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## Strengthening the Department of Political Affairs

# A "critical investment" in preventing and resolving conflicts

**P**reventive diplomacy. It is one of the principal means available to the United Nations to keep conflicts from escalating into costlier tragedies, in lives lost and hopes for development dashed. Yet successful prevention has a basic requirement: that the United Nations be afforded the tools it needs to carry out this most vital function.

A major new reform proposal aims to ensure just that, by strengthening and reorganizing the Department of Political Affairs so that it can be, in the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, "a more proactive and effective platform for preventive diplomacy, including mediation, at the service of Member States."

The Secretary-General's proposals, first presented in October as part of an addendum to the 2008-2009 budget for the Organization, follow directly upon his earlier reforms to



*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon introduces the UN budget to the General Assembly, including his plans to strengthen DPA.*

*UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe*

the management of peacekeeping operations. The \$21 million plan aims to transform DPA into an entity that is "more field-oriented and less bound to the desk", better equipped to mount timely and effective diplomatic initiatives. It constitutes the first major overhaul of the Department since its establishment in 1992.

"The reforms to our peacekeeping apparatus were an essential first step," the Secretary-General said in outlining the restructuring plan in a

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## REBUILDING TRUST IN UGANDA'S PEACE PROCESS

An interview with UN envoy Joaquim Chissano

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report (A/62/621) to the General Assembly. “Now focus must be put on the Organization’s capacity to prevent and resolve conflict — a better investment than dealing with the costly aftermath of war and a critical investment to ensure the billions of dollars spent on development by Member States, the international financial institutions and the United Nations itself are not wasted when armed conflict or war erupts.”

### SUPPORT STRUCTURE FOR DIPLOMACY

For DPA, the proposals are both welcome and overdue.

The Department, primarily through its regional divisions, is the main support structure for

the Secretary-General in his day-to-day diplomacy while managing and overseeing complex political missions for Iraq, Lebanon and the Middle East Peace Process, Nepal, Somalia, West Africa, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic. The Department is also looked upon to provide strategic leadership to the UN system as a whole on conflict prevention.

### CAPACITY STRETCHED THIN

As these and other responsibilities have grown, resources have remained largely stagnant over the years, thus stretching DPA’s capabilities too thinly and, as the Secretary-General said in his report, “hampering the ability of the Department to do the kind of

Services but also dating back to the “Brahimi Report” on Peace Operations(2000) and the report of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004). Yet while the Department’s

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**The United Nations needs to be stronger not only at stabilizing situations by deploying forces, but also at preventing and resolving them through political means.**

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constraints have been identified before, actions were not taken to remedy the situation.

Under the Secretary-General’s proposal, DPA would change in a number of important ways.

First, DPA’s regional divisions would be bolstered substantially so they can engage more directly and systematically with the issues and actors in the field, including our partners in regional organizations, who have a leading role in many instances in preventive diplomatic initiatives. The largest share of the 101 additional staff provided for under the plan would be located on these regional desks, which would also undergo restructuring, and receive an important increase in funding for travel by officials to the areas of potential conflict around the world.

### REGIONAL OFFICES

Another change envisioned under the plan would bring DPA closer to where its assistance might be of help through the gradual establishment, in strict consultation with Member States,



*B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, addresses a press conference on the Secretary-General’s plans to strengthen the Department of Political Affairs.*

UN preventive diplomacy, carried out in many cases through the “good offices” of the Secretary-General. DPA currently provides advice and support to numerous envoys with assignments around the world, including those active on Myanmar, Northern Uganda, Darfur and Western Sahara. At the same time, DPA closely assists

analysis, diplomatic engagement and coordination that is required for successful and proactive preventive diplomacy.”

The new proposals draw on numerous previous reports and evaluations noting DPA’s chronic resource shortages — most recently by the UN’s Office of Internal Oversight

of a limited network of offices in the field with a focus on regional dynamics as opposed to individual country situations. The offices — patterned on the current UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA)

and the recently-established UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (see box) — would serve as forward platforms for preventive diplomacy, when and where

requested by the Member States.

Along with needed enhancements in Departmental management and oversight capacity, DPA would also be strengthened in the areas of electoral assistance, mediation support and policy planning — the latter to permit a stronger focus on cross-cutting issues that are increasingly intertwined with conflict, such as transnational organized crime, corruption and terrorism. Mediation support is already an expanding area for DPA, as indicated by the activities (see page 4) of its recently-established Mediation Support Unit.

## The regional approach: preventive diplomacy in Central Asia

The UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), inaugurated in December 2007 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, is a prime example of how the United Nations intends — by virtue of a more field-based Department of Political Affairs — to better assist Member States in preventing and resolving conflict. The launch of the Centre culminates more than five years of close consultations between DPA, the Governments of the five Central Asian countries, members of the Security Council, and UN programs and agencies in the region.

The establishment of UNRCCA comes at a time of continued transition and consolidation in Central Asia. Since their emergence as independent states following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the five nations of the region have sought to establish national identities while building foundations for peaceful growth and democratic development. Following difficult periods, including the civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s, the region has taken some strides forward in recent years. UNRCCA will be positioned to assist the Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in

preventing and peacefully managing potential conflict associated with the kinds of new threats and challenges they face collectively today, including extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking, the management of natural resources, and environmental pressures.

As a small political office to be led by a Representative of the Secretary-General, UNRCCA will offer assistance to the Governments in building national capacities for prevention, in facilitating dialogue, and in catalyzing international support behind projects and initiatives. The Centre will cooperate closely with regional organizations including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).



*The presidents of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan seen during ribbon cutting ceremonies to inaugurate UNRCCA.*

*Photo: Brian Vitunic*

## DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE

At this writing, the proposals to strengthen DPA remained under discussion by Member States as part of their consideration of the UN budget.

In a November briefing to members of the budget committee of the General Assembly known as the ACABQ, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, emphasized that the United Nations needs to be stronger not only at “stabilizing situations by deploying forces, but also at preventing and resolving them through political means.”

Pascoe noted growing UN political responsibilities in Iraq, Somalia, Lebanon and Darfur, as well as a number of recent cases that showed the value of proactive preventive diplomacy, from Nepal to Myanmar to Northern Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. “The Secretary-General’s vision is for a UN

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# Mediation Support Unit in Motion

In only its first full year of operations in 2007, DPA's Mediation Support Unit went from the drawing board all the way to the peace table — providing real-time assistance to peace envoys on Darfur, Northern Uganda, Western Sahara

When the mediators encountered financial difficulties organizing the first round of discussions between Darfur rebel factions in September 2007 in Arusha, Tanzania, the Unit provided timely stopgap funding that enabled the meetings to go forth as planned. Along with DPA's

efforts on Northern Uganda and Western Sahara, and planned in 2008 to expand its assistance to a number of other active peace process where its support has been requested. Its early efforts on Somalia were also appreciated. As newly-appointed UN envoy, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, prepared to assume his functions in October, the Unit funded and deployed staff to a “scoping” mission to the region that provided the new SRSG with an assessment of the potential for increased UN support to Somalia's national reconciliation process.



*UN Darfur envoy Jan Eliasson (third from left) meeting in Khartoum with joint mediation support team including DPA staff members Nita Yawanarajah and Vladimir Zhegira (middle right).*

*UN Photo / Fred Noy*

and Somalia, developing a new platform to quickly deploy experts to peace talks, and strengthening its foundations as a repository of knowledge and best practices in mediation. With continued strong support from Member States, MSU aims to build on its initial achievements so that it can keep up with the rapidly growing demand for its services.

The talks on Darfur jointly mediated by the United Nations and the African Union provided both an early test and an opportunity for MSU to contribute to an important mediation effort in the field.

Africa I Division, MSU has also detailed staff experts to the Joint Mediation Support Team which assists UN envoy Jan Eliasson and his AU counterpart Ahmed Salim Salim in the day-to-day conduct of the negotiations. MSU has also provided the mediators with briefing notes on lessons from earlier peace efforts on Darfur as well as from the successful negotiations that ended Sudan's North-South conflict in 2005.

## PLANS TO EXPAND

The unit is providing similar kinds of support to peacemaking

## STAND-BY TEAM

In another step that could have important repercussions in the field, preparations were completed for the expected launch in early 2008 of the United Nations' first “Stand-by” mediation support team. Under a Memorandum of Understanding signed in August 2007 with the Norwegian Refugee Council, the team of full-time advisers will be available on short notice to assist peace endeavors in the field. At year's end, DPA and NRC were completing the initial selection process for a geographically and gender-diverse group of experts in five key fields that arise commonly in peace negotiations: security, transitional justice and human rights, constitution-making, wealth-sharing and power-sharing arrangements.

Knowledge management and sharing has been another important focus, as MSU works to ensure that the United Nations is identifying and making available

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## From Annapolis Forward: Supporting Middle East Peacemaking

The Annapolis Conference marked a hopeful end to a trying year for Israelis, Palestinians and all those involved in Middle East peacemaking. With the parties now striving ambitiously for a comprehensive peace treaty by the end of 2008, the United Nations is prepared to lend its support — both through its participation in the Middle East Quartet and through its continuing efforts to ease the suffering of people on the ground.

“Success depends not on what we say today, but on what we do tomorrow,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon cautioned in his 27 November speech to the gathering at Annapolis. “Above all, today marks a beginning, not an end.”

Assisting the Secretary-General in his Middle East diplomacy

is one of DPA’s most active portfolios. The Secretary-General is one of the four “Principals” of the Quartet, a grouping whose frequent meetings bring together the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and the Russian Federation in an effort to push forward peace efforts on the region.

DPA senior officials provide regular briefings to the Security Council that serve as a barometer of trends in the region. The Department also provides oversight and support to the work of UNSCO, the office, based in Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Ramallah, of the United Nations’ Middle East envoy — the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative to the Palestine

Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

### QUARTET EFFORTS

A Quartet meeting on the eve of Annapolis voiced strong support for the conference, while noting that it reflected months of work by the parties and by the Quartet to “expand the circle of support for peace.” This was a reference to efforts to engender broad participation by key Arab states in the region, whose involvement would be critical to any successful peace effort. One important moment in that process took place at UN headquarters during the opening of the General Assembly in September. The Secretary-General hosted an Iftar — the traditional breaking of the fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan — at which Quartet Principals and Arab League Ministers held discussions about the way forward in peacemaking efforts on the Middle East.

Only days after Annapolis, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of a new UN Special Coordinator, Robert Serry, a Dutch diplomat with ample experience in the Middle East, including in peacemaking efforts prior to the Oslo Agreements of 1993 and the Madrid Conference of 1991. “The appointment of a new Special Coordinator comes at a critical juncture, as the Annapolis conference has created renewed momentum for peace”, said a UN statement announcing

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*The Quartet addressing reporters in New York, September 2007.*

UN Photo / Evan Schneider

# Rebuilding Trust in Uganda's Peace Process:

## An Interview with UN envoy Joaquim Chissano

As 2007 drew to a close, one of Africa's most notorious conflicts — the two decade-old war waged by the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda — appeared a few steps closer to resolution, thanks in some measure to timely contributions by

discuss his and the UN's role in the peace process, including the challenge of building trust with the LRA — an insular rebel movement which has been wary of outsiders and fearful that peace could mean imprisonment for atrocities committed during the conflict. These include the widespread



UN / Timothy McKalika

*UN Envoy Joaquim Chissano and mediator Riek Machar of the Government of Southern Sudan in discussions with commanders of the Lord's Resistance Army.*

the United Nations envoy to the talks, the revered statesman and former President of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano.

While visiting UN headquarters to brief the Security Council in November, Chissano took time to

abduction of children as soldiers and other serious abuses widely attributed to the group in a conflict thought to have killed tens of thousands of people since 1986 and forced some 1.7 million villagers from their homes.

### TALKS BACK ON TRACK

Chissano's role as "facilitator" of the talks began in December 2006 when he was named the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the "LRA-Affected Areas" — a euphemism for the region encompassing not only Northern Uganda, but the neighboring border regions of Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These areas suffered the spillover effects of the conflict and have become rearguard retreats of the LRA. At the time of the appointment, government-rebel negotiations mediated by Vice-President Riek Machar of the Government of Southern Sudan, were teetering on the edge of collapse. LRA leaders had angrily walked out of the talks, insisting on both a new mediator and a change in venue away from the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba.

Faith was quickly rewarded, however, that Chissano — with close ties to regional heads of state, bona fides as a former combatant himself and experience in peace negotiations in his native country and elsewhere in Africa — could help to get the talks back on track. Following several visits including two direct meetings with reclusive LRA leader Joseph Kony, talks not only resumed in April 2007 (in Juba and under the continued mediation of Machar), but they picked up momentum quickly thereafter.

Since then, a cessation of hostilities has held and been extended on several occasions, providing relief to the civilian population and giving political efforts room to breathe. In May,



*Members of the LRA stand guard during peace talks.*

UN / Timothy McKulka

the parties reached a “protocol” agreement on root causes of the conflict and the need for comprehensive solutions. In June they signed an agreement on “principles of accountability and reconciliation”, a first step at trying to find a formula which ensures that those responsible for the most grave human rights violations are brought to justice as part of any peace settlement. The parties agreed in principle to explore ways to blend traditional Ugandan forms of justice into a credible national judicial process that would meet human rights standards. The LRA leadership has sought to avoid trials by the International Criminal Court, which in late-2005 issued war crimes indictments against the top members of the group.

### **MOMENTUM SHIFT**

In a further confidence-building measure, rebel representatives returned to Uganda as official guests of the Government in November in order to carry on consultations with supporters in the ethnic Acholi areas of the north where the LRA

originated. Both sides expressed determination, meanwhile, to reach a definitive cease-fire by January, the deadline established by both Uganda and the DRC for resuming military operations against the LRA in the absence of further progress in the talks.

How did momentum shift so quickly in a peace process which only a year ago was in danger of collapse?

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### **Chissano and others have worked hard to overcome deep mistrust on the part of the LRA.**

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Chissano says that he and others worked hard to overcome deep mistrust on the part of the LRA toward just about every other actor in the process — the government, the mediator and the international community writ large. “When I first attempted to make contact it was clear they did not even trust the United Nations,” he said. “They believed the UN was a tool of the ICC to arrest them and hand them over to the Court.”

LRA leaders, in fact, rebuffed Chissano during a first visit to the region, refusing to see him over the course of several days as he tried from Juba and then Khartoum to arrange a meeting in their camps. But he persisted, and the LRA eventually warmed — not only to his role, but also to the potential value of UN involvement in the process, a point Chissano was able to drive home by explaining the UN role in helping his native Mozambique come to peace terms in the 1990s.

Says Chissano of his ability to get through to the LRA: “I think it’s the way you speak to them that matters. They may have committed atrocities, terrible crimes, but they are people. They have their feelings. They even think they are in the right. If you start by condemning them you then miss the opportunity of having leverage over them.”

### **ADVICE AND SUPPORT**

Although his positive impact on the process has been more than apparent to observers, Chissano credits a support system that backs his activities. He is also quick to point out that he continues to act only as a “facilitator” in the talks, offering advice and support where requested to the mediator, Riek Machar, whom he credits strongly for the peace initiative as a whole.

With assistance from DPA and two small support offices which have been established in Kampala and Juba, Chissano has been able to keep a close ear to the ground in Uganda, while also shuttling

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# Being A “Catalyst” Against Genocide:

## An Interview with Francis Deng

**F**rancis Deng, the UN Secretary-General’s new point man on the prevention of genocide, is no firebrand. A soft-spoken diplomat both by nature and by training, he says he’s learned from past experience in humanitarian work that developing cooperation and trust with governments can ultimately get you further than “naming and shaming” them for bad behavior.

It is an approach that Deng himself acknowledges may not satisfy some who would favor more strident activism. But in an interview, Deng — a distinguished

academic, former diplomat from his native Sudan and longtime UN official acknowledged for his pioneering work on internally displaced persons (IDPs) — also took pains to assure that while he will be careful not to alienate the very people he is trying to influence, he would not shy away from “calling a spade a spade” when appropriate.

“I’m just very sensitive about having an entry point for dialogue with governments because without that kind of dialogue you can’t get very far, nor get close,” said Deng, who took up the job in August 2007 under the title of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and other Mass Atrocities.

It was in 2004, as part of UN observances of the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide, that a high-level UN adviser on genocide was first appointed. Deng’s predecessor, the respected Argentine human rights lawyer and activist Juan Méndez, worked hard to define the role during its initial three years — time he divided, among other things, between trying to rally

*Francis Deng addresses a Holocaust remembrance event at UN Headquarters in New York.*

UN Photo / Devra Berkowitz

international action on Darfur, developing a set of genocide “warning signs”, and attempting to make the UN system work better as a nerve center for detecting and responding to crises.

In keeping with his mandate (see box) to gather information and provide early warning of potential problems — Deng’s job is essentially to serve as a “canary in the coalmine”, working to detect tragedies before they occur and to spur governments and the United Nations, including the Secretary-General, into action before it is too late. But how can one person with a small staff become a human warning system for genocide?

### RAISING AWARENESS

One way is to travel to areas of concern, investigating reported violations and using one’s profile to raise awareness about potential crises — something Deng did frequently as the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on IDPs from 1992 to 2004. But as he maps out his itinerary, Deng says he intends to focus not only on countries of concern but also on “success stories” or “best practices” in the field.

Deng cites South Africa as a positive example where potentially “catastrophic” racial cleavages have been managed in the post-Apartheid era through wise leadership and policies. Another case in point is Nigeria, he adds, noting the role of federalism in managing ethnic and religious diversity and conflicts in that country. “There are still things to be managed carefully, but you can say they are still so far avoiding mass atrocities,” he said.







*The remains of victims of the Rwandan genocide on display at the Murambi Genocide Memorial in Rwanda.*

*Photo: OCHA / IRIN*

When it comes to identifying what he calls “the more difficult situations”, where possible warning signs of genocide are already present or on the horizon, Deng does not yet have a list in hand. Surprisingly perhaps, one case that doesn’t figure highly on his agenda is Darfur — the crisis that has probably done more than any other to help spur the United Nations in recent years to heighten its efforts at genocide prevention.

It is not for lack of interest or concern. As a Sudanese national who has worked extensively on policies for addressing conflict in his country, Deng has strong views on the situation not only in Darfur but its link to the broader question of inclusive peace in the Sudan. “But the situation has gone beyond the point where our mandate for prevention is relevant, and, in any case, there are already many people engaged at the highest levels,” he says. “I don’t think there is anything new my mandate would bring to Darfur.”

Shaping the debate over the international response to genocide is the evolving international doctrine of the responsibility to protect, which gained steam with its endorsement by the UN General Assembly in the

Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit.

### **RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT**

Deng says the idea of “R2P” was principally meant to stress that sovereignty implies the responsibility of states, first and foremost, to protect their own citizens, with the international community providing support when governments prove incapable of doing so. He feels too much emphasis is being placed in the public debate on the “last resort” of military intervention — one he would apply only in cases of “abysmal failure” by states to protect their own people.

“My sense is that except for very weak states or failed states, states

that have collapsed and there is a vacuum to be filled, you have two obstacles to overcome. The resistance of governments and the reluctance of international actors to send in their young people to fight,” Deng explains, citing East Timor, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Somalia as rare examples in which the international community was able to get in.

“But in most cases where there is a government with whatever capacity to control the situation or to resist international involvement, intervention without the consent of the government concerned is problematic, to say the least,” Deng contends. “It seems to me therefore that emphasizing the responsibilities of the state itself and developing ways to support them, providing some incentives, is the way to go,” he adds.

As part of his initial round of consultations, Deng says he has been reaching out to NGOs, viewing them as important allies. He has sought both to explain his approach on sovereignty as “responsibility with international cooperation”, and also to provide

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### **Mandate of the Special Representative**

- Collect information on massive and serious violations that might lead to genocide;
- Act as a mechanism of early warning to the Secretary-General, and through him to the Security Council;
- Make recommendations on actions to prevent or halt genocide;
- Liaise with the UN system on activities for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities
- Liaise with the UN system on activities for the prevention of genocide and work to enhance the United Nations capacity to analyze and manage information relating to genocide or related crimes.

## To move a line in the sand: renewed negotiations on Western Sahara

The disputed former Spanish colony of Western Sahara is a sparsely populated wedge of desert on the northwest coast of Africa with the Atlantic Ocean to its West, Algeria to the East, Morocco to the North, and Mauritania to the South. More than thirty years into a bitterly fought impasse over its sovereignty, the territory also sits at a symbolic crossroads of sorts, where aspirations, international law and hard political realities meet.

Straddling that same line as he leads a new UN effort to break the impasse is former Dutch diplomat Peter van Walsum, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, who during a recent pause between rounds of negotiations took time to discuss the issues with *Politically Speaking*.

Since his appointment in July 2005, van Walsum has traveled to the ceasefire lines etched into the Sahara, visited refugee camps in neighboring Algeria and toured the key capitals of the region, developing along the way fluid relations with the two parties to the conflict — Morocco and the Frente

Polisario independence movement — as well as with the neighboring states. In June and in August of 2007 at an estate outside New York City, he presided (with support of both DPA and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations), over the first direct negotiations between the two sides in seven years. At this writing, a third round was expected in January 2008.



*Peter van Walsum briefs the press.*

Trying to forge a solution to one of the most entrenched conflicts on the UN agenda — between sides whose positions

have in the past been, according to van Walsum himself, “almost irreconcilable” — will be no easy task.

Few would have predicted that the issue would remain unsolved today when Spain, riding the tail of the global wave of decolonization, moved in 1975 to relinquish Western Sahara. A referendum on independence was expected to soon follow.

But Morocco and Mauritania laid claims of their own, igniting a 16-year armed conflict with

*Aerial view of the “berm” dividing Western Sahara.*

Polisario, a pro-independence force backed by Algeria that had arisen during the final years of Spanish control. Though Mauritania stepped aside amid military setbacks, fighting continued with Morocco until ceasefire silenced the guns in 1991. An agreement between the sides provided for a referendum the following year in which the people of Western Sahara were to have the opportunity to decide between becoming an independent nation or forming part of Morocco.

A decade and a half later, however, the referendum has yet to be held, and the situation remains essentially frozen in time. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) — headquartered in Laayoune, under the resident leadership of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Western Sahara — is one of the longest standing UN peacekeeping operations. Its more than 200 military observers monitor the



ceasefire along the “berm”, a 2,000-mile long wall of sand that divides Western Sahara in two. The wall was built by Morocco during the war as a barrier against Polisario forces, who hold the territory on the other side as far as the border with Algeria. Tens of thousands of refugees remain in camps in Algeria. Years of efforts to overcome a dispute over the list of voters who could take part in the referendum gave way to an eventual rejection altogether by Morocco of any referendum in which independence is an option.

Unwilling to impose a settlement, the Security Council has instead called for the parties to reach a mutually acceptable political solution, which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

## PREVIOUS EFFORTS FAILED

Van Walsum is not the first to try to help them to do so. A painstaking seven-year UN mediation effort by the former US Secretary of State, James Baker, ended in failure after the plan he proposed for a phased-in referendum was rejected in 2004 by Morocco, which has held firm to its opposition to independence as an option. Polisario, feeling it has international law on its side, has been unwilling to consider any lesser option.

Van Walsum feels the dispute, at its heart, has become a matter of principle for both sides. As strongly as Polisario asserts the right to self-determination, citing both UN Resolutions on decolonization and a largely favorable advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, Morocco has put forth legal claims to Western Sahara

predating the period of Spanish colonial control. Van Walsum says that many Moroccans have an emotional attachment to a territory most of them consider historically part of their country.

Seeing little support in the Security Council to enforce a solution without “the concurrence of the parties” — a position analysts maintain has, if anything, hardened in recent years as key Western powers view Morocco as a bulwark against terrorism in North Africa — van Walsum came quickly to the opinion that there was only one way to overcome the stalemate. “I felt the only choice we have is between indefinite prolongation of the impasse and direct negotiations,” he said.

By taking that stance, van Walsum has been criticized by some for bowing to *realpolitik*, but he is firmly convinced that the only way forward is some kind of acceptable compromise. “Some people may feel that Polisario probably has the stronger case in legal terms, but that hasn’t helped them for 30 years,” he contends. “I am expected to look at political reality as well. Both the Security Council and the International Court of Justice are ‘principal organs’ of the United Nations, but they have distinct functions. I receive my guidance from the Security Council, which has a duty to take both international law and political reality into account.”

The talks mediated by van Walsum, got off to a slow

M.E. Kimball



*UN envoy Peter van Walsum and DPA political officer Donatella Giubilaro speak with a Western Saharan woman at a refugee camp in Algeria, September 2006.*

start. The parties used the first meeting largely to restate longstanding positions. The second meeting broke little new ground, although the climate remained constructive and the discussions turned somewhat more substantive, touching on important questions such as the use of natural resources. There also was a discussion on the possible expansion of the existing confidence-building measures.

While determined that negotiations remain the only chance for a settlement, van Walsum is not expecting dramatic breakthroughs right away. He feels it may take “political shifts” outside of the talks before either side is willing to make significant concessions on the inside. These are code words, perhaps, for some stronger nudging on both of the parties by their allies in the region and the wider international community.

“We need to be given more time, but there has to be a change,” he said. “Before we had an impasse without negotiations, and now we have negotiations at an impasse.”

## Iraq: a “new” mandate for the United Nations

In declaring, during a visit to Washington this year that bringing peace to Iraq is a challenge “for the whole world”, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sent a message that the United Nations wants to be as helpful as it can, irrespective of the divisions that existed on Iraq within the organization before the invasion.

the opportunity to now enhance, where possible, our contributions in crucial areas such as national reconciliation, regional dialogue, humanitarian assistance and human rights,” the Secretary-General said in a statement following the passage, in August 2007, of Security Council Resolution 1770, renewing and strengthening the UN mandate in Iraq.

already being performed by the United Nations, but not previously spelled out in its mandate, such as the UN role in the International Compact for Iraq, and UN support in promoting dialogue between Iraq and its neighbors. The new resolution also reaffirms the role of the United Nations on core issues such as human rights, humanitarian aid and reconstruction assistance.

### FOCUS ON DIALOGUE

Perhaps the most significant new element is the strong focus on national reconciliation — providing for the first time an explicit mandate for the

United Nations, at the request of the Government of Iraq, to advance “inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation.” It’s a role the organization has played in many other situations around the world, but also a recognition that without a political compromise, there will be no lasting end to the violence in Iraq. The change also



*The Secretary-General hosted a high-level meeting on Iraq at UN headquarters in September. He is flanked by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and USG Pascoe.*

Now, armed with an updated mandate from the Security Council and a new top envoy on the ground in Baghdad, the UN is poised to do just that — building on its previous yet largely unheralded contributions in Iraq, while keeping the security of UN staff at the forefront.

“The United Nations is deeply committed to helping the people of Iraq, and I am pleased to have

Though described at the time of its passage as a “new” UN mandate for Iraq, Resolution 1770 is as much about bringing the UN’s responsibilities up to date. The new resolution drops references to milestones that have already been achieved with UN assistance during 2004 and 2005, namely, the holding of the two national elections and a constitutional referendum. Added, for the first time, are other tasks

speaks to the unique character of the United Nations as an impartial entity, with accumulated experience over the past several years in talking to all of the key actors in the country — including some who are unwilling to have dialogue with the US-led Multinational Force.

Despite the continued constraints of insecurity on the ground, the UN has been moving

steadily to carry out its updated responsibilities on Iraq.

The Secretary-General chose Staffan de Mistura of Sweden, a highly experienced UN troubleshooter who previously served as humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, as his new

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**Without a political compromise, there will be no lasting end to the violence in Iraq.**

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envoy, replacing Ashraf Qazi as the top UN diplomat on the ground. De Mistura arrived in Baghdad in early November to begin exploring a stronger political role for the United Nations. His ability to do so will depend in no small part on willingness of Iraqi leaders to invite the UN into sensitive national-level discussion on contentious issues such as the constitutional review process and the future of Kirkuk.

## **IRAQ'S NEIGHBOURS**

Continuing to promote cooperation from Iraq's neighbors, the Secretary-General traveled to Istanbul to participate in a ministerial meeting between Iraq and its neighbors on 3 November — the second such high-level meeting in 2007. As an outcome of those discussions, which focused on border security, energy and refugees, a "support mechanism" will be established in Baghdad with assistance from the UN to follow-up on decisions taken in the high-level meetings and the related working groups.


Electoral and constitutional assistance continued to be

provided through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), as did UN support through the International Compact with Iraq. UN humanitarian agencies were also working to step up their efforts, particularly in light of the dire situation faced by the large number of Iraqis who have been displaced by the violence. A report on human rights issued in October provided the authorities and the Multinational Force with an analysis of the situation and recommendations for strengthening the rule of law.

## **SECURITY OF STAFF**

Approval of the revised mandate coincided almost to the day with the four-year anniversary of the deadly bombing of UN

headquarters in August 2003, and followed several months of rising mortar attacks on the international zone where UNAMI is housed.

These events provided a useful reminder of the risks of working in Iraq and an opportunity for the Secretary-General to restate his firm commitment to the security of those who choose to serve in Iraq. By late 2007, gradual improvements to UN facilities had permitted small increases in international staff, and plans were being developed to build a larger, more secure, integrated compound. For the foreseeable future, however, UN support to Iraq should be measured not by the size of the footprint on the ground, but by the quality of the contributions instead. 

## **Revised UN Mandate in Iraq**

### **Key elements of Security Council Resolution 1770**

At the request of the Government of Iraq, the United Nations shall:

#### **Advise, Support and Assist in:**

- political dialogue and national reconciliation
- holding elections and referenda
- constitutional review and implementation
- resolving disputed internal boundaries;
- regional dialogue, including on issues of border security, energy, and refugees
- reintegration programmes;
- comprehensive census.

#### **Promote, Support and Facilitate:**

- safe, orderly, and voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons
- coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance
- implementation of International Compact with Iraq
- Iraq's capacity to provide essential services for its people
- International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI)
- Economic reform, capacity building

## Myanmar: UN diplomacy in the global spotlight

**D**ramatic developments in Myanmar have thrust the Southeast Asian nation into the global spotlight as never before — and, along with it, UN diplomacy aimed at resolving the recent crisis.

The Department of Political Affairs works in close support of the UN Secretary-General's special envoy, Ibrahim Gambari, the former Nigerian diplomat and UN Under-Secretary-General, whose missions to Myanmar and the region have been at the forefront of international efforts to promote national reconciliation, democracy and respect for human

rights in Myanmar following the government's hard-line response to a wave of demonstrations in September.

Expectations remained tempered both by past experience and the knowledge that diplomatic efforts take time. But by year's end UN diplomacy was showing some initial results in the form of steps towards the establishment of dialogue that would hopefully lead toward national reconciliation.

"The Government of Myanmar, while stressing its sovereignty and independence, can be responsive to the concerns of the international community," Gambari told the Security Council following an early November visit. It was a mission in which he met with senior government officials and other relevant parties including detained dissident Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who in a rare public statement issued by Gambari on her behalf proclaimed her readiness to enter into dialogue with the authorities, while welcoming UN assistance in that regard.

In responding quickly to events as they unfolded, the UN was able to build upon its established entrée to the actors in Myanmar. Under a mandate of the General Assembly in effect since 1993,

*A scene from downtown Yangon, Myanmar's capital, during demonstrations of September 2007.*

UN envoys have been trying, with varying degrees of responsiveness, to bring the "good offices" of the Secretary-General to bear in encouraging Myanmar to move more rapidly and credibly towards inclusive national reconciliation, the restoration of democracy and full respect for human rights.

Following nearly three-years in which his predecessor was unable to visit the country, Gambari traveled there twice in 2006, reestablishing high-level political access to Myanmar. That access, in turn, has proven valuable in responding to the current crisis — providing the international community with a direct, high-level, channel through which to express its concerns and to offer its assistance in addressing the situation.



UN/IC Yangon

*UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.*

Dispatched urgently to Myanmar by the Secretary-General amid the events of September, Gambari met face-to-face with Myanmar's top authority, Senior General Than Shwe, as well as with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. He was able to convey international concerns about reported killings and arrests of demonstrators, to urge an easing of the government response, and to offer UN assistance to help address grievances peacefully.



Once immediate tensions had eased, Gambari returned in November. His visit centered more on promoting a process of dialogue between the government and opposition as a vehicle both for national reconciliation and for addressing humanitarian and socio-economic issues.

In order to bolster support for the Secretary-General's good offices, Gambari has also traveled extensively throughout Asia, consulting with Myanmar's neighbors and members of the regional organization, ASEAN, urging them to encourage Myanmar to respond to international concerns by cooperating with the United Nations. His diplomatic efforts persist independently of the debates that continue among and

*Kyaw Tint Swe (left), Permanent Representative of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation in his country; as Ibrahim Gambari (right) looks on.*

UN Photo / Evan Schneider



between Member States over the merits and effectiveness of sanctions as a way to encourage progress in the country.

In conversations with the authorities in Myanmar, Gambari has emphasized that a return to the status quo before the recent crisis is neither desirable nor sustainable for the country. At the same time, he has cautioned

against expectations that his diplomatic efforts alone, on behalf of the Secretary-General, should produce a quick and easy resolution to the challenges facing Myanmar.

“The good offices is not an event,” he told the Security Council November, “but a process that will require time, patience and persistence.”

## Mediation Support Unit in Motion

*continued from page 4*

the lessons it draws from its mediation efforts around the world. The Unit has developed a standard template to guide post-assignment reports by UN envoys, and also plans to design standard procedures for training envoys before they begin their assignments and for debriefing them afterwards. Development continues, meanwhile, on the UN “Peacemaker” website ([www.un.org/peacemaker](http://www.un.org/peacemaker)), which by the end of 2007 had more than 5,000 registered users from within and outside the UN system and was expanding its inventory of peace

agreements and operational guidance notes for mediators.

MSU also organized training in mediation for mid-level UN staff from various departments, and launched a new project to examine the strengths and weaknesses of recent peace agreements. The Unit reached agreement with the United States Institute of Peace to publish jointly, beginning in 2008, a series of handbooks on mediation-related topics, initially looking at issues such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and human rights accountability in peace processes.

Through an Inter-Departmental Working Group on Mediation Support proposed by DPA in October 2007, the Department intends to expand awareness

about MSU as a resource available not only to missions of DPA and DPKO, but to other entities involved in mediation in the field, including UNHCR, OCHA and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

### MEMBER STATES' DECISION

MSU was established as a result of the decision by Member States in the 2005 World Summit to strengthen the Secretary-General's good offices capabilities, including through mediation in the resolution of disputes. The Unit operates with funding from both the UN regular budget and voluntary contributions, and is slated for expansion as part of the Secretary-General's plan to strengthen and reorganize the Department of Political Affairs.

## Deepening the Global Discussion on Terrorism in Tunis

Few if any issues have been as acrimonious within the body politic of the United Nations as terrorism. But in an historic step toward moving beyond the polarization of the past, the UN General Assembly, in September 2006 adopted a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in which all 192 Member States committed for the very first time to a joint framework for fighting terrorism as well as the “conditions conducive” to its spread, and all stated unequivocally that terrorism can never be justified by any cause.

For both governments and the UN Secretariat, the focus has now shifted to the hard work of implementing the strategy and its accompanying Plan of Action.

As part of that effort, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon traveled to

Tunisia in November 2007 to join more than two hundred political, governmental, religious and other leaders from around the world at the International Conference on Terrorism: Dimensions, Threats and Counter-Measures, jointly organized by the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and its Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).

The event, held in Tunis from 15-17 November, provided an opportunity to spread understanding of, and commitment to the Strategy. It also represented a tangible effort by the United Nations to heed the call within the Plan of Action to work more closely with regional organizations in the fight against terrorism.

“The more we bring leaders together in an ongoing exchange

— to share best practices, to thrash out differences, to raise awareness — the better we can build understanding, respect and dialogue among societies, cultures, religions and nations. And the more effectively and comprehensively we can work to implement our Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” the Secretary-General said in addressing the opening session at Tunis.

Two years in the planning, the conference was organized on behalf of the United Nations by the Department of Political Affairs. DPA, in addition to its wide-ranging work on conflict prevention and the assistance it provides to committees of the Security Council related to terrorism, is an active member of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). The Task Force is chaired by Robert Orr, the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning, and comprises some two dozen mainly UN entities whose activities contribute to the global fight against terrorism.

Converging in Tunis in November were a diverse

and influential group of leaders and opinion shapers, including heads of international and regional organizations, parliamentarians, politicians and prominent religious figures, experts on terrorism and human rights, and representatives of civil society organizations and Muslim communities from the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and South-East Asia.



*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Tunis with Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).*

*UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe*



“By holding this event in Muslim country, with the preeminent organizations of Islamic countries, the UN made an important statement about the urgency of forging greater understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in order to overcome prevailing stereotypes and to more correctly focus the fight against terrorism,” said one of the conference organizers and moderators, Vladimir Goryayev, then acting Deputy Director of DPA’s Asia and Pacific Division.

The agenda in Tunis spanned a range of sensitive issues touched on in the Strategy — from examining conditions conducive to terrorism, to confronting so-called “Islamophobia” and the blaming of Islam for terrorism committed in its name.

Keynote speakers included Talbak Nazarov, a former Foreign Affairs minister from Tajikistan, Adnan Badran, the former Prime Minister of Jordan, and Walter Schwimmer, the former Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, who spoke on “Challenging Stereotypes and inter-faith dialogue”. Among the many UN delegates in attendance were representatives from DPA, UNESCO, UNHCR, the International Office on Migration, the Alliance for Civilizations, the Human Rights Council, the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED).

The conclusions adhered closely to the broad points of consensus adopted in the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In summing up the event on behalf of all present,

## Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force

The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force includes representatives from:

- The Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED)
- The Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA)
- The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)
- The Department of Political Affairs (DPA)
- The Department of Public Information (DPI)
- The Department for Safety and Security (DSS)
- The Expert Staff of the 1540 Committee
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- The International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)
- The Monitoring Team of the 1267 Committee
- The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR)
- The Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)
- The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
- The Special Rapporteur on Promoting and Protection of Human Rights While Countering Terrorism
- The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- The World Customs Organization (WCO)
- The World Bank
- The World Health Organization (WHO)

*(More on the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and wide-ranging UN actions to counter terrorism can be found at <http://www.un.org/terrorism>)*

Mohamed El Aziz Ben Achour, the Culture and Preservation of Heritage Minister of Tunisia, said the prevailing view of participants “was that terrorism and extremism constitute a threat to the peace, security and stability of all countries and peoples” and that: “Terrorism has no justification, no matter what pretext terrorists may use for their deeds.”

Participants also agreed, he said, that terrorism flourishes in environments where there is discontent, exclusion, humiliation, poverty, political oppression and human rights abuses, as well as in countries engaged in regional conflicts. There was also broad agreement on the need to counter the phenomenon of Islamophobia, which has been growing in recent years in part because of misinformation and misperceptions about the religion.

“The emergence of misguided groups that have deviated from the

straight path to fanaticism, violence and extremism, attributing their acts to Islam, in no way justifies associating this phenomenon with the Islamic faith,” Mr. Ben Achour added. “True Islam is the religion of moderation and avoidance of excess, founded on the values of equality, justice, peace and brotherhood.”

While welcoming the Conference as an opportunity to further discussions and understanding of the strategy, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed that the heaviest lifting still lies ahead.

“Now we must implement the Strategy in all its dimensions,” he said. “By next September, when the General Assembly meets to review implementation of the strategy, we must all have concrete progress to show — Member States, the UN system, and our key partners in regional and other organizations.”

## DPA and Elections: 15 Years Later

The United Nations is helping more nations than ever before to strengthen their democracies through credible elections, but technical advisers have replaced blue-vested poll watchers as the standard-bearers of UN assistance around the world in an era of heightened complexity and professional demands. This is among the revealing trends described in a recent report by the Secretary-General (A/62/293) illustrating how UN electoral assistance has grown and evolved during the past 15 years, which is also the period since DPA, through its Electoral Assistance Division (EAD), has served as the focal point for electoral assistance throughout the UN system.



The Division, currently headed by Craig Jenness, was established in 1992 as part of a broader restructuring of the Secretariat in which DPA itself was created. It has worked since that time to ensure both the quality and consistency of UN electoral assistance through a period of increased demand and also great change in the way the UN engages with elections around the world. EAD's "needs assessment missions" form the basis for evaluating and responding to Member State requests, and for fashioning tailor-made assistance while ensuring an effective division of labor throughout the UN system. In the past two years alone, more than 600 election advisers from some three dozen countries were drawn from an EAD-managed roster of experts and deployed to staff electoral missions or projects.

In presenting the report to the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, described EAD as having the kind of field-oriented and operational style that DPA as a whole will be more capable of adopting under the Secretary-General's proposals to strengthen the Department. "Just as one cannot imagine providing electoral assistance by sitting in an office in New York, conflict prevention

and mediation demand an active presence in the field," he said.

Among the trends highlighted in the report, which is issued biannually on UN electoral work:

- *High and Rising Demand for UN assistance.* According to calculations, the UN has assisted 107 Member States with elections over the past 15 years. In the past two years alone, 43 Member States received support, including Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Timor-Leste.
- *Increasing Complexity.* The field of electoral assistance is becoming more complex than ever before, meaning the UN must build up its own expertise. One increasingly common challenge is to ensure that Member States have the capacity to manage and sustain new technologies which many are considering adopting, including electronic voter registration systems.
- *More assistance for local elections.* Such elections are an important opportunity for the UN to assist, given that local elections can be critical for building a broad base for democracy. But local elections are also more complex and costly than presidential and parliamentary votes, often diverting resources from these national elections.
- *Shift away from Election Observation.* Whereas it once observed a number of landmark elections, the United Nations now rarely fields



*A woman casts her ballot in Dili during the second round of the presidential election in Timor-Leste, May 2007.*

*UN Photo / Martine Perret*

observers of its own, leaving this to regional organizations who are doing so more frequently. Most UN assistance entails technical advice and capacity-building either during an electoral period or as part of a longer term effort to develop sustainable institutions.

- *Trend toward electoral “certification”.* The United Nations has been asked in a number of instances, most recently in Timor-Leste, to certify the results of elections — a form of assistance, the Secretary-General suggests in his report, that should be examined and reviewed in light of the UN experience to date.

DPA plays an advisory, coordination and quality-control function, with the Under-Secretary-General responsible for considering and approving of requests from Member States. But as the Secretary-General’s report makes clear, electoral assistance is a shared endeavor involving various parts of the UN system.

The Department works closely, for example, with UNDP, which implements the bulk of the UN’s long-term electoral assistance

in the field, having spent some \$897 million to assist 40-50 countries in 2004-2006. UNDP has shifted away from an election-specific orientation to a longer-term approach of providing assistance over entire election cycles. This longer term support is important for capacity building and ensuring that the knowledge and resources utilized for an election are not simply lost in the time before the next election.

Electoral assistance is provided frequently in the post-conflict context of peace-keeping operations and special political missions. Over the past two years, for example, EAD helped to formulate UN electoral operations in DPKO missions in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Timor-Leste. The historic polls in the DRC were the largest electoral assistance program ever conducted by the United Nations. Electoral assistance was also a component of special political missions in Iraq, Nepal and the occupied Palestinian territory.

Additional UN system partners in this field include OHCHR, UNOPS and UN Volunteers.

Partners outside the UN system include regional organizations such as the EU, OAS and OSCE, as well as International IDEA and IFES.

Looking to the future, EAD expects an even stronger focus on its coordination role. It is committed to working with other Secretariat departments to streamline and revise administrative, procurement and financial procedures in order to ensure the most efficient response. The UN electoral assistance roster is being computerized and will soon be integrated into the system used for all UN field mission recruitment. The Division has also begun to develop policy and reference materials related to electoral best practices.

#### **APPEAL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Improved donor relations are another important commitment, as voluntary funding remains a critical source of financing given the often unpredictable timing and duration of electoral requests. The Secretary-General’s report includes an appeal for additional contributions to the near-depleted United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance.

Going forward, the goal remains to provide the best and most timely assistance possible, but keeping in mind that even the best elections from a technical point of view can become seriously flawed unless the political conditions are “right” going in. The ultimate test is not the vote itself, but whether the participants are prepared to accept results and whether peace and security prevail through the transition in government.

## A “critical investment” in preventing and resolving conflicts

*continued from page 3*

actively trying to resolve problems in the world. In the peace and security area, we have come to realize that a stronger and more active political department is critical to our ability to prevent and resolve armed conflict,” he said.

### MODEST INVESTMENT, BIG PAYOFF

Pascoe, who since becoming head of the Department in March 2007 has spearheaded the development of the current reform proposals at the request of the Secretary-General, referred to DPA as “the most under-resourced organization” he had seen in his nearly four decades of experience in international diplomacy. That includes ambassadorial postings to large missions overseas and service as chief of a regional bureau in his own country’s foreign service.

Pascoe estimates the cost of the proposed changes to DPA amount to less than one percent of the expense of deploying a hybrid peacekeeping force for Darfur — exactly the kind of conflict that would ideally have been avoided with timely preventive actions. A modest investment in additional UN capacity in this area could have a potentially huge payoff, he says.

“One success,” Pascoe told the committee, “can pay the bill ten or a hundred times over.”

## Rebuilding Trust in Uganda’s Peace Process:

*continued from page 7*

to meetings with heads of state around the region, making periodic visits to New York, and — on one occasion — traveling to the Hague to meet with prosecutors of the ICC. OCHA as well as UN peacekeeping missions in both Sudan and the DRC have also provided crucial assistance to the envoy, as have Kampala-based ambassadors from five African countries (DRC, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania) who have agreed to serve as a support group to the talks.

“This is critical because I don’t live in Uganda, I live in

Mozambique,” Chissano said. “Wherever I happen to be, even traveling in Europe, I’m receiving information and analysis, and sending instructions.”

Although the peace process took important steps forward throughout the year, Chissano conceded that human rights accountability remained a thorny issue inside the talks — just as it has in many other negotiations around the world. As the parties sought to define exactly how atrocities would be adjudicated in the national arena, the United Nations urged strongly that impunity not prevail. Ensuring there will be peace *with* justice in Northern Uganda is “a complicated issue, delicate, but not impossible”, said Chissano.

## Being A Catalyst Against Genocide:

*continued from page 9*

assurances that he will be willing to speak out publicly when necessary. “When I had the mandate for IDPs I didn’t visit countries that had crises and come back and publish glowing reports about them,” he notes.

### SEEKING FUNDING

Deng intends to seek additional funding in order to expand beyond his current bare-bones staff, which consists of an assistant and two officers on loan from the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Does he worry about the sheer responsibility of the job in which success could go unnoticed and failure could imply genocide taking place during his watch? Not according to Deng.

“If one is to assume this mandate is going to be effective enough to stop genocide and mass atrocities the world over then I am already failing before I start, because one cannot presumptuously claim to do that,” he says. “All that I can do is to be a catalyst, to contribute toward raising global awareness and the need for a timely and collective response to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. This is something that all self-respecting and legitimate governments cannot but support.”

## From Annapolis Forward

*continued from page 5*

the appointment. The Secretary-General also attended a flurry of related meetings in Paris in mid-December: a donors conference to mobilize funds for Palestinian reform efforts; a Quartet meeting to strategize post-Annapolis; and a follow-up dinner with Arab League representatives.

But in a year that saw reinvigorated diplomacy — first through the reaffirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative, and later at Annapolis — political ruptures and violence on the ground provided a constant reminder of both the heavy suffering inflicted by the conflict and the difficulties that persist in turning peace hopes into reality.


Briefing the Security Council three days after Annapolis, the

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe hailed the understandings reached there between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, calling them “the most significant breakthrough in the peace process in several years.” But Pascoe also reported on continuing Israeli-Palestinian and Intra-Palestinian violence, cautioning Council Members in his assessment that while Annapolis has given much reason to be hopeful, “we must not close our eyes to the difficulties on the ground.”

### CONCERN ABOUT GAZA

International concern has focused on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, where a large majority of the population is dependent on the work of UNRWA, the World Food Program and other agencies delivering assistance. Conditions deteriorated

sharply during the second half of the year after Hamas’ armed takeover of Palestinian institutions was followed by a stricter closure regime of crossing points into the Gaza Strip. While acknowledging Israeli security concerns and calling for an immediate end to rocket fire on Israel from Gaza, the Secretary-General was in the lead in calling for the reopening of crossing points and in asking the Israeli Government to avoid punitive measures — such as the limitation of fuel and electricity supplies — that would harm the well-being of the entire population of the area.

“The people of Gaza have suffered more than anyone else from conflict and poverty. We must reach out to them,” the Secretary-General said at Annapolis. He also urged continued political efforts to restore Palestinian unity, calling this “vital” for any peace agreement to last. 

## Staff News

*Recent senior appointments illustrate DPA’s commitment to professional excellence, diversity, and staff mobility.*

**Elizabeth Spehar of Canada joined DPA in September as Director of the Americas and Europe Division** after more than a dozen years as a senior official of the Organization of American States (OAS) working on issues of democracy, elections, political parties and conflict resolution. Ms. Spehar was the head of the OAS Secretariat’s democracy promotion departments from 1995

to 2007, with the exception of a posting in Port-au-Prince from 2005-2006 as Chief of the OAS Electoral Support Program for Haiti. She led and participated in numerous electoral observer missions and high-level political missions on behalf of the organization. Prior to joining the OAS, Ms. Spehar headed the Americas Programme of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (ICHRDD) in Montreal, and worked previously on democracy and development issues for institutions including Match International, UNDP, the International Develop-

ment and Research Centre (IDRC), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

**Lisa Buttenheim of the United States was appointed Director of the Asia and Pacific Division**, effective in January 2008. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Buttenheim was Director of the Asia and Middle East Division in the Office of Operations of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. She headed the United Nations Office in Belgrade during 2003-2004, served as Chief of Staff to the Special Repre-

*continued on next page*

## Activities and Events

**The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe** carried out two missions to the Horn of Africa for talks on peace and stabilization in **Somalia** and also on addressing regional sources of tensions including relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. During his first visit, in June, Pascoe traveled to the Somali capital of Mogadishu for discussions with Somalia's President, Prime Minister and other senior officials on national reconciliation efforts.



**In August**, USG Pascoe traveled to **Asia**, holding talks with government officials in **Beijing**, representing the Secretary-General in Bishkek, **Kyrgyzstan**, at the Seventh Summit of Heads of States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and then visiting **Nepal** to assess the state of the peace process in meetings with national leaders and the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN).

**USG Pascoe** represented the United Nations at a 1 November meeting of Middle East Quartet envoys in **Jerusalem**, and then accompanied the Secretary-General to **Istanbul** for a Ministerial meeting between Iraq and its neighbors. Later the same month, USG Pascoe was with the Secretary-General in **Tunis**, at a UN-sponsored conference on terrorism, followed by a two-day visit to **Lebanon** and the Annapolis conference on Middle East peace.

*USG Pascoe arriving in Mogadishu in June 2007.*

**In December**, he traveled to **Ashgabat**, Turkmenistan to represent the Secretary-General at the opening of the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia, and then accompanied him at meetings on the Middle East in Paris and a visit to the site of the bombing of UN offices in **Algiers**.

**Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Angela Kane** accompanied the Secretary-General to **Madrid** in June and then to **Lisbon**, **Brussels** and **London** in July. She represented and delivered messages on his behalf on 30 August, to the International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israel-Palestinian Peace in **Brussels**, and on 2 October, to the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the **Black Sea Economic Cooperation** in **Ankara**.

**ASG Kane** was in **South America** with the Secretary-General from 7 to 13 November, traveling to **Buenos Aires**, **Santiago** for the

## Staff news

*(continued from p. 21)*

representative of the Secretary-General in **Kosovo** during 2001-2002, and as Director and Senior Adviser from 1999-2001 to the UN Office of the Special Envoys for the Balkans. From 1989 to 1997, Ms. Bутtenheim served in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in **New York**, before she was assigned as Senior Political Adviser to the Director-General of the UN Office in **Geneva** in 1997. Her early years in the UN were spent working on Middle East issues in the Office of the Under-Secretaries-General for Special Political Affairs, from 1986-1988,

and with the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in **Jerusalem** from 1983-1986.

**Joao Bernardo Honwana of Mozambique joined DPA in November as Director of the Africa I Division**, following senior assignments in UN peacekeeping and peace-building missions, as well as in the area of disarmament. His previous position was as Chief of Staff to United Nations Mission in **Sudan (UNMIS)**. Between 2004-2006 he was the Representative of the Secretary-General for **Guinea-Bissau** and head of the United Nations Peace-building Support

Office for **Guinea-Bissau (UNOG-BIS)**. From 2000-2004 he headed the Conventional Arms Branch of the former Department for Disarmament Affairs. Honwana also brings a background in conflict analysis, prevention and transformation in **Southern Africa** and other regions of the continent from his experience as a Project Coordinator at the Centre for Conflict Resolution at the University of **Cape Town**, from 1993-1999. In his home country, Honwana served the Armed Forces in various capacities, including as Commander of the Air Force and Air Defence from 1987-1993.



*ASC Angela Kane greets Chilean President Michelle Bachelet during the Secretary-General's visit to Latin America, November 2007.*

Ibero-American Summit and to Sao Paulo. The delegation also visited Antarctica in order to see firsthand the effects of global warming. ASG Kane also represented the Secretary-General at the Third International Conference on Colombia, held in Bogota from 29 November to 1 December.

**Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios** visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighboring countries in November and December, amid escalating tensions in the eastern part of the DRC. A Secu-

urity Council statement expressed appreciation for his role in facilitating meetings between the Governments of the DRC and Rwanda which led to the signing of a joint communiqué on a common approach to end the threat posed by armed groups to peace and stability in both countries and the entire Great Lakes Region.

**Previously, ASG Menkerios** accompanied the Deputy Secretary-General to the African Union Summit in Accra, in July 2007. He represented the United Nations in a Ministerial meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau in New York in September and traveled



*ASG Haile Menkerios (center) witnessing commitments by Rwanda and the DRC to work together to combat armed groups.*

**Tadjouidine Ali-Diabacte of Togo** joined DPA in December as **Deputy Director of the Electoral Assistance Division**. He had been serving since October 2003 as the Chief Electoral Officer for the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), where he led UN assistance to elections that were an historic milestone for the country and the largest and most complex electoral process ever conducted with UN support. Mr. Diabacte was a Member of the National Electoral Commission of Togo from 1993-2000. Prior to joining MONUC, he served as chief technical adviser in UN electoral projects

in Chad, Madagascar, Guinea, Comoros, and Cote D'Ivoire.

**In November, the Secretary-General appointed longtime DPA official Vladimir Goryayev of the Russian Federation as Executive Director of the Vienna-based office of the United Nations Register of Damage** caused by the Construction of the Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory. Mr. Goryayev joined DPA in 1988 after having worked in the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. At the time of his appointment to the UN Register of Damage, he was serving as Director, ad interim, for the Asia and the Pacific Division of DPA.

to Switzerland in October for consultations on the Great Lakes region organized by the Swiss Centre for Global Dialogue.

**UN-AU Cooperation.** A DPA team traveled to Addis Ababa in November for a meeting, opened by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, on UN cooperation with the African Union. The mission assessed implementation of the landmark 10-year UN-AU Capacity Building programme adopted in 2006, and met with AU Chairperson Konare and senior officials to discuss how DPA, through its Liaison Office in Addis (UNLO), could further help the African Union to build capacity in areas including mediation, good offices, and electoral assistance. A follow-up visit in December focused on UN support to the recently established Panel of the Wise.

**Niger Delta.** DPA took part in an interdepartmental mission to Abuja in October in response to a request by Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua for UN support in stabilizing the volatile Niger Delta region. While emphasizing that the crisis was domestic in nature and its response would be nationally-driven, the Nigerian government and the UN agreed to work together on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed militias, addressing youth unemployment, promoting a culture of peace, building state and local government capacity and improving basic service delivery.

### Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic and Guinea.

The Department of Political Affairs teamed up with BONUCA, UNOWA and UNDP to seek support from the United Nations Peace-building Fund to finance national reconciliation projects in the Central African Republic and Guinea. The Fund approved the two projects, worth close to \$1 million each, whose implementation was expected to begin before the end of the year.

**Guatemala.** The Secretary-General's designee to head the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), Carlos Castresana Fernández of Spain, made his first official visit to the country as Commissioner in September, accompanied by senior staff of DPA's Americas and Europe Division. Under an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Guatemala, CICIG is expected to be operational by early 2008 with a two-year mandate to help investigate and prosecute illegal armed groups and clandestine security organizations.

### UN-EU Desk-to-Desk Dialogue.

The sixth annual session of the Desk-to-Desk Dialogue on Conflict Prevention, between the UN and the European Commission and Council Secretariats, took place from 12 to 13 November, providing an opportunity exchange views and

information, and to discuss joint approaches on situations including Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Somalia, the Great Lakes region, Chad, Guinea Bissau and West Africa.

**Electoral Assistance.** Among its recent activities, the Electoral Assistance Division provided assistance to the conduct in August 2007 of peaceful and credible presidential and parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone. The division also continued its assistance to electoral operations in Nepal, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Cote D'Ivoire. EAD staff and experts also took part in missions Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan and Pakistan.

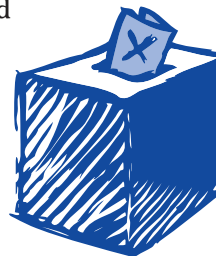
EAD Director Craig Jenness led a mission to Kosovo to assess the pre-electoral environment ahead of the elections held there in November 2007, and also visited Afghanistan. For the second time in three years, staff of EAD also traveled to the South Pacific atoll of Tokelau in October to monitor a referendum on self-government that resulted without change in the status of the territory.

**In keeping** with DPA's attention to the mainstreaming of gender and the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1525 (2000), EAD also developed and published, jointly with Departments of Peace-

keeping Operations and Field Support, a set of Joint Guidelines on Enhancing the Role of Women in Post-Conflict Electoral Processes.

**Security Council Affairs.** Five newly-elected and fifteen incumbent members of the Security Council attended the fifth annual "Hitting the Ground Running" workshop in Tarrytown, New York on 15-16 November, convened by the Government of Finland and conducted jointly by DPA's Security Council Affairs Division and Columbia University. The workshop provided an opportunity for the newly-elected members to learn and exchange views with incumbent members on working methods of the Council and to discuss trends in the Council's agenda and workload.

**In keeping** with its mandate to support the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable



Rights of the Palestinian People, DPA's Division for Palestinian Rights assisted in the holding of a number of activities sponsored by the Committee including:

the Special meeting held in June in New York marking 40 years of occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory; the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in August in Brussels; and a special meeting on 29 November in New York marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Division also continued its annual training program for staff of the Palestinian Authority on the work of the United Nations, hosting two PA officials between September and December.

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