

Summary of Australia-Uruguay Workshop on the Protection of Civilians¹

“Institutionalising the protection of civilians in UN peacekeeping”

1. On 10 February 2015, the Permanent Missions of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations co-hosted their seventh in a series of workshops on the protection of civilians (POC) in UN peacekeeping. The workshop provided a forum for over 160 participants to exchange views on the developments and remaining gaps to enable more effective planning, preparation and support for military, police and civilian peacekeepers on POC. A list of the panelists is at Attachment A.
2. Peacekeeping missions continue to face a range of challenges with implementation of POC, including when state capacity is limited or non-existent, or when the UN peacekeeping mission is perceived as a party to a conflict. Effective leadership, improved training efforts, enhanced capabilities, technologies and innovations, and accountability and performance mechanisms have all been identified as areas that can increase effectiveness on POC. Overall, the workshop reflected the need for stakeholders to focus on mission effectiveness in the field to effect change on the ground for local populations.
3. **First Session:** This session examined the developments that had taken place to address the policy, planning and preparedness gaps on POC in UN peacekeeping, focusing on the implementation of guidance and training. The following key points were raised by the panelists and/or the audience:
 - **Effective POC implementation is contingent on the triangular partnership** between the UN Security Council, the UN and troop- and police-contributing countries.
 - The POC Policy and associated guidance will constitute the foundation for **institutionalizing and professionalizing** POC in peacekeeping.
 - **Managing expectations remains a key challenge for missions.** Wherever a UN peacekeeping mission is deployed, local populations and authorities have an expectation that the UN peacekeeping force will ensure protection from physical violence.
 - **Protection is at the core of humanitarian action.** Humanitarian policy and response strategies are informed by the need to minimize the various risks people face and ensure **full respect of the rights** of all populations affected by armed conflict and disaster.
 - **Tensions arise between peacekeeping missions’ mandated tasks to protect civilians from violence, and tasks of extending state authority or capacity, and reporting on human rights abuses, particularly when these involve elements of the host States.**
 - **The Human Rights Due Diligence Policy** has been an important development which sets out measures that all UN entities must take to ensure that any support that they may provide to non-UN forces is consistent with the purposes and principles as set out in the UN Charter and with its responsibility to respect, promote and encourage respect for international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. The importance of adhering to the policy has been stressed by the Security Council in a number of resolutions establishing or extending the mandates of peacekeeping operations - MINUSMA, UNOCI, MONUSCO, MINUSCA and UNMISS.
 - **Effective and inclusive mission coordination mechanisms are crucial for protection, including in mission planning and reporting processes.** Collaboration across mission components and section, as well as between peacekeeping missions and humanitarian partners, is a prerequisite for ensuring early warning and early response.

¹ This background note has been prepared for the purpose of stimulating discussion at the workshop on protection of civilians in UN peacekeeping operations. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian or Uruguayan governments.

- The **Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes** offers a useful reference tool for mission assessment and planning, especially to plan for, and better prevent or mitigate, worst-case protection scenarios.
 - Missions with POC mandates are **continuously faced with the need to adapt to quickly changing circumstances**. UNMISS had to rapidly adjust when civilians sought refuge within its bases and quickly developed guidance to support UN Police and Formed Police Units to ensure the safety and security of displaced civilians.
4. **Second Session:** This session analyzed the threats, challenges and opportunities emerging from POC mandated missions, as well as the implications that the developments discussed in the first session will have for POC in peacekeeping. It focused on MONUSCO and UNMISS as examples of missions facing challenging POC environments, but also where POC innovation has taken place. The following key points were raised by the panelists and/or the audience:
- **Sustainable peace is the ultimate form of protection from physical violence for civilians.**
 - **POC advisers play a major part in the effort to institutionalise and professionalise a whole-of-mission approach to POC. The POC Coordination Team in UN Headquarters has also been instrumental in this regard.**
 - **Senior mission leadership is essential** for providing the vision, direction, and oversight for POC implementation, and to ensure accountability within the mission. Mission leaders are best-placed to mobilise resources and spearhead innovative, and proactive, approaches to protection.
 - **UN Police are increasingly playing a role in implementing POC mandates** across a range of roles, including in influencing cultural change in host-government institutions on POC and building host-government capacity for upholding their primary responsibility to protect civilians.
 - **Proactive postures as well as preventative and pre-emptive action can neutralise threats to civilians. Peacekeeping forces must aim to become more proactive, flexible and agile.** For example, UNMISS established forward operating bases in Malakal and Bentiu to improve security and thereby encourage civilians to return to the towns.
 - **Peacekeeping missions need both improved situation awareness and early warning mechanisms. Patrolling to meet a number of patrol hours is not sufficient POC – interaction with communities is key.** In MONUSCO, civilian-led tools such as Community Liaison Assistants and Community Alert network systems assist in addressing threats to local communities. Such tools were established to bring civilian expertise to support military POC action through situational awareness and a focus on prevention through the development of community protection plans.
 - **Effective and inclusive mission coordination mechanisms are crucial, and the most difficult ongoing challenge faced by missions is effective intelligence gathering and analysis to ensure that early warning is translated into early response.** MONUSCO has established coordination mechanisms at several levels which are also supported by a package of innovative practices and tools, including a joint planning process (including with the host security forces), mission-wide processes to capture information on priority protection threats in a POC threat matrix, and engagement with humanitarian protection actors to identify priority protection areas.
 - **Greater use of new technologies** would assist with improving **overall situational awareness** and enhance a multitude of capabilities, potentially contributing to overall protection efforts and to enhancing the mission's ability to identify threats to civilians and to respond quicker. Meanwhile, missions must continue to fully exhaust existing and more rudimentary intelligence gathering capabilities.