



INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND LIVE EVENTS

Impact of COVID19 on UN Peace Operations: Can Chaos and Crisis be Turned into Purposeful Transformational Change?

By GCSP – 04 June 2020

Moderated by Jean-Marc Rickli - Head of Global Risks and Resilience, GCSP.

Ms Annika Hilding Norberg - Head of Peace Operations and Peacebuilding, GCSP:

COVID19 will have a **strong impact on UN peace operations.**

UN Peace Operations were born out of **crisis and necessity**. It is not the first time UN Peace Operations are going through ups and downs. They **adapt and respond to shocks and crisis**. This is what defines UN Peace Operations.

Resources allocations: major changes are likely. US is leaving one institution after the other. They are not longer willing to be the supreme paymaster for UN Peace operations. **Will other countries fill the void?**

New politics of polarizations: the current crisis can be turned in an **opportunity for innovation**. However, if politics goes from lockdown to deadlock, then **the future for UN Peace operations looks rather dark.**

Mr Luis Carrilho - UN Police Adviser, UN Headquarters, New York:

In conflict and post-conflict context, the **vulnerable groups** are the one more affected. There is always a risk to see COVID19 used as a pretext to **enact restrictive measures.**

4 objectives for UN Peace Operations throughout the crisis: Continue to **support national authorities; Protecting our personal;** Ensuring that our own personal are **not a contagious factor;** Continue to **protect vulnerable populations.**

In some conflict settings, **armed and terrorist groups** are **exploiting lockdowns** to consolidate their positions. We should consider a future where they would be more peace keeping operations, with increased **protection of civilians** and more **support to third party counter-terrorism** operations.

There will be **fewer resources in the future.** We faced other major challenges in the past and we believe UN Police will be resilient and flexible. The pandemic is an **opportunity to reinforce multilateralism.** We are together in all this pandemic and we need **to overpass it together.** Global security challenge requires global security response.

Ms Natascha Hryckow- Coordinator UN Panel of Experts on Somalia and GCSP Global Fellow:

Somalia at the moment is a place of absolute disaster. Many **challenges are striking the country** at the same time. COVID19 is a crisis that hit us in the west in a powerful way, but it is an additional challenge in some places, such as Somalia.

We mainly focus on the **operations of Al-Chabab in Somalia.** They are known for their adaptability. We focus on their **financial flows.** How they are able to **adapt and analyse** what is happening. There is an **increase in freedom of movement** for these terrorist groups.

People operating in such environment are facing challenges from everywhere. They need to **understand and react in an incredible way.** It requires an increased perspective of the environment.

Lesson learned that will come out: how well we have been able to **adapt to webinars and remote working**. We have to look at where this does not work and where do we have to **prioritize face to face interactions**.

[Mr Ralph Mamiya - Executive-in-Resident Fellow at the Geneva Center for Security Policy:](#)

COVID is an accelerator, more than a dynamic that will change peace keeping in itself. There is room for innovative thinking within UN Peace Operations. It will need decision making in New York and from member states.

On communities: we will need to **focus more on community engagement**. Not only in UN Peace Operations but within the UN as a whole.

There are **opportunities within the COVID19 crisis**. Opportunities to **push forward reforms** that have been on the table for a long time. The future of peace operations will change, through **new technologies**.

[Ambassador Yvette Stevens - Executive-in-Residence Fellow at the GCSP and Former Ambassador:](#)

The **peace keeping operation in Sierra Leone** is an example of successful peacekeeping operation. It was instituted in 1999, just after the UN experience of peace keeping in Rwanda. For the first time, human rights issues were implemented in the mandate of **UNOMSIL**.

What did the mission do? **Strengthened human rights institutions, trained human rights advocates and police personnel**. It was a peacekeeping operation involved in **promoting and strengthening human rights**. It contributed to the rehabilitation of infrastructures and helped setting up a truth and reconciliation commission.

COVID-19 is an opportunity to take prevention seriously in the UN. How prevention could start before countries fall into conflict situations? After COVID19, a major transformation would be a **refocus of the UN system on prevention, starting with a human rights prevention**. It always starts with a human rights violation before going into conflict.

Call for cease-fire by Secretary General was a global call. How could the UN enforce something that depends on the **good will of the warring factions**? It depends on the will of people holding the weapons. I do not see the necessity to set up a UN tool for the global cease fire.

[Dr Mike Kelly - President, Palantir, Australia:](#)

COVID19 is **amplifying the current dynamics and trends**. It will exacerbate the problems we face in **reaching political consensus**.

COVID19 will have a **strong financial impact on peace keeping operations**. Corruption is also a major factor in creating security challenge. Need to invest in good governance.

Effectively, what we have to do is **come back to the principles we have been learning** in making peace sustainable.

Technology and data can be used to improve UN Peace Operations in the future.

This crisis will provide a solution for us, to improve peace keeping and conflict prevention.