

Concept Note -- The Group of 78 Virtual Policy Conference Webinar Series for 2020
The Future of Peacekeeping in the Transition to a More Peaceful World:
Why UN peace operations are critical and need to be expanded

United Nations Peacekeeping is central to conflict resolution, international stabilization and longer-term efforts to build a sustainable peace. With the support of the international community it has the potential to become a key enabler of a long-overdue global shift towards a more cooperative security environment.ⁱ

UNPK has evolved substantively since it began in 1948. Currently about 110,000 military, police and civilians are engaged in thirteen missions.ⁱⁱ The UN deploys more uniformed personnel on operations than any other international organization, alliance, or government, including the United States.

Most armed conflicts today are within states, not between states, and this means peacekeeping mission mandates are charged with many different tasks, including stopping the fighting, keeping combatants apart, disarmament, protection of civilians, building capacity for inclusive political processes, peacebuilding and election monitoring. This is all part of the overarching task of facilitating a peace process that addresses the myriad political underpinnings of conflicts. There are many indicators of success, too – from conflict prevention to reducing the level of violence, from stopping conflicts that have erupted, to enabling a secure environment in which building positive peace can function and thrive for decades.

While peacekeeping may be an imperfect response to seventy years of conflict, overall it has been a remarkably successful endeavor. Governments and civil society need to be clear about how effective peace operations have been; and if they failed, *why* they did so.

We face many challenges. Mandates have become increasingly complex and more robust; yet budgets have been trimmed for austerity and political reasons. **The demand for peacekeepers has escalated, and missions are larger than ever before. But governments, including Canada's, have not kept up.** They need to be encouraged to significantly upgrade existing capacity, and to develop innovative approaches for both longstanding and future challenges.

Our virtual policy conference, **The Future of Peacekeeping in the Transition to a More Peaceful World: *Why UN peace operations are critical and need to be expanded***, will outline what UN peace operations can and cannot do, and how they might be improved and expanded. We will assess what changes will help transition national defence establishments, and encourage UN options for a more peaceful world. We will explore Lessons Learned for conflict prevention and protection of civilians (POC) and what they mean for future UNPK/peace operations.

Therefore, questions we will address include:

- 1. What are the strengths and limits of UN Peacekeeping?**
- 2. Can UN peacekeeping advance both rule of law and negotiated solutions to spoilers and groups designated as terrorists, and can mandates retain mission impartiality?**

3. If UN peace operations cannot effectively address these challenges, what else may be needed when they increasingly encounter difficulty, as we have seen in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Haiti and South Sudan?

4. Can peacekeeping be adapted to respond more rapidly and effectively to crises before they escalate and become full-blown armed conflicts?

Outcomes of our virtual policy conference will include a report outlining how UN peace operations have evolved, why they are largely successful, and what enhancements or shifts are required to improve capacity, responsiveness and function.

These conclusions are expected to help strengthen civil society's understanding of these issues and to hone policy options for government decision makers. We hope to raise awareness of the potential of, and urgent need for, substantive innovations and new approaches, such as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) initiative, to further the Canadian government's engagement in the central role peacekeeping plays in building sustainable peace.

ⁱ See: "A Shift to Sustainable Peace and Common Security", a civil society [statement](#) endorsed by several leading Canadian NGOs.

ⁱⁱ Over a million men and women have participated in more than seventy missions.