

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 13 May 2025 from the Permanent Representative of
Denmark to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith a summary report produced by Denmark of the event on the theme “Advancing adaptability in United Nations peace operations: responding to new realities”, held on 24 and 25 March 2025 as an open debate of the Security Council in connection with the item entitled “Maintenance of international peace and security” (see annex).

I hope that the enclosed report will serve as a reference to further advance the important ongoing discussion on the future of United Nations peace operations.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Christina Markus **Lassen**

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 13 May 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Chair's summary of the high-level open debate of the Security Council on the theme "Advancing adaptability in United Nations peace operations: responding to new realities", 24 and 25 March 2025

Introduction

Under the presidency of Denmark, the Security Council convened on 24 and 25 March 2025 for a high-level open debate on the theme "Advancing adaptability in United Nations peace operations: responding to new realities". The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Lars Løkke Rasmussen. The Council was briefed by the Secretary-General and the Director of Research and Head of the Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations at the International Peace Institute, Jenna Russo. A total of 82 speakers participated in the open debate.¹

In order to guide the discussion, a concept note was prepared and issued as a document of the Security Council ([S/2025/141](#)).

The open debate took place against a backdrop of growing global fragmentation, volatility and complexity – trends that are both reflected in and driven by conflicts around the world. As these dynamics evolve, so too must our collective response, including United Nations peace operations. The open debate offered a timely platform for fresh ideas and forward-looking proposals on the future of United Nations peace operations. The discussion underscored a strong commitment to and continued demand for peace operations as an essential tool to maintain international peace and security, while also offering input to the forthcoming review of all forms of United Nations peace operations. The Peacebuilding Commission also contributed its advice on the theme of the open debate ([S/2025/180](#)), which was welcomed by several Member States.

"For millions, the blue flag and the Blue Helmets are symbols of hope"²

Briefings

The Secretary-General emphasized the crucial role of United Nations peace operations in maintaining international peace and security, while highlighting the growing challenges they face, including complex and prolonged conflicts, the presence of non-State actors and the impact of climate change. He called for new, adaptable models for peace operations, citing the suggested tailored approach to the situation in Haiti and increased cooperation with regional organizations. He referred to the comprehensive review of peace operations that was under way, aimed at making them more flexible and effective. He highlighted the persistent mismatch between

¹ In addition to Council members, the following non-Council members participated in the meeting: Albania, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Germany, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Nigeria, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe and the European Union.

² See [S/PV.9884](#).

mandates and available resources and emphasized the need to engage early with host countries and populations. The Secretary-General urged the Security Council to provide unified political support and ensure that peace operations were well-resourced, with clear mandates and achievable goals.

Ms. Russo spoke to the successes of United Nations peace operations over the years but noted that modern global conflicts required more adaptable and flexible operations. To that end, she offered four recommendations: (a) strengthening the planning culture within the United Nations to ensure the Organization can act proactively and strategically; (b) adopting a risk-tolerant culture to allow space for innovative solutions and trial-and-error; (c) encouraging the Secretariat not to self-censor its recommendations to the Council, despite difficult political manoeuvring; and (d) considering a modular approach to peace operations, which would offer both opportunities to create more targeted, context-sensitive efforts, but also risks, including the potential of sidelining key peacebuilding dimensions.

Debate

The ensuing high-level debate underscored the indispensable role of United Nations peace operations in supporting the Security Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security. There was broad agreement on the need for more agile, adaptable operations that can respond effectively to the present complex conflict landscape. Participants emphasized the importance of clear, realistic mandates that are tailored to the specific context of a host State and underpinned by a stronger planning culture. Such efforts should include capacity-building and training that reflects the current threat landscape, as well as strengthened coordination between missions, the Secretariat, the Peacebuilding Commission, United Nations country teams and local actors. Some Member States underscored the need to respect host State sovereignty and to comply with the principles of consent and impartiality. Several also highlighted the importance of harnessing innovation and leveraging data-driven decision-making, intelligence-led approaches and digital tools so as to enhance efficiency and make peace operations more fit for purpose. Debate participants also highlighted the women and peace and security agenda, as well as the inclusion of women and young people in peace processes.

A majority of speakers also recognized the need for mandates that are focused, realistic, adaptable and achievable – underscoring that the success of peace operations relies on clearly defined political objectives. Several argued that peace operations should take the entire peace continuum into account and include early warning systems, preventive actions and peacebuilding efforts. Others expressed concern regarding the trend of broad mandates, noting the risk of prolonged and costly missions, and warned against so-called “Christmas-tree” mandates, which risk diluting a mission’s core tasks and targeted engagements.

The majority of speakers emphasized cooperation with regional actors as a central part of future peace operations. Enhanced coordination and strengthened partnerships would enable the United Nations and partners to use their comparative advantages. Several countries specifically highlighted cooperation with the African Union and the implementation of Security Council resolution [2719 \(2023\)](#) as important elements of future peace efforts of the United Nations.

Denmark, Pakistan and the Republic of Korea announced the formation of a “Council trio” dedicated to working proactively to put greater emphasis on all aspects of United Nations peace operations and to foster constructive debate in order to future-proof this critical tool.

Recommendations

In summary, the following key recommendations can be highlighted from the debate:

- Enhance the adaptability and flexibility of United Nations peace operations to effectively address increasingly complex, protracted and volatile conflict systems, including through context-specific and modular approaches.
 - Strengthen strategic and integrated planning across the United Nations system by ensuring that mission planning is proactive, forward-looking and aligned with political objectives, available resources and conditions on the ground.
 - Ensure that mandates are clear, realistic, achievable and tailored to the context, recognizing the balance between the comprehensive mandates required to address complex and interconnected challenges, and the intentional targeting required to ensure the effectiveness, focus and agility of peace operations over time.
 - Deepen partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, in particular with the African Union, in order to leverage comparative advantages and promote inclusive national ownership in line with Security Council resolution [2719 \(2023\)](#).
 - Promote inclusive approaches to peace by ensuring the meaningful participation and protection of women, young people, marginalized communities and civil society throughout all phases of peace operations, including by further institutionalizing and operationalizing the women and peace and security agenda and the youth and peace and security agenda.
 - Foster innovation and leverage data-driven approaches to improve the responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency of peace operations, including through the use of digital tools and technologies.
 - Ensure sustained, unified and coherent political support from the Security Council, including through engagement with host governments and local communities, and by enabling the Secretariat to present timely and frank analysis.
 - Advance a comprehensive approach across the peace continuum, encompassing early warning, prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, in order to address systemic conflict drivers, advance political solutions and support sustainable peace outcomes. The ongoing peacebuilding architecture review will be key to this objective.
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