

UN PEACEKEEPING

United Nations Peacekeeping helps countries torn by conflict create conditions for lasting peace.

Peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most [effective tools](#) available to the UN to assist host countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace.

Peacekeeping has unique strengths, including legitimacy, burden sharing, and an ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to advance multidimensional mandates.

UN peacekeepers provide security and the political and peacebuilding support to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace.

UN Peacekeeping is guided by [three basic principles](#):

- Consent of the parties;
- Impartiality;
- Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

Peacekeeping is flexible and over the past two decades has been deployed in many configurations. There are currently [13 UN peacekeeping operations](#) deployed on three continents.

Today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations are called upon not only to maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, [protect civilians](#), assist in the [disarmament, demobilization and reintegration](#) of former combatants; support the organization of elections, protect and [promote human rights](#) and assist in restoring the [rule of law](#).

Success is never guaranteed, because UN Peacekeeping almost by definition goes to the most physically and politically difficult environments. However, we have built up a demonstrable [record of success](#) over our 60 years of existence, including winning the [Nobel Peace Prize](#).

Peacekeeping has always been highly dynamic and has [evolved in the face of new challenges](#). Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [established](#) a 17-member High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations to make a comprehensive assessment of the state of UN peace operations today, and the emerging needs of the future.

Global partnership

UN peacekeeping is a unique global partnership. It brings together the [General Assembly](#), the [Security Council](#), the Secretariat, [troop and police contributors](#) and the host governments in a combined effort to maintain international peace and security. Its strength lies in the legitimacy of the UN Charter and in the wide range of contributing countries that participate and provide precious resources.

There are three basic principles that continue to set UN peacekeeping operations apart as a tool for maintaining international peace and security.

These three principles are inter-related and mutually reinforcing:

1. Consent of the parties
2. Impartiality
3. Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate

1. Consent of the parties

UN peacekeeping operations are deployed with the consent of the main parties to the conflict. This requires a commitment by the parties to a political process. Their acceptance of a peacekeeping operation provides the UN with the necessary freedom of action, both political and physical, to carry out its mandated tasks.

In the absence of such consent, a peacekeeping operation risks becoming a party to the conflict; and being drawn towards enforcement action, and away from its fundamental role of keeping the peace.

The fact that the main parties have given their consent to the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation does not necessarily imply or guarantee that there will also be consent at the local level, particularly if the main parties are internally divided or have weak command and control systems. Universality of consent becomes even less probable in volatile settings, characterized by the presence of armed groups not under the control of any of the parties, or by the presence of other spoilers.

2. Impartiality

Impartiality is crucial to maintaining the consent and cooperation of the main parties, but should not be confused with neutrality or inactivity. United Nations peacekeepers should be impartial in their dealings with the parties to the conflict, but not neutral in the execution of their mandate.

Just as a good referee is impartial, but will penalize infractions, so a peacekeeping operation should not condone actions by the parties that violate the undertakings of the peace process or the international norms and principles that a United Nations peacekeeping operation upholds.

Notwithstanding the need to establish and maintain good relations with the parties, a peacekeeping operation must scrupulously avoid activities that might compromise its image of impartiality. A mission should not shy away from a rigorous application of the principle of impartiality for fear of misinterpretation or retaliation.

Failure to do so may undermine the peacekeeping operation's credibility and legitimacy, and may lead to a withdrawal of consent for its presence by one or more of the parties.

3. Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate

UN peacekeeping operations are not an enforcement tool. However, they may use force at the tactical level, with the authorization of the Security Council, if acting in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

In certain volatile situations, the Security Council has given UN peacekeeping operations "robust" mandates authorizing them to "use all necessary means" to deter forceful attempts to disrupt the political process, protect civilians under imminent threat of physical attack, and/or assist the national authorities in maintaining law and order.

Although on the ground they may sometimes appear similar, robust peacekeeping should not be confused with peace enforcement, as envisaged under [Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter](#).

- Robust peacekeeping involves the use of force at the tactical level with the authorization of the Security Council and consent of the host nation and/or the main parties to the conflict.
- By contrast, peace enforcement does not require the consent of the main parties and may involve the use of military force at the strategic or international level, which is normally prohibited for Member States under Article 2(4) of the Charter, unless authorized by the Security Council.

A UN peacekeeping operation should only use force as a measure of last resort. It should always be calibrated in a precise, proportional and appropriate manner, within the principle of the minimum force necessary to achieve the desired effect, while sustaining consent for the mission and its mandate. The use of force by a UN peacekeeping operation always has political implications and can often give rise to unforeseen circumstances.

Judgments concerning its use need to be made at the appropriate level within a mission, based on a combination of factors including mission capability; public perceptions; humanitarian impact; force protection; safety and security of personnel; and, most importantly, the effect that such action will have on national and local consent for the mission.

The Security Council determines the deployment of a new UN peace operation.

Initial consultation

As a conflict develops, worsens, or approaches resolution, the UN is frequently involved in a number of consultations to determine the best response by the international community. These consultations would likely involve:

- All relevant United Nations actors
- The potential host government and the parties on the ground
- Member States, including States that might contribute troops and police to a peace operation
- Regional and other intergovernmental organizations
- Other relevant key external partners

During this initial phase the UN Secretary-General may request a strategic assessment to identify all possible options for UN engagement.

Technical field assessment

As soon as security conditions permit, the Secretariat usually deploys a technical assessment mission to the country or territory where the deployment of a UN peace operation is envisaged. The assessment mission analyzes and assesses the overall security, political, military, humanitarian and human rights situation on the ground, and its implications for a possible operation. Based on the findings and recommendations of the assessment mission, the UN Secretary-General will issue a report to the [Security Council](#). This report will present options for the establishment of a peace operation as appropriate including its size and resources. The report will also include [financial implications and statement of preliminary estimated costs](#).

Security Council resolution

If the Security Council determines that deploying a UN peace operation is the most appropriate step to take, it will formally authorize this by adopting a resolution. The resolution sets out the operation's mandate and size, and details the tasks it will be responsible for performing. The budget and resources are then subject to [General Assembly](#) approval.

Appointment of senior officials

The Secretary-General normally appoints a Head of Mission (usually a Special Representative) to direct the peacekeeping operation. The Head of Mission reports to the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations at the UN Headquarters.

The Secretary-General also appoints a peace operation's Force Commander and Police Commissioner, and senior civilian staff. The [Department of Peace Operations \(DPO\)](#) and the [Department of Operational Support \(DOS\)](#) are then responsible for staffing the civilian components of a peace operation.

Planning

In the meantime, the Head of Mission, DPO and DOS lead the planning for the political, military, operational and support (i.e., logistics and administration) aspects of the peace operation. The planning phase usually involves the establishment of a Headquarters-based joint working group or integrated mission task force, with participation of all relevant UN departments, funds and programmes.

Deployment

Deployment of an operation proceeds then as quickly as possible, taking into account the security and political conditions on the ground. It often starts with an advance team to establish mission headquarters and leads to a gradual build-up to encompass all components and regions, as required by the mandate.

Who provides peacekeepers?

The UN has no standing army or police force of its own, and [Member States](#) are asked to [contribute military and police personnel](#) required for each operation. Peacekeepers wear their countries' uniform and are identified as UN peacekeepers only by a UN blue helmet or beret and a badge. Civilian staff of peace operations are international civil servants, [recruited and deployed](#) by the UN Secretariat.

Reporting to the Security Council

The Secretary-General will then provide regular reports to the Security Council on the implementation of the mission mandate. The Security Council reviews these reports and briefings, and renews and adjusts the mission mandate, as required, until the mission is completed or closed.

More than one million men and women have served under the UN flag since 1948. UN Peacekeepers can be military, police and civilians. Tragically, more than 3,500 have lost their lives in the cause of peace.

UN peacekeepers come from all walks of life, with diverse cultural backgrounds and from an ever-growing number of Member States. When they serve under the United Nations they are united by a commitment to maintain or restore world peace and security. They share a common purpose to protect the most vulnerable and provide support to countries in transition from conflict to peace.

Peacekeepers are civilian, military and police personnel all working together. The roles and responsibilities of peacekeepers are evolving as peacekeeping mandates become more complex and multidimensional. Peacekeeping operations have developed from simply monitoring ceasefires to protecting civilians, disarming ex-combatants, protecting human rights, promoting the rule of law, supporting free and fair elections, minimizing the risk of land-mines and much more.

Fallen heroes

Tragically over 3,500 peacekeepers have lost their lives in the cause of peace. In 2016 alone 117 peacekeepers paid the ultimate price. They included military, police, international civil servants, UN Volunteers and national staff from 43 countries. Their sacrifice on behalf of the international community are one of the most concrete expressions of the UN Charter's determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Women in Peacekeeping

While women have always had a role in peacekeeping, the Secretary-General has committed to ensuring that women play a far more active role in peace operations. Secretary-General António Guterres is committed to building the number of women peacekeepers. As stated in his 2017 Gender Parity Strategy, "Peacekeeping is the most visible face of the United Nations...The fact that only 3% of UN peacekeepers and 10% of police are

women hampers our protection reach and operational effectiveness and sends the wrong message about who the UN serves and represents”.

A top priority for UN Peacekeeping is to increase the number of female military personnel in peacekeeping operations, including increasing women staff officers and military observers to 15 per cent by the end of 2018; currently 11 per cent of staff officers and military observers in peacekeeping operations are female. At UN Headquarters, 18 per cent of military staff are women, exceeding the target of 15 per cent for 2018.

Women Peacekeepers

Women peacekeepers service in all peacekeeping capacities, civilian, military and police. It is an operational imperative that we recruit and retain women peacekeepers. In addition, women peacekeepers act as role models in the local environment, inspiring women and girls in often male-dominated societies to push for their own rights and for participation in peace processes.

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

Each year on the 29 May we celebrate the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. The day was established to honour the memory of the UN peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the cause of peace; and to pay tribute to all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in UN peacekeeping operations for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage.

The UN General Assembly designated Peacekeepers Day in 2002 [[A/RES/57/129](#)]. In recent years, we have encouraged the celebration of the Day under a common theme:

- 2018: 70 Years of Service and Sacrifice
UN peacekeeping is a unique and dynamic instrument to help countries torn by conflict transition to lasting peace.
- 2017: Investing in Peace
Peacekeeping is an investment in global peace, security, and prosperity.
- 2016: Honouring our Heroes
More than one million women and men have served under the ‘blue flag’ with pride, distinction and courage.

- 2015: Together for peace
Reflecting on the past, present and future of UN Peacekeeping, reaffirming our commitment to working 'Together for Peace'.
- 2014: A force for the future
Focusing on how UN Peacekeeping is evolving to meet new challenges.
- 2013: Adapting to new challenges
Exploring the changing needs of international peace and security.
- 2012: Peacekeeping is a Global Partnership
Highlighting the variety of partnerships we have at every stage of our work.
- 2011: Law. Order. Peace
Focusing on our efforts to strengthen rule of law.
- 2010: Ayiti Kanpe (Haiti Standing)
Remembering the earthquake in Haiti that resulted in the death of 102 UN personnel, including 97 peacekeepers.
- 2009: Women in peacekeeping
The important role of women peacekeepers.
- 2008: 60th anniversary of UN Peacekeeping.

Standards of conduct and training

The UN expects that all peacekeeping personnel adhere to the highest standards of behaviour and conduct themselves in a professional and disciplined manner at all times.

Special training is required to ensure that UN personnel are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform these diverse duties and to be prepared for particularly challenging situations. There are several types of required training from pre-deployment which covers basic UN principles, guidelines and policies to more targeted trainings related to specific issues such as sexual abuse and exploitation. These required trainings set standards for UN peacekeeping and guide personnel as they carry out critical tasks to assist the countries within which they work.

UN peacekeeping missions operate in the most dangerous and difficult environments in the world, dealing with conflicts – or their aftermath – which others cannot or will not address. We can achieve what others can't, but success is never guaranteed.

Since 1948, the UN has helped end conflicts and foster reconciliation by conducting successful peacekeeping operations in dozens of countries, including Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Namibia and Tajikistan.

UN peacekeeping has also made a real difference in other places with recently completed or on-going operations such as Sierra Leone, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Timor-Leste, Liberia, Haiti and Kosovo. By providing basic security guarantees and responding to crises, these UN operations have supported political transitions and helped buttress fragile new state institutions. They have helped countries to close the chapter of conflict and open a path to normal development, even if major peacebuilding challenges remain.

In other instances, however, UN peacekeeping – and the response by the international community as a whole – have been challenged and found wanting, for instance in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. These setbacks provided important lessons for the international community when deciding how and when to deploy and support UN peacekeeping as a tool to restore and maintain international peace and security.

What factors are required for success?

As past experience shows, there are several factors that are essential for a successful peacekeeping operation. It must:

- Be guided by the principles of consent, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate;
- Be perceived as legitimate and credible, particularly in the eyes of the local population;
- Promote national and local ownership of the peace process in the host country.

Other important factors that help drive success include:

- Genuine commitment to a political process by the parties in working towards peace (there must be a peace to keep);

- Clear, credible and achievable mandates, with matching personnel, logistic and financial resources;
- Unity of purpose within the Security Council, with active support to UN operations in the field;
- Host country commitment to unhindered UN operations and freedom of movement;
- Supportive engagement by neighbouring countries and regional actors;
- An integrated UN approach, effective coordination with other actors on the ground and good communication with host country authorities and population;
- The utmost sensitivity towards the local population and upholding the highest standards of professionalism and good conduct (peacekeepers must avoid becoming part of the problem).