

Mr. Mahmoud: I thank you, Sir, for inviting me to address the Security Council on such an important subject.

The purpose of my briefing is twofold. First, it is to present to the Council the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations' (HIPPO) view of the conceptual and attitudinal shifts that need to be internalized by peace operations if they are to unleash their potential to contribute to sustaining peace. Secondly, it is to share with the Security Council some of the practical implications of those shifts, in terms of the design, implementation and review of peacekeeping operations.

The report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/446) devotes some 10 pages to the issue of sustaining peace. Its main thrust is to unpack the spirit and the letter of its title, which calls for "uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people". HIPPO views sustaining peace as the ultimate objective of United Nations postconflict engagement, in which inclusive politics and the people in that inclusive plurality, including women and youth, play a central role.

What are the shifts advocated by HIPPO for the purpose of sustaining peace? Let me just mention three of them. The first is to acknowledge that countries emerging from conflict are not blank pages and their people are not projects. Internal actors at all levels of society are the main agents of peace. That means that our efforts to help sustain peace should be motivated by humility to learn from what still works well in countries emerging from conflict and to respect that every society, however broken it may appear, has capacities and assets, not just needs and vulnerabilities. Such an approach goes against the grain of the practices of some outside interveners who believe that countries in conflict lack the competency and resources to address their own predicament.

That myopia leads me to the second shift advocated by HIPPO, namely, the need to challenge the assumptions and values that underpin some of the supply-driven templates and technical approaches and solutions that are regular staples in the mandates of a number of peacekeeping operations. Strengthening central State institutions, for example, is believed to create the conditions for peace. However, that approach ignores the fact that State institutions, as they are being strengthened, tend to be in the thrall of domestic ruling elites who are concerned more about power than governance and susceptible "to corruption by powerful groups".

The third shift advocated by HIPPO is politics — legitimate politics, I hasten to add. Lasting peace is neither achieved nor sustained through military and technical engagements, but through political solutions. Peace processes do not end with a ceasefire or a peace agreement, which simply mean that belligerents have decided, sometimes through coercive diplomacy, to move from violence to politics, a transition usually fraught with uncertainties and reversals. HIPPO contends that politics is the best force multiplier where missions are deployed in hostile environments.

Therefore, what are the practical implications of those three shifts? Let me mention two.

First, there is a need to rethink the way that we analyse peace and conflict when planning and reviewing peace operations. Such analysis should not only assess the factors that drive and sustain violence and instability, it should also map what is still working and not just what needs to be fixed. Such mapping would include surveys of the resilient capacities that host societies and ordinary people are using to peacefully manage conflict and subsist in the direst of circumstances. It would also assess other determinants of peace, such as the commitments of domestic, bilateral

and regional stakeholders to the cause of peace, accompanied by an inventory of their respective interests and comparative advantages. Given that the drivers of instability tend to be transnational in origin and effect, the analysis should assess those drivers from a regional perspective. And because women and youth experience conflict differently, specific measures should be taken to ensure their unique perspectives are taken into account at every step of that analytical exercise. Let me hasten to add that several peacekeeping missions are undertaking aspects of that type of analysis, including through surveys. But I suspect that sustaining peace is not the overarching organizing framework for collecting and processing information.

The second practical implication of the shifts is the development of a strategic compact for sustaining peace. That could be initiated in response to a specific and firm request from the Security Council. The compact would articulate a shared, context-sensitive understanding of what sustaining peace means in accordance with the spirit and the letter of resolution 2282 (2016). It would outline, on the basis of the analysis I just discussed, the primary responsibilities of the host country and other national stakeholders, as well as the supportive role of the United Nations system on the ground under the leadership of an empowered Resident Coordinator. The compact would also include time-bound performance benchmarks to ensure mutual accountability and facilitate reporting. It would be a strategic framework that would ensure inclusive national ownership and the primacy of legitimate politics. In addition, it would enable the mission to execute its mandate from a long term, sustaining-peace perspective, whether the task is the extension of State authority or the protection of civilians.

The compact would also respond to the call by the Secretary-General and others to build synergies among the three foundational pillars of the United Nations and to put “we the peoples” at the centre of United Nations engagement. The pillars, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, would flow through the compact in an integrated manner. It would also provide a natural home for people-centred approaches, particularly if the compact is vetted through a standing civil society consultative body.

I recognize that this is a tall order, and attempts have been made, particularly in peacekeeping missions serving in challenging political contexts where host Governments are unable or unwilling to cooperate. But without a shift in mindset and an up-front investment in strategic analysis and an inclusive compact-building process for the sake of peace, the United Nations, in my view, will continue to deploy peacekeepers into hostile environments with little or no peace to keep, where at times the line between peacekeeping and peace enforcement becomes blurred and where the primary focus during review periods is largely on meeting the pressing operational and logistical requirements for overstretched missions.

In conclusion, the next time peacekeeping operations come up for review, particularly those with “stabilization” as their middle name, I humbly suggest that the Council consider the following four questions.

First, does the mission have dedicated capacity at the highest level to generate and cultivate legitimate political solutions?

Secondly, does the mission have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to regularly conduct strategic, integrated and participatory analyses to identify how it can contribute to sustaining peace?

Thirdly, does the mission have a binding, strategic compact and an exit strategy that, in addition to its intrinsic mandated objectives, are explicitly designed to contribute to the overarching goal of sustaining peace?

Fourthly, and lastly, does it have mission-wide consultative mechanisms that put people at the centre and to ensure inclusive national ownership and effective trust-building?

The answers to those questions and the debates they may generate might offer the Council, with the advisory support of the Peacebuilding Commission, an opportunity to include in mission mandates provisions that can enhance their potential to contribute to sustaining peace, guided by the spirit and the letter of HIPPO recommendations and the sustaining peace resolutions.