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WEST AFRICA

Preventive Diplomacy in West Africa

In a region striving to consolidate hard-won peace and democratic progress against a resurgence of coups and other emerging threats, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) is demonstrating the value of a UN political presence on the ground, working with States and regional bodies to prevent and manage crises while also tackling longer-term challenges.

The Dakar-based office headed by Said Djinnit, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa, has had its hands full the past year responding to tense elections in a number of countries, and fragile political transitions following the overthrow of governments in Guinea and Niger.

Preventive diplomacy of this kind is not something easily done from a distance in New York, or by the United Nations alone. Djinnit has



UNOWA chief Said Djinnit (right) arriving for political talks in Guinea with ECOWAS Commission President James Victor Gbeho

teamed up with fellow envoys from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union — often shuttling the region together on the same UN plane — to encourage military leaders in both countries to honor commitments to return to democracy through elections.

As a former AU Peace and Security Commissioner, Djinnit places special emphasis on cooperation with the key

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IRAQ IN TRANSITION: A CONVERSATION WITH THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

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Panels, inquiries and investigative mandates: an expanding frontier

Under the hot lights of a UN press room in New York, journalists scribbled furiously on their notepads while the head of a United Nations probe into one the most notorious political assassinations in years delivered its key findings. In words that would reverberate halfway around the world, the commission found that former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, killed in a 2007 bombing as she campaigned for her country's presidency, might still be alive today had she only been provided with adequate security.

The dramatic reading earlier this year of the “Bhutto Commission”

report by Heraldo Muñoz, the former Chilean ambassador to the United Nations, was the culmination of a nine-month fact-finding

effort of the kind that is becoming increasingly common by the United Nations. Member States faced with politically sensitive crimes, violent incidents or grave

human rights violations to resolve — in this case, the Government of Pakistan — have been turning more and more to the United Nations to conduct impartial inquiries.

“The United Nations cannot be called upon to solve every sensitive crime or incident, but where we can help to prevent or resolve

The growing number of requests is proving both a challenge and an opportunity.

conflict through a credible and impartial inquiry or investigation we have done a valuable service,” says the USG for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe.

The phenomenon is not altogether new to the United Nations. As far back as 1961, the Security Council established a Commission of Investigation into the death of the first Prime Minister of Congo. What once was rare is increasingly common, however. The growing number of requests is proving both a challenge and an opportunity for the United Nations to assist its Members States in addressing difficult problems.

Other examples in just the past five years include the United Nations International Investigation Commission into the 2005 assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri; a joint fact-finding inquiry carried out between the UN and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) into the deaths of Ghanaian migrants found in the Gambia in 2007; the UN-backed International Commission

against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), created in 2007 to help the Central American country investigate and dismantle clandestine criminal networks; and the Commission of Inquiry into the events of September 28, 2009 in Conakry, Guinea, when security forces killed and raped scores of people at a demonstration demanding fair elections in the aftermath of a coup.

The Secretary-General and members of the Bhutto Commission deliver its report to Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations

UN Photo





Francisco Dall'Anese Ruiz, head of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), delivering the Commission's three-year report

In deciding this year to establish a panel of experts to advise him on issues of accountability for human rights allegations stemming from the Sri Lankan civil war, the Secretary-General was acting in follow-up to a 2009 visit to the country during which he and the President of Sri Lanka jointly identified accountability as an important post-war concern.

Most recently, in August 2010, following discussions with the two concerned Member States, the Secretary-General established a Panel of Inquiry into an Israeli raid on an aid flotilla headed for Gaza from Turkey in which nine people lost their lives.

DIVERSE REQUESTS

As these examples make clear, the entities being created are as diverse as the situations they respond to. Some, such as the Bhutto inquiry, are only fact-finding in nature, leaving responsibility for criminal investigation and prosecution entirely in the hands of national authorities.

Others, such as the Hariri investigation, amount to full-fledged criminal investigations. Some are internal to one Member State, while others — such as the Gaza flotilla and Gambia-Ghana inquiries — involve a controversy between countries. CICIG is a hybrid, a UN-backed international body carrying out prosecutions in the national courts.

DPA ROLE

The Department of Political Affairs has been involved to varying degrees in all of these recent panels of inquiry, fact-finding and investigative efforts, along with other UN departments and offices including the Office of Legal Affairs, the Office of the High-Commissioner for Human Rights and the Department of Safety and Security.

DPA advises the Secretary-General on the handling of requests, and often leads mandate discussions with the relevant Member State(s). The Department's involvement may

continue throughout the life of these entities, either by providing advice, oversight and administrative support, or by assisting other UN departments that are managing them. Each case has brought its own challenges in intra-UN coordination.

The mandates themselves have been established through various UN mechanisms — ideally by decision of a governing body of the Organization. Both the General Assembly and Security Council can, through resolutions, establish an investigative entity.

In some instances, inquiries have been set up by the Secretary-General on his own or through an exchange of letters the President of the Security Council.

No matter how they are established, UN fact-finding, investigative or advisory panels and commissions have proven to be complex undertakings requiring smooth management of political, diplomatic, legal, administrative, security, logistical and financial aspects. Despite its increasing experience in this area, the Organization is only now developing a systematic approach to handling Member State requests, to managing entities once established, and to learning lessons from them afterwards.

PREVENTIVE EFFECT

Determining facts can be an important end in itself, yet in more than a few cases there was a broader goal in mind. In polarized societies or regions, there is often

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Iraq in Transition

Over the past several years, the United Nations has worked under difficult conditions to help Iraq and its people through one of the most wrenching periods in their history. The months ahead will be ones of further transition both for Iraqis and the United Nations mission in the country as the United States continues to draw down its troops and Iraqis assume greater responsibility for their affairs.



*The SRSG for Iraq,
Ad Melkert*

UN Photo

In an interview with *Politically Speaking*, Ad Melkert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), discussed some of the political and security challenges on the horizon. From its base in Baghdad and other locations, UNAMI has helped to successfully organize six major elections, promoted reconciliation, monitored human rights and provided humanitarian and development assistance to the Iraqi people. Melkert, an

ex-member of parliament and minister in his native Netherlands, was the UNDP Associate Administrator before taking up the UN's top post in Iraq in August 2009. He spoke during a visit to New York over the summer, amid stalemate in efforts to form a government following parliamentary elections in March and just ahead of the September milestone marking the end of the US combat role in Iraq.

Q. *By the time this issue goes to print you will have been in Iraq for more than a year. How difficult is it to live and to work effectively in a place where the insecurity imposes such severe restrictions?*

I think for all of us, the hardest thing is that you are not really part of normal life, taking a walk where you want to go, going to a café or theatre or driving somewhere just to get to know a fascinating country with a fascinating history and people. We cannot do any of that. For most UN staff around the world, this would be basic. That said, we do reach out as much as possible, with the heavy investment it entails in security

personnel and equipment. It is not possible to go everywhere, but it is certainly happening in many places in the country, such as Kirkuk, Mosul, Diyala, Basra, Ramadi. Even then, the interactions with Iraqis tend to be at the level of their representatives, in settings that are only in exceptional cases the settings of daily life. We are constantly trying to increase our interactions as much as security circumstances permit.

Q. *What impact will the continued US draw down have on security in Iraq and on UNAMI's operations?*

I think back to June 2009 when the Americans withdrew from

urban centres. There was great anxiety in some quarters yet it did not lead to an overall worsening of the security situation. Actually, it was the other way around despite a number of horrific explosions in Baghdad and Mosul. The security situation in Iraq remains problematic, but by and large it has started to improve despite some serious recent setbacks. We also see increased capability by Iraqi police and security forces, as proven particularly during the elections. Still, for UNAMI, the continuing reduction in US troops through 2011 will mean a lot. We will face the consequences in terms of the logistical support and protection support that are considerable under the agreements between the American and Iraqi government. At the same time it is inevitable and necessary for

the UN to be able to work increasingly with the Iraqi security forces as is the normal situation in working with a host country.

Q. *Are you confident the UN can ride out that transition without having to scale back its operations?*

The bottom line is to keep the footprint both of UNAMI and the United Nations Country Team at the level where they are now, but preferably to increase that footprint. This is what the Iraqi government wants, particularly with respect to the contributions of UN agencies, funds and programmes. But that same or bigger footprint comes with a price tag. With the



UNAMI chief Ad Melkert at a polling station during Iraq's March 2010 parliamentary elections

©UNAMI/
Rick Bajomas



UNAMI chief Ad Melkert in discussions in Baghdad with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamel al-Maliki, July 2009. UN Photo/Rick Bajomas

needs for self-reliance we will have to invest more in air assets, in our vehicles, in our personnel security details and UN guards, and that is what we will propose to the UN membership on the budget.

Q. *Several years ago, UNAMI's mandate was changed to allow a larger role in promoting reconciliation between Iraqis. To what extent has UNAMI been able to fulfil this expanded political role?*

It was difficult at first given the extremely violent situation that still abounded in 2006-7, but over the past two years in particular it has been increasingly possible for UNAMI to pick up on that broader mandate. UNAMI issued

important reports on disputed internal boundaries. We have started to work on the issues between Iraq and Kuwait in relation to Chapter VII. As we speak we are fully engaged in a process of reconciliation in the province of Ninewa. On top of that, the role of UNAMI has become strong in the whole election process, which is not just the elec-

tions themselves but the political conditions around them and following them. I think it is fair to say that UNAMI is more at the center of the political action and more recognized in this regard by Iraqi actors and the international community, not the least against the backdrop of the clearly changing role of the Americans.

Q. *Many observers feel Arab-Kurdish tensions are now the most dangerous of Iraq's fault lines. In that connection, can you say more about your involvement in reconciliation efforts in Ninewa province?*

Ninewa is one of the hotbeds of tension in Iraq today, so anything that can be done to defuse

tensions there is welcome. Secondly, there was a promising initiative by Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Issawi to try to break the deadlock between Arab and Kurdish parties in the regional council that had led to non-participation of the Kurds. I sensed that after the elections there were new opportunities to try to revive a process that had gotten stuck in the mud. Once a new government is in place people can get trapped in the trenches again. I invited all parties to meet in our residence in Baghdad in a process that has brought them much more into communication and negotiation with each other than we could have imagined. It is still early to say whether it will lead to results. One of the reasons for doing it is that we see it as a part of a bigger picture of the future relationship between Arabs and Kurds in addressing the issues in the "disputed territories".

Q. *There was great enthusiasm after the parliamentary elections in March, but then came the stalemate in forming a government. Was the UN in a position to help broker a compromise?*

Our simple position is that we are there permanently available to provide technical and political advice and support wherever we can but it must be done at the request of Iraqi actors and it must be done in a way that is recognized by all as an impartial contribution, and in full respect for Iraqi processes and preferences. The positive experience with finding a compromise around the election law in December 2009 was

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Preventive Diplomacy in West Africa

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regional and sub-regional organizations in the area, even if it means the United Nations must often assume a supporting role.

“Conflict prevention requires proximity, knowledge, commitment and presence. It demands that you work with the actors on the ground,” he said. “The voice of ECOWAS has weight, as does that of the AU and the UN. But the common voice has even more weight than the three combined. It is a case of one plus one plus one equals ten.”

Politically Speaking caught up with the former Algerian diplomat after the first round of Guinea’s transitional presidential election. He had already visited the country nearly forty times since taking up his post — a pace that accelerated rapidly after December 2008, when an army captain, Moussa Dadis Camara, seized power following the death of Guinea’s long-time leader Lansana Conte.

Under the Ougadougou Agreement of 15 January 2010, the coup chief, wounded after an assassination attempt, agreed to remain outside Guinea while an interim leader supervised the remainder of the transition. Djinnit worked closely with ECOWAS and African Union envoys to persuade key players to abide by the accord. He was in the capital of Burkina Faso the day after its signing to discourage Dadis Camara from returning to Guinea at a time when elements in the army were agitating for his return. He agreed instead to deliver a speech from Burkina Faso over Guinean radio. A major problem was averted, says Djinnit. “Dadis going back to Guinea would have meant things going back to square one,” he recalled.

Diplomatic fire fighting on Guinea continued throughout



UNOWA chief Said Djinnit greeting acting Guinean junta leader Brig. General Sékouba Konaté in Conakry, joined by the African Union Special Envoy for Guinea, Ibrahima Fall

2010, both to discourage electoral delays and to encourage the interim leader, General Sekouba Konate, to remain in office through the completion of the transition. The UN also contributed a critical human rights investigation by OHCHR into the stadium massacre of September 2009, assisted with election preparations and worked with ECOWAS and the AU on a joint assessment on reforming the armed forces.

Keeping up the pace of preventive diplomacy by the UN and its partners will be critical in a country whose social, ethnic and civilian-military cleavages, says Djinnit, are comparable to those that fuelled wars in fellow West African nations of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In addition to its efforts on Guinea, UNOWA during the past year has also supported ECOWAS mediation in Togo’s tense March 2010 elections, and continues to press for a rapid transition to

Regional Political Offices

West Africa. UNOWA, established by the Security Council in 2002, is the first example of what is becoming a growing trend at the United Nations in establishing regionally-focused political offices to engage in preventive diplomacy and other activities to encourage peace and stability.

Central Asia. The United Nations established its Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in 2007 following discussions with the five governments of Central Asia. UNRCCA has been a valuable platform for preventive diplomacy to contain and resolve the recent difficulties in Kyrgyzstan.

Central Africa. Efforts are also currently underway to establish a United Nations regional political office for Central Africa.

democracy in Niger following that country's February 2010 coup.

Putting out political flames in the region — as important as that has become — is only one of the mission's responsibilities.

UNOWA continues to fulfil its mandate to bring a regional dimension to UN peace efforts in the area.

Djinnit hosts regular meetings of the four peacekeeping and peace-building missions that remain in West Africa following the wars of the 1990s, in Cote D'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau. These and other countries in the region are facing different threats to stability these days: drug trafficking, terrorism in the Sahel, climate change and rampant youth unemployment.

UNOWA is teaming up with ECOWAS on a framework for security sector reform in West Africa and on a regional anti-drug program, the West Africa Coast Initiative, which also closely involves UNODC and other entities. The office organized a regional forum in Dakar in September on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace.

Djinnit points to the importance of strong working relationships with United Nations Resident Coordinators in the region, as well as with the regional directors of UN agencies, funds and programmes, many of whom are based in Dakar. He feels that contact with UNOWA helps these individual entities see that "beyond their respective

institutional objectives there is a broader political endeavour of the United Nations to contribute to stability and progress in the region."

Countries are facing new threats including drug trafficking and terrorism.

For UNOWA, leveraging the value of partnerships both within and outside the UN is critical for a relatively small office with a staff of

30 people and a budget of only \$6-7 million annually.

The mission is also helping nurse to its conclusion the resolution of what was once an explosive border conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria. The two countries agreed several years ago

under UN mediation to accept a ruling by the International Court of Justice. One of Djinnit's first tasks on arriving to the region in late 2008 was to seek assurances that Nigeria, despite a change in government, would abide by the transfer under that ruling of the oil-rich Bakassi peninsula from Nigeria to Cameroon.

The process has moved forward despite hiccups. Several hundred disputed kilometers remain to be demarcated and tensions persist in some of the communities in the border area. "It's an ongoing process, but a successful one," says Djinnit. "There is a lot of interest in this experience on the part of other countries having disputes."

Iraq in Transition

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an indication of how the UN can be helpful. After two months of stalemate, the Iraqi partners asked us to convene a meeting and submit suggestions that would help to unblock the situation. We did so in the UN residence, and after a few days of further negotiations the Iraqis took it forward. I think we had a clear role in unlocking the situation.

Q. *Despite the considerable ups and downs of the past few years, do you see Iraq trending toward becoming a stable democracy?*

The answer is a cautious yes, although I would add that democracy is a means to an end, the end being the development and the

prosperity and the inclusiveness of the society in Iraq. It is hard to see how this could be achieved in a different way. Democracy is a crucial alternative to Iraq's very chequered history of exclusion and violence. What happened with the March elections is the successful termination of the first full term of an elected legislature going now into the next round. I am cautiously optimistic, with ups and downs, that it will be possible to get to the next stage, with a new parliament formed, a new government seated, and a new government program starting. The more these constitutional and institutional processes repeat themselves and are supported by the main actors, the better the chance this plant will grow into a solid tree.

We still have many years to go.

Turning the tide on Somalia?

The news headlines from Somalia may at times appear bleak, but officials leading a renewed effort to turn the tide in that country say they see the beginnings of a unified strategy taking effect. For Somalis, the increased international effort offers a fighting chance to build a stable government in their country for the first time in decades.

“Is this a huge challenge? Yes. Is it going to be difficult? Yes. But what strikes me is how the pieces are coming into place and the political will in the international community is strengthening,” observed the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, following his most recent visit to the war-torn capital of Mogadishu.

The September visit by the UN’s top political official to Somalia and other states in the Horn of Africa is indicative of a heightened determination under UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to help stabilize Somalia. Pascoe was joined by the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Somalia, Dr Augustine P. Mahiga, a Tanzanian

Soldier from the African Union Mission in Somalia provides security outside a hospital run by the AU peacekeepers

The United Nations has increased its efforts to help stabilize Somalia.

diplomat named in July 2010 to head the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, known as UNPOS.

UNPOS spearheaded negotiations leading to the 2008 Djibouti agreement through which Somalia’s current Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established under the moderate Islamist leadership of President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed. A wide segment of clans and political groups are included, however the government has strained to consolidate its authority.

With the transitional period now approaching its conclusion, the United Nations is urging the TFG

to overcome internal divisions and focus on delivering tangible services to the people. Among the next steps on the transitional calendar are wide ranging consultations on a draft constitution.

The security situation has remained a major problem. The Al Shabab insurgency has increased its reach, launching suicide bombings in the capital while imposing a harsh regime in areas it controls including amputations and stonings, and banning television and music. Even as efforts continue to develop professional security forces loyal to the TFG, an 8,000-strong AU peacekeeping force, AMISOM, provides the critical measure of stability for the embattled government

In considering its alternatives in Somalia, the UN Security Council opted for a cautious approach to the deployment of blue helmets. For the first time, however, assessed funds from the United Nations budget are being used to help finance the



Photo: AMISOM

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) addresses a joint press conference with Somali President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed (left) and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu after closing the UN Istanbul Conference on Somalia, in Istanbul, Turkey

UN Photo



operations of a regional force. The aid to AMISOM, ranging from equipment, logistics, to the management of public information, is being provided through the Department of Field Support.

Regional and international resolve to defeat the insurgents has only hardened since Al Shabab claimed responsibility for two deadly suicide bombings targeting football fans watching the World Cup final in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, in July. Uganda and Burundi are the only two countries currently providing troops to AMISOM.

The sharpened UN focus on Somalia today contrasts with a period of less intensive engagement following the ill-fated experience of UN peacekeeping in the early 1990s.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has considered it a priority to do more, saying that no country can be abandoned to lawlessness and chaos. He hosted major international conferences on Somalia in Brussels and Istanbul, and a high-level meeting on the margins of the UN General Assembly in September. The events have helped to shine a

USG Pascoe (right) and UNPOS chief Augustine Mahiga (second from right) land in Mogadishu for talks with the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia

Photo: UNPOS



spotlight on the country, improve international coordination and shore up political and financial commitments to help Somalia in its time of need.

Concerns about the country becoming a haven for terrorism have combined with dramatic incidents of piracy off the Somali coast to increase the depth of international concern.

The UN has hosted regular international meetings on Somalia piracy, monitored and reported on trends, and established an anti-piracy trust fund managed by the

Department of Political Affairs. The fund has been used to finance projects to build capacities around the region to prosecute piracy suspects. The Secretary-General has also appointed a senior French diplomat and jurist, Jack Lang, to advise him on how to further strengthen criminal prosecutions.

The Istanbul meeting, co-chaired with the government of Turkey in May 2010, was unique in underscoring the importance not only of political and military measures, but also of rebuilding Somalia's shattered economy. Dozens of business representatives were in attendance, most notably from the Somali diaspora but also from inside Somalia and the international community. UNPOS had pinpointed certain areas — livestock, fisheries, alternative energy, transport, infrastructure and banking — and the companies taking part ranged from a Saudi firm

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Kyrgyzstan: the crisis response

Few could have predicted how suddenly turmoil engulfed the Central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan in 2010 — between the ouster of its president amid political unrest, and inter-ethnic violence in the country's south that took hundreds of lives. There is little doubt, however, that the ability of the United Nations to respond to the crisis was greatly enhanced due to the presence of a UN political office in the region — the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

Established in 2007 to help the five nations of the region to address an array of common challenges, UNRCCA, under the leadership of Miroslav Jenca, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Central Asia, has contributed to regional and international efforts to help Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors come to grips with the crisis. The office based in the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat has worked closely with key regional states and organizations to contain tensions, assist in normalizing the political situation, and mobilize aid to those affected by the violence.

The ouster of President Bakiyev in April 2010 came only three days after a visit by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as part of a regional tour. During stops in

several countries the UN chief had urged greater progress on human rights around the region, while also focusing attention on cross-cutting challenges, among them conflicts over water, and environmental catastrophe in the Aral Sea basin.

Since its establishment, UNRCCA has been working intensively to bring the governments of the region together for dialogue on precisely these and other common problems including terrorism, drug trafficking

and spill-over effects from the war in Afghanistan.

When the political crisis broke in Kyrgyzstan, the UN was well positioned to help.

SRSJ Jenca engaged with the provisional government in Bishkek and other national figures, as well as regional leaders, in the tumultuous period after the fall of the former president. He met regularly with representatives of the Interim Government led by Rosa Otunbayeva, herself a former UN official, as well as with civil society, political parties and the international community. Jenca has worked closely with the UN Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team on the ground to ensure effective assistance from the United Nations during all of the different phases of the transition.

Right: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon with UNRCCA chief Miroslav Jenca during the Secretary-General's visit to Central Asia

Below: Jenca meeting in Bishkek with Kyrgyzstan's interim President Roza Otunbayeva

UN Photos





Ethnic Uzbeks displaced from their homes as a result of the June violence in the southern city of Osh

UN Photo

One important area of assistance has been electoral and constitutional support. The UN provided technical advice and assistance in the drafting of a new interim constitution and in the organization of the 27 June referendum in which it was peacefully ratified. A non-voting UN expert sat on the Central Electoral Commission which oversaw the vote.

UN agencies also delivered rapid humanitarian assistance amid difficult conditions following a mid-June outbreak of violence in the country's south that could potentially have derailed the election and plunged the country into chaos. Nearly 400 people were confirmed killed in the violence that pitted ethnic Kyrgyz against Uzbeks in and around the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad. Some 400,000 people fled their homes amid widespread destruction of residences and businesses.

Following the outbreak of violence in June, SRSJ Jenca was among the first international

representatives to travel to southern Kyrgyzstan. UNRCCA was active in mobilizing support for an urgent UN humanitarian assistance effort for the affected population in the South as well as for the estimated 100,000 ethnic Uzbeks who crossed the border in Uzbekistan for safety amid the bloodshed. In June, the Security Council was briefed twice regarding developments in Kyrgyzstan. Today, the main focus has shifted to reconstruction and recovery. A donor conference which the UN helped to organize yielded \$1.1 billion in pledges.

The United Nations is also looking to help Kyrgyzstan through the political challenges ahead. At this writing, the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP were working together to provide technical advice and support to parliamentary elections held in October. Possible UN assistance


to an international inquiry into the June violence was also under discussion. Meanwhile, UNRCCA had set out a range of activities aimed at reducing tensions in Kyrgyzstan, including the holding of reconciliation meetings and forums with ethnic communities, state authorities and civil society groups.

REGIONAL PARTNERS

Briefing members of the Security Council in August on the activities of UNRCCA, Jenca stressed the great value of the close cooperation he enjoyed with regional partners in responding throughout the

year to the upheavals in the country — particularly envoys from the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Russia and the Collective

Security Treaty Organization. Jenca cautioned about a possible “heated” run-up to parliament elections, and warned that the relative calm in the country cannot be taken for granted.

“Our continued engagement and assistance to the Kyrgyz government are required in order to prevent a recurrence of violence,” he said. 

The United Nations is looking to help Kyrgyzstan through the political challenges ahead.

Rediscovering Preventive Diplomacy: A View from the United Nations

At a time of growing fatigue internationally with the cost of conflicts and their aftermath, governments and international organizations are placing



USG B. Lynn Pascoe
UN Photo

renewed emphasis on preventive diplomacy as a cost-effective means to stop crises before they escalate. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon drew attention to the importance of preventive diplomacy in his opening address to the 65th General Assembly in September, as did a special summit of the Security Council held on its margins under the presidency of Turkey.

The Department of Political Affairs works at the heart of efforts to reinvigorate the use of preventive diplomacy at the United Nations.

The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, described progress to

date in a speech at the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C. in July 2010. An abridged version of his remarks follows:

Let me begin by thanking Brookings for this opportunity to speak about the work of the United Nations in dealing with conflicts around the world.

While academic studies conclude that conflicts have actually been declining in recent years, it doesn't feel that way from our vantage point in New York. From Sudan to the DRC, Afghanistan to Iraq, Somalia to Madagascar, south Lebanon to south Kyrgyzstan, Nepal to Sri Lanka or the Maldives to Pakistan, there is no shortage of flashpoints to consume our energies.

Crises and conflicts are not disappearing as much as they are

evolving in nature. They are still overtaxing the ability of concerned governments, regional and global institutions to respond.

With more blue helmets in the field than at any time in our history, UN peacekeeping has been straining under the burden of trying to contain conflicts. The global financial crisis has added to the sense of fatigue internationally with the massive cost of far-away conflicts and their aftermath.

At the United Nations, these factors are contributing to a rediscovery or a rebirth, if you will, of preventive diplomacy and mediation as a cost-effective option for dealing with crises. Member states are seeking better tailored

approaches all along the conflict cycle, and in doing so they are having a fresh look at an old art — diplomacy and mediation.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has led this effort in New York. The Security Council is also focusing on this theme, and member states in the developing world, African countries in particular, are among the most enthusiastic.

Preventing conflict is easier said than done, of course. The challenge is to translate this political and rhetorical commitment into effective preventive action in the field. We must become better not only at stabilizing conflicts and easing the suffering they cause, but at preventing and resolving them through political means.

The case for more robust political action for peace in the world's hotspots begins with three simple propositions.

First, at the root of most conflicts that may, or perhaps already have turned violent are political problems requiring political solutions. Second, we know that distrust among national actors in conflict often runs so high that they are unable to arrive at necessary compromises without help in the form of international mediation, facilitation or diplomatic encouragement. Third, we know there is a place for political action before, during and after a conflict.

There is also often a clear need for regional and international mediation to manage tense electoral disputes or to reverse coups or other unconstitutional changes of government. Sometimes a well-managed election is the best form of prevention available.

In rising to meet these challenges, the United Nations neither starts from scratch nor does it usually work alone. We have a substantial track record in peacemaking, a relatively united Security Council in support of our actions, and ever-stronger partnerships with key governments and regional organizations.

Our main platforms today for preventive diplomacy in the field are the dozen or so “political missions” present in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. These include the UN missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well in Nepal, Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic. We have regional missions in Central Asia and West Africa and are now well advanced in setting up a third one in Central Africa.

These are relatively lean, inexpensive, civilian operations that can achieve impressive results:

In Iraq, UNAMI has helped broker compromises and offered expertise to keep elections on

track as well to encourage dialogue on explosive issues such as the future of Kirkuk.

In Lebanon, the diplomatic activity of our Beirut-based political envoy adds to the role of UN peacekeepers in smoothing tensions in the South and easing problems with regional neighbors.

In Sierra Leone last year, the head of our political mission literally scampered to the roof of building in Freetown to defuse a situation that could have triggered a relapse into conflict.

Our West Africa-focused envoy based in Dakar has played a very helpful role along with ECOWAS and African Union mediators and governments including the United States and France in responding to coups and electoral crises through the region.

Last, I should mention Kyrgyzstan, and the efforts of our Regional Office for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia to help ease the crisis there.

Most of these efforts are mentioned only infrequently, if at all, in the press, but this kind of quiet political intervention by the UN can pay great dividends for very little cost.

We also face a number of obstacles in increasing the scope and effectiveness of UN action in preventive diplomacy.

First, governments and leaders sometimes do not want outside assistance until a problem has escalated

beyond their control.

A second set of challenges to boosting our capacity is financial. In contrast to peacekeeping, political missions remain on the UN’s regular budget process, which is less capable of responding to fast-breaking crises. We have so far been able to bridge the gap only through extra-budgetary funding.

The third set of challenges relates to our own professionalism. Effective diplomacy and mediation is not only about being there and being fast. It is also about being good at what we do. Envoys need well-trained staff support, and adequate funding and logistics. They must have at their fingertips the lessons learned from past and comparative experience as they take on a new mediation challenges. This is the unglamorous reality behind the scenes of a mediation effort, but it can make or break the operation.

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USG B. Lynn Pascoe appearing at the Brookings Institute, July 2010

Brookings Photo



Burundi after the elections

Four years after the departure of UN peacekeepers from Burundi, a tense cycle of elections held in 2010 demonstrated both the progress and the considerable political challenges still ahead in building lasting peace and reconciliation in the country.

however the vote was complicated by political controversy. International, regional and national observers declared the elections had been credible, however Burundi's main opposition party alleged fraud and withdrew after the first round of communal-level voting. While fears of



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arriving ahead of elections in Burundi, June 2010

UN Photo

The Central African nation became a key concern of the Department of Political Affairs during the past year as DPA took on oversight of BINUB, the integrated United Nations political office in the country. The office based in Bujumbura works under a Security Council mandate to help consolidate peace agreements that ended a 13-year civil war.

Multistage elections held between May and September were seen as a critical milestone,

renewed violence never materialized, the extent of national reconciliation and democratic progress was called into question.

During a visit to Bujumbura in June, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon encouraged the country's leaders to resolve differences through dialogue in order to sustain the important progress in the peace process. "Burundi stands at a crossroads," he said during a speech to leaders at the national parliament.

IMPORTANT PROGRESS

Despite ongoing difficulties, Burundi has taken important strides forward since ethnic violence between Hutus and Tutsis ravaged Rwanda's neighbour in the 1990s.

Peace accords signed in 2000 in Arusha, Tanzania envisioned a new constitution with an alternating presidency and ethnically-balanced institutions designed to blunt the potential for conflict. South African mediation played an important role. A first set of democratic elections came off successfully in 2005 under the watchful presence of UN blue helmets.

Subsequent cease-fires have brought remaining rebel groups into the political process despite flare-ups. Progress has been considerable in the reintegration of more than 30,000 former combatants and 1.5 million refugees and IDPs. That this year's election

dispute failed to spark violence was a sign for many observers that Burundian civil society, media and the broader population have become less susceptible to ethnic incitement.


Burundi has also reached world-class levels of representation by women in high public office. More than a third of the officials voted or named into office in the recent elections were women, including 9 of 21 ministers and nearly half of the Senate.



Woman voting in Burundi's landmark 2005 elections

UN Photo

to keep opposition forces engaged with a system in which they have little representation.

United Nations assistance will need to be tailored to fit the evolving circumstances in the country. This was the focus of a September 2010 visit to the country by B. Lynn Pascoe, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. At this writing, discussions were underway at the request of Burundi's government to target the activities of BINUB on several key challenges that remain in the peace process. Mobilizing aid resources and providing political assistance to promote dialogue and reconciliation are likely to be among the priorities of BINUB in the period ahead. 

Still, other key promises of the peace remained unfulfilled.

For people of one of the world's poorest nations, the economic dividends of peace have been scarce. Burundi's already fragile economy was shattered further by the conflict. More than two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty line today, and the government's budget is highly dependent on donor funding.

Burundi's presence on the agenda of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission is a factor that may help to sustain international aid and attention.

POLITICAL TASKS AHEAD

The political tasks ahead are also steep.

President Pierre Nkurunziza has pledged to address transitional justice issues that remain high on the agenda of civil society. Agreements reached in the peace process envisioned the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Special Tribunal to prosecute

allegations of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

Reconciliation will also require work. After re-taking the executive and obtaining landslide parliamentary majorities in the elections, the governing party will be challenged


Rediscovering Preventive Diplomacy

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The Department of Political Affairs is making a concerted effort to fill this mediation support gap. We have set up a Mediation Support Unit to back up our regional desks. We are helping regional organizations like the African Union to develop their own mediation capacities and nurturing the close ties necessary to enable us to address crises together.

Progress aside, the United Nations and the international community as whole still have a

long way to go before they can reliably predict, prevent and respond through diplomacy to reduce the extent of conflict around the world. Some drivers of conflict, including economic and social disparities and the unpredictable whims of leaders, are beyond the immediate reach of preventive diplomacy. We also know that for every case in which preventive diplomacy succeeds, there will be others in which it falls short of its goals.

Political will — the number one ingredient for peace — cannot easily be generated where it's lacking. That said, we at the United Nations are in a much better position today than we were even three years ago to make a positive contribution. 

Nepal: a final push for peace

For those who have closely followed the peace process in Nepal, there was something dramatically different this time around when the UN Security Council resolved this past September to extend once again the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). This extension would be the last, the Council said. UNMIN would be depart in January 2011.

If, by taking this action, the Security Council intended to jolt Nepal's government and political parties back into focusing on what has been an increasingly troubled peace process, early returns were promising. Editorial pages in Nepal's newspapers carried strong calls urging the government and the party of the former Maoist rebels to utilize the remaining months to resolve the most contentious issue that has slowed the peace process to a crawl: the future of over 19,000 Maoist combatants who remain housed in cantonment sites across Nepal.

The parties promptly announced they had agreed to activate a Special Committee established under the peace process with responsibility for overseeing and managing the Maoist combatants. As a first step, the combatants were formally brought under the Committee's purview — a milestone on the road to their eventual integration or rehabilitation. And,

hopefully, toward the smooth conclusion of UNMIN's mandate.

Peace was signed in November 2006 after a decade-long conflict that claimed at least 13,000 lives and caused enormous suffering in the country. The UN quickly mounted its political mission to support the peace process, however UNMIN's stay in the country— along with the peace

process itself — has gone on much longer than originally intended.

When the mission was established by the Security Council in January 2007, UNMIN was given two tasks — to assist national authorities in conducting the election to a Constituent Assembly; and to monitor the weapons of Maoist combatants, as well as a similar number of weapons of the Nepal Army, to ensure that the elections were free and fair. After the elections, it was hoped the two sides would quickly either integrate the Maoist combatants into national security forces or rehabilitate them back into society, and

Right: UNMIN chief Karin Landgren attends a ceremony for the discharge of minors from Maoist ranks

Below: Maoist soldier overlooks discharge of a group of minors

UN Photos



there would be no more need for UNMIN's monitoring obligations.

It is to Nepal's credit that the first task was successfully completed in April 2008. Millions of Nepalis voted to elect the most diverse and inclusive Legislature-Parliament in the nation's history. Its very first act was to dissolve the country's monarchy and declare Nepal a Republic. This same body also serves as the Constituent Assembly tasked with drafting a new inclusive constitution. However, the process of integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist combatants failed to get off the ground as disputes between parties grew after the elections, eventually slowing down the peace process.

FREQUENT EXTENSIONS

The government and parties frequently requested the Security Council to extend UNMIN's mandate in six and four month instalments — hoping to reach agreements within that time. They made little practical progress, however, in creating the conditions for its departure. UNMIN was left to continue its monitoring obligations without an end in sight.

UNMIN's chief and the Secretary-General's Representative in Nepal, Karin Landgren, has emphasized the need for the parties to resolve this matter in order to successfully complete the peace process. Her message has been reinforced at the highest levels by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and during several visits to the country

Nepal still hosts two armies — one from the government side, and another from the opposition Maoists.

during 2010 by B. Lynn Pascoe, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

That thousands of Maoist combatants remained in temporary shelters even after four years of the peace process is a constant reminder that Nepal still hosts two armies — one from the government side, and another from the opposition Maoists. As such, while the actual

fighting may have ended with the signing of a ceasefire agreement in 2006, the existence of two opposing armies continues to pose significant risks to the country.

The job for Nepal's policy-makers is therefore clear cut: if durable peace and stability is to return,

the future of the two armies must be decided. It is in this area the UN hopes that progress will be made in the coming months.

At this writing, Nepali leaders were expressing confidence they could complete the integration and rehabilitation process during the remaining months of the Mission's mandate. Landgren offered encouragement: "From our side, we will concentrate in these four months on two things: one is to provide the maximum support we can to the peace process, and the other is on making the arrangements for an orderly withdrawal of UNMIN."

The UN hopes that the same spirit of cooperation which enabled the peace process to begin in the first place will eventually help its successful completion.



Above: A senior UN delegation meets with Nepal's Prime Minister in October 2010. From left, Tamrat Samuel, Director, Asia and Pacific Division, DPA; UNMIN chief and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Karin Landgren; B. Lynn Pascoe, USG for Political Affairs; Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal

Right: USG Pascoe being briefed by UN arms monitors in Nepal

UN Photos



Preventing Electoral Conflict in Solomon Islands

Recent elections for parliament and the prime minister of Solomon Islands stood out more for what did not happen than what did. The August 2010 polls on the sprawling Pacific archipelago went off peacefully, with no repeat of the violence that marred elections four years earlier — a result attributable at least in part to the effective presence of international observers coordinated by the United Nations.

DPA ASSISTANCE

The Department of Political Affairs worked closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to mount and oversee the work of an international coordination team deployed to the country by DPA's Electoral Assistance Division at the request of Solomon Islands' government. That just over 70 observers were able to cover

38 percent of the polling sites across the nation was a feat widely praised as having helped to generate confidence in the process.

Violence concerns ahead of the key vote stemmed from the lingering effects of the civil unrest that plagued the Solomon Islands during the 1990s.

Clashes triggered initially by land disputes between the peoples of two of the main islands, Guadalcanal and Malaita, led to open warfare, resulting in hundreds of deaths.

Peace agreements struck in 2000 were insufficient to stem the conflict, leading to the deployment of an Australian-led peacekeeping force, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which continues to help maintain stability in the country.

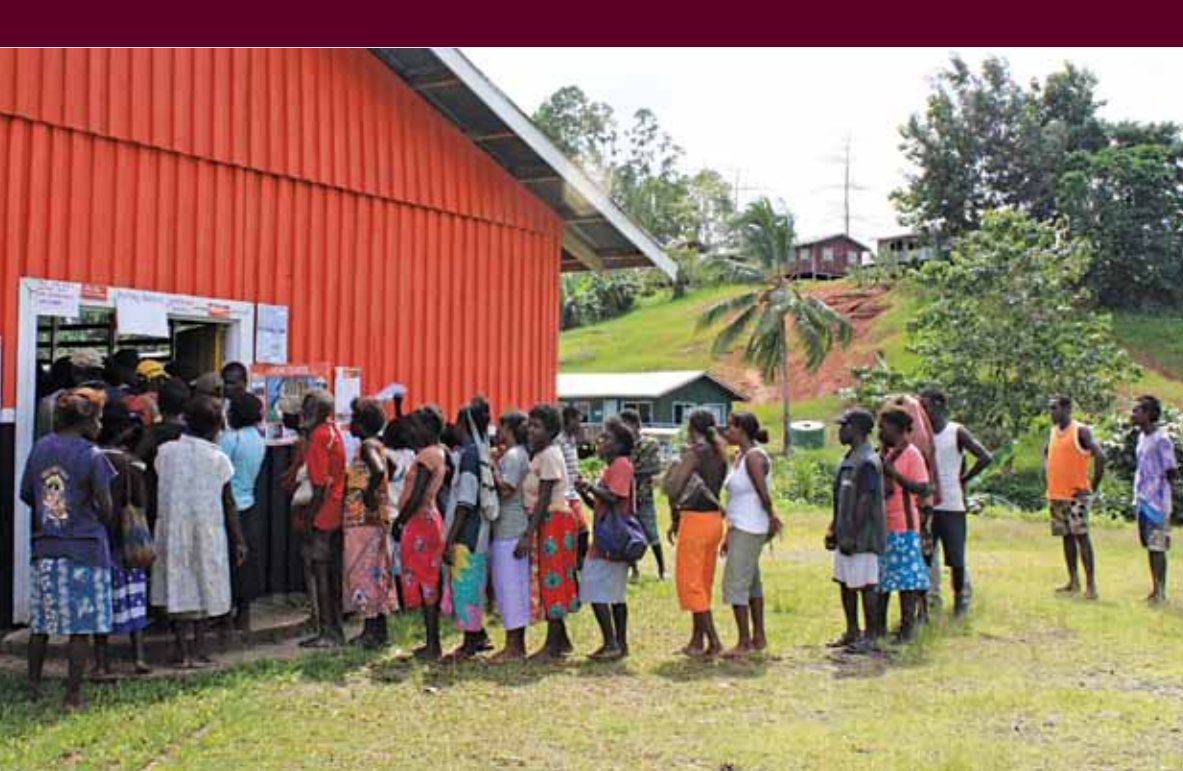
UN electoral assistance to the country began in 2001, when DPA deployed an Electoral Expert Monitoring Team to the country for the first post-conflict parliamentary voting. In 2006, the UN had its first experience coordinating the deployment of international observers to Solomon Islands elections. The 2010 election was, therefore, the third post-conflict election; its peaceful and successful conduct was seen as an important milestone in the political evolution of the country.

FEAR OF VIOLENCE

One of the main concerns was the possibility of post-election violence. Under the Solomon Islands electoral system, the election of the Prime Minister, often referred to as the “Second Election”, takes place two or three weeks after the parliamentary elections, when the winning members of the new parliament convene their first meeting to decide who will be the Prime Minister. In 2006, the parliamentary elections went well and results were not challenged, but the results

One of the main concerns was the possibility of post-election violence.





Voters queuing up during August 2010 parliamentary elections in Solomon Islands

Commonwealth Photo

deploy to as many locations as possible. On the 4th of August, election-day for the 50-seat parliament, the observers were present in seven of the country's nine provinces plus the capital city Honiara, covering 335 polling stations in all.

The UN continued to support crucial observation tasks through to the counting process

and the 25 August election of the Prime Minister by the parliament. Government consent was secured to permit a small group of five of the UN-coordinated observers (from the UK, US, Pacific Islands Forum, Japan and New Zealand) inside the parliament premises as parliament chose The Hon. Danny Philip as the country's new prime minister.

The best preventive measure of all was a credibly-run election.

Although violence and controversy were largely avoided, the electoral process in Solomon Islands was not perfect. Observers

pointed to the need for substantial reforms in order to, among other things, provide better opportunities for women to be represented in the parliament, and to address serious concerns with respect to the voters list. More broadly, promoting development, maintaining a spirit of unity and reconciliation, and fighting corruption will be among the many sizeable challenges ahead for newly-elected authorities.

of the second stage were rejected by sections of the public. Violent rioting, looting, and arson swept the capital, Honiara. Hundreds of people were displaced or had to flee the country.

With this bitter experience still fresh in mind, Solomon Islanders mobilized with international support to prevent a repeat of the same dynamic in 2010.

Local security forces, along with RAMSI, stepped up security arrangements to discourage problems before, during or after the voting. Solomon Islands Election Commission (SIEC) and civil society organizations organized extensive voter education and outreach programs. Domestic observers were more involved than ever before and media was active in voter awareness and in reporting on the elections.

International Observer during August 2010 parliamentary elections in Solomon Islands

Commonwealth Photo

OBSERVERS' VERDICT

Of course the best preventive measure of all was a credibly-run election. International observers commended the people and authorities of Solomon Islands for conducting the elections in an "orderly, peaceful and transparent" manner and stressed that the election met democratic benchmarks.

The UN Election Observation Coordination Team (EOCT) did its part by successfully coordinating the presence of more than 70 international observers from the Commonwealth, Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP), Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom, United States and New Zealand. The team organized briefings before deployment for the observers, liaised with authorities to ensure international observers would get access to polling stations, and provided logistical support so they could

Panels, inquiries and investigative mandates: an expanding frontier

continued from page 3

little confidence in the professionalism of judicial authorities. Getting to the bottom of a crime or an incident can help to prevent or reduce political conflict.

“These entities are often preventive in nature even if that is not formally part of their mandate,” observed B. Lynn Pascoe, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. “By providing an impartial

account of controversial events they can help to depoliticize issues and overcome trust deficits that have accumulated over years of conflict.”

The recently established Gaza

Flotilla Panel of Inquiry, for example, was established not only to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident, but to make recommendations that could prevent

their recurrence. One member each from Israel and Turkey serves

“These entities are often preventive in nature even if that is not formally part of their mandate,” observed B. Lynn Pascoe.

in the four-member panel. The Secretary-General expressed hope that its work would contribute to improving bilateral relations which had become strained over the incident.

The Ghana-Gambia inquiry was credited with helping to restore good relations after these were upset by the mysterious deaths of the Ghanaian migrants. CICIG in Guatemala earned praise for its professional investigation in the 2009 killing of a prominent lawyer, a case that had seemingly threatened to destabilize the government.

The increase in inquiries has been driven largely by the demand from Member States. Success has bred more requests, although not all situations may be ideally suited to such a mechanism.

Turning the tide on Somalia?

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importing livestock from Somalia, to various Japanese interests to a Somali tuna canning company.

Somalis have never stopped doing business amid the strife. Despite nearly two decades without a stable central government, there are an estimated 1.5 million mobile phone lines in the country today. The diaspora sends over \$1 billion in remittances every year.

While continuing previous efforts to reach out to the diaspora,

SRSB Mahiga has also expressed a strong desire to increase UNPOS’ physical presence on the ground, including in Mogadishu, as security conditions permit.

At present, the Nairobi-based office reports there are more than 60 international UN staff based inside Somalia along with nearly

800 national staff, from various UN agencies, delivering humanitarian assistance and implementing recovery and development programs. The UN and NGOs are responding to the 2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance through services such as health and nutrition activities, water and education.

USG Pascoe speaking with African Union peacekeepers in Somalia



On the Web: DPA Remakes its Online Presence

Through the recent launch of a revamped public website and its first departmental intranet, DPA is burnishing its online presence to improve external and internal communications.

DPA's external website, launched in August, remains at www.un.org/depts/dpa. The overhaul aims to provide to audiences and partners a more engaging, comprehensive and up-to-date presentation of the work of the Department.

New features include:

A more dynamic home page with images, video and regularly updated news on political issues managed by DPA;

- Greater visibility for UN political missions and good offices efforts in the field;
- Enhanced presentation of regional and thematic priorities as well as UN electoral assistance activities and the UN peacemaker website
- Expanded content on emerging themes such as preventive diplomacy and mediation support, cooperation with regional organizations and counter-terrorism;
- More information for donors and member states on voluntary funding and requesting assistance.



Meanwhile, DPA unveiled its intranet to UN staff at the end of September with the expectation that it will become a valuable tool for bringing internal communications and knowledge-sharing up to speed with the Department's increasingly operational approach in the field. The site unites in one single location a wide and expanding range of Departmental resources. While primarily for use within and between DPA and its field operations, the intranet contains information that can be of interest to staff more broadly. It can be accessed by all UN Secretariat staff at Headquarters and in the field directly or through iSeek, the global UN intranet.



The site provides easy access to DPA policies and best practices, and provides a "toolbox" to make it easier to develop continuous learning based on staff experience. An interactive DPA Forum will bring staff together through an online discussion board.

In announcing the launch, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe encouraged DPA staff to be actively engaged with the new intranet in order to ensure that it fulfils its potential.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

The Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, travelled to **Sri Lanka** in June 2010 for discussions on the status of post-war reconciliation and recovery efforts. It was his third visit to Sri Lanka since the end of country's armed conflict in 2009.

In late-August and early-September, USG Pascoe carried out a five-nation trip to the **Horn of Africa** focusing especially on the situation in Somalia. The mission included stops in **Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea** and **Djibouti** and **Kenya**, where USG Pascoe also represented the Secretary-General at ceremonies in Nairobi to mark the adoption of Kenya's new constitution. Before returning to New York, USG Pascoe stopped in **Burundi** for discussions with government and non-governmental representatives and a visit to the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB).

USG Pascoe visited **Nepal** in October, his second trip to the country in 2010, for consultations aimed at promoting forward movement in the peace process and an orderly departure of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council.

* * *

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tayé-Brook Zerihoun accompanied the **Secretary-General** to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon in June 2010. In July, he travelled to Ethiopia to

meet with the UN senior officials and staff members on the newly established United Nations Office to the African Union, before heading to Uganda where he headed the UN Headquarters delegation to the 17th ordinary session of the Executive Council of Ministers. ASG Zerihoun then joined the UN delegation led by the Deputy Secretary-General for the 15th Ordinary Session of the African Union from 24 to 27 July in Kampala, and participated in the multilateral meeting on Somalia, as well as bilateral meetings with the AU Chairperson, the Presidents of the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, the Vice-President of Burundi, and the Prime Ministers of Rwanda and Lesotho.

* * *

As part of the growing cooperation between DPA and UNDP on conflict prevention, **Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco** and Mr. Jordan Ryan, Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme,



Oscar Fernandez-Taranco briefing the Security Council on the Middle East

convened a May 2010 donor lunch hosted by the Permanent Mission of **Switzerland** to share experiences and exchange views on the UN's work under the **DPA-UNDP Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention**. New funding agreements have since been signed by **Finland** and **Sweden** in support of this collaboration. Later in May, ASG Fernandez-Taranco accompanied the **Secretary-General** on his trip to **Canada** to discuss preparations for the **G-8/G-20 Summits**. Mr. Fernandez-Taranco also co-chaired a May roundtable with the World Bank with the participation of **43 representatives from the UN, the World Bank, regional organizations, and academia** to exchange views and experiences on different approaches to **conflict prevention** and to explore the potential for closer collaboration. He participated in a lessons-learned meeting on the **International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)** in **Stockholm**. In the context of the political unrest in **Kyrgyzstan**, ASG Fernandez-Taranco briefed the **Security Council** during June on UN preventive diplomacy aimed at reducing tension and promoting dialogue. In August, he briefed the Security Council on the **situation in the Middle East**.

* * *

DPA Support to General Assembly Committees

Palestinian Rights. DPA's Division for Palestinian Rights continued to support the work of the Committee on the Exercise

of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People by organizing a number of events. The **United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process** was held in **Istanbul**, on 25 and 26 May 2010 under the theme

“Ending the occupation and establishing the Palestinian State.” Its primary goal was to examine the political context, including the status of the peace process, and identify concrete ways to advance the Palestinian Authority’s State-building agenda launched in

2009. **Robert Serry**, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, represented the Secretary-General. The meeting was followed on 27 May by the United Nations Public Forum which focused on Jerusalem as the key to Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine held in **Rabat, Morocco**, on 1 and 2 July 2010 continued the **Jerusalem** theme, highlighting the city’s religious, cultural and political importance,

Jerusalem’s status under international law, its significance as a final status issue, and examining the role African and other States could play to promote a solution. The Secretary-General was represented by **Bader Al-Dafa**, ESCWA Executive Secretary.

Invited to the above-mentioned events were internationally renowned experts, including Israelis and Palestinians, representatives of United Nations Members and Observers, inter-governmental organizations, United Nations system entities, civil society organizations and the media. Additional information can be found on the “Question of Palestine” website maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights at <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/home.htm>

* * *

Decolonization. December 2010 marks both the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the

STAFF NEWS

Tayé-Brook Zerihoun was sworn in as Assistant-Secretary-General for Political Affairs in May 2010, bringing to the job nearly twenty years of previous experience with the United Nations in areas including decolonization, trusteeship, conflict prevention and resolution, peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Mr. Zerihoun was most recently, since April 2008, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and Head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Before that, Mr. Zerihoun served as the Acting Special Representative of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) from October 2006 until October 2007, where he also served as the Secretary-General’s Principal Deputy Representative since August 2004 and Chief United Nations Mediator for the Darfur Peace Talks in support of the efforts of Special Envoy Jan Eliasson. Between 1995 and 2003, Mr. Zerihoun served initially as Deputy and then Director of the Africa I Division in the Department of Political Affairs, with responsibility for the countries of the Horn of Africa, Great Lakes and Southern Africa regions.



ASG Tayé-Brook Zerihoun

Horst Heitmann was named in August 2010 as Director of DPA’s Middle East and West Asia Division. Mr. Heitmann was previously Director of DPA’s Security Council Affairs Division. He is a veteran DPA official who has also served as Chief of the DPA’s Security Council Secretariat Branch and prior to that as Deputy Director in the Asia and Pacific Division. Mr. Heitmann replaced Lisa Buttenheim following her appointment as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cyprus. **Laura Vaccari** is the chief of DPA’s Decolonization Unit since April 2010. She joined DPA in 1992 where she served most recently as Deputy Director of the Europe division and as chief of the regional organizations unit. In addition to the Office of the Secretary-General and in Security Council affairs, Ms. Vaccari also served in UN missions in Iraq, Central America and Cyprus. Ms. Vaccari replaces **Freda Mackay**, who moved to the Policy and Mediation Division of DPA as Chief for Policy, Regional Organizations and Guidance.



USG Pascoe visiting with resettled war refugees in Sri Lanka, June 2010


UNMIN Photo

50th anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Special Committee on decolonization (C-24) convened the Pacific regional seminar — which was held in Nouméa, New Caledonia, from 18 to 20 May — to assess progress made in decolonization and to consider the next steps in the context of calls for a Third International Decade, with a view toward completing its historic task. Among the topics discussed was the assistance to the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories under the purview of

the C-24 Committee, including from the United Nations system agencies and programmes. This was a special occasion as the 2010 decolonization seminar was held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, affording participants the opportunity to get to know first-hand conditions on the ground. DPA's Decolonization Unit provided full support to the seminar's substantive preparation, proceedings and follow-up.

* * *

UN-SADC Cooperation. In September 2010, on the margins

of the 65th General Assembly, the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) signed a framework agreement to enable closer cooperation on issues vital to peace and security in the region including conflict prevention, mediation and elections. Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe characterized the agreement, which he signed with SADC Executive-Secretary Tomáz Augusto Salomão, as “the first step towards a very valuable partnership. The Framework for Cooperation aims to strengthen and draw upon both organizations’ capacities, including SADC’s knowledge and understanding of the region and the mediation, peacemaking and peacebuilding experience of DPA. A DPA liaison team deployed to SADC’s headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana, will help to implement the agreement. 

POLITICALLY
speaking

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