## Thematic issues

## 24. United Nations peacekeeping operations

During the period under review, the Security Council held four meetings, adopted one resolution and issued one presidential statement under the item entitled "United Nations peacekeeping operations. Two of the meetings took the form of briefings, one took the form of an open debate and one was convened for the adoption of a decision. 947 More information on the meetings, including on participants and outcomes, is provided in the table below. 948

In 2022, the Council continued to hold the annual briefings on the Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiatives further to resolution 2378 (2017) and on the work of United Nations police components. The Council also held a high-level open debate on the importance of strategic communications for efficient peacekeeping, during which it issued a presidential statement, and adopted resolution 2668 (2022) addressing mental health and psychosocial support for United Nations peace operations personnel. During these meetings, the Council was briefed twice by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and once by the Secretary-General, the Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the Police Commissioners of MONUSCO and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the Director of Research at the International Peace Institute and a representative of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. 949

On 12 July 2022, at the initiative of Brazil which held the presidency of the Council for the month, <sup>950</sup> the Council held a high-level open debate on the role of strategic communications in efficient peacekeeping. <sup>951</sup> Opening the meeting, the Secretary-General stated that strategic communications were critical across the mandates of peacekeeping operations, including to protect civilians and prevent violence, secure ceasefires and safeguard political settlements, investigate and report on human rights abuses and violations, advance the women and peace and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>947</sup> For more information on the format of meetings, see part II.

<sup>948</sup> See <u>A/77/2</u>, part II, chap. 4.

<sup>949</sup> See S/PV.9090 and S/PV.9090 (Resumption 1), S/PV.9123 and S/PV.9189.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>950</sup> A concept note was circulated by a letter dated 5 July 2022 (S/2022/539).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>951</sup> See <u>S/PV.9090</u> and <u>S/PV.9090</u> (Resumption 1). For more information on high-level meetings, see part II.

security agenda and promote the role of women as peacekeepers, peacemakers and peace leaders, and ensure the safety and security of the personnel and the communities they served. The Secretary-General noted that disinformation was not just misleading, but dangerous and potentially deadly, fuelling open violence against United Nations personnel and their partners. The best way and most cost-effective instrument for countering that threat, according to the Secretary-General, were credible, accurate and human-centred strategic communications which, not only defused harmful lies, but also provided for tailored two-way communication that built trust and political and public support. Such communication could strengthen the understanding among local populations of United Nations missions and mandates, and in return strengthen the understanding of peacekeepers of the concerns, grievances, expectations and hopes of those populations.

The Secretary-General observed that, in order to be effective, strategic communications had to be grounded in evidence, based on verified data, open to dialogue, rooted in storytelling and delivered by credible messengers. As a means of improving strategic communications in peacekeeping, he noted that the United Nations was working on adopting a whole-of-mission communication approach, holding mission leaders accountable to own and lead these efforts, providing guidance and training to missions, working with technology and media companies and Member States, monitoring and evaluating the efficacy of information campaigns, and deploying communications to strengthen accountability and to end misconduct by personnel and partners, including combating sexual exploitation and abuse. The Secretary-General concluded by emphasizing that the United Nations had to take a deliberate stand as a trusted information actor in conflict environments by providing engaging and factual content, facilitating inclusive dialogue, demanding the removal of harmful speech, calling leaders to account and promoting peace and unity.

Following the Secretary-General, the Force Commander of MONUSCO shared his perspective on the utility of strategic communications in countering the overall poor perception among the population in the Democratic Republic of the Congo regarding the relevance of the Mission in improving the security situation. In this regard, the Force Commander noted that one

<sup>952</sup> See S/PV.9090.

part of the Mission's strategy was to communicate in person with stakeholders, from the village chief to the media and up to the national and regional armed forces leadership, all of whom played a critical role in countering the criticism, to explain the aim and the limits of the mandate and to acknowledge the validity of the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy. In terms of challenges, he highlighted the need for more female translators, better pre-deployment training for units and qualified public information and information operation staff officers, as well as a specialized military psychological operational unit. Furthermore, he stressed the need for synergy between the military campaign plan and the strategic communications plan and that strategic communication was a command duty and a Mission leadership endeavour.

In her remarks, the Director of Research of the International Peace Institute discussed the role of strategic communications in enhancing the protection of civilians, how to ensure that communication was, not only gender sensitive, but also gender transformative, and the importance of active listening to place the experiences of communities in peacekeeping at the forefront. With respect to the protection of civilians, she stated that strategic communications were not limited to managing expectations by communicating the limitations of the mission's protection work, but also included messaging on how populations could better access the protection interventions that were available. Strategic communications could also be used to counter hate speech and misinformation or disinformation that was used to incite violence, inflame identity-based cleavages or mobilize individuals into armed groups. The Director of Research explained that gender-transformative communications used narratives and storytelling that promoted gender equality and combatted harmful stereotypes and behaviours by, for example, highlighting stories and images that expanded traditional understandings of gender roles, addressing harmful gender practices and using information to increase women's access to power and resources. Finally, she emphasized that strategic communications had to move beyond a unidirectional flow of relaying information to a dynamic dialogue between missions and communities. In this regard, she suggested the use of, in addition to data and analytics, storytelling as a means of persuading people and inspiring them to act for the sake of peace.

In their discussion, members and participating non-members of the Council highlighted the importance of strategic communications for the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations in increasingly complex and hostile operating environments characterized by a significant increase in the dissemination of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech through digital technologies. They pointed out the link between effective strategic communications and the implementation of protection of civilians mandates and ensuring the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel. In terms of practical steps, speakers recommended implementing communications strategies across all missions and all of their respective components, ensuring the ownership of such strategies by mission leadership, improving communication capabilities through the deployment of specialized personnel, training and the use of technology, and ensuring a "two-way" communication between peacekeepers, communities, host governments and other stakeholders on the ground. Many speakers also emphasized the utility of strategic communications in advancing the women and peace and security agenda.

In the presidential statement issued during the meeting, the Council underscored the importance of strategic communications to the implementation of the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and the safety and security of peacekeepers. The Council recognized that strategic communications and the provision of accurate content helped strengthen the understanding of peacekeeping mandates, managed expectations and garnered trust and support among relevant stakeholders, notably host governments and local communities, and contributed to countering disinformation and misinformation. Moreover, the Council stressed the need to improve the culture of strategic communications across all mission components and called on operations in the implementation of protection of civilians mandates to enhance community engagement and awareness about the protection needs and capacities of local communities. Finally, the Council requested the Secretary-General to provide, no later than 15 April 2023, a strategic review of strategic communications across all peacekeeping operations and to ensure that his regular reports on individual operations included, as applicable, information on the actions and impact of such communications for mandated activities.

On 6 September 2022, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations briefed the Council further to resolution 2378 (2017) on the progress and challenges concerning the

<sup>953</sup> S/PRST/2022/5, fifth paragraph.

<sup>954</sup> Ibid.

<sup>955</sup> Ibid., sixth and seventh paragraphs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>956</sup> Ibid., sixteenth and seventeenth paragraphs.

Implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiatives. 957
Noting the increasingly complex geopolitical environment, the Under-Secretary-General stressed the need to do everything to preserve the space needed for United Nations peacekeeping operations which continued to visibly manifest a multilateral system in action on the ground. He then provided an overview of the implementation of some of the priorities of the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative. Specifically, in line with the second on strategic and operational integration, the Under-Secretary-General reported that 11 out of 12 missions developed either integrated mission plans or results frameworks for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS), most of which took into account gender considerations and the women and peace and security agenda. Noting that missions could only fulfil their mandates if they had the appropriate capacities at the right time, he called for the support of Council members to fill the critical capacity gaps, especially utility and armed helicopters. With regard to the fourth priority on safety and security, the Under-Secretary-General expressed regret over the doubling of peacekeeper deaths in 2021 compared to 2020 and noted that the trend continued in 2022, particularly with the use of explosive ordnance and improved explosive devices.

On the sixth priority, the Under-Secretary-General stated that missions were working to fully integrate strategic communications into planning and decision-making and were proactively communicating on the tangible impact of peacekeeping in a compelling, human-centred way, particularly through the use of social media and United Nations-operated radio networks. Regarding the participation of women in peacekeeping, he noted that, except for military contingents, most targets set in the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy had been met and surpassed. The Under-Secretary-General stated that work on creating more gender-responsive working and living environments continued and that gender analysis was being used to inform decision-making. Nevertheless, he emphasized constraints related to inadequate resources and personnel, including a shortage of gender advisers. While stating that notable progress had been made in addressing the priorities outlined in the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, the Under-Secretary-General called for stronger and more united support from the Council for advancing the political efforts of peacekeeping operations and support for missions when they

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>957</sup> See <u>S/PV.9123</u>.

faced undue restrictions and obstacles from the parties to the conflict, including violations of status-of-forces agreements.

In their exchanges following the briefing, Council members widely recognized the improvements made in the performance of peacekeeping operations since the launch of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, but also outlined a number of challenges. Most Council members stressed that effective mandate implementation required tailored, realistic and properlyresourced mandates that formed part of an overall strategy to achieve a political solution to the conflict. Several Council members expressed concern with the increasingly broad nature of mandates and stressed that their focus should remain on supporting political processes. 958 Several speakers further raised the need to engage with and improve relations with host governments. 959 Some Council members urged host governments to avoid imposing restrictions on missions and abide by their obligations under the status-of-forces agreements. 960 A number of Council members pointed to the increasing tensions between some missions and local communities and called for the greater use of strategic communications to rebuild and maintain trust. 961 In terms of other priorities for improving peacekeeping performance, speakers highlighted the importance of partnerships with regional organizations and regional missions on the ground, additional resources and capacities to ensure the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel, the use of data and technology, the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and creating conditions conducive to the participation of women in missions.

On 14 November 2022, the Council held the annual briefing with select police commissions of United Nations peacekeeping operations. <sup>962</sup> In his introductory remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations provided an overview and examples of the work of the Secretariat and United Nations police personnel in support of political transitions, increasing linkages between long-term strategic planning and operational decision-making, aligning pre-deployment training with in-mission training, performance assessment, the development of police-related impact indicators within the CPAS framework, strategic

<sup>958</sup> Ibid., Ghana, China and Russian Federation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>959</sup> Ibid., China, Gabon, Russian Federation, Kenya, India and France.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>960</sup> Ibid., Ghana, United Kingdom, United States and France.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>961</sup> Ibid., Norway, United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Albania and Brazil.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>962</sup> See S/PV.9189.

communication and improving cooperation with host countries during transitions. <sup>963</sup> Moreover, the Under-Secretary-General stated that gender-responsive policing efforts ensured that the different security needs of women, men, girls and boys were considered, including through a robust network of gender advisers and police gender focal points. He added that United Nations police had already achieved its gender parity targets for 2025, with women comprising almost one in five police officers and five out of nine police components being headed by women.

In their remarks, the Police Commissioners of UNMISS and MONUSCO described the work of their police components on the protection of civilians and improving performance. The Police Commissioner of UMMISS noted that, as part of its mandate, the police component participated in whole-of-mission efforts to foster protection through dialogue and engagement, participated in integrated civilian-military-police patrols and deployment to temporary operating bases near conflict hotspots, and contributed to the creation of a protective environment through its support to rule of law institutions. As a means of improving performance, he highlighted the need to create a more enabling environment for the participation of women, additional capacity for joint and integrated planning, proactive and resourceful police officers with good education and pre-deployment training, and additional formed police units. The Police Commissioner of MONUSCO noted the efforts to improve the performance of the Mission's police component, particularly through communication with police-contributing countries on the quality of formed police units and necessary specialized teams, training and the use of monitoring and measurement systems such as CPAS, and the implementation of an annual workplan as a monitoring and assessment mechanism. He also referred to the deployment of police teams to measure and help improve the performance of the Congolese National Police in combating urban and organized crime.

Following the Police Commissioners, Ms. Emma Birikorang, a representative of the Kofi Anna International Peacekeeping Training Centre, spoke about the influence of decisions, norms, ideas and policies implemented at the multilateral level of United Nations peacekeeping on the decision-making of peacekeeping stakeholders at the national level. Specifically, she expressed the view that peacekeeping had a democratizing effect on the security sector in host communities

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>963</sup> Ibid.

and troop-contributing countries and strengthened the legitimacy and effectiveness of domestic security relations. She further noted that there were mutually reinforcing benefits that police in peacekeeping brought to the women and peace and security agenda in the peacekeeping theatre and at the domestic level. While noting the critical contribution of police components to the Action for Peacekeeping priorities, she highlighted the need for improvements in innovation, adaptability, operational readiness, strategic and operational integration and accountability for peacekeepers in mission in which fragile States were often beneficiaries. However, Ms. Birikorang added that, even beyond fragile host countries, police-contributing countries had maximized their participation in peacekeeping in order to benefit their own societies and strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of domestic security relations.

In their statements following the briefers, Council members recognized the important the work of police components, particularly in conflict prevention and early warning, the protection of civilians, peacekeeping transitions, capacity-building, the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and strategic communications. Council members underscored that ensuring effective and accountable police components was a key requirement under the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative. 964 While noting some improvements, Council members stressed the need to ensure that police officers were provided with specialized and tailored training relevant to their operational environment and to have the right mindset and necessary equipment, including technology, to successfully perform their duties. Council members further acknowledged the important role of women police officers, particularly in community engagement, and called for additional progress on increasing their participation in police components and improving their working conditions. As a key element to increasing the effectiveness of police, speakers called for stronger partnerships between police components and local communities, host countries, United Nations country teams, civil society, regional organizations, among other stakeholders. Furthermore, some members underscored the need for greater coordination between the Council, Secretariat, police-contributing countries and host States, particularly with respect to planning, mandate design and exit strategies. 965

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>964</sup> Ibid., Kenya, Ireland, United States, Mexico, United Kingdom and Ghana.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>965</sup> Ibid., China, India and Russian Federation.

On 21 December 2022, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2668 (2022) by which it recognized the need to raise awareness of the importance of mental health and psychosocial support to United Nations peace operations personnel. 966 The Council encouraged troop- and police-contributing countries, including Member States and the Secretariat, to provide mental health services to support personnel during pre-deployment training, to continue fostering a culture of well-being and care during deployment, and to continue to provide peace operations personnel at the post-deployment stage with adequate mental health and psychosocial support services. 967 Furthermore, the Council requested the Secretary-General to include information on the implementation of aspects of the 2018 United Nations Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy, as appropriate, in his comprehensive reports to the Council under resolution 2378 (2017). 968

Following the vote, while expressing support for the resolution, the representatives of India and the Russian Federation questioned whether the Council was the appropriate forum to address the issue of mental health and psychosocial support for peacekeeping personnel. Peacekeeping operations of the Russian Federation stated that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the General Assembly was the specialized platform which brought together all interested parties, including troop contributors and Secretariat experts, for a comprehensive review of all aspects of peacekeeping operations and added that the Council lacked the necessary competence, data and analysis to consider peacekeeping personnel and mental health issues. Purthermore, the representative of the Russian Federation was of the view that mixing the notions of "peacekeeping operations" and "special political missions" under the single term "peace operations" introduced uncertainty regarding the responsibility for the appropriate selection of personnel, their mental health support, funding and the overall scope of the efforts needed, given that the latter missions fell under the responsibility of the Secretariat. Similarly, the representative of India stressed that any serious deliberation of the issue should be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>966</sup> Resolution <u>2668 (2022)</u>, para. 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>967</sup> Ibid., paras. 2-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>968</sup> Ibid., para. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>969</sup> See S/PV.9229.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>970</sup> Ibid. For further information on the relations between the Security Council and the General Assembly, including its subsidiary organs, see part IV.

premised on data and studies conducted in consultation with troop- and police-contributing countries and that the Special Committee was giving due consideration to the mental health of peacekeeping personnel as a result of which there had been consistent improvement in recent years in the operating environment, living conditions, casualty evacuation and medical facilities, among other areas. As penholder of the resolution, the representative of Mexico expressed the position that the Council should give due importance not only to the physical well-being of uniformed and civilian personnel, but also to their mental health before, during and after their deployment.

Meetings: United Nations peacekeeping operations

Meeting record and date	Sub-item	Other documents	Rule 37 invitations	Rule 39 and other invitations	Speakers	Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)
S/PV.8837 18 August 2021	Protecting the protectors	Draft resolution submitted by 80 Member States (S/2021/730) <sup>a</sup>	65 Member States <sup>b</sup>			Resolution <u>2589</u> (2021) 15-0-0
S/PV.8838 18 August 2021	Protecting the protectors: technology and peacekeeping  Letter dated 26 July 2021 from the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/681)	Letter dated 20 August 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2021/732)			Secretary- General, all Council members <sup>c</sup>	S/PRST/2021/17
S/PV.8851 8 September 2021	United Nations transitions  Letter dated 24 August 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/756)	Letter dated 10 September 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary- General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2021/783)		Former President of Liberia, President of the Community Development Association of the Sudan	Secretary- General, all Council members, <sup>d</sup> all invitees	

Meeting record and date	Sub-item	Other documents	Rule 37 invitations	Rule 39 and other invitations	Speakers	Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)
<u>S/PV.8852</u> 9 September 2021	United Nations transitions  Letter dated 24 August 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/756)	Draft resolution submitted by 97 Member States (S/2021/771) <sup>e</sup>	82 Member States <sup>f</sup>			Resolution <u>2594(2021)</u> 15-0-0
S/PV.8901 10 November 2021	Police Commissioners			Under Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Police Commissioner of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, Police Commissioner of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali	Council members, <sup>g</sup> all invitees <sup>h</sup>	

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Guatemala, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Lithuania, Malta, Morocco, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand and Uruguay.
 <sup>b</sup> Brazil was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs. Ghana was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. India was represented by its Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs. The United Arab Emirates was represented by its Permanent Representative and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for Political Affairs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>c</sup> Indonesia spoke on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of United Nations Peacekeepers. Denmark spoke on behalf of the Nordic Countries.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>d</sup> The Police Commissioners of UNMISS and MONUSCO participated in the meeting by videoconference.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>e</sup> Albania, Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye and United Arab Emirates.

f Algeria, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and Türkiye.