

The Boutros-Ghali Observatory presents

JUNE 26TH 2025

INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES INTO PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

ANTICIPATING CRISES, CURBING
EMISSIONS AND PLANNING SUSTAINABLY

Location:

Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC),
ACCRA, GHANA



Provisional program

08 : 00

Welcoming participants

08 : 30

Introductory remarks

09 : 00

Panel 1: The impact of climate change on the deployment of peace operations

Climate change is undeniably affecting the conduct of peacekeeping operations. On the one hand, the combination of security challenges and climate disruption impacts civilian populations, making them vulnerable and exposing them to environmental disasters and violence. On the other hand, climate change has a significant impact on peacekeeping mandates: the scope of peacekeepers' duties is expanding as climate change worsens. This situation may be due to the weakening of political institutions in the host country, the emergence of tensions over resource shortages or the increased need to protect civilian populations. Furthermore, the effects of climate change disrupt the work of uniformed personnel. Extreme weather events complicate the logistics of peacekeeping operations by slowing down resupply. The extraordinary conditions (droughts, heat waves or floods) in which UN troops are deployed can affect their safety, thereby impairing their ability to fulfil their mission. This can damage their image and, ultimately, their legitimacy within the host state. This panel aims to examine the various climate impacts on the ground in peace operations, from the mandate to the actions of UN personnel.

10 : 30

Coffee break

11 : 00

Panel 2: Integrating environmental issues: from mandate planning to operational implementation

In peacekeeping operations, several stakeholders are at the forefront of developing, planning and implementing climate and environmental policy. These actors, including the Secretariat, the Security Council, POs leadership, TCCs, regional organisations and other actors, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), can act at different levels. In this context, these institutions have developed a unique perspective on the challenges of environmentally conscious planning in peace operations. This panel aims to highlight their different perspectives on the challenges inherent in implementing environmental guidelines in peace operations. The goal is to provide a cross-cutting overview, from the drafting of mandates to their day-to-day implementation. The aim is to identify challenges but also levers for action to ensure that these key peacekeeping issues are properly integrated.

12 : 30

Group picture

12 : 45

Lunch provided for all participants

14 : 00

Keynote speech

14 : 45

Coffee break

15 : 15

Round table: Tools, best practices and synergies for sustainable and climate-resilient peace operations

Despite the difficulties encountered in implementing environmental policies in POs, some programmes, such as environmental mediation initiatives, sustainable infrastructure facilities and waste management protocols, have led to significant progress. The Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, Atul Khare, emphasises that most of these ambitious measures have been implemented through collaboration, which is crucial for integrating climate issues into peace operations. This round table will bring together stakeholders involved in mitigation and resilient adaptation measures, as well as energy transition. It will encourage horizontal exchanges between TCCs, mission staff and international experts to identify avenues for cooperation and understand how partnerships can provide a tangible response to the challenges posed by ongoing climate change.

16 : 30

Closing remarks



Synopsis

Over the past 20 years, peacekeeping experts have highlighted the prevalence of extreme weather events in mission areas. As a matter of fact, the four largest UN peacekeeping missions deployed in recent decades – MINUSCA, MONUSCO, UNMISS and MINUSMA (which withdrew in 2023) – operate in areas where ecosystem degradation and public health issues are intertwined. According to researcher Agathe Sarfati, 80% of UN contingents are involved in situations of climate disruption. These issues affect not only host states, but also peacekeepers, most of whom come from countries of the 'Global South' that are heavily affected by the effects of climate change. This problem is particularly evident among African troop-contributing countries (TCCs). While these phenomena affect all regions of the world, French-speaking African countries face particularly serious consequences for their stability and the security of their populations. It is therefore crucial to integrate these dimensions into the conduct of operations and the mandate of missions, especially in the protection of civilians.

The United Nations estimates that peace operations (POs) are responsible for 87% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced by the activities of the Secretariat. On a UN system-wide scale, including all agencies, POs are responsible for an impressive 48%, or half, of all emissions generated, making them the leading cause of GHG emissions within the UN. Environmental issues are therefore central to peacekeeping – from planning to withdrawal, including the deployment of troops and their presence on the ground. They concern all stakeholders, whether it be the host state, the TCCs or the UN institutions. Taking them into account enables missions to better adapt their actions by anticipating crises, limiting emissions and planning the legacy of missions in a sustainable way.

In response to this situation, the UN has been addressing environmental issues within peacekeeping missions since the 1990s. Initially focusing on the preservation of natural resources, in the 2000s it shifted its attention to pollution caused by peacekeeping operations and, from 2017 onwards, to climate challenges in the field. More recently, the Department of Operational Support (DOS) reaffirmed the importance it attaches to this issue by publishing the Environmental Strategy for Peace Operations 2023-2030. The strategy aims, among other things, to reduce emissions and increase the proportion of renewable energy used in POs. More broadly, there is an institutional interest in integrating environmental issues into all stages of mission planning, from pre-deployment to withdrawal. This commitment will undoubtedly be reflected at the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial that will be held in Berlin in May 2025, where environmental issues are on the agenda.

The integration of environmental issues into peace operations is part of a constant balancing act between the priorities identified in the field by the Department of Peace Operations, the DOS and, more broadly, the Secretariat, and the positions expressed by Member States, particularly within the Security Council. The result of these different approaches is a lack of systematic funding, trained personnel and material resources, leading to inconsistent implementation of environmental measures in the field by peace operations.

