



Strategic Communications for the New Era of UN Peace Operations

Challenges Forum Workshop

Co-Hosted by the United States Institute of Peace and the Folke Bernadotte Academy

United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 23 June 2015, 0930-1630 hrs.

Thematic Focus and Concept

What is required for UN peace operations to have a positive, significant and lasting impact and assist in the transition from conflict to peace, to sustainable development? A variety of factors are in play, but lessons learned clearly shows that international engagements are unlikely to succeed without robust and carefully considered Strategic Communications, that use a variety of techniques to explain, clarify and advocate the mission of UN peace operations to key target audiences.

UN missions are increasingly deployed into volatile and inhospitable environments, faced by new threats that require a range of creative and innovative responses. Peacekeeping is a partnership, between the UN, its member states but also civilians in need of protection, and in order to manage evolving expectations and build lasting support among central constituencies, a broad based, well-resourced and accurately evaluated strategic communication plan is required.

Peace operations do not generally succeed through the threat or actual use of military force alone. UN peace operations strive to combine its unique mixture of 'soft' and 'hard' power to create peace and stability. UN missions have begun to move from crisis communications and more classic 20th Century public information capacities to a more modern strategic communications approach, underpinned by segmented audience targeting, regularly refined and adjusted and supported by the use of digital, social and other new media as well as more traditional forms of outreach. But a decisively more strategic approach is urgently required if UN peacekeeping is to succeed in accomplishing its Security Council mandated tasks and missions.

UN Peacekeeping needs to develop, promulgate and mainstream a new strategic communication approach fit for the purposes and challenges of the 21st century. Building on the findings of the Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation, the focus now should be on what is required to ensure that a modern communications approach is embraced by all UN Peace Operations keeping in mind the range of new challenges and threats including asymmetric, technologically leveraged approaches used by non-state actors such as ISIS or Al-Shabaab.

To this end, and building on the current processes for reform of UN peace operations, a focused workshop on ‘Strategic Communications for the New Era of UN Peace Operations’ will be held in Washington DC, 23 June, 2015. The workshop will produce a set of practical, concrete and realistic recommendations.

The workshop will, first, take stock of where the main challenges lie in strategic communications and UN peace operations today; and second, explore best practices from the world of strategic communications both outside and inside the UN system, i.e. what can UN peacekeeping learn about the optimal use of strategic communications to maximize its impact and outcomes; and third, develop recommendations on innovation for strategic communication, and how the UN can secure a position at the forefront in this important evolution that is strategic communication.

Background Papers will be prepared by Mr Nick Birnback, Director, Public Affairs, Departments for Peacekeeping Operations and of Field Supports, United Nations, and Mr Peter Loge, Vice President, External Relations, United States Institute of Peace, respectively.

Preliminary Programme

0930 Opening and Welcome

Chair Ambassador George Moose, Vice-Chairman, United States Institute of Peace (tbc)

Ms Nancy Lindborg, President, United States Institute of Peace
Mr Sven-Eric Söder, Director-General, Folke Bernadotte Academy
Ms Annika Hilding Norberg, Director and Founder, Challenges Forum

0945 Peace Operations and Strategic Communications – Challenges Today

What are the challenges for the UN's current approach to strategic communication, its advantages and limitations, both in the field and at headquarters? What is the optimal purpose of strategic communication in the context of peace operations? And what are the current gaps and needs that prevents the UN from fulfilling this potential? Is the UN using strategic communication to its full potential or what needs to change?

Chair Mr Nick Birnback, Director, Public Affairs, Department for Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, United Nations

Panelists Mr B. Lynn Pascoe, Member, UN Secretary-General's Independent Panel on Peace Operations, United States

Ms Yasmina Bouziane, Chief Communication and Public Information Office, MINUSTAH

Representative, NATO (tbc)

Discussion

1100 Break

1115 Strategic Communications – What are the Best Practices Today?

There are many actors who use strategic communication as an effective tool to mobilize support and encourage certain behaviors and actions. The UN can learn from a spectra of these approaches. What are the best practices currently performed? What experiences can the UN draw upon to help peace operations face the current challenges in the field through better strategic communication?

Chair Mr Peter Loge, Vice President, External Relations, United States Institute of Peace

Panelists Dr Christina Schori Liang, Senior Programme Advisor and Senior Fellow, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Switzerland

Mr Bill Wasserman, President, M+R Strategic Services

Mr Jon Haber, Director, Cascade Strategy

Ms Sarah Coppersmith, Vice President, Scott Circle

Discussion

1230 Luncheon - Speakers H.E. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, United Nations, introduced by Ambassador George Moose, Vice-Chairman, United States Institute of Peace (tbc)

1345 Innovation for Strategic Communications – Moving the Strategic Communication Frontier Forward

Using innovation to secure optimal use of new media platforms as well as other technologically driven tools is critical. With the technological progress and social media culture that has developed, there is today the possibility of achieving a lot more with less when it comes to strategic communication - digital media, crowdsourcing and conflict mapping are all new features playing an increasingly important role for the success of peace operations. This requires knowledge but also a certain frame of mind best described as innovative and proactive rather than reactive. What tools can the UN draw upon to effectively communicate both internally and externally? What are the platforms that UN peacekeeping should target and what tools does it need to do so? How can the UN secure a position at the forefront in this important evolution that is strategic communication?

Chair Mr Sven-Eric Söder, Director-General, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden

Panelists Representative UNICEF (tbc)

Ms Stephanie Dreyer, Director of Digital Media and Strategy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, Department of Defence, United States

Mr Daniel Stauffacher, President, ICT4Peace Foundation, Switzerland (tbc)

Discussion

1500 Break

1515 Working Groups Session – Analysis and identification of possible recommendations

1615-1630 Conclusions

Maj Gen (Retd) Robert Gordon, Senior Adviser, Challenges Forum

Dr Victoria Holt, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Department of State, United States

Looking to the Future

Ms Annika Hilding Norberg, Director and Founder, Challenges Forum