

Thematic issues

24. United Nations peacekeeping operations

During the period under review, the Security Council held three meetings under the item entitled “United Nations peacekeeping operations”, all of which took the form of briefings.⁸³² More information on the meetings, including on participants, is provided in the table below.⁸³³

In 2023, the Council held meetings with selected force commanders and police commissioners of United Nations peacekeeping operations, respectively, on 28 July and 14 November, as well as the annual briefing on the Action for Peacekeeping initiative (A4P) and its implementation strategy, Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+), pursuant to resolution [2378 \(2017\)](#) on 7 September.

At the meeting held on 28 July, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, the Force Commanders of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and the Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Security Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on the role of military components in the protection of civilians.⁸³⁴ In his introductory remarks, the Under-Secretary-General provided an overview of the discussions during the annual gathering of force commanders at Headquarters and recalled that, ultimately, the collective efforts to enhance peacekeeping within the framework of A4P+ were more important than ever.

The Force Commander of UNMISS stated that, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the Government of South Sudan, the protection of civilians remained the overarching priority for the Mission. The Force Commander highlighted the Mission’s engagement with the South Sudanese authorities to enlist proactive actions and prevent conflicts and provided specific examples of actions it took in the fulfilment of its protection mandate. While noting that enhancing freedom of movement was a continuous priority for UNMISS, he further emphasized that the physical protection of civilians was not necessarily ensured only by

⁸³² For more information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. I.

⁸³³ See [A/78/2](#), part II, chap. 4.

⁸³⁴ See [S/PV.9389](#).

the use of arms and military means, but also involved a strategic approach, integrating proactive engagement, early warning systems and non-military measures. The Force Commander of MONUSCO shared his perspective on the diverse challenges faced by the Mission in the implementation of its protection mandate, including the weak capacity of State security actors, the weak justice system, the presence of numerous illegal armed groups in the area of responsibility, the presence of a high number of vulnerable displaced persons and the deliberate targeting of civilians. The Force Commander described a complex and dynamic operational landscape, including new threats such as misinformation and disinformation, which had adversely affected the efforts of MONUSCO to prevent and respond to threats against civilians. In terms of addressing these challenges, he emphasized the need for synergy between the military campaign and the strategic communication plans and stressed that strategic communication was a command duty and a mission leadership endeavour, crucial for countering misinformation and maintaining the support of the local population. The Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL noted that prevention was central to the Mission's activities, achieved through robust deployment across the area of operations, situational awareness, and dialogue and engagement with the parties to the conflict. To facilitate these efforts, the Force Commander highlighted the establishment of a tripartite forum as a key confidence-building and conflict management tool. In terms of challenges, the UNIFIL Force Commander cited the rise in misinformation and disinformation campaigns against the Mission which undermined its effectiveness, including by contributing to a decline in local community's acceptance, which was essential for peacekeeper safety and their access and freedom of movement. Finally, he underscored that women and youth were essential partners in all tiers of the protection of civilians policy and the essential role of women in improving all aspects of operations and facilitating access to local communities.

In their discussion following the briefers, Council members widely recognized the importance of protection of civilian mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations, along with the primary responsibility of States in that regard. Some Council members underscored the need for the Council to provide missions with more realistic and achievable protection mandates. Council members called for the strengthening of mission capacities in a number of areas in support of their protection mandates, including enhancing early warning capabilities,

engagement with host countries and local communities, the provision of appropriate equipment and training, the introduction of new technologies, medical support, along with strengthened civil-military coordination. Several speakers either referred to or posed questions to the force commanders regarding the impact of misinformation and disinformation and highlighted the importance of strategic communication for mandate implementation.⁸³⁵ Several members stressed the importance of missions having adequate mandates to address sexual and gender-based violence and the protection of women and children,⁸³⁶ while some also underscored the need for peacekeepers themselves to act in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.⁸³⁷

At the annual briefing held pursuant to resolution [2378 \(2017\)](#), which was convened on 7 September, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations noted that five years into the A4P initiative, the declaration of shared commitments stood as a testament to global consensus and ambition to strengthen peacekeeping missions and make peacekeepers safer and more effective.⁸³⁸ He noted that A4P+, launched in 2021, focused on catalytic issues that were critical for achieving the aims of A4P. Highlighting the results achieved as part of the initiative thus far, the Under-Secretary-General stated that growing divisions among Member States, combined with the increasing complexity of conflicts, posed a formidable challenge to peacekeeping and the broader task of maintaining peace and security. Moreover, noting a convergence of global phenomena – geopolitical tension, climate change and transnational organized crime, he stressed the need to continue strengthening the effectiveness of peacekeeping, which was one of the most powerful multilateral tools. In that regard, the Under-Secretary-General underlined that political strategies that had coherence and collective support from key actors were a cornerstone of A4P and A4P+. Noting that effective peacekeeping also required the right capabilities and mindset, he updated Council members on the deployment of the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System and work on adapting training and deployment to the needs of missions. The Under-Secretary-General referred to notable strides in enhancing the safety and security of peacekeepers, including the Action Plan to Improve the Security of Peacekeepers and the review of explosive

⁸³⁵ Ibid., (Ghana, Switzerland, Gabon, Albania, Japan, United Arab Emirates and Brazil).

⁸³⁶ Ibid., (France, Switzerland, Albania, Malta and China).

⁸³⁷ Ibid., (Switzerland, United States and Mozambique).

⁸³⁸ See [S/PV.9413](#).

ordnance threats, but noted that further progress hinged on sustained Member State support, especially in the form of specialized skills, equipment and expertise. In line with resolution [2436 \(2018\)](#) and as documented in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the overall performance of peacekeeping operations,⁸³⁹ efforts were being made to strengthen the performance of United Nations peacekeeping at all levels through improved performance assessment tools and taking all necessary measures to address allegations of misconduct. The Under-Secretary-General reported that, based on the recent strategic review of strategic communications across peacekeeping operations,⁸⁴⁰ several missions were implementing regular perception surveys to better understand the attitudes and expectations of local populations, and we were working to further build capacity and expertise in that area. With regard to the final A4P+ priority of cooperation with host States, missions were engaging in proactive discussions with national authorities to address critical challenges such as detentions of personnel or restriction on their freedom of movement. The Under-Secretary-General concluded that, at its core, peacekeeping was a political instrument the efficacy of which was linked to robust political support from the Council. He therefore called on all stakeholders to recommit to peacekeeping reform and build further on their shared successes.

During the subsequent discussions, Council members reiterated the crucial importance of United Nations peacekeeping as a tool for the maintenance of international peace and security, expressed support for the A4P and A4P+ initiatives and the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his New Agenda for Peace on how to improve peacekeeping. Specifically, Council members widely concurred that peacekeeping operations had to form part of broader political strategies and peace processes to resolve conflict and that mandates had to be realistic and match the actual capacities of missions. Some delegations further underscored the importance of broader and more strategic and partnership-based approaches to peacekeeping transitions to secure the necessary resources and institutional support, including through the Peacebuilding Commission, in addressing the root causes of conflict.⁸⁴¹ Council members widely acknowledged the importance of communication with host States and local communities to

⁸³⁹ See [S/2023/646](#).

⁸⁴⁰ See [S/2023/282](#).

⁸⁴¹ See [S/PV.9413](#), (Ghana, Japan and China).

ensure effective mandate implementation. A few Council members highlighted the need to respect and adhere to the basic principles of peacekeeping, namely, consent of the parties, impartiality and refraining from the use of force, except in self-defence.⁸⁴² Most Council members expressed support for further advancing the participation of women in peacekeeping. Finally, a number of Council members highlighted the important role and the need for the United Nations to support regional peacekeeping efforts, including those of the African Union.⁸⁴³ Some also called for greater focus on managing the environmental impacts on peacekeeping.⁸⁴⁴

At the meeting held on 14 November, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, the Police Commissioners of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and UNMISS, the Police Adviser of the Department of Peace Operations and the Executive Director of Security Council Report on the challenges faced by United Nations police components.⁸⁴⁵ In his introductory remarks, the Under-Secretary-General stated that many challenges to global peace, security and development, such as a global decline in respect for the rule of law, corruption, disregard for international law, transnational organized crime, attacks on human rights and the shrinking of civic space, called for unique and specific policing responses. He stressed the need to collectively ensure that United Nations police was properly prepared, equipped and resourced to address those challenges. While recalling that the gap between peacekeeping mandates and what the mission could, in practice, deliver had become quite significant, significant strides had been made in advancing the commitments under the A4P initiative and in fulfilling the priorities of the A4P+ initiative. Nevertheless, he underscored that United Nations peacekeeping could only achieve in many cases what he described as intermediate goals, including preserving ceasefires, protecting civilians, mediating local conflicts and strengthening institutions, and that durable political solutions to conflict required the unified political support of Member States and particularly the Council.

In his remarks, the Police Commissioner of MINUSCA provided an overview of the police component's work on reinforcing the capacities of the Internal Security Force of the

⁸⁴² Ibid., (Russian Federation, Brazil, China and Ecuador).

⁸⁴³ Ibid., (Ghana, Russian Federation, Japan, France, Mozambique, China, Switzerland, Malta, Gabon and Albania).

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., (United States, Ecuador, Switzerland and Malta).

⁸⁴⁵ See [S/PV.9475](#).

Central African Republic and its impact, which he described as significant, particularly with regard to the presence and operations of the Force both in Bangui and across the country and on respect for human rights within it. He added that the police component would continue to expand its footprint in the country for the implementation of the Mission's mandate, in particular the protection of civilians, the strengthening of the rule of law and the restoration of State authority. The Police Commissioner of UNMISS stressed that it was imperative for United Nations police interventions to protect civilians continued to take into consideration the gender dimensions of new and emerging threats. In that regard, she emphasized the need to continue to insist on and support women's representation and participation in all decision-making and to unify the security architecture through the necessary unified forces, including the South Sudan National Police Service, with women competing for leadership positions. Furthermore, with the renewed mandate of UNMISS underlining the Mission's responsibility to protect civilians across South Sudan, an expanded geographical footprint, accompanied by proactive, robust deployment, remained pivotal. The UNMISS Police Commissioner also highlighted the work of the specialized police team on training the South Sudan National Police Service on addressing sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence.

The United Nations Police Adviser reflected on some of the main challenges and achievements of police components in contributing to the advancement of A4P and the New Agenda for Peace. In that regard, he noted varying relationships and levels of trust between host State government institutions and missions, the need to align contingent-owned equipment with the new statement-of-unit requirements which reflected changing operational realities, the need for increased support from police-contributing countries including through the deployment of capacities without caveats, enhanced welfare arrangements and the endorsement of the Fifth Committee to match mandated policing tasks with adequate resources.

In her statement, the Executive Director of Security Council Report highlighted the role of United Nations police components in building host State law enforcement capacity to address organized crime. She stated that this work included supporting immigration and maritime security, crime prevention, response and investigation. The Executive Director further noted that policing responses to organized crime could prove important particularly in the context of transitions and where enforcement action was being undertaken, as discussed in the New Agenda

for Peace. In conclusion, while noting that United Nations policing faced high expectations and an ever-toughening political environment for peace operations, she expressed the view that the Council’s anticipated reflection on the future of peace operations could provide an opportunity for the Secretariat to present on, and for Member States to consider in depth, organized crime and the role of United Nations police with other actors in supporting stabilization and longer-term peace.

In their discussion, Council members recognized the importance of police components in peace operations for supporting the maintenance of law and order, the protection of civilians, the promotion and protection of human rights and security sector reform. Council members concurred regarding the need to make United Nations police mandates more realistic and matched with appropriate capacities and resources, including through the deployment of innovative new technologies. A number of members stressed the importance of capacity-building of national police services and national ownership of reform processes.⁸⁴⁶ A number of representatives also highlighted the importance of strategic communication with local communities and host countries.⁸⁴⁷ Most Council members also underscored the importance of increasing the number of female police officers and the corresponding advantage to effective mandate implementation. Finally, noting that the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the work of United Nations police components was done in 2018,⁸⁴⁸ several Council members called on the Secretariat to conduct a new review in this regard and to report to the Council.⁸⁴⁹

Meetings: United Nations peacekeeping operations, 2023

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decisions and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
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⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., (China, United Kingdom, Japan, Albania, Malta and Mozambique).

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., (China, Brazil, Gabon and Japan).

⁸⁴⁸ See [S/2018/1183](#).

⁸⁴⁹ See [S/PV.9475](#), (France, United Kingdom and United States).

<p>S/PV.9389 28 July 2023</p>	<p>Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon</p>	<p>All Council members, all invitees</p>
<p>S/PV.9413 7 September 2023</p>	<p>Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations</p>	<p>All Council members, invitee</p>
<p>S/PV.9475 Police Commissioners 14 November 2023</p>	<p>Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Police Commissioner of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, Police Commissioner of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, United Nations Police Adviser, Department of Peace Operations, Executive Director, Security Council Report</p>	<p>All Council members, all invitees</p>
