Briefing on Global Peace, Security, and Peacekeeping Operations Week 42 13 Oct 19 Oct 2025

Waterloo 20/10/2025

Briefing on Global Peace, Security, and Peacekeeping Operations

Executive Summary

Dear Members of AISP/SPIA International.

The international peace and security landscape is at a pivotal juncture, defined by a severe financial crisis crippling United Nations peacekeeping operations, the persistence of complex regional conflicts, and a concurrent push for reformed multilateralism. A significant funding shortfall, driven by a reduction in U.S. contributions, has forced a 15% budget cut across all UN peacekeeping missions, translating into a potential 25% reduction in personnel. This threatens to scale back vital operations in volatile regions, including South Sudan (UNMISS), Lebanon (UNIFIL), and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), directly impacting the protection of civilians.

Simultaneously, key conflict zones exhibit deep-seated challenges. In Gaza, a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas is punctuated by renewed clashes, while diplomatic efforts led by Egypt, France, and Britain are underway to establish a UN-backed international stabilization force. However, Hamas officials have signaled an intent to maintain security control and have not committed to disarmament, posing a major obstacle to long-term peace plans. In Africa, the Sahel is described as a "powder keg," with terrorism spreading into coastal West Africa, a situation exacerbated by the withdrawal of international forces and the disruptive presence of Russian mercenaries. In contrast, UN-supported initiatives in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo show progress, with successful disarmament programs and military capacity-building enhancing stability.

Amid these challenges, a strategic re-evaluation of global peacekeeping is emerging. India is championing a new approach through its "4C" formula of Consultation, Cooperation, Coordination, and Capacity Building, as showcased at a recent conclave of troop-contributing countries. Concurrently, the African Union and the UN are deepening their strategic partnership to address continental security threats, reflecting a broader trend toward shared responsibility and regional ownership in maintaining peace.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. The UN Peacekeeping Funding Crisis

A severe funding shortfall is forcing drastic cuts across all United Nations peacekeeping operations, threatening their capacity to fulfill mandates in some of the world's most volatile regions. This financial crisis, described by UN Peacekeeping Chief Jean-Pierre Lacroix as “more daunting than ever,” stems from delayed and partial payments of assessed contributions by Member States.

The Funding Shortfall and its Consequences

The crisis was precipitated by a significant reduction in financial support from the United States, the UN's largest donor. For the 2025-26 peacekeeping budget of $5.4 billion, the U.S. contribution was reduced by approximately half, from an expected $1.3 billion to around $682 million.

This has led UN Secretary-General António Guterres to order an emergency 15% budget reduction across all missions. Due to the compressed timeframe for implementation, this will translate into a **roughly 25% reduction in uniformed and civilian personnel**.

Key consequences include:

• **Personnel Repatriation:** Between 13,000 and 14,000 troops and police personnel are expected to be repatriated from nine global missions.

• **Operational Curtailment:** The Department of Peace Operations warns that fewer peacekeepers will mean fewer patrols to monitor ceasefires, fewer safe zones for civilians, and diminished support for humanitarian relief.

• **Bangladeshi Contingent Reduction:** Bangladesh, a top troop-contributing nation, will repatriate 1,313 peacekeepers from five missions, providing a concrete example of the drawdown's impact.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| UN Mission | Number of Bangladeshi Peacekeepers to be Withdrawn |
| UNMISS (South Sudan) | 617 |
| MINUSCA (Central African Republic) | 341 |
| UNISFA (Abyei) | 268 |
| MONUSCO (DR Congo) | 79 |
| MINURSO (Western Sahara) | 8 |

Mission-Specific Impacts

• **UNMISS (South Sudan):** The mission faces a 15% budget cut amid escalating political violence. During a visit, Jean-Pierre Lacroix stressed that despite the cuts, UNMISS remains committed to protecting civilians and supporting the peace agreement.

• **UNIFIL (Lebanon):** A UNIFIL spokesperson warned that the global drawdown would create “significant challenges.” However, the force commander, Gen. Diodato Abagnara, reassured the Lebanese government that the cuts would not compromise operational coordination or support for the Lebanese Army. The mission's mandate was extended "for a final time" through December 31, 2026.

• **MINURSO (Western Sahara):** The potential implications of budget reductions on the mission's composition have been a key topic of discussion among diplomats, including a U.S. delegation and Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister.

Key Statements and Perspectives

“Our peacekeepers, your peacekeepers, protect people – they make the difference between life and death for hundreds of thousands of civilians.” — **Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations**

The U.S. is focused on "ramping the UN back to its fundamentals: promoting peace, enforcing peace and preventing war... it's time to stop all the nonsense." — **Mike Waltz, U.S. Ambassador to the UN (in a televised interview)**

The total peacekeeping budget represents less than half of one percent of global military spending, which was estimated at $2.7 trillion in 2024.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2. Analysis of Key Conflict Zones and Peace Initiatives

Gaza and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

A fragile, U.S.-mediated ceasefire is in place, but the situation remains highly volatile with significant challenges to long-term stability.

• **Ceasefire Status and Violations:** Fighting has broken out again in southern Gaza near Rafah approximately a week after the ceasefire began. Hamas fighters reportedly breached the truce in two prior incidents. The death of two IDF soldiers was initially attributed by some sources to Hamas anti-tank weapons, while another report suggested it was caused by unexploded ordnance.

• **Proposed International Stabilization Force (ISF):** A major diplomatic initiative is underway to establish a multinational peacekeeping mission.

    ◦ **Leadership:** Egypt is pressing the UN Security Council for a resolution, while France and Britain, in coordination with the U.S., are working to finalize the text.

    ◦ **Composition:** The proposed force would consist of approximately 4,000 lightly armed troops. Potential contributing nations include Egypt, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Indonesia.

    ◦ **Mandate:** The mission's role is emphasized as "peacekeeping, not peace-enforcing," focused on stabilization, delivery of essential services, and police training.

• **Hamas's Stated Positions:** In an interview, senior Hamas politburo member Mohammed Nazzal articulated positions that diverge significantly from the U.S. peace plan.

    ◦ **Governance:** Hamas intends to maintain security control on the ground during a transitional period, even with a civil technocratic administration.

    ◦ **Disarmament:** The group cannot commit to disarmament, stating that the issue depends on the final political project and requires a broader Palestinian consensus.

    ◦ **Truce:** Hamas is ready for a ceasefire of up to five years to allow for the reconstruction of Gaza and seeks "horizons and hope" for an independent Palestinian state.

• **Humanitarian and Political Context:** Despite the ceasefire, daily life for Gazans is characterized by persistent struggle. Displaced families live in worn-out tents, rely on canned food, and face high prices for basic goods. Online discussions reflect deep divisions and skepticism, with debates over media narratives, Hamas's strategic aims, and the geopolitical alignment of various political factions in the West.

Spreading Terrorism in the Sahel and West Africa

The Sahel has become the world's epicenter of terrorism, with violence increasingly spilling over into coastal West African states, creating what one analyst calls a "silent powder keg."

• **Escalating Violence:** Since Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger left the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in early 2025, there has been a marked increase in attacks by groups like the al-Qaida-affiliated Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Sahel Province (ISSP).

• **Regional Destabilization:** The violence is no longer contained to the central Sahel, with terrorist groups now targeting border regions between Benin, Niger, Nigeria, and Togo.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Time Period | Details of Attacks and Casualties |
| **Togo** | 2024 | 10 terror attacks resulted in 52 deaths. |
|  | Jan-Jul 2025 | JNIM killed at least 54 civilians and 8 soldiers in 15 attacks. |
| **Benin** | Jan 2025 | JNIM attacks killed 28 Beninese soldiers. |
|  | Apr 2025 | JNIM killed 54 Beninese soldiers in the same region. |
| **Nigeria** | Jan 2025 | ISWAP killed 20 Nigerian soldiers at a base in Malam Fatori. |
|  | Jul 2025 | ISWAP killed 11 people at an internal displacement camp in Malam Fatori. |

• **Destabilizing Factors:**

    ◦ **Withdrawal of International Support:** The expulsion of international counterterrorism troops by the junta-led governments has created a security vacuum.

    ◦ **Role of Russian Mercenaries:** The presence of Russia’s Africa Corps (formerly Wagner Group) has complicated counterterrorism efforts. According to a report by The Sentry, their brutal tactics and operational mistakes have alienated the Malian people and are deeply resented by the Malian Army.

    ◦ **Junta Failures:** Analyst Julian McBride warns, “Unless the coup-belt officers turn course and allow regional coordination to combat al-Qaeda and ISIS, the jihadists will continue to gain ground.”

Peace and Stabilization Efforts in Central Africa

Despite regional instability, UN-supported programs in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are achieving notable successes in disarmament and capacity-building.

• **Central African Republic (CAR):** A disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process is underway for the ‘3R’ (Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation) armed group, following a peace agreement.

    ◦ **UN Role:** The UN mission, MINUSCA, is providing extensive financial, logistical, and security support.

    ◦ **Impact:** The program is credited with pacifying communities and improving civilian security. "Now that we have laid down our weapons, peace is possible," said Mbekaka Ursula Aicha, a female ex-combatant. A local resident noted, "Before, we never slept peacefully... But now, I can sleep calmly."

• **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC):** In the conflict-ridden Ituri province, the UN mission MONUSCO is strengthening the capacity of the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC).

    ◦ **Training:** MONUSCO instructors from multiple contingents recently trained 120 FARDC soldiers in skills including drone operation, GPS, first aid, and advanced weapons handling. This is part of a broader effort that has trained over 1,600 Congolese soldiers in the past year.

    ◦ **Objective:** The training aims to equip FARDC to "deploy these skills independently and sustainably" and better protect civilians from armed groups.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3. Evolving Multilateralism and Global Peacekeeping Architectures

Amid the operational and financial pressures on peacekeeping, key international actors are actively promoting strategic reforms and deepening partnerships.

India's Leadership in Peacekeeping

India has positioned itself as a leading voice for the future of peacekeeping, hosting the United Nations Troop Contributing Countries’ (UNTCC) Chiefs’ Conclave in New Delhi in October 2025, with delegations from 32 nations.

• **The "4C" Formula:** India's Defence Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh, proposed a guiding principle for modern peacekeeping: **Consultation, Cooperation, Coordination, and Capacity Building**.

• **Call for Reformed Multilateralism:** The minister called for reforms to "outdated global structures" to give an equitable voice to all stakeholders and urged advanced nations to provide greater logistical, financial, and technological support to missions.

• **Indigenous Innovation:** Through its *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* (Self-reliant India) initiative, India is promoting its indigenous defense technologies—such as secure communication systems and unmanned platforms—as cost-effective solutions for peacekeeping operations.

• **Pioneering Inclusivity:** The role of women in peacekeeping was highlighted, citing India’s pioneering all-women Formed Police Unit in Liberia in 2007 as a model of empowerment and effectiveness.

AU-UN Strategic Partnership

The African Union and the United Nations are strengthening their collaboration on peace and security issues affecting the continent.

• **Joint Consultative Meetings:** The 19th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting between the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the UN Security Council (UNSC) was held in Addis Ababa in October 2025.

• **Shared Agenda:** The councils discussed critical issues including counter-terrorism, peace support operations, and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. These efforts are aligned with the AU's "Silencing the Guns" initiative, AU Agenda 2063, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

• **2025 AU Theme:** The African Union has designated 2025 as the **"Year of Reparations: Justice for Africans & People of African Descent through Reparations,"** reflecting a broader focus on historical justice as a component of peace and stability.