

Applying Sustaining Peace Workshop 1
Sustaining Peace and Peace Operation Mandates: The Liberia Transition
December 14, 2016

On 14 December 2016, NYU's Center on International Cooperation (CIC), the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (DHF) and the International Peace Institute (IPI) organized the first in a series of workshops in support of efforts to better understand and implement sustaining peace.

At this first workshop, participants discussed practical ways to improve the peacebuilding implications of peace operation mandates, drawing on the upcoming Liberia transition as a prime case, under the Chatham House rule.

Participants included member states active in the Security Council and/or the Peacebuilding Commission; experts from different parts of the UN system including the Peacebuilding Support Office; the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; the Department of Political Affairs; the UN Development Program; and representatives from CIC, IPI, DHF, the Institute for Security Studies, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The discussion took place against the backdrop of the transition from the UNMIL mandate, voted on 21 December 2016 at the Security Council.

The Report of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) on the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture called for a change in the way the United Nations does business, by considering the implications for sustaining peace across the conflict cycle, from humanitarian action and peacemaking to peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development. UN member states committed to this vision through two parallel General Assembly and Security Council resolutions adopted by consensus on 27 April 2016. Since then, member states, different parts of the UN system and various civil society groups have come together to discuss practical ways to move this agenda forward.

Sustaining peace and peace operations: 2015 Peacebuilding Review recommendations

The AGE Report underscores UN peacebuilding cannot be limited to the New York-based Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). Rather, the challenges for building and sustaining peace are systemic in nature, partially stemming from the UN operating in inter-governmental and operational silos both in Headquarters and in the field. Systemic challenges include deficiencies in coordination and resourcing of peacebuilding efforts on the ground during the formation, implementation and drawdown of peace operation mandates.

Recognizing this challenge, the AGE Report recommended:

- Accepting that peacebuilding is an essentially political task, and ensuring peace operation mandates are more strategic and context-specific
- Bringing political, security, human rights and development perspectives to the Security Council including through the PBC, in the formation and drawdown of peace operation mandates
- Better communication, coordination and linked action between peace operations and UN Country Teams
- Avoiding mismatch between complex mission mandates and human and financial resources intended to implement them

- Avoiding relapse through unrealistic timelines and undue haste in transitions
- Maintaining political and financial investment in strategic UN peacebuilding activities implicated by mission mandates, including after drawdown;
- Partnering better with other key stakeholders on the ground, including regional organizations and international financial institutions

Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly Resolution 70/262 broadly endorsed this vision, including the need to resource peacebuilding components of peace operation mandates more adequately, including during transitions and drawdowns.

The Liberia transition, sustaining peace, and the role of the PBC

Participants were briefed on recent developments related to the transition process, including the successes and shortcomings of the UNMIL mandate, the state of discussions at the Security Council, current peacebuilding priorities and challenges, and recent advisory activities of the PBC during transition efforts. Discussions included challenges, good practices and ways forward for the UN system to effectively sustain peace during peace operations.

- 1) **The practical implications of DPKO assessment missions:** the DPKO-led assessment guiding mandate formation and transitions was thorough, analytical and well researched. However, the recommendations focused more on security implications, rather than addressing the root causes of conflict and recommending future actions. With the help of PBSO and PBC, more effort can be spent to ensure assessments have a stronger long-term focus .
- 2) **The view from the ground:** structural issues such as youth employment, horizontal inequalities, lack of institutional capacity, economic recovery, reconciliation and justice, and problems with decentralization can be identified as the main challenges in Liberia. These are added to security issues. Local dependency on UNMIL, post-Ebola challenges and the upcoming elections create additional problems to address. Joint analysis is needed, along with better coordination between various national and local capacities and international, regional and bilateral efforts. Better ways to sustain peace in Liberia could include:
 - *Stakeholder mapping* to identify the comparative advantages of various actors, utilize them towards a strategic vision, and address response gaps.
 - *Ensuring national ownership* by building local and national capacities to lead and coordinate peacebuilding activities. When capacity gaps prevail, traditional systems and local practices could help establish ownership.
 - *Coordination and joint action* between different bilateral donors and international and regional organizations. This is crucial to a joint strategic vision for sustaining peace. The UN should focus particularly on regional and sub-regional organizations working in Liberia. Their perspectives must be brought to deliberations at the Council on mission mandates.

3) The potential of the PBC: The PBC Liberia Configuration, led by Sweden, organized a multi-stakeholder forum in Monrovia to discuss the repercussions of the UNMIL transition on sustaining peace. This was followed by a configuration meeting in New York. The input from both meetings was communicated to the Security Council. This example can lead to a “new way of working” between the PBC and the Security Council:

- *Transforming inputs into meaningful analysis.* The PBC could provide concise, practical analysis to the Council, drawing on input from multi-stakeholder meetings and discussions. The PBC will need to communicate these results to the Council in a meaningful, timely and efficient manner.
- *Strengthening inclusive national ownership.* Peacebuilding must be a nationally owned and led process. The PBC could bring multiple voices from the field to inform Council deliberations in New York.
- *Broader actor mapping.* Peacebuilding is a political process that involves a broad range of actors. Various international, regional and sub-regional institutions, as well as bilateral actors from Africa and beyond, are all active in Liberia. Some have a stronger role and greater visibility than the UN. The PBC could help guide New York-level activity with stakeholder mapping to identify resource and attention gaps in future peacebuilding activities.

Tailoring peace operation mandates to better sustain peace

Building and sustaining peace after a violent conflict is a lengthy and costly challenge requiring extended attention, funds and linked action among multiple stakeholders. The workshop centered around three questions and raised the following key points and recommendations:

1) Can the PBC and its configurations play a practical role to support the Security Council in the formation and drawdown of peace operation mandates?

- The Council’s workload has increased and intensified over the years, to include new conflicts and disasters and a range of thematic issues. It may not always have the capacity to be the primary UN peacebuilding actor. *The PBC should find innovative ways to support the Council to prioritize sustaining peace. For instance:*
 - *The PBC could bring the perspectives of development and humanitarian agencies, civil society, and regional and sub-regional organizations to Security Council debates.* This would include field- and need-driven strategies in the planning, implementation and coordination of UN peacebuilding.
 - Multi-stakeholder forums such as the Swedish-led exercise in Monrovia can help the PBC prioritize local and national perspectives, as well as structural issues, during mandate drawdown deliberations. *More practical*

PBC working methods are needed to communicate these results to the Council.

- *The PBC, with the support of DPA, could serve as a forum where member states can discuss structural and operational priorities under the principle of national ownership, without necessarily being on the Security Council's or PBC's formal agenda. The PBC has recently engaged with Burkina Faso and Sri Lanka in such a format. This type of interaction should be continued.*
- *Security Council delegates often have limited time available (3-4 weeks) to finalize mandate deliberations, creating a challenge for elaborate discussions on prevention and peacebuilding priorities. The PBC, and its country-specific configurations should find ways to engage with the Council at a working level well ahead of these deliberations.*
- *Beyond the Council, the PBC should engage with other organs of the UN, especially the ECOSOC and General Assembly, to better communicate the concept of sustaining peace and its implications. These discussions should include all main Committees of the General Assembly, particularly the 2nd Committee that deals with development issues.*

2) How can peace operations connect more efficiently with UN Country Teams, Resident Coordinators (RC) and peacebuilding actors on the ground? What are the options for joint and linked analysis, planning and programming?

- *Sustaining peace is not about enhancing the UN's response on the ground. It is about finding appropriate ways to work with national/local governments and boost their capacities.*
- *Joint strategic analysis and assessments between peace operations and UNCTs are essential. This should include a political economy dimension, which involves identifying elites and elite structures, and donor dependency. Analysis should also include formal and informal revenue sources, whether revenues trickle down to the people, and ways to generate income. A strategic unit in the Secretary-General's office, mandated to coordinate strategic priorities and action, could direct such analysis.*
- *The UN should act more coherently throughout its entire presence.¹ Often, peacekeeping operations such as UNMIL are perceived as the "UN Brand." Transitions confuse populations over the shape and format of continued UN presence on the ground. Peace operations and Country Teams should act together from the outset to prevent such confusion. Both DPKO and DPA should have stronger relations and better communication with the RC, particularly after mission drawdown. A substantial dialogue between UNDP and DPKO ahead of*

¹ In fact, in terms of integrated action, the UN has gone backward. Burundi for example saw "triple-hatting: RC/HC, the SRSG and the Head of Political Affairs. The UNCT included the World Bank. However, the national government seemed to prefer to work solely with UNDP on a development platform.

mandate deliberations could prevent overly ambitious or unrealistic Council mandates.

- Although *transitions particularly require linked action*, this is not the norm. In Liberia, current attention is on the upcoming elections. Meanwhile, the broader need to plan future development processes with coherence between the government, UN and donors is being overlooked.
- *Hasty withdrawals of missions are problematic, but peacekeeping also requires a deadline.* For instance, conflict drivers in Liberia are not dissimilar from several countries with no peace operation. UN engagement should be based on a framework of mutual accountability, rather than dependency. DPKO and PBC could collaborate on ways to achieve this.
- *After transitions, the capacities and resources of UNCTs must tailored to respond to the needs for sustaining peace, following a thorough assessment.*

3) What are the major funding challenges for peacebuilding activities during mission mandates? How can these challenges be overcome?

- When peacekeeping operations leave, peacebuilding funding often drops dramatically. The exception is when special political missions (SPMs) are deployed. In addition to assessed contributions, their presence often triggers voluntary funding. Liberia, however, has seen little or no consideration for transitioning into an SPM following the drawdown of UNMIL. *In transitions, the catalytic effect of SPMs should be utilized. Better DPA/DPKO coordination can achieve this.*
- Many member states are not aware that UNCTs are mainly financed through voluntary funding. Significant financial risks ensue in the wake of peace operation drawdowns. *Better communication with member states on funding streams is needed.*
- The military components of peacekeeping operations like UNMIL are expensive. As a result, budgetary concerns dominate transition decisions. More focused peace operation mandates could help reduce budgets, increase the will to accompany countries for longer periods, and facilitate smoother transitions.