the importance of ensuring that their statements and actions be in symmetry with those of the Secretary-General, and more generally with Headquarters, but that they often lacked sufficient and timely information to do so. In this context, it was equally felt that greater feedback on reports from the field would also be useful.

### **Recommendations**

- vi. *Improve the flow of communications from Headquarters to the Field, in particular by providing SRSGs on a timely basis:*
  - a. *Relevant statements of the Secretary-General, Security-Council and General Assembly;*
  - b. *Reports from meetings relevant to the mission held at Headquarters either internally, with Member States, or other interested parties;*
  - c. *Responses to field reports, especially those of a political nature or where guidance is requested;*
  - d. *Reports of developments in other missions or aspects of the Organization's work that might affect an SRSG-led mission.*
- vii. *Means by which the Secretary-General can show support for and thereby strengthen the position of the SRSG vis-à-vis the parties, members of the international community, and the UN system:*
  - a. *Publicly issued statements of support, either in press interviews or through the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General;*
  - b. *Letters to Heads of Agencies at the beginning of an SRSG's appointment and subsequently. Such letters are normally conveyed to the field and can have a measurable impact in improving co-operation;*
  - c. *Convening Heads of Agency meetings, chaired by the Secretary-General;*

- d. *Inviting an SRSG to be present with the Secretary-General when matters critical to the mission are discussed with the parties, Member States, the Security Council or other actors;*
- e. *Within the Secretariat, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General can be instrumental in seeing that matters of concern to an SRSG are addressed promptly by the bureaucracy. Parallel support from the heads of DPA and DPKO is equally crucial, both in conveying the Secretary-General's support for an SRSG to the parties and Member States but equally within the Secretariat bureaucracy and wider UN system.*

## 4.3 The parties

### **Credibility with the parties is one of an SRSGs most important assets...**

Ultimately, perhaps the pivotal source of authority for an SRSG will be his or her relationship to the parties to the conflict. This is one of the aspects of an SRSG's work that is the most dependent upon the specific skills and experience which an SRSG brings to the job, and participants had few policy recommendations in this sphere. The extent to which the parties turn to an SRSG for help in resolving differences will have a very large impact on his or her ability to influence other actors. In the absence of credibility with the parties, it will be very difficult for an SRSG to play a substantial role in a conflict area.

### **...that can be supported from UN Headquarters.**

It was observed that an SRSG's credibility with the parties was in part influenced by the signals coming from Headquarters, and from the ability of an SRSG to mobilise Headquarters' support for action in the field. If an SRSG felt that responding to a request by the parties was important for the peace process and the mission, but could not gain necessary Headquarters' clearance or support for meeting such a request, his or her credibility could suffer as a consequence. In this context, effective and timely communications and co-ordination between Headquarters and the SRSG were crucial so that an SRSG would not send the wrong signals.

In the Forum it was a matter of debate whether someone who was a mediator in the negotiations phase was an appropriate candidate to head a UN verification or peace-building mission for the same conflict. In the case of El Salvador, it was decided that the mediator and the head of the verification process should not be the same person, whereas in Guatemala, in the wake of the peace agreement the mediator had been appointed head of mission at the request of the parties. In the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip the parties had fully supported the appointment of someone who had been closely associated with the negotiations process as head of the UN mission. Participants generally agreed that having prior relations with the parties was a great asset for a new SRSG. However, on the specific question of whether the Secretary-General should avoid appointing as SRSG a former mediator in the conflict, it was felt that this should be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

In some circumstances, the parties will have included in their agreement(s) a specific role for the United Nations. The more clearly this role is defined, the more leverage an SRSG will enjoy with other actors involved in supporting the implementation of the agreement. In the Forum it was pointed out that even where the UN may lack the political or financial resources of other actors, when an agreement between the parties has specified that the UN should assume a particular role (such as overseeing elections or more general verification of the agreement's implementation), this gave the UN an extremely important instrument that could balance the UN's relationships with other actors. In addition to the principle agreement(s) between the parties, *ad hoc* requests of the parties for UN assistance can help an SRSG mobilise support within the UN system and the international community.

## **Recommendations**

- viii. In considering candidates for an SRSG post, the Secretary-General should weigh any previous relationships or contacts with the parties against the particular nature of the mission. On balance, such relationships will usually allow a newly appointed SRSG to consolidate his or her position on behalf of the UN more quickly.*
- ix. An overview of how the UN has supported peace-building efforts around the world should be provided to an SRSG at the time of appointment. Such an overview will help an SRSG offer the parties practicable UN responses to the conflict based on previous experience. Where the UN is involved in the negotiations phase, such an overview may also be helpful in demonstrating to the parties how similar issues have been addressed with UN assistance in other contexts.*

## 4.4 The international community

### **An identifiable group of key countries and institutions...**

In each conflict situation, there is an identifiable group of key countries (aside from the parties) whose support the SRSG will require if the UN is to have a meaningful role. Alongside relations with the parties, relations with these countries constitute a potentially vital source of authority. An SRSG will normally have been appointed after consultations with the Foreign Ministries of such countries. However, as with other aspects of an SRSG's role, this will not automatically place the SRSG in a commanding position on the ground where the view from a local embassy about an SRSG's role may be more circumspect.

### **...whose support is essential to the success of a UN mission.**

In building relations with the local representatives of these key countries, an SRSG must be able to do several things simultaneously: demonstrate that he or she has access to and a degree of influence with the parties; provide useful interpretation of political developments or insight into political thinking of the parties and, on occasion, other actors of the international community; and demonstrate that he or she can not only table useful proposals but follow-them up with appropriate UN contributions. Formally speaking, an SRSG at the Assistant Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General level will normally be higher ranking than other diplomats in the mission area. While this will have little practical impact on the ground, it does mean that from time to time an SRSG may find it useful to relate directly to senior officials in world capitals to reinforce a message first articulated to the local diplomatic community. When backed by parallel steps at UN Headquarters, such approaches can have a useful impact on the decisions of key actors at important junctures.

Several participants in the Forum observed that as a matter of strategic necessity, they had immediately sought to build relationships with the international community. This had been necessary not only to fulfil the political aspects of the mandate. In order to establish a stable base of authority within the United Nations, it was necessary to first have the political backing of key member states. An external orientation can help an SRSG establish a platform on which to build the political authority and credibility necessary to develop the UN's role in the peace process. The fragmentation of the UN system and the fact that staffing and other resources

often take some time to arrive in the mission area, mean that an SRSG cannot simply rely on the mandate or terms of reference to ensure that UN agencies on the ground will follow his or her leadership. In addition to close ties to the parties, having the support of the international community is another factor that can persuade the agencies to be supportive of an SRSG's efforts.

**SRSGs and UN Headquarters should co-ordinate their consultations with Security Council representatives in the mission area and in New York.**

When an SRSG has been appointed based on a Security Council mandate, he or she needs to work very closely on the ground with the representatives of the Council. Maintaining the support of the Council is critical for the mission to fulfil its mandate. Diplomats in the mission area can be very helpful in building support for the mission in their capitals. Consulting with them in advance of Security Council consideration of issues relevant to the mission can help smooth acceptance of UN suggestions or concerns. This is another area where co-ordination could be strengthened between UN Headquarters and the SRSG-led mission in the field.

A newly appointed SRSG needs to identify the key members of the international community, visit representatives of these countries both locally and in their capitals, and persuade them to become involved and to support the SRSG. A successful effort in this regard is nearly a precondition for an SRSG-led mission to succeed. Maintaining this support will be an ongoing process throughout an SRSG's tenure.

**Led by the SRSG, the UN should speak with one voice in donor co-ordination forums.**

While an SRSG should not seek to monopolise relations with Member States (including the major donors among them), he or she should be assigned responsibility for representing the UN in policy co-ordination mechanisms and consultations in which the political and/or socio-economic aspects of the peace process are discussed. This will help ensure that in such forums, the United Nations will speak with a unified voice. It will also provide an incentive for the UN system to co-operate with an SRSG. In representing the UN at such forums, the SRSG should co-operate very closely with the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator who will normally have greater operational knowledge and who will be a key element in mobilising the UN system.

## **Co-operation between the UN, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund will contribute significantly to socio-economic aspects of peace-building.**

Included under the rubric of “international community” are the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Even though these institutions are part of the wider UN system, an SRSG will not even have nominal authority with regard to their roles. Establishing co-operative relations with the World Bank in particular can have a large positive impact on the degree of co-operation by the parties and the UN system with an SRSG. The World Bank is a principle source of funds for reconstruction and development and a principal actor in establishing priorities for the use of donor aid. Increasingly, the World Bank is active in providing assistance in post-conflict situations. In recent cases, such as Bosnia and Palestine, the World Bank was asked by the international community to play a major role in co-ordinating international assistance related to the peace process.

The SRSG and the senior representative of the World Bank in the mission area can be very helpful to one another. The World Bank does not have a political role and the UN will not normally have the range of development resources and financing mechanisms that are available to the World Bank. An effective working relationship between the World Bank and the SRSG-led mission can contribute significantly to overall donor co-ordination efforts, the establishment of development and reconstruction priorities, and identification of practicable multilateral mechanisms for supporting the social and economic aspects of peace-building. In order to strengthen UN-World Bank-IMF co-operation in the mission area, the SRSG should have clear responsibility within the UN for policy co-ordination with both the World Bank and the IMF. In addition, the SRSG should head a unified UN delegation to World Bank-led Consultative Group Meetings, with individual programmes and agencies attending as part of the SRSG’s delegation.

The question of who will represent the United Nations at multilateral meetings related to the conflict presents a real test of the notion that an SRSG has overall authority for UN activities. Differences commonly arise over this issue. UNDP questioned the “practical feasibility” of having SRSGs represent the UN in donor and Consultative Group forums since, in UNDP’s view, “SRSGs have not, in the past, been involved in or possess experience in areas such as resource mobilisation and donor co-ordination... [T]he United Nations country team [led by the Resident Co-ordinator] should be expected to retain its leading role in this area...” In the view of a number of SRSGs participating in the Forum this matter is central to their authority within the United Nations and their ability to help shape a coherent UN response to developments in the mission area. There is a close link between the political and diplomatic aspects of a peace process on the one hand and

the social and economic development initiatives necessary to underpin the peace-building effort on the other hand. In order to be fully effective in the political realm, an SRSG will also have to be able to lead the UN system in the development realm.

## **Recommendations**

- x. *The SRSG should be charged with representing the entire United Nations family at multilateral meetings related to the conflict. Participation of individual agencies and programmes should be as part of the SRSG's delegation to the meeting.*
- xi. *Relations with the World Bank concerning policy co-ordination should be the responsibility of the SRSG. The SRSG should head a unified UN delegation to World Bank-led Consultative Group meetings.*
- xii. *While donor countries will wish to maintain bilateral relations with individual UN agencies, the SRSG should be responsible for the UN's participation in donor-related policy co-ordination mechanisms and consultations. The SRSG should lead UN delegations to donor conferences.*
- xiii. *At critical junctures, an SRSG should be called to UN Headquarters to participate in consultations with Security Council members. Similarly, SRSGs should visit senior officials in donor capitals to build support for the United Nations overall role in the peace process, and support UN agencies' efforts to mobilise resources for projects in the mission area.*

## 4.5 The UN System

### **An SRSG faces the challenge of achieving cohesion in UN operations in the absence of statutory authority for UN agencies and programmes.**

Ironically, among the main sources of an SRSG's authority, the UN system may prove to be the weakest. This may be particularly the case for an SRSG who comes to the job without extensive knowledge and experience of the UN. The Member States created a UN system where authority was consciously fragmented, with the separate parts of the system enjoying a considerable degree of *de jure* and/or *de facto* independence from the Secretariat. In practical terms, this means that an SRSG cannot expect to enjoy a greater degree of authority in the mission area than the Secretariat strains to exercise throughout the entire system. UN agencies that were active in the mission area prior to the arrival of an SRSG often see the SRSG – agency relationship as inevitably resulting in the loss of their operational freedom.

### **Having limited formal authority, SRSGs should adopt a services-oriented approach to relations with UN agencies and programmes.**

Participants in the Forum agreed that the SRSG's relationships with the agencies had to be based on positive incentives and problem solving. An SRSG needs to demonstrate to the UN family that co-operating with him or her is ultimately beneficial to the agencies. Having few mechanisms at his or her disposal to induce compliance, an SRSG must develop a service-oriented strategy towards the UN system. For example, an SRSG's access to the parties can be useful to agencies seeking to develop new projects or become newly engaged in the mission area. Similarly, an SRSG can support agency fund-raising efforts through his contacts with donor representatives as well as convey agency concerns on humanitarian, development, or political matters. In missions where security and access to certain regions are problematic, an SRSG can help negotiate with relevant authorities on behalf of all UN agencies.<sup>5</sup> In addition, in some missions, an SRSG may have infrastructural

<sup>5</sup> OCHA cautions that access negotiations are an essential issue on which the relationship between the SRSG and the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator needs to be clarified as it is connected to the question of political conditionality and humanitarian assistance.

services that can be made available to the UN family. This type of approach will help build support for an SRSG in the mission area.

As with the other sources of authority, here too there is an interlocking aspect. In general, participants in the Forum found that their stock of authority within the UN system depended in part upon the strength of their relationships with the parties, the international community and the Secretariat. In turn, other actors will respond more to an SRSG when he or she can demonstrate that the UN system is behind the mission.

## **Recommendations**

- xiv. *As noted previously, an SRSG's Terms of Reference should clearly state his responsibilities vis-à-vis the UN system, and should be communicated by the Secretary-General to the UN family. UN agencies watch closely the statements and actions of the Secretary-General, or more generally of the Secretariat, for signs of an SRSG's relative strength or weakness with Headquarters. The Secretariat should be conscious of this, supporting the SRSG in appropriate ways when necessary.*
- xv. *A review should be made of UN inter-agency co-ordination structures and mechanisms employed by SRSGs in peace-building missions. The review should describe the various mechanisms developed and seek to assess which approaches have functioned best and why. The review should be made available to newly appointed SRSGs to provide possible models for inter-agency co-ordination.*

## **5. The relationship between the SRSG and the UN system in the field**

**The political objective of preventing a return to conflict should dominate the priorities of all UN agencies in the mission area, but this will not always be the case.**

An SRSG will be the senior United Nations official in the mission area and will generally be charged with responsibility for UN co-ordination. However, as noted above, an SRSG's authority over the UN's agencies, funds and programmes is not guaranteed by his or her seniority or terms of reference. An SRSG must build cooperative relationships with UN agencies already operating in the mission area as well as with those who are seeking to become involved in the area. At the same time, it is imperative that the fundamentally political goals of preventing a return to conflict and advancing the peace process be accepted by the agencies as the top priorities of the UN. This implies the establishment of a clear hierarchy of priorities, a process which can lead to "cultural clashes" (in addition to the usual institutional clashes over turf) between the mission and the various UN agencies. Such clashes stem from the distinctive professional orientations, principles and concerns associated with peace-keeping operations, diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, development assistance, and human rights work.

**An SRSG must develop methods for UN co-ordination that can establish unified priorities, but also set the stage for normalisation under the Resident Co-ordinator system.**

By the time an SRSG is appointed to a conflict area, other UN actors will have already been involved for some time in providing, for example, humanitarian or development assistance or helping refugees and displaced persons. Agencies will be acting according to their own mandates which may have been approved by governing boards composed of Member States or may derive from international conventions. Appointed in unusual circumstances and for limited time periods, SRSGs face a complicated challenge. They should support and even strengthen existing UN

system-wide mechanisms for policy and operational co-ordination in the field. This will help ensure a smooth hand-over back to UN system once an SRSG mission has ended. Yet, because these mechanisms are based on normal operational considerations, they were not developed for application in the exceptional circumstances of peace-building missions. Therefore, an SRSG must be able to adapt these existing mechanisms or propose alternatives that allow him or her to assume responsibility for all UN activities in the mission area without undermining a future “normalisation” process when the mission has been completed.<sup>6</sup>

### **In the field, there are four different dimensions to an SRSG’s relationship with the agencies.**

In his or her relationships with the UN programmes and agencies operating in the mission area, an SRSG has four main points of entry:

- The *formal authority* invested in an SRSG as the head of UN operations in the field. In most circumstances, the formal authority of an SRSG will have little real impact on agency behaviour;
- The *financial dimension*, which reflects the extent of control and/or influence which an SRSG has over the flow of funds from donors to UN agencies for projects in the mission area. In most cases, SRSGs will have limited, if any, formal decision-making authority over funding for UN projects. However, they may be able to exercise some influence over donor decisions via formal and informal co-ordination processes;
- The *personal dimension*, which reflects an SRSG’s ability to build influence through developing personal relationships with agency representatives in the field and at Headquarters. As important as such relationships can be, if they are not institutionalised they are likely to be transitory and therefore not consistently reliable;
- The *organisational dimension*, in which an SRSG makes use of instruments and opportunities present in the political environment (i.e. relations with the parties and the international community) to adapt or develop mechanisms for inter-agency co-ordination that support the SRSG in assuming

<sup>6</sup> The UNDP Administrator, who also serves as Chairman of the UN Development Group, added: “The authority of the SRSG, in my view, pertains to the mandate of the mission and in no way can detract from the fiduciary responsibilities of individual representatives. [The SRSG’s] authority should be exercised through a process of country-based co-ordination, led by the SRSG and assisted by the United Nations Resident Co-ordinator for operational activities.”

overall responsibility for UN activities in the mission area. It is here that an SRSG may well have the greatest degree of freedom, as well as the capacity, to act.

Participants in the Forum agreed that an SRSG had to identify the complementarities among the various parts of the UN family and use persuasion and incentives to create synergies among them. To the extent practicable, during their relatively short tenures, SRSGs should not create structures that compete with existing systems. This is for the simple reason that with the departure of an SRSG, the UN must continue to function according to established policies for co-ordination which are largely centred on the Resident Co-ordinator System.

### **The relationship between the SRSG and the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator: Exploring options.**

The relationship between the SRSG and the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator was a focus of discussion in the Forum. [OCHA later observed that in the majority of cases in which an SRSG has been appointed, the co-ordination function was either wholly or partially an OCHA responsibility. In an increasing number of cases, one person was appointed to fill both the Resident Co-ordinator and Humanitarian Co-ordinator functions. The discussion on the SRSG-Resident Co-ordinator relationships would, for the most part, apply equally to SRSG-Humanitarian Co-ordinator relationship.]

The UNDP Administrator commented that Resident Co-ordinators, as a rule, had many of the same responsibilities as SRSGs, particularly in the areas of UN and donor co-ordination. Resident Co-ordinators also faced similar structural difficulties, including the lack of formal authority over agencies and the lack of control over funding. He advised that SRSG appointments be made sparingly and only in those cases where a difference could be made by high level diplomatic interventions on behalf of the Secretary-General or where there is a significant peace-keeping operation. Such situations were beyond the capacity and mandate of the Resident Co-ordinator System, and the direct engagement by the Secretary-General through his Special Representative was clearly required.

The Resident Co-ordinator System is undergoing considerable change, and as the Resident Co-ordinator becomes the overall co-ordinator for assistance in the field, he or she will be able to provide an important means of support to the SRSG. In some cases (such as Haiti and Tajikistan), the Resident Co-ordinator had been appointed as Deputy to the SRSG. The UNDP Administrator suggested that in circumstances where an SRSG has responsibility for a wide-range of assistance

activities as well as a peace-keeping mission, it may be useful to consider a new command-oriented organisational pattern within which the Resident Co-ordinator also functions as Deputy to the SRSG.

Another option for consideration was that rather than function as the Deputy Head of Mission, the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator could serve as Deputy to the SRSG for UN Co-ordination. In such a situation, UN co-ordination and programme development would continue to be the operational responsibility of the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator. However the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator would report to the SRSG concerning UN co-ordination and would work within the policy guidelines established by the SRSG. This would ensure continuity once the situation normalised (and no longer required an SRSG) while also ensuring that the political priorities pursued by the SRSG would shape the priorities of the UN system in the mission area. (The Deputy Head of Mission would be a mission appointee.)

SRSGs had mixed evaluations of the experience of having a Resident Co-ordinator as Deputy SRSG. They nevertheless agreed that options for possible SRSG – Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator relationships needed to be explored further at the policy level.<sup>7</sup> The objective should not necessarily be to settle on one pattern, but to agree on a range of workable options suitable to different types of missions and circumstances.

[By late 1998, OCHA was in the process of preparing draft guidance for the relationship between Resident Co-ordinators/Humanitarian Co-ordinators. It was expected that the issue would be placed before the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) in early 1999, and hopefully adopted by ECHA and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security shortly thereafter.]

Not all UN actors will have an operational presence in the field, yet their mandates may be directly relevant to an SRSG's mission. An SRSG will need to be aware of UN offices, agencies or programmes that set standards for or have policy input into UN activities on a system-wide basis, but may not be present in the mission area. Human rights and children in conflict are examples of two issues that will in almost all circumstances have to be addressed by an SRSG directly within the policy framework and principles of the UN as well as related international conventions. Policy co-ordination based in the Secretariat should be developed to help ensure that an SRSG is provided with information from non-operational UN actors. During the Forum, the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict highlighted

<sup>7</sup> Paragraph 20 of the *Draft Generic Guidelines for a Strategic Framework Approach for Response to and Recovery from Crisis*, October 1998, states: "The [Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator] may in some instances serve as Deputy SRSG where appropriate, in accordance with existing directives on SRSGs and taking into account forthcoming guidance on their relationship to Resident and/or Humanitarian Co-ordinators."

the need to link an SRSG's work in the peace process as a whole with the special mandate of his function to address the needs of children affected by the conflict. Ensuring links between the SRSG-led mission and the High Commission for Human Rights, in cases where the Commission is not yet operational in the field, is another similar example.

### **Linking the SRSG role in peace-building to wider policy developments**

In terms of the wider debate on the UN's role in post-conflict settings that is taking place within the UN's Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, consideration of the role of the SRSG has not been systematically addressed. Yet, as a direct appointee of the Secretary-General and the ranking representative of the United Nations in the mission area, the SRSG function can be a useful means for advancing both the Strategic Frameworks initiative as well as co-operation between the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The October 1998 *Draft Generic Guidelines for a Strategic Framework Approach for Response to and Recovery from Crisis* state that in the field the SRSG "will have overall responsibility for global UN activities." Further thinking is still required concerning how this responsibility is to be carried out in practical, operational terms.

### **Recommendations**

- xvi. (\*) *A policy review should be undertaken to examine options for different possible relationships between the SRSG and the Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator. The review should take into consideration how rationalising or regularising UN co-ordination under the leadership of an SRSG, consistent with the mission's mandate, can support both the Strategic Frameworks initiative and the overall objectives of the Resident Co-ordinator System. The Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator should be closely associated with supporting the policy framework for UN assistance set by the SRSG.*
- xvii. *A mechanism needs to be developed at Headquarters to resolve persistent policy differences affecting operations in the mission area. Such differences may arise between an SRSG and the agencies, between the SRSG and Secretariat departments, and between Secretariat*

*departments with responsibility for peace-building missions. In addition to relevant Secretariat departments and UN agencies, the Deputy Secretary-General should also take part in such a mechanism.*

- xviii. Given the inevitability that disagreements will arise between an SRSG and UN agencies, from time to time the Secretary-General will need to intervene with the heads of agencies in support of the SRSG. Such interventions should reinforce the priorities of the Organisation in the mission area, particularly when agencies are pursuing objectives that are at odds with or risk undermining efforts to achieve the political goals of the mission.*
- xix. In this connection, efforts to enhance co-ordination in the field should be mirrored by a parallel process of improving policy consultations at Headquarters and between Headquarters and the agencies on matters relevant to SRSG-led missions. Such co-ordination could also help ensure that SRSGs in the field are fully informed of relevant policy and activities of UN actors which may not be operational in the mission area, including the UN High Commission for Human Rights and the Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict.*
- xx. (\*) Circumstances under which SRSGs are appointed largely parallel those for in which the Strategic Frameworks approach may be applied. More systematic consideration of the role of the SRSG should be integrated into the Strategic Frameworks initiative as well as into the ongoing examination of ways to improve co-operation between the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions in post-conflict situations.<sup>8</sup>*

<sup>8</sup> Paragraph 20 of the *Draft Generic Guidelines for a Strategic Framework Approach for Response to and Recovery from Crisis*, issued in October 1998, states: "In instances where an SRSG has been appointed, s/he will have overall responsibility for global UN activities." Further clarification of how this responsibility is to be exercised in practice is still required.

## **6. Managerial and administrative issues**

**An SRSG is highly dependent on the Secretariat to recruit staff and establish effective administrative structures to support the mission.**

The ability of an SRSG to play a meaningful role is closely associated with the ability of the Secretariat to deploy in a timely manner the personnel, infrastructure and financial resources required to create an organisation capable of supporting the SRSG in carrying out the mission's mandate. In this area an SRSG's own efforts will count for much less than the responsiveness of the Secretariat bureaucracy and the General Assembly's bodies related to resource allocation, such as the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. In addition, only when troop-contributing countries respond promptly to requests of the Secretariat will an SRSG-led mission be able to pursue the mandate approved by the Security Council.

**Quick action is critical...**

As with other issues discussed in the Forum, participants agreed that in general each mission faced different circumstances and that therefore there were not single answers or solutions to the issues raised which could be applied across the board. Participants described a range of possible means for addressing some problems while suggesting that other issues be explored further to develop policy options. At the core of the discussion lay a common theme: once the decision had been taken to deploy a mission, the United Nations must act quickly to maximise the political opportunities to advance the peace process. When an SRSG is unable to function owing to the inadequacy or absence of staff, peace-keeping troops and financial resources, the credibility of the UN suffers and the early opportunity represented by an SRSG's appointment is lost.

### **...but long time-lags seem to be the rule rather than the exception.**

Even for high-profile, well-funded missions that enjoyed a long lead time for preparation, the record is generally discouraging. In what has become a common pattern, an SRSG is sent to the field with little more than his or her mandate, letter of appointment and one or two staff aides, who may or may not have peace-building experience. Only months later, will the mission actually take form, with necessary personnel and peace-keeping troops in place.

Participants in the SRSG Forum raised four categories of concerns in which action by the Secretariat could lead to improvements on the ground:

- 6.1 Managerial structure of the mission
- 6.2 Personnel
- 6.3 Administrative support
- 6.4 Financial resources.

## **6.1 Managerial structure**

### **What is the role of an SRSG's deputy and who should fill the function?**

The SRSG is the Chief of mission, but who should be the Deputy Chief of Mission? What should be the relationship between the deputy and other senior mission personnel? And how should the Deputy be chosen? In peace-building missions with peace-keeping components, there are generally three senior officials serving below the SRSG: the senior military officer, the senior civilian/political officer and the senior administrative officer. (As noted previously in this report, in some missions, the Deputy to the SRSG is the Resident Co-ordinator who is also the head of the UNDP mission and therefore is not physically based at the SRSG's office.) It is common for a degree of competitiveness to exist between staff serving in these senior military, civilian and administrative positions, with incumbents perceiving themselves as the mission's number two. SRSGs at the Forum believed that it was important that the relationships between senior mission staff be clearly established.

Forum participants generally felt that the mission's formal number two should be a civilian with extensive knowledge of the UN system and diplomatic skills sufficient to lead the mission when the SRSG is not present. The SRSG should be principally engaged with relations with the parties and members of the international community. The Deputy Chief of Mission should have responsibility for the day-to-day management of the mission apparatus. The relationship with the senior military officer is vitally important, and he or she should report directly to the SRSG. (Only in the SRSG's absence would the senior military officer report to the Deputy.) DPKO added that the mission administration, which is a centralised support provided to all mission components, should be under the direct oversight of the SRSG, with the Chief Administrative Officer reporting directly to the Head of Mission.

**Deputies should be selected concurrent with an SRSG's appointment, and in consultation with the SRSG.**

Forum participants stressed that the selection of the right Deputy is critical to the overall functioning of the mission. Several participants observed that in their experience, there could be a delay of many months before a deputy was appointed. In addition, SRSGs felt that they were insufficiently consulted on the selection of the deputy. Particularly in missions with both peace-keeping and civilian components, it was observed that it could be helpful to include a "chief of staff" type function in which a senior aide to the SRSG would be responsible for co-ordination within the mission. DPKO emphasised that this function would not be equivalent to Deputy SRSG post nor could it substitute for the direct reporting of the heads of various mission components to the Head of Mission.

**There is both a managerial and an operational need to devolve more operations-related decision-making to the field.**

Several participants noted that it was difficult to establish a clear management structure within a mission when *de facto* reporting relations to UN headquarters were stronger than the reporting lines within the mission itself. For example, when administrative, budgetary, and staffing decisions are taken in Headquarters, and an SRSG has only advisory input, the *de facto* reporting pattern for mission administrative staff will often be to Headquarters departments rather than to the SRSG. In fact, the role of UN headquarters in administering the mission increases with the number of operational decisions taken at Headquarters. This pattern is reinforced

by the fact that career advancement for mission staff does not always depend as much on performance in the mission as it does on having the right networks in Headquarters to ensure that after the mission assignment ends, another assignment is forthcoming. Decentralising as many operational decisions to the field as practicable, combined with the timely provision of staff to an SRSG, would strengthen the mission's management and also ensure clearer lines of responsibility and accountability.

## **6.2 Personnel**

### **Quick growth in peace-keeping missions in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to shortages of appropriate staff, especially in administration and finance.**

SRSGs in the Forum were concerned not only about the time it took for staff to be recruited, but also that too frequently staff had little previous experience in peace-building or peace-keeping situations. Among the number of challenges posed to the UN by the explosion in peace-keeping missions in the 1990s was the difficulty in identifying suitable candidates to serve in the field. This was particularly the case for administrative and finance positions where there was a shortage of personnel trained in the UN's rules, regulations and procedures. With the decrease in missions, this situation has eased somewhat, although DPKO continues to report difficulties in finding top-quality chief administrative officers. Forum participants urged that profiles be drafted in consultation with the SRSG for the types of positions required by the mission. They also urged that the mission be allowed greater input during the recruitment process leading to the selection of staff.

### **Professional "cultural clashes" in missions could be overcome through training.**

A number of Forum participants observed that the clash of professional cultures between political, development, humanitarian and peace-keeping work arose not only between the mission and UN agencies but also within the mission itself. This was because mission staff were often recruited from development and humanitarian agencies, or came directly from national military establishments, and had no

previous experience with the political demands of peace-keeping or peace-building missions. It was recommended that before being sent to the mission, staff receive training, perhaps at the UN staff college, in peace-keeping and peace-building.

The timely deployment of troops by contributing countries is as important as the provision of civilian personnel and financial resources by the Secretariat. It is common for there to be a lag, sometimes considerable, before peace-keeping troops arrive in the mission area. This alone can cause a serious set-back to the SRSG's efforts to implement the mission's mandate. In certain cases, the Secretariat may wish to consider linking the arrival of an SRSG in the mission area with the clear commitment from troop contributing states concerning the arrival of military personnel.

## **6.3 Administrative support**

**An effective administrative support structure, led by an experienced Chief Administrative Officer, is a lynch pin for a mission's success.**

The initial phase of a mission requires intensive administrative activity, such as: locating suitable office space and preparing contracts related to premises and basic infrastructural services; procuring supplies and equipment; preparing revised budgets; initiating proper administrative, budgetary and finance systems for the mission to follow; and recruiting mission staff. Yet, it can often take months before a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), as well as junior support staff, are assigned to the mission. The lack of an existing administrative support structure in the field at the time of the appointment of an SRSG is one of the principle reasons for delays in a mission becoming fully operational.

In the Forum, it was suggested that Headquarters establish an administrative advance team that would be sent to the field in conjunction with the appointment of an SRSG. The advance team would remain in the field until a CAO and other key administrative and finance staff could be appointed. The advance team would not only help ensure that the mission would become operational much more quickly but also that the proper procedures are put in place, thereby enhancing mission accountability from the start. The advance team should be led at a senior level and be able to address finance and budget, procurement, and personnel requirements.

## 6.4 Financial resources

### **It takes too long to approve budgets and too long to authorise expenditure.**

Participants were not as concerned with the overall level of resources as they were with the time lags between the launch of a mission and obtaining the necessary approval of financial resources, not to mention the time it takes to make these resources available to missions in the field. The discussion on resources covered three types of issues:

- a) the time required for a mission's budget to be approved;
- b) the procedures for the mission to access approved resources, and;
- c) the lack of flexible financial instruments to fund peace-building activities.

#### **a) Approving a mission budget**

**The urgency to act on the ground can be stymied by a lengthy budgetary approval process.**

There is a contradiction between the political urgency to act quickly associated with the appointment of an SRSG and the time consuming process of approving the resources that make it possible for an SRSG to implement the tasks that the United Nations has been requested by the Security Council or the General Assembly to undertake. The time lapse between the arrival of an SRSG in the field and the approval of a mission's budget by the General Assembly can range from three to six months. During this time an SRSG faces an almost impossible situation: s/he is expected to implement the mission's mandate without the resources required to do so. (Under the present system, the Secretariat may not advance more than a fraction of anticipated resources.)

As noted earlier in this report, several participants in the Forum observed that in the months following their arrival in the field, they had adopted an external orientation, concentrating their efforts on building relationships with the parties and members of the international community. One of the reasons for doing so was the lack of resources available to the mission. In this situation, SRSGs have had to

seek ways to build a political role for the UN that is primarily based on the personal involvement of the SRSG. This approach is not sustainable for very long. The SRSG must be able to demonstrate that the UN can implement its mandate in the time frame demanded by the peace process, otherwise the UN and the SRSG both lose credibility. In the peace process itself, political momentum generated by the Security Council's approval of a mission and the appointment of the SRSG is lost when the mission does not have the resources to act.

### **Can the process be compressed?**

Participants recognised that it is not within the power of the Secretariat to change the present procedures for approving mission resources. Such changes, which have been proposed before, require the approval of Member States. Nevertheless, participants suggested that it would be worth exploring the extent to which the process could be compressed so that the standard procedures could be implemented much more quickly. DPKO agreed that this issue needs to be further addressed, noting that although advance commitment authority and annual budgets had improved the situation, the fact remains that funds can be accessed only after the adoption of a mandate.

## **b) Spending approved resources**

**Once a budget is approved, the procedures for authorising expenditure can be daunting.**

The difficulties and complications involved in gaining access to approved budgetary resources were among the largest sources of frustration for SRSGs participating in the Forum. There are two basic aspects of this problem. The first aspect is the time routinely required for a mission to receive authorisation from Headquarters to expend funds as stipulated in the approved budget. The mission itself has only limited authority to spend funds without seeking the prior approval of Headquarters. This is true even when the budget has made provisions for such expenditure. The second aspect is the time required for procurement, even when an item is available locally at a competitive price. Here too, even when rather small amounts of funds are involved, the procurement process generally requires extensive involvement by Headquarters.

DPKO observed that in the context of the reform process, Financial Regulations, Rules and procedures in the areas of finance, procurement and personnel were being reviewed with the aim of delegating more authority,

responsibility and accountability to the programme and line managers in the field. For example, the level of procurement authority to the field had recently been increased to US\$ 200,000. Nevertheless, further efforts to streamline procurement activities were needed, especially to permit the delegation of more authority for local procurement of specific commodities, not solely based on financial thresholds.

### **Can SRSG-led missions be granted greater control over approved resources?**

Participants in the Forum strongly urged that a greater degree of decision-making authority be devolved to the field. Such action could greatly reduce the steps required to expend approved resources, without in any way affecting the oversight and auditing measures associated with periodic reviews of a mission's management and administration. Under the present system, an SRSG, appointed at the Assistant Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General, has very little authority to manage the mission's resources. Instead, most decisions to commit and expend funds can be made only by Headquarters following receipt of a request from the mission. While such a system may be seen to ensure accountability, several participants argued that *post facto* auditing procedures could ensure the same degree of accountability without negatively affecting operational efficiency. Further, by limiting the responsiveness of the mission to events on the ground, the highly centralised approach to financial management can hinder the mission from implementing its mandate effectively, efficiently and responsibly.

In the Forum, it was noted that these observations were not particularly new and that recommendations to devolve greater authority to the mission had been made by others in recent years. What has not been articulated so clearly is why it has not proved feasible to implement previous recommendations to decentralise. It would be useful to examine the obstacles to decentralisation at the same time as new efforts should be made to transfer more authority to the SRSG as Chief of Mission.

DPKO commented that expenditure of approved resources is governed by the UN Financial Regulations and Rules. In addition, Member States continue to emphasise order, predictability and accountability in the management of peace-keeping operations. Proposals already made to increase delegation of responsibilities with accountability at mission level to some extent address concerns raised by Forum participants. Such delegation would be applied on the understanding that the necessary checks and balances would not be comprised, and that the separation of financial responsibilities between missions and Headquarters would be transparent. Currently, most missions do not have sufficient number of staff with adequate skills to carry out in full the decentralised functions. Efforts are being made to provide the required capacity in the mission which will make both greater decentralisation and greater delegation of authority possible.

## **c) Creating flexible financial instrument to support peace-building**

### **More peace-building activities could be built into the mission's regular budget.**

Participants in the Forum generally considered that it was essential that an SRSG have a flexible financial instrument that would permit him or her to authorise the expenditure of funds, consistent with the mission's mandate, in support of the peace process. Activities might include, for example, public information and production of reports, covering the costs of meetings between the parties or some people-to-people type activities. (SRSGs tended to refer to such an instrument as a discretionary fund.) These types of *ad hoc* activities are by their nature difficult to anticipate and have not normally been included in mission budgets. Under the UN's budgetary system, it is very difficult to gain authorisation for an expenditure that was not anticipated in the budget.

In principle, however, mission budgets could include line items for a wide range of *ad hoc* peace-building or peace-promotion activities. Under the existing system, this would require that line items matching the categories of expenditure be established in the budget. For example, public information, production of reports, holding of meetings, etc., can largely be covered by the mission's regular budget if funds were appropriately designated when the budget was approved. A review of *ad hoc* peace-building activities should be undertaken, classified according to existing budget lines, and then made standard features of mission budgetary submissions. The specific range of activities and the corresponding budgetary allocations will naturally vary from mission to mission.

### **Donors are often willing to provide earmarked funds to an SRSG to support peace-building activities, but the possible mechanisms for administering such funds are not easy to identify or establish.**

In addition to building such expenditure into the regular budget, the present system makes available to SRSGs additional financial instruments for handling voluntary donor contributions to support SRSG-led missions. These instruments are usually referred to as trust funds, but can equally take the form of a project agreement. The problem is that the process for establishing a trust fund mechanism is very opaque, complex and time-consuming, commonly requiring up to 12 months or more before funds may be accepted from donors and expended on agreed activities. SRSGs who have been successful in establishing such a fund have found them extremely useful tools in support of the mission. This is another example where the present system need not be radically altered, rather the process needs to be improved to become more transparent and responsive.

## **Recommendations**

- xxi. Review senior management structures adopted in previous and ongoing missions, with particular attention to the role of the Deputy Chief of Mission, and the relationship between the senior military, civilian/political and administrative positions. Develop options that can be drawn on by the Secretariat and SRSR appointees in planning future missions;*
- xxii. Draft staff profiles for use in planning the managerial structure of a mission as well as recruitment. Where practicable, profiles should be drafted with input from missions;*
- xxiii. SRSRs should be consulted throughout the recruitment process and, where feasible, involved in interviewing candidates;*
- xxiv. Staff without previous experience in peace-keeping or peace-building should be provided with informational materials and possibly also training prior to joining the mission in the field.*
- xxv. To ensure that a newly appointed SRSR will have adequate support in the establishment phase of a mission, an advance team led by a senior administrator should be sent from Headquarters and remain in the mission area until a Chief Administrative Officer and related support staff are recruited.*
- xxvi. (\*) A review should be undertaken, in consultation with relevant General Assembly bodies, to determine how the budget approval process for newly established missions can be compressed<sup>9</sup> ;*
- xxvii. (\*) A greater degree of decision-making authority related to the commitment and expenditure of funds, including procurement, should be devolved to the field. A review should be undertaken to determine the policy and operational ramifications associated with devolution, as well as to identify precisely what would be required to enable devolution to take place.<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> DPKO reports that there has been a recent increase to US\$ 200,000 in the level of procurement authority delegated to field missions.

<sup>9</sup> DPKO reports that the review of the budget formulation and approval process has been commenced by the Controller in co-operation with DPKO's Field Administration and Logistics Division.

- xxviii. A review should be undertaken of ad hoc peace-building activities carried out (or proposed) by missions. In the past, these activities have included public information and advocacy to explain the goals of the mission, facilitation of meetings involving the parties, donors and/or international organisations as well as local and international NGOs, small demonstration projects, people-to-people initiatives, etc. Such activities should be classified according to existing budget lines and made standard features of mission budgetary submissions. If such activities are not anticipated in a mission's approved regular budget, it can be very difficult to re-programme funds to cover such costs.*
- xxix. In addition to a mission's regular budget, voluntary contributions from donors can often be used to finance peace-building activities. SRSG's require a source of funds for peace-building activities that can be used in a flexible manner to build support for the peace process and to meet unplanned challenges. Donor countries are often willing to provide funds for this purpose. A review should be undertaken to identify the financial instruments (i.e. "trust funds") through which voluntary contributions may be received for the purpose of funding peace-building activities proposed by an SRSG. The review should identify which offices and programmes of the UN presently implement such instruments, the programme support costs and procedures associated with these instruments and the average time required to establish each instrument. The review should constitute a sort of guide, enabling an SRSG to establish quickly a mechanism suitable to his or her mission. The review should also make recommendations to improve the transparency of such instruments.*





# Command from the Saddle

How does the United Nations carry out peace-building missions? And what can be done to strengthen mission management and enhance the UN's overall role in supporting countries striving to make the transition from conflict to peace? In July 1998, Fafo's Peace Implementation Network convened a two-day Forum of past and present heads of UN peace missions, along with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette, the head of the UN's peace-keeping department, the head of UNDP, and other senior UN officials. Drawing on the observations and analysis presented by these participants, "Command from the Saddle" examines the political, diplomatic and socio-economic context of the UN's peace-building work and offers practicable measures to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

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