

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 26 June 2020 from the Permanent Representative
of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of Germany in July, the Security Council plans to hold a high-level open debate on the theme “Peace operations and human rights” on 7 July 2020.

In preparation for this meeting, Germany has prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Christoph **Heusgen**



Annex to the letter dated 26 June 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council high-level open debate on the theme “Peace operations and human rights”, to be held on 7 July 2020 at 10 a.m.

Protecting and promoting human rights: the role of United Nations peace operations

1. “Human rights are intrinsically linked to peace and security, and their inclusion in the deliberations and decisions of the Security Council is of great importance” (Secretary-General António Guterres, 2017).
2. As the world continues to witness armed conflicts and human rights violations, stressing the universality of human rights and including them in discussions about international peace and security are more critical than ever. Human rights deserve our respect at any time and are not negotiable, in particular in times of crisis such as the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
3. Human rights violations constitute an immediate driver for armed conflicts and, as such, are invariably a feature of violent conflict. With that in mind, Germany, together with France, presided over an Arria-formula Security Council meeting on human rights in peace operations on 17 April 2019, co-sponsored by Côte d’Ivoire, Kuwait and Peru.
4. United Nations peace operations, as one of the international community’s key instruments for conflict management, have a critical role in the promotion and protection of human rights: on the basis of their mandates from the Security Council, they monitor, report and, if necessary, intervene when faced with human rights violations, thus contributing to the successful promotion of peace processes. To name selected functions, peace operations may engage in casualty reporting, capacity-building programmes and public reporting on human rights violations and abuses.
5. One example from the field illustrates this critical work: the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) monitors, investigates, verifies and reports on violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, including abuses of children and women. The peacekeeping operation thus supports and enhances civil society’s ability to monitor and report on human rights violations, while engaging in human rights and democracy dialogue with the Government of a country emerging from years of civil war and violence and transitioning to independence.
6. United Nations peace operations are rightly expected to prevent or end human rights violations, as well as to protect civilians. They draw on both their civilian and uniformed components for that purpose, for instance through joint protection teams. Furthermore, mixed-gender engagement teams have proven to be successful in building relationships with vulnerable groups during patrols and outreach activities. This underlines the importance of increasing the number of women peacekeepers.
7. Human rights have developed into an innovative catalyst for United Nations peace operations. Several ongoing peacekeeping operations (the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur,

UNMISS and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo), as well as special political missions (the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan and the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti), have integrated human rights components. They serve as enablers across a wide spectrum of mission actions to strengthen the mission's strategic position and credibility.

8. Applying a gender lens to human rights work is critical to address the full spectrum of human rights abuses. In seven missions, women's protection advisers are responsible for monitoring, analysing and reporting on conflict-related sexual violence. Nine peacekeeping operations have gender units within the leadership team to ensure that women's rights and the women and peace and security agenda are mainstreamed into all mission activities. Peace operations also monitor and report on violations in the framework of the children and armed conflict dossier.

9. The vast majority of United Nations peacekeepers are also deployed under a protection of civilians mandate. When faced with human rights violations, peace operations need to decide how to react and how to intervene, what instruments to use and whether follow-on activities are necessary. There is a direct link between the results of upholding, promoting and protecting human rights and the credibility of United Nations operations. Protecting the civilian population and upholding human rights will determine how the United Nations is viewed publicly and how it will be remembered.

Objective and scope

10. The aim of the open debate is to discuss in depth how peace operations can contribute more effectively to the promotion and protection of human rights.

11. Participants are invited to share examples and best practices of human rights integration at the national and pre-United Nations-deployment levels, as well as of in-mission collaboration with human rights components.

12. Moreover, Member States are invited to discuss concrete challenges that persist with regard to better promoting and protecting human rights through United Nations peace operations, and how the Security Council, as well as specific peace operations, should address those challenges.

13. Member States are encouraged to focus on the following questions:

- How can peace operations promote and protect human rights more effectively? Where does untapped potential exist?
- Which trends and developments influence human rights work in United Nations peace operations? To what extent and in which areas do challenges persist?
- How can partnerships within peace operations (between the uniformed and civilian parts of an operation) and with host Governments be enhanced?
- What impact does the integration of human rights have on overall mandate implementation?
- Which best practices can be shared with regard to the protection of children and women?
- What needs to be improved when peace operations collaborate with civil society organizations on the ground, for example to monitor human rights violations and to address human rights-related grievances?

- What are the key challenges for the promotion and protection of human rights posed by COVID-19?
- What is the future role of the Security Council in promoting and protecting human rights through United Nations peace operations? How can the Council and its member States ensure well-defined protection of civilians and human rights mandates, as well as sufficient resources for United Nations peace operations?

Format

14. The virtual open debate will be chaired by the Minister of Defence of Germany, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer. The Security Council will hear briefings by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, David Shearer, and a civil society representative.

15. The working methods for the month of July have not yet been adopted. While not prejudging the decision by the members of the Security Council on these working methods, Germany intends to hold the open debate in the format of an open videoconference. Member States and observer States that are not members of the Council will, if following the same working methods applied in the current month, be invited to participate in the open videoconference within the principles of rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure and can participate, following a decision, by submitting written statements. In such cases, they will be invited to send their written statements to the President of the Security Council (dppa-scsb3@un.org) ahead of the meeting.
