

INTRODUCTION

In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of United Nations Peacekeeping, the United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) facilitated a series of public dialogues and closed experts' roundtables exploring the multiple facets of United Nations Peacekeeping in the past, present and future, focusing primarily on cutting-edge issues of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The public discussions took place in ten communities across Canada during the fall 2006 and winter 2007.

Drawing on Canadian and international expertise from a broad network of government actors, academics and researchers, field practitioners, civil society organizations, leading think tanks, and the media, the series of forward-looking dialogues addressed the development of a multifunctional response strategy to Canadian and international involvement in post-conflict societies, with specific attention given to key priority areas like Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan. The report is intended to provide focused recommendations to the United Nations, international and local non-governmental organizations, and the various government departments' policy development on peacekeeping, as well as propose tools and strategies for relevant stakeholders.

The report is based on the combination of a series of briefing papers elaborated in advance of each dialogue and the various experiences, views and recommendations expressed by the participants during the roundtables and public forums. In seeking to provide an accurate reflection of the views expressed during the public dialogues, a draft of the report and its recommendations was made available to all participants, and revised in light of their comments. The opinions expressed and recommendations made in this report are derived from UNA-Canada's consultation process and are not necessarily the views of the organization. In addition, the recommendations do not represent agreement by consensus among the participants, and may not include all views outside of this limited consultation process. The views expressed by the participants also reflect their personal opinions and should not be attributed to their institutions. It should be noted that all participants contributed actively and constructively to the discussions. However, not all individual interventions could be incorporated in the final report.

The intention of the series of roundtables and public dialogues was to explore the complexity of UN peacekeeping, while simultaneously seeking to elaborate concrete recommendations for strengthening policy and practice.

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN PEACE AND SECURITY

Most people agree that UN peacekeeping has evolved enormously since the 1990s. However, recent news articles and media analyses have expressed a variety of opinions surrounding the value of UN peacekeeping as a mechanism of peace and security and its possible role in the future. Some view UN peacekeeping as the way of the future. Some have gone as far as saying that “peacekeeping is dead.” Others, still, are unsure, questioning its effectiveness but recognizing its strengths. Clearly, peacekeeping is not a static concept. Peacekeeping changes and evolves over time, building on past experiences and lessons learned. The United Nations have drawn numerous lessons from past operations and many in the international community are working relentlessly to strengthen UN peacekeeping capacity and efficiency.

The past few years have been extremely challenging for the United Nations, and such challenges are likely to continue in the future. The surge in the number, size and complexity of UN peacekeeping missions are examples of the challenges faced by the United Nations. Recent figures put the number of military and civilian personnel deployed as part of UN peacekeeping missions at over 93,000. This number is projected to reach 140,000 once planned deployments in Lebanon, Timor-Leste and Darfur are fully implemented.

The importance of this surge is two-fold: while it represents a stark example of the crucial and evolving role of UN peacekeeping in conflict management, it also demonstrates the vulnerability of the United Nations system and its limitations in the face of adversity. Not surprisingly, the surge is causing a dramatic strain on the UN’s capacity to strengthen ongoing operations and to undertake new missions. More operations also translate into financial implications for the UN system, putting more pressure on Member states. In fact, the annual budget of UN peacekeeping has tripled in the last ten years. It currently lies in the range of \$6 billion.

Of all the myths that make up Canadians’ sense of who we are as a nation, perhaps one of the most pervasive is that Canada is a peacekeeping country. Yet, this is an exaggeration, and the current commitment shows a sharp decline in Canadian participation in UN peacekeeping. Peacekeeping has been shown to be a proud Canadian tradition but its current contribution is meager. Much to the surprise of most Canadians, as of March 2007, Canada ranked 59th out of 114 countries in terms of military and police contributions to UN operations. While a growing number of states are recognizing what Canada has long acknowledged, that peacekeeping is beneficial to the international community, Canada’s financial contribution to the UN peacekeeping budget is minimal. Canada contributed 3% of the 2006 assessed contributions to UN Peacekeeping Budget.

Canada has an exemplary record in UN peacekeeping, yet the extent of its contribution, both in terms of peacekeeping personnel and percentage of cost of peacekeeping missions, are on a clear decline. As an increasing number of states are becoming more involved in UN peacekeeping, and as the cost of peacekeeping is increasing, Canada is contributing less. The extent to which Canada’s future commitment to UN Peacekeeping will be sustained or increased remains to be seen.

In light of the above, the present report is opportune. The objective in further exploring the challenges to and opportunities for strengthening UN peacekeeping, is to come up with a set of recommendations for bolstering and reinforcing UN peacekeeping, and for fostering greater engagement on the part of Western countries, with particular attention given to Canada.

For the purpose of this report, the term ‘peacekeeping’ refers to operations authorized by the United Nations (under Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the UN Charter) to monitor cease-fires and/or support the implementation of peace agreements, and to initiate peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction activities.

OVERVIEW OF REPORT

Each public dialogue focused on a specific topic and included both Canadian and international expertise.

Chapter 1 explores the changing nature of training needs for UN peacekeepers before and after the Cold War, and examines specific training requirements for today’s peacekeepers. The chapter looks at the development of a systematic approach to training in Canada, identifies a number of Canadian and international training initiatives, reflects on lessons learned, and provides some guidance for a more comprehensive approach to peacekeeping training.

Chapter 2 looks at the role of international media in UN peacekeeping. In particular, the chapter explores tools and processes for UN peacekeeping missions in the field to get their message out to the international community and addresses several obstacles to greater dissemination of information both in the field and internationally. The chapter also looks at the role of media in Canada, and pays a special attention to the difficulty of presenting news stories as emerging, pressing and relevant to target audiences at home.

Chapter 3 examines the debate surrounding international and Canadian strategies for rapid response to crises. The chapter explores UN rapid response capabilities, as well as Canada’s role in preventing and assisting in crises, and its contribution to global security. Specifically, the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the system’s current strengths and weaknesses, and gives specific insights as to the barriers preventing the realization of concrete outcomes.

Chapter 4 discusses issues related to local capacity building and sustainable strategies in UN peacekeeping. The chapter examines the role of the international community and of Canada in promoting capacity building. The chapter also looks at ways to ensure the success of local capacity building in UN peacekeeping missions in the future.

Chapter 5 discusses the situation of security and rule of law in Haiti, within the context of the present United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). In particular, the chapter explores strengths and weaknesses of the mission through an assessment of local conditions. The chapter also discusses Canada’s contribution in Haiti and looks at possible ways forward.

Chapter 6 explores issues related to human security in UN peacekeeping. The chapter explores the concept of human security, both in theoretical and practical terms, and examines the role of Canada and the international community in promoting the concept. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the application of human security to UN peacekeeping and looks at ways of improving human security in field operations.

Chapter 7 discusses a gendered perspective on Canada's commitment to UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Among the themes explored are the various roles of women in post-conflict societies and the importance of bringing a gendered approach to the institution of peacekeeping. The chapter also looks at ways of better institutionalizing the inclusion of women in peace operations.

Chapter 8 looks at issues related to children and armed conflict and UN peacekeeping, examining in particular the implications of The Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles). The chapter provides insights from the experiences of young adults who lived through war as children, and looks at ways the public can become engaged in this issue. The chapter also looks at ways of improving programmes to address children and armed conflict in field operations.

Chapter 9 explores Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the role of Canadian civil society. The chapter provides an overview of lessons from other existing networks on R2P and considers Canadian civil society efforts to solidify the normative understanding of R2P. Chapter 9 is a special chapter linking an earlier conference on the Responsibility to Protect and is largely drawn from a paper written by Maria Banda, entitled "The Responsibility to Protect: Moving the Agenda Forward."

Chapter 10 discusses the changing nature of UN peace operations. In particular, the chapter examines new challenges to UN peacekeeping in the 21st century and identifies opportunities for strengthening UN peace operations in the future, and for encouraging greater engagement on the part of Western nations, including Canada.

The concluding chapter pulls together common themes and findings that emerged from this comprehensive consultation process. In addition, recommendations arising from the roundtables and public dialogues are summarized. The international community has drawn lessons from the past operations and is working to strengthen the United Nations peacekeeping capacity in a number of areas. The objective of this publication is to bring forward a myriad of views and perspectives on emerging issues in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, while clearly articulating lessons learned and suggested recommendations. The ultimate goal is to positively influence Canada's engagement on the issue, as well as impact policy development on the national and international levels.