

Chapter 4.

Working together to prevent and manage armed conflicts

119. In the years since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, the Executive Heads of the UN system in CEB have increasingly focused on the need for the system to reach a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of armed conflict and to make a more effective, sustained contribution to creating the conditions for lasting peace.

120. Many parts of the UN system are increasingly engaged in conflict prevention and peace-building activities. A survey in May 2002 evidenced a growing trend in UN organizations and agencies towards incorporating a conflict prevention perspective into their activities—whether geared to fostering economic development, social justice and respect for human rights or to promoting good governance and the rule of law.²⁶ This chapter focuses in particular on the UN system's work in managing transitions and protecting civilians in armed conflicts in the wider perspective of peace-building. It also addresses the system's efforts to counter terrorism.

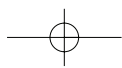
Advancing a comprehensive culture of prevention

121. The UN system is increasingly approaching the construction of a comprehensive culture of prevention as part of the broader effort to build mutual confidence and reduce tensions. A key foundation of this effort is the important engagement of the system in different aspects of disarmament. This engagement ranges from verifying compliance with existing treaties on the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons—led by the IAEA, and involving organizations such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)—to providing timely assistance to Member States for the removal and disposal of small arms and landmines.

122. The UN system is at the same time keenly aware that building a truly comprehensive culture of prevention requires a constant, deliberate effort at integrating a prevention perspective, across all aspects of its work, not only in the political but also in the humanitarian and socio-economic areas, including its development programmes at the country level. Within the UN itself, considerable progress has been achieved in linking peace-building, humanitarian assistance and development work. The four UN Executive Committees—ECHA, ECPS, ECESA and UNDG—have been instrumental in acting on these linkages.²⁷ In turn, this is serving to facilitate the timely engagement in this perspective, of specialized agencies and other development actors in processes related to post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction.

26. Interim Report of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Armed Conflict (A/58/365-S/2003/888).

27. Reviewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform—Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950).



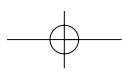
123. The UN system, at the same time, is introducing improved methodologies to deepen understanding of the impact of poverty and human rights on conflicts, and has begun to integrate more systematically the outcomes in development planning processes, within the framework of the UN Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). On this basis, the system is reinforcing policy guidance to Resident Coordinators and UN country teams on conflict prevention. As part of the effort to nurture a culture of prevention among the personnel of all UN organizations, the UN System Staff College (UNSSC) has operated, for the past few years, a system-wide training course, the Early Warning and Preventive Measures Project, which aims to improve UN system's analytical capacities in the area of conflict prevention.

Box 4.1

Coordination on early warning and preventive action

The UN Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action ("Framework Team") brings together the various parts of the UN system to devise strategies for consolidating peace, building on national and civil society efforts in the field. The Framework Team has been instrumental in initiating and coordinating early preventive action among a large number of UN bodies. It serves as a "gearbox" between the field and Headquarters, channelling early warning information and suggestions on preventive and pre-emptive measures to the appropriate forums and decision making bodies. It utilizes existing tools, such as UN CCAs, UNDAFs and PRSPs, and builds on specific conflict prevention programmes that may be taking shape at the country level. A main concern of the UN Country Teams is to ensure that initiatives developed under the Framework Team have the necessary support of national governments and local authorities.

124. The UN system's capacity-building work on human rights, democracy and good governance highlighted in the previous chapter is equally relevant to the system's conflict prevention and peace-building effort. This is the case in many of the activities designed to: strengthen national capacities to protect human rights and to ensure that domestic institutions and processes respond effectively to civil, cultural, economic, political and social grievances and abuses that could lead to tensions and armed conflict; establish processes of consensus-building; facilitate transitional justice and reconciliation processes; strengthen the rule of law; promote accountability; ensure the delivery of essential services for the most vulnerable elements in society; and ensure the participation of women, youth and minorities in key national processes. From the same perspective, UN organizations are working to build support for diversity and tolerance in media, popular culture and education. Similarly, the system's activities for the settlement and reintegration of conflict-affected peoples, including returned refugees, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants are increasingly being approached from a longer-term perspective, which seeks to advance peace-building and durable development.



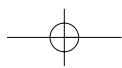
125. The system's support to Member States in combatting transnational crime should be seen in the same way—and as key to advancing most, if not all, of the Millennium Declaration's objectives. Recognizing the need for comprehensive and coordinated action to help Member States fight organized crime, CEB in April 2004 adopted a strategy designed to help forge a system-wide response to the challenges posed by transnational crime. All of the immediate inter-agency measures identified by CEB in this area have been initiated, with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Programmes (UNODC) in the lead. The aim is to put in place a comprehensive and coordinated system-wide response to transnational organized crime capable of countering effectively its disruptive impact on economic and social progress and the effort to build peaceful, equitable societies.

Box 4.2**Curbing transnational crime**

With UNODC as the focal point, four multi-agency task forces were established under the auspices of CEB to identify and elaborate: links between ongoing conflicts and organized crime (UNODC, UNICEF, UNDP, UNDP, DPKO, WFP, OCHA and UNRWA); collaborative interventions to counter trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of migrants, including responses to the vulnerability of trafficking victims to HIV/AIDS (IOM, UNHCHR, UNHCR, ILO, UNODC and UNICEF); the involvement of organized crime in trafficking in a variety of illicit commodities and the UN system's response (UNODC, UNEP, UNDDA, UPU, UNDP, UNESCO, IMO, ICAO, IAEA, ICPO/Interpol, OPCW and CITES); and HIV/AIDS in prisons (UNODC, UNAIDS and WHO). Each of these task teams has produced a detailed report, from which a joint programme of activities to counter transnational crime has been developed. With the completion of the initial phase of raising awareness and building links among UN system organizations, the focus of the process has shifted towards joint programming. Eight specific areas for joint action by the UN system have been identified: implementation of relevant international legal instruments; system-wide information collection, analysis and reporting; development of preventive approaches within the UN system; joint activities and projects; enhanced cooperation with identified external agencies; inclusion in UN country level interventions; promotion of best practices; and raising awareness of the UN system's response.

Managing transitions

126. Countries emerging from conflicts frequently face multiple challenges that require simultaneous action on many fronts in order to lay the foundation for sustainable recovery and long-term development. UN country teams have developed transitional recovery strategies to address the root causes of conflict and minimize the likelihood of its recurrence. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the UN Mission of Support in East Timor provide good examples of efforts towards formalizing integrated, continuing support for good governance and for political and peace-building processes, while responding to urgent humanitarian and recovery needs.



Box 4.3**Peacebuilding and development in East Timor**

When violence erupted immediately after the vote for independence in September 1999, more than two-thirds of East Timor's 800,000 people fled or were forcibly displaced from their homes. Nearly four-fifths of the infrastructure and public buildings were destroyed, along with much of agriculture.

Organizations of the UN system complemented peacekeeping operations with emergency humanitarian assistance by providing food and medicines, rehabilitating basic infrastructure, protecting displaced persons and repatriating refugees who fled to West Timor. The UN assisted in the drafting of the constitution, which adheres to all international human rights principles.

UN system assistance in this phase created a safe environment and provided the basic conditions for further rehabilitation and development. Key UN system organizations supported a nation-wide process, involving as many as 38,000 ordinary citizens in formulating a vision for the country's future and national ownership of a five-year development plan.

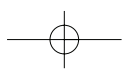
Following Timor-Leste's independence in May 2002, the UN's executive and legislative powers transferred to the sovereign State. The new peacekeeping mission, UNMISET, continued to have responsibility for external security and law enforcement, as well as capacity building in governance, justice and development. Since May 2004, and pursuant to Security Council resolution 1543, the mission has primarily provided support for the public administration and justice system and for justice in the area of serious crimes. It supports the development of law enforcement and continues to provide support for security and stability. UNMISET's Civilian Support Group embodies the philosophy of the "Brahimi Report," which advocates a role for peacekeeping missions beyond providing troops and police support and which stresses the need for harmonization of assistance from the UN system.²⁸ The organizations of the UN system are focusing on the country's social and economic development—from building the capacity of civil servants to strengthening the institutions of governance and from expanding education and health services to reducing poverty and developing communities. With the end of UNMISET on 20 May 2005, the UN system has laid the foundation to help ensure that peace is durable and that development is sustainable.

127. In framing their response to countries emerging from conflict, organizations of the UN system are collaborating with governments and other partners to prepare comprehensive post-conflict needs assessments, in order to create a basis for longer-term reconstruction plans and to acquire a sound estimate of requirements for funding and other international support.

128. Contributions by UN organizations to the overall effort to manage the transition process range from assistance in restoring the institutional capacities of governments and communities for rebuilding and recovering from crisis, to help in creating jobs, reviving local enterprises, rehabilitating airports and civil aviation facilities, and restoring damaged communications networks.

129. A joint UNDG-ECHA Working Group has emphasized the need for the system to operate from within a common strategic framework for the transition from conflict to peace, building on shared contextual analysis and needs assessments and responding to nationally defined requirements. Under the auspices of the ECHA, ECPS and UNDG, a standing mechanism has been established to provide support and guidance to the UN country team in planning the system's support to the transition process.

28. Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809).



130. UNDP, UNHCR, the World Bank and other UN entities of the system are piloting an integrated approach known as the 4Rs—Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction—in order to bring humanitarian and development agencies and partners together in an effort to reinforce peace processes and avert the re-emergence of violence in transition situations. The approach aims to promote mutually reinforcing interventions by different UN agencies, on the basis of common principles, integrated planning and local ownership.

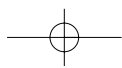
131. Accordingly, the UN system is now applying comprehensive transition recovery frameworks that integrate reconstruction, rehabilitation and long-term development to provide support to countries emerging from conflicts. In Liberia, a comprehensive assessment of the country's transitional requirements has led to a results-focused transitional framework that currently serves as the basis for coordinated support by the UN system. In Sierra Leone, the peace-building and recovery strategy integrates humanitarian and development assistance in one process. A large number of UN system organizations are supporting, on similar bases, transition processes in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mozambique, Sudan and Timor-Leste.

Box 4.4

Working together on transition in Liberia

After 14 years of devastating civil war in Liberia, a peace agreement was signed in August 2003. A national transitional government was established and urgent reconstruction needs were identified by organizations of the UN system, together with the World Bank and other partners.

In the transition period, UN organizations have been working together within the Results-Focused Transition Framework adopted by the transitional government. UNDP is funding five reintegration projects and is implementing capacity-building initiatives and activities to increase access to care, support and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. It is also supporting the work of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights to develop a national action plan on human rights. UNICEF is helping protect and support vulnerable communities and groups, including women and children. UNFPA has provided support to protect women and helped to raise awareness of sexual and gender-based violence. Its "back to school" campaign delivered emergency school-supply kits for 800,000 children and trained 12,000 primary school teachers. It also helped to install 432 water points and basic sanitation facilities in 519 schools. WFP's school feeding programmes have reached 395,510 children in 1,065 schools. WFP is also working closely with UNICEF and WHO to increase the capacity of the transitional government to integrate food assistance with health care. FAO and WFP have been collaborating to revive the agriculture sector. The national immunization programme is continuing with the participation of UNICEF, WHO and other partners. It has already reached 95 percent of its target figure, having immunized 1.5 million children against measles. WHO is working with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to improve the quality of drinking water by introducing the local production of chlorine. UNEP and UNDP are working with the Government and non-governmental organizations to help restore proper administration of natural resources. And, in close collaboration with the government, UNHCR is facilitating the voluntary repatriation of some 30,000 Liberian refugees from neighbouring countries, in addition to the estimated 50,000 who have already returned home. UNHCR is also working closely with UNMIL, IOM, partner agencies and the Government to return internally displaced persons to their places of origin.



132. The UN is increasingly deploying integrated missions to address comprehensively and from a preventive perspective the interlinked dimensions of peace and security, humanitarian assistance and development. In appropriate situations, a single official has been designated as both Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Resident Coordinator, supported by an integrated task force at UN Headquarters. This allows the development community to work more closely with peacekeepers in a mutually supportive fashion and enables peacekeepers and development staff to address transition issues and concerns related to the reconstruction of crisis countries in a more coherent way. This integrated approach is currently being applied in Angola, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. While operating within this integrated framework, the UN is taking care to retain its capacity to ensure the independence of humanitarian action, cooperating closely with non-governmental organizations and the Red Cross.

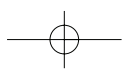
133. At the inter-governmental level, the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict has advanced the UN's capacity to address more coherently the socio-economic and political aspects of post-conflict recovery. It has also contributed to a further strengthening of collaboration between the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions in post-conflict situations.

Protecting the vulnerable: special emphasis on civilians in armed conflict

134. In recent years, civilian populations have increasingly become the targets of armed groups. Women, who often suffer in disproportionate numbers, are being subjected to atrocities that include organized sexual violence and exploitation. Children are being targeted—and at times recruited or abducted into militia forces. Women and children also constitute the majority of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons. In the circumstances, the protection of civilians, especially women and children in conflict situations, remains a key humanitarian imperative for the international community and the UN system.

135. The work of UN system organizations to address the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict or transition is guided by international norms derived from humanitarian, human rights, refugee and criminal law. On that basis, the system has endeavoured to establish common policy orientations that can maximize the coherence and impact of its work for the protection of civilians. As a result, the protection of civilians is now more systematically integrated into the mandates of various peacekeeping operations in Africa. As part of the same effort, common approaches are being developed to use multidisciplinary and joint assessment missions for evaluating the implementation of humanitarian mandates within peacekeeping environments.

136. A system-wide effort is underway to raise greater awareness of the role and responsibilities of Member States in protecting civilians in armed conflict, including in monitoring, reporting and taking action against violations. In general, the UN is pursuing the protection of civilians in armed conflict through a broad platform for action which covers: (a) improving humanitarian access to civilians in need; (b) improving the safety and



security of humanitarian personnel; (c) improving measures to respond to the security needs of refugees and internally displaced persons; (d) ensuring that the special protection and assistance requirements of children in armed conflict are fully addressed; (e) ensuring that the special protection and assistance requirements of women in armed conflict are fully addressed; (f) addressing shortcomings in the approach to disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation; (g) addressing the impact of small arms and light weapons on civilians; (h) combatting impunity; (i) developing further measures to promote the responsibility of armed groups and non-State actors; and (j) ensuring the provision of the necessary resources to address the needs of vulnerable populations in “forgotten emergencies.” The scope of assistance to countries that receive and provide support to refugees is also being expanded, including assistance to address any environmental impact of hosting large numbers of refugees.

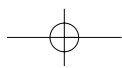
137. Guidelines to provide common orientations to the work of UN system country teams have recently been drawn up in a number of areas. These include a Guidance Note on Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons for use by UN Country Teams, prepared by an inter-agency working group led by UNDP and UNHCR. The Note focuses on approaches to the elaboration of development programmes for displaced persons and their host communities, within the framework of the MDGs.

138. A task force of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on HIV Interventions in Emergency Settings has similarly developed guidelines to improve the protection and care of people suffering from HIV and AIDS in situations of conflict and/or displacement. UNHCR and several other UN system organizations have drawn upon this inter-agency work to develop and implement various forms of interventions appropriate to the circumstances of people suffering from HIV and AIDS.

139. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has focused on strengthening and expanding the scope of international instruments for child protection. Together with ILO, UNODC, UNHCR, UNDP, UNIFEM, International Organization for Migration and other partners, UNICEF is working to prevent child trafficking, particularly in conflict situations, by advocating adherence to such legal instruments as the Palermo Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

140. Along with poverty, the AIDS pandemic and other social factors, armed conflicts have contributed to a growing number of children being orphaned or otherwise separated from their families, making them particularly vulnerable. Various organizations of the UN system are helping to enhance their protection by strengthening health care systems, providing affordable supplies and drugs and encouraging local communities and social welfare systems to ensure that caregivers receive the support they need and that access of these children to education improves.

141. Effective responses to sexual and gender-based violence are being incorporated in all aspects of peace-keeping operations, including improved physical protection, monitoring and reporting. Personnel-contributing countries are being urged to ensure that all mission



personnel have training, prior to deployment, on the rights and specific protection needs of women and children. Increased donor support is being mobilized for programmes focused on the rights of women and girls, particularly those related to sexual violence and to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

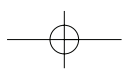
142. The United Nations has launched a renewed, vigorous effort to prevent, investigate and address allegations of sexual misconduct by its personnel and peacekeepers. No-fraternization rules and imposition of curfew for military contingents have been tightened and are being strictly enforced. “A comprehensive strategy to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations,” which contains a number of concrete recommendations to deepen the reform processes underway in this respect, has recently been finalized for consideration by the General Assembly (A/59/710); and it has been reviewed, in the first instance, in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. The recommendations cover: the standardization of rules against sexual exploitation and abuse for all categories of peacekeeping personnel; the provision of a professional investigative capacity for peacekeeping operations; organizational, managerial and command measures to address sexual exploitation and abuse directly; and strengthening of individual accountability through the disciplinary process, as well as financial and criminal accountability, where appropriate.

Countering terrorism

143. An effective approach by the UN system to conflict prevention, peace-building and protecting the vulnerable must fully encompass and, indeed, have a sharp, strong focus on countering terrorism. The system’s work in this area is guided by a large number of international conventions negotiated within the United Nations. It covers a wide spectrum of interventions aimed at:

- Assessing the longer-term implications and broad policy dimensions of terrorism for the United Nations;
- Advising Member States on legislating and implementing antiterrorism measures;
- Auditing States’ aviation security systems to ensure compliance with international standards and to spur the development of new safeguards, including the development of standards and biometrics for international travel documents;
- Fighting piracy in the context of international agreements to prevent and suppress terrorist acts against ships at sea and in port, and improving overall ship and port security;
- Reviewing nuclear facilities in Member States, to identify necessary security upgrades and the financial requirements to carry them out;
- Strengthening Member States’ abilities to detect radioactive material at their borders and to respond to illicit trafficking;
- Combatting the financing of terrorism through the monitoring of postal services; and
- Raising awareness and preparedness at the national and international levels to deal with the accidental release or deliberate use of biological and chemical agents or radio-nuclear materials.

144. The work of the organizations of the UN system complements that of the Security Council and its Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), which monitors compliance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). CTC also considers ways in which



States can be assisted and explore the promotion of best practices; the availability of existing technical, financial, in particular to regulatory and legislative programmes; and synergies among assistance programmes within international, regional and sub-regional organizations.

145. In addition, the UN has established a Policy Working Group which meets periodically to identify the longer-term implications and broad policy dimensions of terrorism and to formulate recommendations on steps to address it.

Challenges

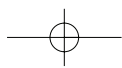
146. UN organizations have made considerable strides in adopting multidimensional, country-based approaches to conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. Yet, the challenges posed remain daunting and require intensified efforts by the UN system, as well as greater support from Member States. These challenges include:

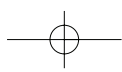
- a reinforcement of the UN system's capacity to act as a "mobilizer," helping to coordinate the efforts of all actors in developing and implementing comprehensive prevention and peace-building strategies;
- a more strategic response to the economic dimensions of conflict;
- greater attention to environmental threats and building additional capacity to analyse and address those threats;
- enhancing the UN system's ability to understand better the local context of armed conflict;
- greater attention and a sharper focus on the immediate post-conflict period, when many of the conditions are set for either sustained recovery or the recurrence of conflict and possibly civil war; and
- a stronger focus by the UN system on helping countries to develop their own institutions and processes for conflict prevention and peace-building.

147. For the UN system to build these capacities and effectively engage partners in proactively preventing and managing armed conflicts, it needs to:

- develop, based on a deeper appreciation of the different priorities that countries and peoples have, a better understanding of the nature of the threats to peace, the factors that contribute to violence and the interlinkages among them;
- further enhance inter-agency cooperation at both the analytical and operational levels; and
- identify innovative, mutually reinforcing responses to emerging threats to peace and help build stronger coalitions for action, engaging Member States, multilateral agencies and civil society.

148. A major system-wide effort will continue to be required to keep the issue of the protection of civilians in situations of conflict and displacement as a high priority for Member States and the international community. And the UN system will need to step up further its advocacy for the ratification and observance of treaties and conventions relating to the protection of civilians, including the Genocide Convention, the Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and all refugee conventions.





149. Devising a comprehensive approach to countering terrorism poses a major, growing challenge for the UN system. In his report to the 2005 World Summit, the Secretary-General suggests the elements of such a strategy, as well as an array of proposals to strengthen the UN framework for and contribution to collective security. The UN system's future work in peace and security will be guided by the consensus reached at the Summit, by the directives of the governing bodies of its constituent members and by the ongoing evolution of the international legal framework.

150. The effort to build a fully integrated system response capacity for peace-building, armed conflict prevention and humanitarian interventions will ultimately succeed only if supported by adequate resources. Existing modalities for financing critical operations during the period of transition from humanitarian assistance to peacekeeping and peace-building support and to long-term development programming require urgent review.

