

2005: A good year for peacekeeping operations

For UN peacekeeping, 2005 was in many ways a banner year.

After having launched four new operations in 2004 and the Sudan mission in 2005, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was, at its peak during the year, directing 18 peace operations across the world, comprising some 85,000 troops, police and civilian personnel and directly affecting some 200 million men, women and children in host countries.

The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) also led eight special political missions and peacebuilding support offices in West and Central Africa, Central Asia, Iraq and the Middle East.

As the expression of the collective will of the international community to assist societies moving from armed conflict to peace, peacekeeping continued to grow in scope and complexity.

New missions tackled a range of complex and multidisciplinary tasks including disarming combatants, organizing democratic elections, building local police and security capacities, restoring public order, running public adminis-

trations, monitoring human rights and shoring up fragile peace agreements.

During the same year, two external reports credited UN peace operations with a quantifiable reduction in international conflict and war-related deaths.

A number of major milestones were achieved in 2005: a large peace support operation began deployment in Sudan to bolster the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in March between north and south Sudan. Missions led by DPKO and DPA supported the organization of landmark elections in Afghanistan, Burundi, Liberia, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which held its first democratic vote in four decades, during which the population approved a draft constitution. Plans for parliamentary elections in Haiti and in the DRC were in the works for early 2006.

Two peacekeeping operations closed—in Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste—having successfully achieved their mandates to solidify peace and help expand and strengthen the authority of democratically elected governments. New

integrated mission offices with mandates of longer-term peacebuilding are under way in both those countries.

In Kosovo, the UN peacekeeping operation worked to hold the local administration to standards of governance to prepare for talks on final status which were to begin in early 2006. In the DRC, UN troops, in a series of operations, progressed dramatically toward restoring stability in Eastern Congo. In Côte d'Ivoire, the mission wrestled with serious challenges to the peace agreement of 2003, but a crisis was averted when all parties accepted Charles Konan Banny as interim prime minister in December. In Georgia, the UN observer mission continued to monitor the ceasefire and promote a political settlement of the conflict.

Regrettably, no progress was made in overcoming the deadlock in Western Sahara, and stalemate persisted in the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Other long-standing UN operations remained on the ground in the Middle East, India and Pakistan and Cyprus, continuing to provide much needed stability in their areas of operation.

Nearly two dozen countries contributed uniformed personnel for the first time to UN peace operations, bringing the total number of troop and police contributing countries to 107, with Bangladesh the largest troop contributor by the end of the year (9,758 troops), and the U.S. the largest financial contributor, accounting for 27 percent of peacekeeping's \$5.03 billion budget for July 2005 through June 2006.

The need for long-term efforts to maintain sustainable peace convinced UN Member States at the 2005 Summit to create a Peacebuilding Commission, an advisory body which will work to coordinate and ensure long-term international commitments to countries emerging from conflict.

UN Photo by Martine Perret



Cibitoke woman voting in Burundi election, 7 April 2005

UN establishes Peacebuilding Commission

As a major outcome of reform initiatives endorsed by world leaders at the September Summit, the General Assembly established a new Peacebuilding Commission on 20 December to help rebuild and stabilize countries emerging from conflict. As studies have shown that up to half those countries can relapse into conflict within five years of a peace agreement, this decision could mark a watershed in UN efforts to help states and societies manage the difficult transition from war to peace.

The Commission will for the first time bring together all the major actors concerned with a country emerging from conflict to decide on a long-term peacebuilding strategy. By establishing a link between immediate post-conflict efforts on the one hand and long-term recovery and development efforts on the other, it will fill a previously existing gap in the UN system. The Commission will focus attention on reconstruction and institution-building and improve coordination within and outside the UN system so that international attention does not wane during the crucial post-conflict years.

The Commission, an advisory body, will be made up of 31 members: seven from the Security Council, including the five permanent members; another seven from the Economic and Social Council; five from the top 10 financial contributors to the United Nations; and five from the 10 nations that supply the most troops for peacekeeping missions. Seven others will be chosen to ensure geographical balance by regional groupings. Representatives of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other institutional donors will be expected to attend meetings. Authorities of the country under consideration by the Commission – as well as its neighbors – will also play an active role in the process.

The idea for a Peacebuilding Commission evolved from the perceived need at the UN for a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation. The Commission is expected to address the special needs of individual countries emerging from conflict and to help prevent future conflicts by helping parties to end hostilities and work towards recovery, reconstruction and development and in mobilizing international assistance.

The Commission will be supported by a small Peacebuilding Support Office, which will provide the Commission with the information and analysis needed to coordinate UN's peacebuilding efforts.

The roles of peacekeepers also grew more complex and risky in 2005: robust peacekeeping, including military operations to protect civilians in the DRC and Haiti, also cost lives: 121 peacekeepers died on mission in 2005, including nine Bangladeshi soldiers killed in an ambush in the DRC in February.

The peacekeeping community also confronted the ugly specter of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, which Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno has called “one of the most shameful episodes in UN peacekeeping.” Enforcing the Secretary-General’s zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse became a major priority for DPKO and the entire Organization during 2005, which began implementing a wide range of recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General’s special advisor on the issue, Jordan’s Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein.

The UN Secretariat continued to improve its capacity to deploy peacekeeping operations immediately upon a peace agreement. Although proposals for a reserve military force did not win Member States’ approval at the 2005 World Summit, its Outcome Document did authorize the creation of a standing, on-call police capacity.

Peacekeeping missions became increasingly “integrated” during the past year, with Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in several missions doubling as UN Resident Coordinators, ensuring that the humanitarian and development aspects of a post-conflict situation—and the relevant UN agencies—were progressively better coordinated with the peacekeeping operation.

Two major studies in 2005—one by the US’ Rand Corporation and another by the University of British Columbia—credited UN peace operations with helping to reduce conflict and build

stable nations. The Human Security Report, wrote one of its UBC authors, showed that the UN has “played a critical role in enhancing global security.”

The International Crisis Group in its end of the year “CrisisWatch” cited four conflict situations that had improved at the end of 2005: three of these were the sites of UN peace operations—the DRC, Côte d’Ivoire and Afghanistan.

During a year of growth and renewed reliance on UN peace operations, the UN’s objective has been to improve its capacities to deploy quickly and efficiently, fulfill its mandates with a unique range of expertise and a “duty of care” for the host population and create an effective and cost-efficient basis for sustainable peace. Facing new and ever growing challenges, the Organization will continue the implementation of reforms aimed at further improving the way it plans, deploys and sustains peace operations. ■