



## **A High-Level Dialogue on Peace Operations: Enhancing Partnerships between the UN and International, Regional, and Sub-regional Organizations**

### **Co-Chairs' Summary**

On September 25, 2019, the governments of Finland, Indonesia, Rwanda, and Uruguay, and the International Peace Institute co-organized the seventh annual ministerial dinner on United Nations (UN) peace operations on the sidelines of the 74<sup>th</sup> annual UN General Assembly debate. The dinner was attended by foreign ministers and high-level delegates from capitals representing member states; the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, and the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security were also in attendance.

The high-level dialogue provided a forum for discussion on ways to strengthen partnerships in peace operations between the UN and international, regional, and sub-regional organizations. Conversations during the dinner reflected the growing importance of such partnerships in addressing complex peace and security challenges, as emphasized by the 2015 High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the 2018 Action for Peacekeeping Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations.

Participants examined contemporary dynamics of various partnerships in peace operations, including peacekeeping operations as well as broader conflict management efforts. While the discussions focused on the UN and its partnerships with the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU), participants noted with encouragement the growing space for other multilateral organizations – such as the League of Arab States (LAS), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Organization of American States (OAS), and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), amongst others – to strengthen their contributions.

Discussions examined the ways in which such partnerships reflect comparative advantages between the UN and other organizations, and how effective partnerships require common analysis, clearer divisions of labor, and commitments to joint action. Participants also emphasized the importance of leveraging these complementarities at both the strategic and operational levels. They stressed the importance of promoting greater structure and predictability within these partnerships, while nonetheless maintaining flexibility so that collective approaches can be tailored to different contexts. In this regard, the *UN-AU Joint Framework for the Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security* and the *Joint Priorities of the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management* were cited as two examples of ways in which the partners have provided additional structure to supplement their collective activities.

Participants considered a number of issues inherent to partnerships in peace operations, including aligning strategic planning and political strategies, capacity enhancement, and resource sharing. They observed that member states and multilateral organizations must increase their efforts to meet established commitments for gender parity across all components of peace operations. Discussions

emphasized the importance of coordinated approaches to conflict prevention in both headquarters and field settings, observing how good offices and mediation can strengthen collective political leverage before the outbreak of violence. Participants also highlighted improvements in joint-capacity building and training programs, along with more standardized approaches to information sharing and planning exercises. Moving forward, they stressed the importance of leveraging partnerships to address persistent challenges in how peace operations ensure the effective protection of civilians and delivery of humanitarian support in complex environments. The role of women and gender aspects were also discussed, as well as new challenges posed by climate change.

The partnership between the UN and the AU on peace and security received particular attention during these discussions. Participants highlighted the informal division of labor that has emerged between AU-led peace support operations and UN peacekeeping operations: the AU is often better positioned to serve as a first responder and intervene immediately in crisis situations, while the UN can undertake longer-term engagement on stabilization activities (e.g., demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration, electoral support, and rule of law) in environments backed by political processes. Discussions also reflected on the significant growth in the partnership's political and operational dimensions over recent years. In this light, participants emphasized how more structured policies and more frequent consultations have helped the organizations align their understandings and more quickly work towards collective responses. Participants also recognized the urgency of ensuring predictable and sustainable financing for AU-led peace support operations, and how continued shortfalls in this regard inhibit the effectiveness and capabilities of peace operations that undertake work that the UN is unable to perform.

In conclusion, participants underscored the centrality of partnerships for the future of peace operations. They universally agreed on the importance of leveraging complementarity in different contexts, and that collective action was essential at a time of broader challenges to multilateralism. While participants acknowledged areas for additional progress at both the political and operational levels, they were nonetheless encouraged by the pace at which partnerships had grown and the significant opportunities to build on this momentum moving forward. As one participant aptly summarized, "Whatever works for peace is good. It doesn't matter who leads, partnerships are all about flexibility in reaching a collective goal."