



“Towards More Inclusive Mandate-Making, More Effective Mandate Implementation”
Summary of 4 December 2009 Thematic Series Panel Discussions

The third roundtable discussion of the series, “Building More Effective UN Peace Operations,” hosted by the Canadian Permanent Mission to the United Nations and the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) was held on 4 December 2009. The discussion investigated the process of mandate-making for contemporary peacekeeping operations and the operational impact of those political negotiations. Following introductory remarks from Canada’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador John McNee and CIC Senior Fellow, Teresa Whitfield, panelists Lakhdar Brahimi (formerly the Foreign Minister of Algeria and former UN SRSG and international mediator in multiple conflict theaters) and Lieutenant General Chikadibia Isaac Obiakor (UN Military Advisor), discussed the challenges to peacekeeping operations that emanate from the mandate making process. The meeting’s proceedings were governed by Chatham House Rule.

As a point of departure, the panel agreed that the coalition of Member States needed to support multidimensional peacekeeping operations – those who sit on the Security Council, those who contribute troops/police, and those who pay the bulk of the assessed budget – has become increasingly fractured. It is this division of labor, however, that allowed for the dramatic growth of UN peacekeeping in terms of deployment levels and complexity over the course of the last decade. Yet the current dysfunction among these stakeholders in making and renewing peacekeeping mandates has had implications for the performance of UN operations. Further, a perceived lack of adequate consultation has amplified deeper questions about the purposes of UN peacekeeping and the political consensus needed to support it, and has spurred recent activity both within and outside of the Security Council aimed at restoring and strengthening the relationship among the stakeholders in UN peacekeeping operations.

Beyond stressing the central need of creating a more inclusive mandate-making process, the panelists identified a number of substantive improvements that could ensure that Security Council mandates reflect the political and operational realities of a given peacekeeping context. Chief among these recommendations was the need for the mandate-making process to reflect constantly evolving realities in the operational theater. Often the originating mandate conferred to an operation is ill suited to address the situation on the ground once the peacekeeping operation is deployed. It was suggested that originating mandates should remain provisional during the first year of an operation and be subject to frequent review and alterations if deemed necessary.

A frank open discussion period with Member States followed the panel’s presentations. Member State representatives reinforced the centrality of improving the way that peace operations are mandated and reinvigorating the partnership needed for implementation, especially in the face of anticipated growing demand for UN peacekeeping. This sentiment emerged from a shared recognition that the UN is the best placed actor for rebuilding states ravaged by war, but to serve this role its operating methods need to be updated and made more efficient to ensure that it can continue to deliver. Directly related to the creation of peacekeeping mandates is the availability and deployment of resources necessary to implement these tasks. With this in mind, the crucial role of the Department of Field Support in the performance of UN peacekeeping operations will be the focus of the next installment of the thematic series on 12 February 2010, where panelists, Under Secretary-General for Field Support, Susan Malcorra and Major General Patrick Cammert (ret.) will discuss the challenges facing the UN’s critical support structures and the implications of DFS’s forthcoming Global Support Strategy.