



IPI MEETING BRIEF

Côte d'Ivoire, a Successful Case of Crisis Management: A Look Back at the Experience and Lessons Learned

In June 2017, after thirteen years, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) will be closing, leaving behind a country on the path of economic development, reconciliation, and sustainable peace. With the support of international partners, the country has managed to emerge from its sociopolitical crisis and build social cohesion. Although challenges remain, Côte d'Ivoire is seen as a success story in terms of crisis management and effective cooperation with the United Nations in the management of UNOCI's exit strategy.

With the closing of the mission, and as Côte d'Ivoire launches its campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2018–2019, the permanent mission of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations and the International Peace Institute (IPI) organized a high-level panel on April 11, 2017, to look back at the experience of UNOCI and the lessons learned. Below are the main points raised during the discussion:

- In order to resolve its sociopolitical crisis and address the root causes of the conflict, the government quickly sought to own the **political priorities of the exit strategy** established by the Security Council. The creation of the Truth, Reconciliation and Dialogue Commission in 2011 opened the possibility of identifying the origins of the crisis and the victims to be compensated. The government also invested in the reconstruction of national security and defense institutions through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR), as well as by strengthening the rule of law. Further, it promoted human rights by establishing a National Human Rights Commission. Lastly, the adoption of the constitution of the Third Republic in October 2016 further consolidated the foundation of this new era of peace.
- UNOCI's exit process has been subject to **strong ownership by the local population**, a key element in any transition toward sustainable peace. For example, a National Chamber of Kings and Traditional Chiefs was established to strengthen traditional conflict resolution efforts. Social campaigns undertaken by UNOCI that were directed at the local population, such as the rehabilitation of clinics, roads, and schools, added to this dynamic of inclusivity.
- **Close cooperation between the government and the United Nations facilitated the mission's exit.** Peacekeeping missions are not intended to substitute for governments, but rather to provide them support. The Ivorian government's leadership and commitment to undertake the necessary reforms also enabled UNOCI to reach its objectives. UNOCI was unique in that the Security Council resorted to various crisis management instruments ranging from mediation and the deployment of a peacekeeping operation to a targeted sanctions regime. UNOCI's election certification role also helped resolve disputes over the 2010 presidential election results and avoid a new political crisis. Although contested at the outset, UNOCI's role in the elections

ultimately led the international community to unite around a decisive response to the post-election crisis. These successive measures illustrate the importance of the United Nations **regularly reevaluating peacekeeping operations mandates** to ensure they can adapt to the realities on the ground.

- The preparation of an **exit strategy** early in the design of the mission is also seen as a good practice that should be implemented during the deployment of future UN missions.
- A further innovation of UNOCI lies in its cooperation with the neighboring United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), in particular through the exchange of analysis and information, but also through joint patrols along the border between the two countries.
- The **engagement and firmness of the regional and international community**, including the United Nations, African Union, and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), prevented the escalation of tensions and allowed for the stabilization of the situation. However, UNOCI did not always have a good reputation in the eyes of the local population, notably because of accusations of sexual exploitation and abuse by blue helmets and the perception that protection of civilians operations were sometimes too “frail.”
- Côte d’Ivoire has demonstrated that not all crises are intractable, and the country is now presented as a model of crisis recovery on the African continent. With a growth rate nearing 9 percent, the country’s economy is a major driver for the West Africa region. However, beyond its political and economic successes, the road to reconciliation, essential for sustainable peace, is still long and full of challenges. The 2020 presidential elections will be a measure of the country’s capacity and resilience to sustain peace and stability.