



# General Assembly

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### **SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS DIVERSIFY UNITED NATIONS TOOLBOX CREATING NIMBLER, MORE COHERENT RESPONSE IN BATTLE'S WAKE, FOURTH COMMITTEE TOLD**

#### **'Less Costly to Prevent Conflict than to Maintain Peace,' Says Speaker**

Through the deployment of special political missions across the world, the United Nations had diversified its crisis-response "toolbox", and Member States now had at their disposal a wider number of mechanisms for a nimbler, more coherent response in wake of conflict, the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) heard during consideration of the new item on its agenda.

Briefing the Fourth Committee on the Secretary-General's report on special political missions, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, called it a milestone for the Organization as it was the first review of policy issues on the topic. Those missions, he said, had become more complex with their average number tripling in the last two decades.

He pointed as well to increasing diversity in mission design and mandates, and said that along with political tasks, special political missions were expanding into areas such as human rights and preventing sexual violence in conflict. In fact, the average number of mandate areas had tripled since the mid-1990s. There was one common characteristic across the mandates though and that was preventing conflict, which made the missions political.

Partnerships, he said, were a crucial part of their work, and field-based missions worked closely with regional and subregional organizations, thereby "multiplying the effect". The United Nations and League of Arab States mission in Syria was a true joint effort. Also notable was their deployment often to volatile environments. Missions in Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen were examples. The volatility of the security put pressure on the missions in the implementation of the mandate and represented a risk to the lives of mission staff.

Speakers taking the floor voiced support for the special political missions, which, said the representative of El Salvador, were often deployed when other agents could not act. That, she said, underscored their vital function even amid few guarantees of success for States to transition from peace to development. The mission deployed in her country in 1991 had helped put an end to a 12-year civil war, ensured a ceasefire, reformed the armed forces and established a truth commission to answer for war crimes.

The representative of Jamaica said it was less costly to prevent conflict than it was to maintain peace. The expansion of special political missions over the past decade had now created a parallel field presence along with traditional peacekeeping operations. In the absence of clear mandates, duplication of functions and confusion of tasks could render ineffective the United Nations presence on the ground. An integrated approach within the United Nations system that took into account each agency's responsibilities could ensure no overlapping directives and a clear exit strategy.

The representative of Thailand, speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), agreed that the mandates should be articulated clearly with realistic and achievable goals. "A peace that counted was a peace that lasted," and therefore, security, development and respect for human rights needed mutual reinforcement in order to achieve sustainable accord.

Nevertheless, he cautioned, those missioners were not a "panacea for all conflicts and crises", nor was there a one-size-fits-all formula that would guarantee a mission's success. Acknowledging, as did several speakers, the effectiveness of missions in Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen and Mali, he joined the call on the

Security Council and General Assembly to reaffirm national ownership and national responsibility toward solving conflicts.

Speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Egypt's representative agreed with previous speakers on the need for clear, achievable and practical objectives without "rushing into adopting mandates that lack political basis or sufficient resources". He added that since special political missions did not follow the United Nations regular budget cycle — despite falling under its budget umbrella — they required funding under the same criteria, methodology and mechanisms as peacekeeping operations with a new, separately functioning account.

Also speaking in that discussion were representatives of Mexico, Finland, Guatemala, Iraq, Indonesia, Libya, Switzerland, Eritrea, Republic of Korea, United States, Brazil, Australia, Russian Federation, Japan, United Kingdom and South Africa.

The President of the General Assembly addressed the Committee on its work.

The Committee will meet again at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, 5 November to begin its consideration of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

### Background

The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) met this afternoon to begin its review of special political missions, for which it had before it the report of the Secretary-General on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions (document [A/68/223](#)).

### Statements

JOHN ASHE, President of the General Assembly, commended the Committee for considering and completing 11 of 15 of its tasked agenda items for the session but urged work on three specific complex issues: peacekeeping, the decolonization of countries still under others' rule and some aspects of the ongoing situation in the Middle East. He hoped the current and third decade for the eradication of colonialism (2011-2020) would be the final one as decolonization had "no place in the modern world". When the United Nations was formed in 1945, almost a third of the world population lived in colonized countries; now only 17 territories were officially non self-governing. He noted the "praiseworthy" work done on liberating French Polynesia and said bringing that issue to closure was one of the most important matters tasked under the Fourth Committee. As peacekeeping had become a major tool for conflict resolution, the Secretariat needed to honour the men and women in "blue helmets" by providing them with the necessary resources, training and guidance.

He expressed satisfaction over the consideration given to the environment in all aspects of peacekeeping, especially concerning the Council's response to Mali. He welcomed the negotiations between Israel and Palestine towards a two-State solution and called on the United Nations to play a more "decisive role as the situation became dire for the 5 million Palestinian refugees in the region. With "no prospect in site", the demand for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was becoming more untenable. The resolution of two major issues would help UNRWA function: the cessation of the conflict and further funding from Member States that already donated to the Agency, as well as the addition of new donors.

OSCAR FERNANDEZ-TARANCO, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said that the Secretary-General's report on special political missions was a milestone for the Organization as it was the first review of policy issues on the topic. The report would also serve as a valuable reference document on those missions. It was the result of extensive consultations with Member States and it described the rich history of political missions from the deployment of Count Folke Bernadotte as a mediator in Palestine to the establishment of a special envoy for the Great Lakes region this year. In fact, such was the dynamism of such missions that a new one had been set up in Syria since the report's issuance.

Country specific missions, he added, worked in difficult environments to foster national reconciliation and to create inclusive Government mechanisms in the aftermath of conflict. Regional offices in West and Central Africa had served as platforms for diplomacy and mediation working with regional and subregional actors. Further, the Secretary-General's envoys were promoting dialogue across the globe, from Cyprus to Libya, and were the most visible illustrations of the growing emphasis on preventive diplomacy.

Political missions had become more complex in the last two decades, he went on. There was also increasing diversity in mission design and mandates. In addition to political tasks, special political missions were expanding into areas such as human rights and preventing sexual violence in conflict. The average number of mandate areas had tripled since the mid-1990s. There was one common characteristic across the mandates though and that was preventing conflict, which made the missions political.

The report addressed, he noted, a wide range of policy issues from knowledge management to lessons learned. Partnerships were a crucial part of the work carried out by special political missions. Field-based missions and envoys worked closely with regional and subregional organizations, thereby “multiplying the effect.” The United Nations and League of Arab States mission in Syria was a true joint effort. Also notable was that special political missions were often deployed to volatile environments. Missions in Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen all served as examples. The volatility of the security environment put pressure on the missions in the implementation of the mandate and represented a risk to the lives of mission staff.

Enhancing coherence between various United Nations actors on the ground and in Headquarters was also one of the key tasks that special political missions were entrusted with. In developing and refining such missions, the United Nations had diversified its “toolbox.” Member States now had at their disposal a wider number of tools, and that enhanced toolbox had allowed for a nimbler, more coherent response. He paid special tribute to staff members who had served in political missions, at times with the highest personal sacrifices.

MOHAMED SELIM ( [Egypt](#) ), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, re-emphasized its commitment to support all efforts aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and transparency of special political missions. The Non-Aligned Movement attached great importance to reaching consensus on the development of policies related to those missions, ensuring the implementation of “only ideas and approaches” collectively adopted by Member States. He stressed the importance of United Nations bodies to draft clear, achievable and practical directives without “rushing into adopting mandates that lack political basis or sufficient resources”, as well as the importance of respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States. He called on the Council and the Assembly to maintain international peace while reaffirming the principles of national ownership and national responsibility.

He urged the Assembly to deliberate on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions and the Secretary General to submit a comprehensive report in that regard, including transparency, accountability, balance in geographical representation and mission effectiveness. He noted the exponential increase in the financial requirements for the missions. Though they did not follow the regular budget cycle of the United Nations, despite falling under its budget umbrella, such missions must be dealt with using the same criteria, methodology and mechanisms used to fund peacekeeping operations, he said, calling for a new, separate account for those missions’ function.

NORACHIT SINHASANI ( [Thailand](#) ), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and associating himself with Non-Aligned Movement, said that while the international community had a role to play in assisting countries in transition, domestic conflicts could be resolved only through inclusive participation of national stakeholders and addressing their needs in a sustainable way. The work of the special political missions should be tailored to local contexts and needs. Further, transparency and accountability were crucial for their legitimacy and credibility, especially when important decisions pertaining to them were made by a limited number of Member States privy to that process. ASEAN encouraged more “regular, inclusive and interactive” consultations on the overall policy matters related to such missions.

Those missions, he added, were not a panacea for all conflicts and crises. There was no one-size-fits-all formula that would guarantee the success of a mission. Therefore, mission mandates should be articulated clearly, with realistic and achievable goals. Further, “a peace that counted was a peace that lasted.” Security, development and respect for human rights needed to be mutually reinforcing in order to achieve a sustainable peace. That pointed to the need for strategic cooperation between special political missions and the wider United Nations system.

RICARDO ALDAY GONZÁLEZ ( [Mexico](#) ) said the review of special political missions was the main de facto reform of the United Nations, given their significant political and financial implications for one of the Organization’s main responsibilities: the maintenance of international peace and security. Mexico would continue to call on Member States to make joint efforts towards a serious review of those missions within the Assembly’s Fourth Committee and when appropriate, the Assembly’s Fifth Committee. Those missions should not be misused under the premise that they were an innovative resource. Instead, their deployment should be the result of an adequate diagnosis of the situation on the ground, previous consultations with national and regional actors and a broad analysis through other available options. The Assembly needed to continue promoting a gradual process to enhance improved accountability and transparency when creating those missions and their follow-up mechanisms. Mexico and Finland had used some of the recommendations in the Secretariat’s report this year to coordinate the process toward a draft resolution it hoped would soon be adopted. That draft text sought to strengthen the framework to enhance the transparency, accountability and efficiency of the missions and provided the Committee with a solid basis for action.

JANNE TAALAS ( [Finland](#) ) welcomed the report’s recommendations for improving the effectiveness of special political missions, noting that dialogue between the Secretary-General and Member States could make their work more widely appreciated. Some 50,000 Finns had served in United Nations peacekeeping operations and, together with Turkey and the Friends of Mediation Group, her country had developed the “Guidance for Effective Mediation” booklet. She wondered if a comprehensive field guide could be developed to strengthen the preventive work of special political missions. Finland’s policy would be driven by the view that peacekeeping and

other means of crisis management, such as civilian crisis management and mediation, must complement each other and be mutually reinforcing. The special political missions had a vital role in implementing Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. That should be reflected in this year's resolution of the Committee.

GABRIEL ORELLANA ZABALZA ( Guatemala ), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, said the information gap regarding the overall implementation of special political missions required immediate resolution. It was of "vital importance" to develop future missions and ensure their effective application with explicit and achievable mandates through the Secretariat. When special political missions adhered to clear procedures when set up and carried out, the choice of using them — in lieu of other peacekeeping and peacebuilding tools — was pronounced. In light of the spread of such missions, the Assembly must have a central role in policy discussions, and the Secretary-General needed to submit a report outlining their transparency, accountability and geopolitical representation. Considering the exponential growth in the past 10 years, the financing of such missions required special attention, he said, calling on the Assembly to fund them under the same mechanisms used for peacekeeping. He urged Member States involved in those missions to have periodic debates on all the missions' affairs.

NOORA DHAFIR JAAFAR AL-SARIAA ( Iraq ), aligning herself with the Non-Aligned Movement, said that it was crucial to remember the unique characteristics of each political mission based on its mandate and the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty of the Member State, which was referred to in chapter five of the Secretary-General's report in paragraph 73. The relationship between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) had been remarkably positive and that was reflected by the desire of the Government to extend the mandate of UNAMI until the end of 2014. The mission had provided support to the Iraqi Government on many issues such as advancing the political dialogue on reconciliation and establishing the electoral process. In addition to helping organize six elections, UNAMI had also coordinated United Nations humanitarian efforts and financial assistance from donors. Her Government would continue to facilitate the work of UNAMI in the country.

YUSRA KHAN ( Indonesia ), aligning himself with the Non-Aligned Movement and ASEAN, said Indonesia was pleased that the Assembly was engaging for the first time, through the Fourth Committee, with the Secretary-General on the issue of special political missions. With the increased number, size and complexity of those missions, it was very important that the Secretariat have regular, inclusive and interactive consultations with Member States on their overall policy matters. Indonesia would like the Secretary-General to outline in his next report the steps being taken to build greater transparency and balance in geographical representation in the missions. Another important aspect was the promotion of national ownership at all stages in implementing the mandate. Indonesia also believed it was important for all clusters of special political missions to operate under clear, credible and achievable mission mandates. The articulation of the goals and purposes of the special envoys, sanctions-monitoring teams and field-based missions was also essential. That would help enhance transparency.

IMAD I. A. TAGURI ( Libya ), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, duly noted the importance of the special political missions as "one of the most important tools" of the international community to achieve diplomacy and collective security when addressing conflicts worldwide. Those missions clearly had increased over the years and had changed in nature, and it was therefore imperative for the United Nations to support the national interests of the countries requiring missions in coordination with United Nations agencies and to link security with economic and social development. He singled out the important role of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to help the Libyan people reconstruct the country after its "triumph over four decades of dictatorship". He named, among other achievements, elections of the first general council tasked with establishing the country's leadership, a regenerated rule of law, the reintegration of refugees and the removal of landmines installed in 2011 during the last days of the former dictatorship.

ADRIAN MICHAEL SOLLBERGER ( Switzerland ) said that the Secretary-General's report attested to the boom in special political missions, in their size and in the complexity of mandates. High-profile deployments, such as the recent ones in Libya and Syria, demonstrated their importance in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. That boom had its reasons: special political missions had distinct advantages over other tools. They allowed the United Nations to react to crisis situations quickly. Such missions also had a strong record of supporting national authorities while maintaining a small footprint. Member States should ask themselves how to better support those missions. The Secretary-General's report had emphasized that substantive dialogue on special political missions with Member States was critical. Given their complexity and dynamic nature, that dialogue should be results-based and interactive. Switzerland hoped that the current year's resolution would be a fruitful step in that direction.

ELSA HAILE ( Eritrea ) said the last decade had seen "exponential" growth in the number of special political missions, but it was unfortunate that such developments had taken place without policy consultation or input from the United Nations membership. She underscored the Assembly's broader authority in making policy recommendations on all aspects of international peace and security. Supporting the transparency and effectiveness of such missions, she said she looked forward to receiving another report on policy matters,

including measures taken by the Secretariat to ensure those missions' accountability to the United Nations Charter and to their mandates. She also emphasized the need for improved dialogue between the Department of Political Affairs and the Assembly.

KIM IL-EUNG ( Republic of Korea ) said that last year's adoption of Assembly resolution 67/123 added to the Committee's workload the agenda item on the comprehensive review of special political missions. It was important for all Member States to contribute their wisdom to exploring ways to improve the effectiveness of those missions as well as transparency within the United Nations. For that collective measure, the Committee should focus on producing added value for the overall performance of the special political missions without creating any duplication. The success of those missions would hinge on active cooperation with the country in question and assistance from regional and subregional organizations. He stressed the need to protect civilians, especially women and children. In order to prevent relapse into conflict, it was crucial to monitor the implementation of sanction measures, including arms embargos.

CHRISTOPHER KLEIN ( United States ) said that his country was a supporter of special political missions. As political missions had evolved over the decades, they played invaluable roles in preventing conflict. They contributed to capacity-building and providing political support in countries in transition such as Libya where UNSMIL was restoring public security and providing electoral assistance. Political missions could also play a coordination role in mobilizing support for host countries. Regarding the resolution currently in consideration in the Fourth Committee, his country welcomed the dialogue between Member States on the sharing of information on special political missions and hoped that the Fourth Committee would avoid any overlap on administrative and budgetary issues, which were under the purview of the Fifth Committee.

GUILHERME DE AGUIAR PATRIOTA ( Brazil ) said special political missions involved tasks inscribed in the very heart of the functions of the United Nations since its inception: good offices, conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. Due to their growing complexity, field-based special political missions were increasingly acquiring characteristics akin to multidimensional peacekeeping operations, fulfilling mandates that could be described as "light peacekeeping". Greater clarity in the conceptual distinction between peacekeeping operations and special political missions would increase the transparency of the latter and help solve the concrete operational challenges they faced. While most of the missions were established by the Council, all were funded by the regular budget of the United Nations. That situation enhanced the imbalance between decisions made by a few Council members and the disproportionate sharing of costs by many Member States. That mode of funding constituted the single most important distortion in the budgetary process of the United Nations.

CHRIS BACK, Senator from Australia, said that growth in the number of special political missions over the past decade alone attested to their ability and effectiveness as a critical peacekeeping, peacebuilding and State-building tool. The mandates of those missions were now more complex than ever and provided support to countries in the areas of electoral assistance, constitution-making, human rights and rule of law. Those missions had also been at the fore of advancing the "women, peace and security" agenda over the past 13 years. For those reasons and more, Australia strongly supported their important and far-reaching mandates. There was a clear need to strengthen their ability to implement those mandates, and the Assembly needed to find solutions to those practical challenges. The missions must be allowed access to the support structures they needed, including the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund and strategic deployment stocks, while relevant departments must be given access to the Peacekeeping Support Account to fund their backstopping requirements.

PETR V. ILICHEV ( Russian Federation ) said that his country believed that the success of special political missions depended on respect for the principle of national responsibility and the priorities of the host countries. The report of the Secretary-General had confirmed how diverse the missions and their mandates were, noting that standard features of the missions included combating organized crime and terrorism. Since the discussion in the General Assembly regarding the special political missions was still in its early stages, it would be "counterproductive to weigh down that dialogue" with issues that were under discussion in other formats. He welcomed the focus of the co-sponsors of the resolution on transparent, open dialogue and trusted that pursuant to inter-State negotiations, the resolution would be approved by consensus.

HIROSHI ISHIKAWA ( Japan ) said that categorizing special political missions into three mandate clusters was a very helpful way to comprehend the full landscape of those missions. Each cluster had very different characteristics, and dealing with all three as one topic was very complicated. There was a broad range of demands in the field of peace and security, and they required a response from Member States with very limited resources resulting from severe fiscal constraints. In light of that reality, the most effective approach to such a challenge was to seek the right mix of United Nations configurations for peace and security, including special political missions and peacekeeping missions. It was also necessary to highlight transparency. Many decisions on those missions had been made by the Security Council internal process, and it was not clear enough. Clarity of process was essential to attaining broad support from all Member States.

CARLA RIVERA ( El Salvador ), agreeing with the Secretary-General that special political missions had a common purpose to prevent conflict and help build lasting peace, said that the activities that had been implemented within that framework allowed States such as hers transition from peace to development. The

mission deployed in El Salvador in 1991 had helped put an end to a 12-year civil war and had ensured a ceasefire and a reform of the armed forces as well as the establishment of the truth commission. Special political missions were often deployed when other agents could not act. Therefore, they played a vital function even when there were few guarantees of success. She expressed concerns about the existing agreements for financing those missions and hoped that the budgetary burden would take into account the shared responsibility of the international community, and especially that of the permanent members of the Security Council.

MARTIN SHEARMAN ( [United Kingdom](#)) underlined the critical role of special political missions in maintaining international peace and security. In Yemen, the Office of the Special Adviser was assisting that country's historic national dialogue process, while in Somalia, a new mission had been established to align the United Nations work on the ground. But there was much work to do for such missions to improve their effectiveness and transparency. The United Kingdom's \$11 million extra-budgetary commitment to the Department of Political Affairs spoke to its commitment to drive such improvement. For its part, the Committee's discussion of policy matters should bring more transparency to the work of those missions. In that context, he urged all States to engage in a spirit of "compromise and pragmatism" to finalize the draft resolution currently being negotiated.

SHORNA-KAY MARIE RICHARDS ( [Jamaica](#)) said that it had been proven time and again that "it was less costly to prevent conflict than it was to maintain peace". The expansion of special political missions over the past decade had now created a parallel field presence along with traditional peacekeeping operations. In the absence of clear mandates, the duplication of functions as well as confusion of tasks could lead to the United Nations presence on the ground being rendered ineffective. The multidimensional nature of those missions, due to the complex nature of the conflicts, called more than ever for an integrated approach within the United Nations system. A careful assessment should be carried out clearly defining function and responsibilities for each Agency to ensure that there were no overlapping mandates. Attention must also be paid to exit strategy employed when a mission was drawing down in a conflict zone. Further, her delegation was concerned that there were no specific mechanisms by which special political missions could report to Member States.

JEREMIAH NYAMANE KINGSLEY MAMABOLO ( [South Africa](#)), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, said that it was important to keep in mind the respective roles and authority of the General Assembly and the Security Council in the maintenance of peace internationally. The Organization must keep abreast of new developments and challenges in the field of security. Contemporary special political missions were different from their predecessors. Looking at the geographical dispersion of current missions, at least 10 were in Africa. There were several issues of peace and security in the continent, but the composition of the Security Council when assigning those mandates did not comprise a single African member. At the same time, his country was encouraged by the recent deployment of a newly appointed envoy to the Great Lakes region — the first woman to hold a comparable position.

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