



## MEETING BRIEF

### **Security Council–Mandated Benchmarks in the Context of UN Mission Transitions**

At a time when UN peace operations must carry out increasingly complex and multidimensional mandates, benchmarks are an indispensable tool to capture peacekeeping and peacebuilding progress in order to inform decision-making on the scope, composition, size, and duration of UN missions. To this end, benchmarks need to be realistic, measurable, and flexible to reflect shifting realities on the ground. This was the key message that emerged from an expert roundtable organized by the International Peace Institute in collaboration with the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Field Support (DFS) on October 31, 2014, featuring Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous, Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire Youssoufou Bamba, and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom Sir Mark Lyall Grant.

Six main points emerged from the meeting:

- Now routinely requested by the Security Council, benchmarks have become a reality for UN missions. First introduced in 2002, they can today be found in seven peacekeeping missions and two special political missions. The most effective benchmarks are those which are simple, transparent, realistic, and subject to ongoing critical review by the UN and national actors.
- A useful management and decision-making tool, benchmarks increase situational awareness via systematic progress monitoring and help to set strategic priorities. Benchmarks are of particular value for the management of transition processes as they inform decision making about when a mission can be safely drawn down, as demonstrated by UN missions in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), Liberia (UNMIL), and Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL).
- Benchmarks can provide a framework for engagement between key stakeholders (i.e., Security Council members, host governments, and UN missions). They can be used to manage relationships and expectations by helping partners agree on a joint vision, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and enhancing accountability.
- For benchmarks to be effective, it is important that stakeholders' decision making be consistent with the progress assessments carried out against the benchmarks. Involving the host government from the outset in the design of benchmarks can strengthen buy-in and remind authorities of their commitment when progress falls short.
- Developing benchmarks to measure peacekeeping and peacebuilding progress is difficult because of the complexity of the tasks and ambiguity of the concepts involved. There is not always consensus on how to measure progress, good data is seldom readily available, and comprehensive data collection is difficult due to poor infrastructure in conflict environments.
- To increase their impact, benchmarks need to be translated into an analytical and strategic narrative that captures the state of play on the ground and provides a vision on the way forward. Similarly, benchmarks need to be aligned with other planning and management frameworks, such as the New Deal compact and the UN Integrated Strategic Framework, to ensure increased coherence.

– Michael R. Snyder