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Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Thematic evaluation of political affairs in peacekeeping missions

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

In its evaluation of political affairs in peacekeeping missions, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) determined, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of political affairs components in peacekeeping missions. It focused specifically on two intermediate political affairs outcomes: the establishment of peace agreements and achievement of political dialogue. The evaluation covered five peacekeeping missions, in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kosovo, Mali and South Sudan. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used, including staff and stakeholder surveys, staff and stakeholder interviews, document reviews, social media analyses and analyses of secondary data from conflict databases and local population surveys.

In some but not all instances, peace agreements and political dialogues have helped to reduce conflict and tensions in the five peacekeeping countries. This raises questions about the relevance of some of these outcomes for sustaining peace. The level of fatalities in the Central African Republic and Mali was reduced in those specific areas where a local peace agreement had been signed, although the level of fatalities in Mali increased overall. Specifically, the level of fatalities in those areas dropped by 33 per cent and 64 per cent in Mali and the Central African Republic respectively after local peace agreements were signed. In South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the level of fatalities in those specific areas with a local peace agreement remained unchanged. Political dialogues also appeared to have made a positive difference to reducing tensions.

Political outcomes related to peace agreements and political dialogues have been achieved effectively with important contributions from political affairs components in peacekeeping missions. These have been achieved through exploitation of the



political knowledge and networks maintained by Political Affairs Officers; the effective discharge of the Secretary-General's good offices function by senior mission leaders; and finding political space in which to engage critical peace partners. However, the missions' use of social media to advocate for peace was less clear.

The political affairs components conducted a variety of political analyses, which, staff reported, accounted for the greatest amount of their time of all activities that they engaged in. Overall, these analyses were of good quality and timely. However, there were opportunities to improve the utilization of these outputs in contributing towards achieving positive political outcomes.

Finally, the mission structures in place for political affairs were not always efficient in achieving their political outcomes. This was compounded by complex reporting lines, inefficient horizontal information sharing, and ad hoc coordination between field offices and mission headquarters.

OIOS made three important recommendations to the five peacekeeping missions to:

- (a) Strengthen political affairs component performance assessment and reporting;
- (b) Develop a mission-specific political strategy that is clearly communicated to relevant stakeholders;
- (c) Strengthen the utility of the political analyses produced by its political affairs component.

OIOS also made one important recommendation to the Department of Peace Operations to conduct a review of current mission structures with a view to improving overall efficiency and effectiveness.

I. Introduction and objective

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services identified the political affairs component of peacekeeping missions for a thematic evaluation, based on a risk assessment conducted in 2019 to identify United Nations peacekeeping evaluation priorities for 2020–2021.

2. The overall objective of the thematic evaluation was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of political affairs components in peacekeeping missions. It was focused specifically on two intermediate political affairs outcomes: the establishment of peace agreements and achievement of political dialogue. The evaluation had a twofold purpose, supporting both accountability and learning. The evaluation conforms with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system.¹

3. Management comments were sought on the draft report from the peacekeeping missions and the Department of Peace Operations, and taken into consideration for the final report. They are included in annex II.

II. Background

Mandates, roles and stakeholders

4. The Security Council establishes mandates for peacekeeping missions, which are translated into mission concepts by the Integrated Operations Teams of the Department of Peace Operations, in close collaboration with mission senior management. The mission concept focuses on the long-term vision for mandate implementation and establishes the planning for all components of a peacekeeping mission.

5. The overarching objective of the political affairs work of peacekeeping missions is to contribute towards sustainable peace and democratic order in the host country. To achieve these objectives, immediate and intermediate outcomes must be achieved by the missions, including support for the establishment of peace agreements; achievement of political dialogue; support for the holding of free and fair elections; and peaceful transfer of power. Specifically, the work of the political affairs component is at the heart of conflict management and may include the following primary functions.²

(a) Further understanding the root causes and dynamics of the conflict and institutional crises that created the requirement for a peacekeeping operation;

(b) Following the evolution of these conflict dynamics and their impact on the institutional stability of the country;

(c) Developing strategies and good offices to help the parties in conflict resolve disputes through peaceful means and strengthen the institutional stability required to promote inclusive democracy and the rule of law and to build local political and civic capacity.

6. The political affairs function is undertaken by both dedicated political affairs divisions or offices and the offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The political affairs divisions or offices support the Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives in the conduct of good offices to parties in conflict, both personally

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group, “Norms and standards for evaluation”, 2016.

² *Handbook on the United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations* (United Nations publication, 2003), p. 23; and inputs from MONUSCO.

and through responsibilities delegated to other offices, in areas of tension. Good offices encompasses preventive diplomacy to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of conflicts when they occur. Political affairs divisions or offices also support senior mission leadership in advocacy through the provision of facilitation and support for mediation efforts and analysis of political dynamics that inform strategic and operational decision-making related to mandate implementation priorities.

7. Within the mission, political affairs work is undertaken in partnership and coordination with the following components or offices: civil affairs; strategic communications and public information; security sector reform and justice; military; police; human rights; protection of civilians; and gender. Additionally, the Joint Mission Analysis Centre and Joint Operations Centre both rely on political analyses for their substantive work and contribute to those analyses. Ultimately, the mission senior management relies on the work of political affairs division and units in undertaking its good offices function and engaging in peace and other political negotiations, and by leading the political tier of protection of civilians strategies.

Resources

8. There is no discrete and separate programmatic budget for “political affairs” in peacekeeping missions, making identification of dedicated funding for this component difficult. In 2020, there were 275 Political Affairs Officers deployed across 11 peacekeeping missions, as shown in table 1.³ Mission funds are available to these staff for outreach and travel.

Table 1
Number of Political Affairs Officers in peacekeeping missions, 2020

<i>Mission</i>	<i>Total civilian staff</i>	<i>Political Affairs Officers</i>	<i>Number of female officers</i>
UNMISS	1 402	63	24 (38%)
MINUSMA	1 421	54	19 (35%)
MONUSCO	2 201	49	15 (31%)
MINUSCA	519	39	17 (44%)
UNMIK	312	21	8 (38%)
UNAMID	1 948	20	7 (35%)
UNIFIL	588	15	7 (47%)
UNFICYP	115	5	1 (20%)
UNISFA	3 580	4	0 (0%)
MINURSO	158	3	1 (33%)
UNTSO	222	2	2 (100%)
Total	12 466	275	101 (37%)

(Footnotes on following page)

³ The number is based on the functional title in Umoja. The figures included all the staff categories in the Secretariat but excluded United Nations Volunteers. Deviations may also occur owing to inconsistency in functional titles recorded in Umoja. Data was accessed from Umoja in November 2020.

(Footnotes to table 1)

Abbreviations: MINURSO, United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; MINUSCA, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; MINUSMA, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; MONUSCO, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; UNAMID, African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur; UNFICYP, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus; UNIFIL, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon; UNISFA, United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei; UNMIK, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo; UNMISS, United Nations Mission in South Sudan; UNTSO, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

III. Scope and methodology

9. The scope of the evaluation covered the following five peacekeeping missions, which had a specific “peace, reconciliation and political process” mandate and accounted for the large majority (approximately 82 per cent) of the total number of Political Affairs Officers across all missions: the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

10. The evaluation covered the period 2017–2020, and utilized a mixed-method approach incorporating the following qualitative and quantitative data sources:

(a) **Structured content analysis of political analysis documents:** An expert assessment of 130 political affairs outputs across the five missions, including political analyses, notes to file, talking points and code cables, which were rated across seven key criteria⁴ on a 5-point Likert scale;

(b) **Document and programme data reviews:** of mission political strategies, workplans, organizational charts, human resource budgets, the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System and mission-specific reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council;

(c) **Surveys:** Two web-based surveys⁵ of (i) all mission personnel with political affairs functional titles, and (ii) external stakeholders, including government interlocutors, representatives of civil society organizations and United Nations country team members;

⁴ The seven criteria are derived from those used on a similar assessment of political analyses for the 2020 OIOS evaluation of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (document IED-20-001). They are: structural logic (clear structure effective for delivering material, key points upfront); quality of drafting (clear, relatively brief, declarative sentences or paragraphs with topic sentences); breadth of coverage (analysis covered all essential points for consideration by decision makers); depth of coverage (offered much insight and especially effective use of data); coherence and cogency (presentation is clear, succinct and easy to follow); courage (addressing policy implications and power dynamics); and analytic content (sharp and substantial analysis).

⁵ The mission staff survey was conducted from March to April 2021; 140 of 215 staff in the survey population responded, for an overall response rate of 65 per cent. The stakeholder survey was conducted from May to June 2021; 29 of 99 stakeholders – from civil society organizations, United Nations country teams and government partners – responded, for an overall response rate of 29 per cent.

(d) **Semi-structured interviews:** 79 interviews with mission personnel across all five missions, senior mission leadership and Department of Peace Operations and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs staff members at Headquarters;

(e) **Social media analysis:**⁶ of all five missions, including an assessment of their engagement in relation to key political events in the country;

(f) **Grid analysis of ACLED⁷ and PA-X⁸ databases:** to conduct a statistical calculation to compare the average level of fatalities before and after the signing of local peace agreements in specific areas (30 km²);

(g) **Review of local population survey data:**⁹ in all five missions to ascertain public sentiment with regard to key political processes and events.

11. The evaluation had the following limitations:

(a) The PA-X and ACLED database analysis of 92 local peace agreements assumed that the respective mission political affairs components were involved, given their primary role in political developments in the countries involved;

(b) The absence and/or limitations of reliable mission programme data pertaining to mission performance on its political affairs components;

(c) Given the thematic nature of the evaluation across five different missions, the evaluation did not assess outcomes at the individual mission level comprehensively; rather, results are reported at the aggregate level;

(d) Given the at times intangible, undocumented and unpublicized nature of the political work of missions, it was not always possible to assess the outcomes achieved in the political arena;

(e) Regarding the social media analysis, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan have a significant digital divide in mobile connectivity. Therefore, the social media in these countries may represent the views of considerably small population groups.

⁶ The analysis was partially based on the Sparrow tool (<https://mysparrowreport.org/>) developed by the Innovation Cell of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, available at <https://futurespeace.org/>.

⁷ See Clionadh Raleigh, "Introducing ACLED: an Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 47, No. 5 (September 2010).

⁸ University of Edinburgh, Peace Agreements Database, available at www.peaceagreements.org; and Christine Bell and others, PA-X Codebook, version 5, available at www.peaceagreements.org.

⁹ The five population surveys were: Mali-Mètre in Mali (2017–2019); Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Polls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2019); Public Pulse survey in Kosovo (2020); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Endline Study on Peace, Security and Sexual and Gender Based Violence in South Sudan* (2017); and Peace, Justice and Security Polls in the Central African Republic (2020).

IV. Evaluation results

A. In some but not all instances, political dialogues and/or peace agreements have helped to reduce tensions and conflicts in the five mission countries

Over the past four years, political affairs components have directly contributed to more than 50 political events in the 5 missions, as highlighted in reports of the Secretary-General

12. A systematic assessment of all reports on the Secretary-General on the 5 missions presented to the Security Council over the period 2017–2020 identified 53 specific events that contributed to peace agreements and political dialogues. Examples of political outcomes achieved included:

(a) A local peace agreement signed in Bangassou, Central African Republic, in April 2018;¹⁰

(b) An inclusive political dialogue in Bamako, Mali, conducted in December 2019, which concluded with the adoption of four resolutions and a series of peace recommendations;¹¹

(c) A peace conference in Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 9 to 11 October 2020, at which concerned communities reached an agreement over a border dispute;¹²

(d) A series of televised town hall debates in Kosovo from February to May 2019 to discuss key issues identified during the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum of May 2018;¹³

(e) Three political forums in Juba, South Sudan, between from September to November 2019 bringing relevant actors for dialogue with national leaders to enable grass-roots participation in the peace process.¹⁴

Political dialogues have helped to reduce tensions, although their contribution to sustainable peace was unclear

13. Stakeholders and mission personnel perceived that political dialogues had reduced tensions at the local level. About two thirds of personnel interviewed and two thirds of stakeholders surveyed reported that political dialogues on the ground involving relevant parties had been instrumental in preventing tensions from escalating into local conflicts. In addition, six of the nine Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General interviewed volunteered that facilitating dialogue among different political stakeholders was one of the main positive outcomes achieved by their respective missions. For example, to contribute to stabilization in Ituri Province, MONUSCO supported national-level dialogues on the demobilization of armed groups in the area. In Kosovo, UNMIK facilitated dialogue at the municipal level, including youth and women's networks, to contribute to trust-building among different groups of society.

14. The mission-specific reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council also identified improvements in the security situation in each of the five mission countries and the role of political affairs in contributing to this positive outcome

¹⁰ S/2018/922, para. 12.

¹¹ S/2020/223, para. 2.

¹² S/2020/1150, para. 38.

¹³ S/2019/461, para. 34.

¹⁴ S/2019/936, paras. 75–76.

through political dialogue. Some mission-specific examples are provided in the text box.

Examples of how the missions have engaged in political dialogues that laid the groundwork for reduction of tensions

MINUSCA (S/2019/147, para. 6): In January–February 2019, the United Nations supported direct talks between the Government of the Central African Republic and 14 armed groups, facilitated by the African Union. The talks resulted in the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

MINUSMA (S/2017/811, para. 3): In February 2017, MINUSMA and the international mediation team supported the High Representative of the President of the Republic of Mali for the Implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement in the dialogue between the signatory parties to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali relating to the implementation of the Agreement beyond the interim period. The signatory parties reached an agreement on a revised road map for the implementation of the Agreement.

MONUSCO (S/2019/575, para. 50): In the first half of 2019, MONUSCO provided support to the Provincial Ministry of the Interior to facilitate dialogue in the Bambuba-Kisiki and Banande-Kainama groupings in Beni territory on land and other disputes. The dialogue led to the signing of a peace agreement.

UNMIK (S/2018/747, para. 35): In May 2019, UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo Team organized a Trust-Building Forum with the participation of broad sections of Kosovo society. The participants identified avenues to build greater trust between communities in Kosovo and established a platform for future action in various development fields.

UNMISS (S/2018/831, para. 30): During the summer of 2018, UNMISS facilitated dialogue between the Jieng Council of Elders (Dinka) and the Council of Elders of Jubek State to address heightened tensions between host communities and migratory Dinka Bor cattle keepers. The dialogue led to the establishment of a joint committee to address communal tensions.

Source: Reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, 2017–2020.

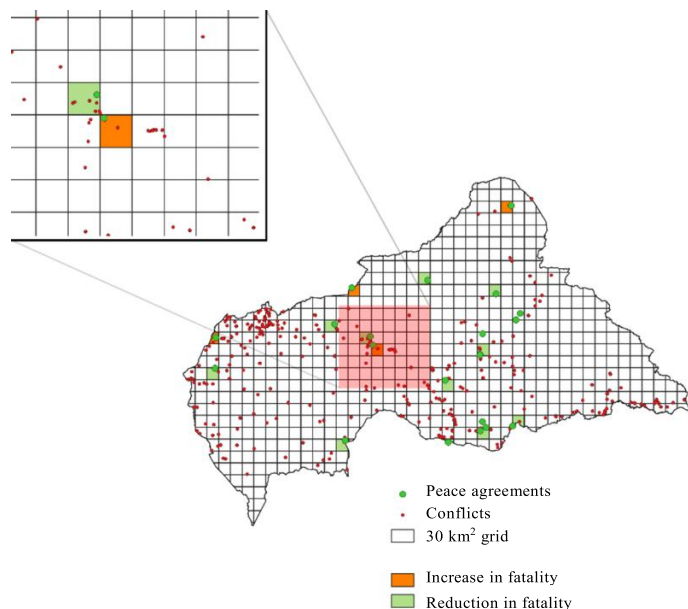
The level of all fatalities in the Central African Republic and Mali was reduced in those specific areas where a local peace agreement had been signed, although the level of fatalities in Mali increased overall; in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the level of fatalities in those specific areas with a local peace agreement remained unchanged. This raises questions about the relevance of some of these outcomes for sustaining peace.

15. Local peace agreements appeared to have reduced the average level of fatalities in two of the four mission countries where such agreements existed. A statistical analysis of conflicts (obtained from ACLED) and local peace agreements (obtained from PA-X) revealed that, during the period from 2017 to 2020, the average level of fatalities dropped by approximately 33 per cent and 64 per cent in Mali and the Central African Republic respectively (see figure I) after local peace agreements were

signed.¹⁵ This pointed to the efficacy of localized peace agreements involving relevant parties in reducing local conflicts.

Figure I

In the Central African Republic, there was a reduction in average fatalities following the signing of peace agreements



Note: The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on the map, do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. The green-shaded grid squares (see inset detail), represent areas of the country where the average number of fatalities declined after peace agreements were signed. The orange-shaded grid squares, fewer overall, represent areas in the country where fatalities increased.

16. While the analysis did not show any observable reduction in conflict following local peace agreements in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, different political dynamics were at play that may partially explain this lack of change. In South Sudan, the local context was largely shaped by failures in political agreements at the national level which permeated down to conflicts at the subnational level. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a limited presence of State authority proved a major challenge to containing conflict at the local level.

17. Specific provisions relating to women were explicitly mentioned in one third (31 out of 92) of local peace agreements from 2017 to 2019 in the PA-X database. These included, but were not limited to, greater participation of women in peace agreement implementation monitoring committees, local conflict resolution structures and representation in democratic institutions such as the parliament. However, the data were insufficient to assess women's participation more comprehensively in the peace process overall and/or the role of the mission's political affairs function in advancing their participation.

¹⁵ See paragraphs 10 (f) and 11 (a) for the methodology and assumptions underlying the analysis. Additionally, sustainability of the peace agreements was not assessed.

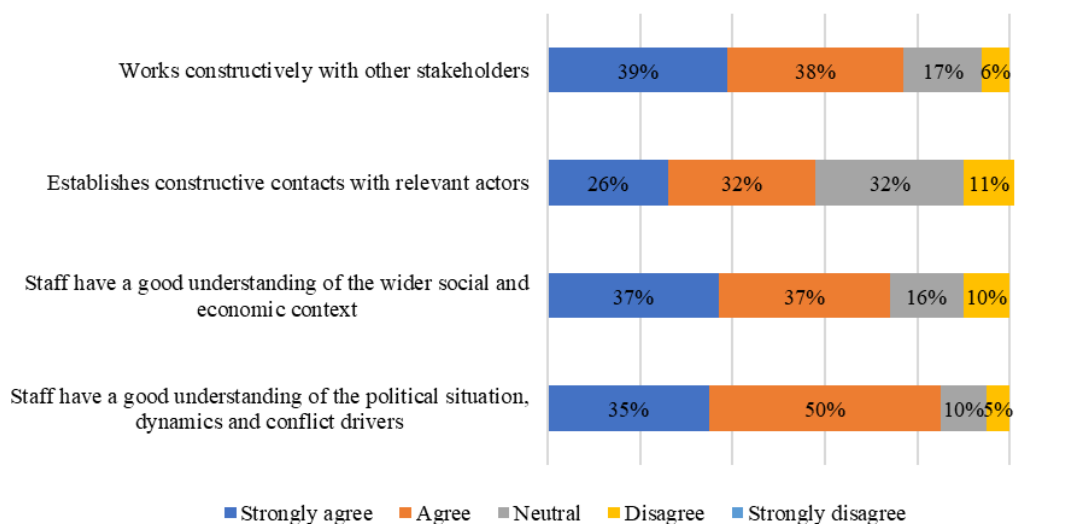
B. Peace agreements and political dialogues have been achieved effectively with important contributions from political affairs components in peacekeeping missions

Stakeholders assessed political affairs staff positively in using their knowledge and networks to contribute to political processes and outcomes

18. As shown in figure II, the majority of stakeholders surveyed (58 per cent or more) agreed that mission political affairs components have demonstrated their political knowledge and utilized their networks in various ways. The majority of internal stakeholders interviewed at the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations (8 out of 11) also volunteered examples of successes which they attributed in large part to the knowledge and expertise of political affairs personnel. In addition, four of the five Special Representatives of the Secretary-General interviewed specifically noted the knowledge of political affairs personnel as facilitating their political engagement, and many mission personnel interviewed (40 per cent) volunteered that the skills and in-depth knowledge of political affairs personnel were a major reason for their effectiveness.

Figure II

Stakeholders rated mission political affairs components positively for various indicators demonstrating their political acumen



Source: OIOS stakeholder survey.

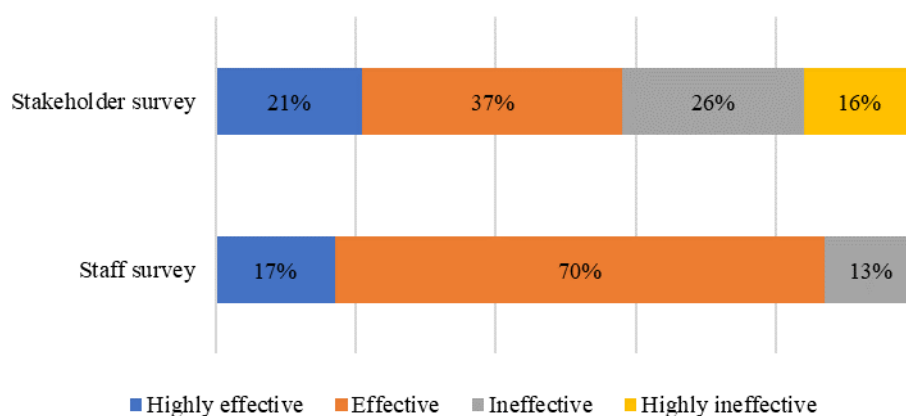
19. Personnel of political affairs components have also provided support to meetings, conferences and other political forums leading to the signing of peace agreements and/or the conduct of political dialogues. This direct contribution played a key role in creating the necessary enabling environment for political processes to take place and providing the required operational support for their implementation. Additionally, political affairs personnel were the penholders for the preparation of the first drafts of the mandated reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council that were used to support Member States' deliberation and decision-making in connection with mission mandates and activities.

20. The contributions of political affairs components to these positive political outcomes were also recognized by respondents in both the stakeholders and staff

surveys, although significantly less so by the stakeholders. As figure III shows, more than half of the stakeholders and staff surveyed (58 per cent and 87 per cent respectively) who offered an opinion rated the work of political affairs components as effective overall. More specifically, half of the stakeholders surveyed assessed the missions as good in contributing to the achievement of peace agreements, and two thirds assessed the missions as good in contributing to political dialogue. About 78 per cent of staff interviewed from other mission components with whom political affairs partnered gave a positive overall assessment of their respective missions' political work.

Figure III

Majority of stakeholder and staff survey respondents rated the political affairs component in the five missions as effective in advancing the peace process, with stakeholder ratings lower overall



Source: OIOS staff and stakeholder surveys.

Political Affairs Officers have exploited their political knowledge and networks to understand the conflict context and facilitate progress towards peace

21. Political Affairs Officers at mission headquarters and field offices have demonstrated a deep understanding of and established sound networks with key actors, including government and civil society partners, in national and subnational political spheres. Their knowledge and networks have been critical to achieving positive political outcomes, including through:

- Utilizing networks with different political actors to reduce violence through support for provincial authorities in negotiations with armed groups;
- Utilizing knowledge and outreach to non-governmental organizations to monitor implementation of peace agreements;
- Identifying opportunities for strategic political engagement through insights gained from working relationships with political actors.

The good offices of senior mission leaders have played a critical role in achieving positive peace outcomes

22. The reports of the Secretary-General on the five missions consistently highlighted the importance and outcomes of the good offices initiatives of senior mission leaders, including their contribution to peace processes at all levels. Prime among these were efforts to establish conditions conducive to the initiation of

political dialogues and peace agreements and to support the implementation of agreements reached. The types of outcomes identified in the reports included:

- *Encouraging parties to participate in (or return to) peace negotiations.* For example, in January and February 2019, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA intensified his engagement with the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation as a panel member to encourage direct talks between the Government and armed groups.¹⁶
- *Interacting with regional and international stakeholders to align information and approaches.* For example, from March to June 2017, UNMISS continued to actively support the work of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, including by facilitating, ahead of its plenary meetings, a regular forum for international partners and the Friends of South Sudan group to align the positions of the international community in support of the work of the Chair of the Commission.¹⁷
- *Promoting the implementation of ceasefire and other agreements.* For example, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSMA, in cooperation with the Government of Algeria, intensified his good offices efforts with the leaders of signatory movements to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali to facilitate dialogue and assisted them in overcoming obstacles. The movements produced a road map for implementation of the commitments of 11 December 2017.¹⁸
- *Helping to ensure that peace processes were inclusive.* For example, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK visited more than 20 municipalities to engage with a wide group of local leaders.¹⁹
- *Exercising good offices function to avoid violence in lead up to elections.* For example, from October to December 2018, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO conducted extensive good offices outreach to all political parties, government and leaders across the spectrum to encourage political dialogue and avoid electoral conflict.²⁰

23. These activities were frequently conducted in private, without publicity or public scrutiny, and their success reflected the knowledge and networks of the senior leaders involved, as well as their perceived credibility, trustworthiness and impartiality. The Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General interviewed also spoke of the importance of their good relations with national and political leaders and spending time with different groups to strategize together regarding solutions to obstacles to peace.

Despite often challenging contexts, the political affairs component in all five missions were able to find political space in which to engage critical peace partners

24. In all five missions evaluated, the progression of the peace process was at times hindered by factors such as lack of receptivity by parties, conflicting priorities among partners, rapidly changing political dynamics, practical and logistical issues (such as road access during wet seasons and coronavirus disease (COVID-19)) and, in some cases, limitations on the mission's own role and/or mandate in the peace process.

¹⁶ S/2019/147, para. 3.

¹⁷ S/2017/505, para. 46.

¹⁸ S/2017/1105, para. 4.

¹⁹ S/2017/387, para. 43.

²⁰ S/2019/6, para. 13.

Among mission personnel surveyed, external factors such as these were the most commonly cited challenges to achieving positive political outcomes. Nevertheless, in each mission, examples were found of successful efforts to identify and expand the political space in which to engage critical peace partners. For example, in Kosovo, where the political process was led by the European Union, UNMIK, in the absence of any peace agreement or acknowledged role in the national political space, recalibrated its approach to engaging with civil society organizations and government officials at the municipality level. The Mission primarily conducted local-level initiatives through capacity-building and mainstreaming gender in peace dialogues. Similarly, in South Sudan, where the peace process was led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union, UNMISS helped maintain the momentum when progress in negotiations stalled by engaging actively with all relevant parties, broadcast radio²¹ debates by leaders to the local communities and conducted extensive in-person meetings to disseminate information about the agreement.²² In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO focused its political affairs work on promoting a political environment for the execution of national elections in 2018.²³

Public perceptions of security among local populations improved in three of the five mission countries

25. Data from established local population surveys in the five mission countries revealed improved public perceptions in three of the five – the Central African Republic, Kosovo and Mali.²⁴ Data illustrating this public sentiment included:²⁵

- In Kosovo, 8 out of 10 respondents in Kosovo (83 per cent) felt safe in the streets in April 2020, compared with 70 per cent in May 2019;
- In Mali, most respondents (65 per cent) believed that the level of insecurity had either decreased or remained the same in the 12 months preceding the survey in November 2019;
- In the Central African Republic, more than half of respondents (55 per cent) felt that there was freer movement of goods and improvement in the security situation in November 2020 as compared with November 2019.²⁶

26. In contrast, about 70 per cent and 78 per cent of respondents in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, surveyed in November 2017 and July–August 2019 respectively, felt more insecure in the 12 months prior to the survey.

²¹ Radio Miraya (<https://unmiss.unmissions.org/radio-miraya-news>).

²² Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

²³ See Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, *Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in the DRC* (Oslo, 2019).

²⁴ See paragraph 10 (g) for data sources for each country. While all five local population surveys differed methodologically regarding survey population and questionnaire construct, proxy indicators on public perceptions of security were identified in all five to provide a general assessment.

²⁵ To aggregate results across all countries, except South Sudan, this conclusion was reached only on a single year with a single comparable indicator. The evaluation did not assess more longitudinal data for multiple variables across any of the five countries.

²⁶ The insecurity significantly rose again after the Constitutional Court of the Central Africa Republic did not certify the former president's candidacy for the presidential elections, which resulted in an armed attack on Bangui in January 2021.

Missions' use of social media to advocate for peace, including greater participation of women, was more unclear

27. While not the direct responsibility of the political affairs component, and taking into account limitations in mobile connectivity at the country level, the missions' use of social media as an advocacy tool for promoting peace was difficult to gauge. In terms of the actual number of mission followers on Twitter and Facebook, two of the largest social media platforms, outreach across missions varied significantly. Social media activities appeared to be most prevalent in relation to national events; the accounts of senior mission leaders, such as the Special Representatives or Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, accounted for a sizeable proportion of Twitter coverage of the missions' activities at the national level. As one example, the event on the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic had 765 and 723 "likes" on Twitter and Facebook, respectively.

28. The level of engagement in relation to key political events at the subnational level was more limited. One example of this was the ceasefire agreement and road map to end violence in Bria, Haute-Kotto Prefecture, in the Central African Republic, which received no coverage on Twitter and only 20 "likes" on Facebook. Similarly, while the inclusive political dialogue in Bamako, received 883 and 637 "likes" on Twitter and Facebook respectively, the subnational truce between the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform, both signatory movements, received almost no coverage. Furthermore, mission social media posts specifically on women's participation in peace processes were also limited.

The missions' own performance data on their political affairs work were also limited

29. Despite these positive ratings, however, programme performance data on the results of political affairs components in the missions was limited. While reporting did occur through mandatory results-based budgeting, progress in the results-based budgeting indicators was primarily reported in terms of outputs and not outcomes.

30. The recent introduction of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System across all the missions was intended to bridge this gap by facilitating mission reporting on outcomes. An assessment of the System framework suggested that it was a highly relevant tool for measuring mission performance on political affairs. Examples of pertinent indicators in this regard included:

- (a) Number of violations of a peace agreement by signed armed groups;
- (b) Whether inclusive national dialogue was held and the number of key stakeholders participating in inclusive national dialogue workshops;
- (c) Extent to which government members are engaging with the parties to a peace agreement.

31. However, the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System has only recently been implemented in the field missions and is partially and/or inconsistently used. Several missions reported that the process of populating the System was ongoing and that preliminary data was insufficient for analysing programme performance. Therefore, the System was not available at the time of the evaluation to assess the performance of the missions' political affairs work.

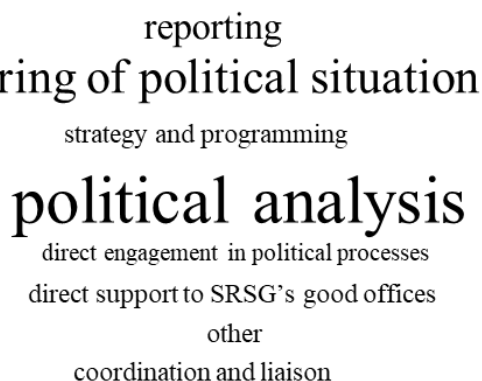
C. Mission political analyses have been generally sound but could be used more effectively in contributing to the achievement of positive political outcomes

Conducting political analyses has been a significant activity for mission political affairs components

32. Staff working in mission political affairs components produced a variety of political analysis documents, including analytical reports, code cables, strategy papers and notes to file. Staff survey respondents reported that conducting these analyses accounted for the greatest amount of their time of all the activities that they engaged in, as shown in figure IV. This was followed by monitoring of the political situation in the country and reporting on key political events to senior mission or Headquarters leaders.

Figure IV

Mission political affairs staff reported conducting political analysis as the activity they spent most of their time on



Note: The word cloud in the figure shows the different types of activities typically undertaken by mission political affairs staff. The bigger the font size, the more often it was mentioned by mission staff survey respondents as an activity that they engaged in. “Political analysis” was the most frequently reported activity (by 55 out of 136 respondents).

Source: OIOS staff survey.

Across various criteria, the analyses produced by the mission political affairs component have been of good quality overall

33. Based on an assessment across seven criteria on a five-point scale,²⁷ the overall quality of the political analysis documents produced by the missions was rated as positive, as shown in table 2. Overall, approximately 80 per cent of all documents were rated either four or above on all the criteria. The documents scored highest on the criteria of “breadth” and “depth”, suggesting that the documents prepared by the political affairs function included a broad assessment of the political situation in the country and its underlying conditions. However, the documents scored least well on the “analysis” criterion, suggesting that the identification of conflict drivers and

²⁷ A five-point Likert scale (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = fair, 4 = good, 5 = excellent) was used to rate documents on seven different dimensions. A rating of 4 was used as the default setting for appropriate professional work. Exceptionally good work was rated as 5. See also para. 9 (a) for further explanation of the assessment.

power dynamics, the inclusion of specific recommendations and the risk of inaction were not consistently addressed in all the documents reviewed.

Table 2
Political analysis documents scored generally well on seven assessment criteria

	<i>Structural logic</i>	<i>Drafting</i>	<i>Breadth</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Coherence and cogency</i>	<i>Courage</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
All missions							
Percentage of entries = 5:	30%	34%	29%	28%	33%	19%	32%
Percentage of entries = 4:	57%	55%	68%	65%	60%	71%	54%
Percentage of entries < 4:	12%	11%	3%	7%	7%	10%	14%

Source: OIOS expert assessment of key political affairs document.

The analyses scored well overall on integrating gender but not as well on human rights and disability inclusion

34. The core United Nations programming principles of gender equality, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and human rights were inconsistently integrated into the political analyses reviewed, as shown in table 3. Overall, 47 per cent of the documents assessed addressed gender issues substantively, with some variations across the missions. In contrast, human rights considerations were addressed in only 8 per cent of the documents, whereas disability and environmental issues received even less attention.

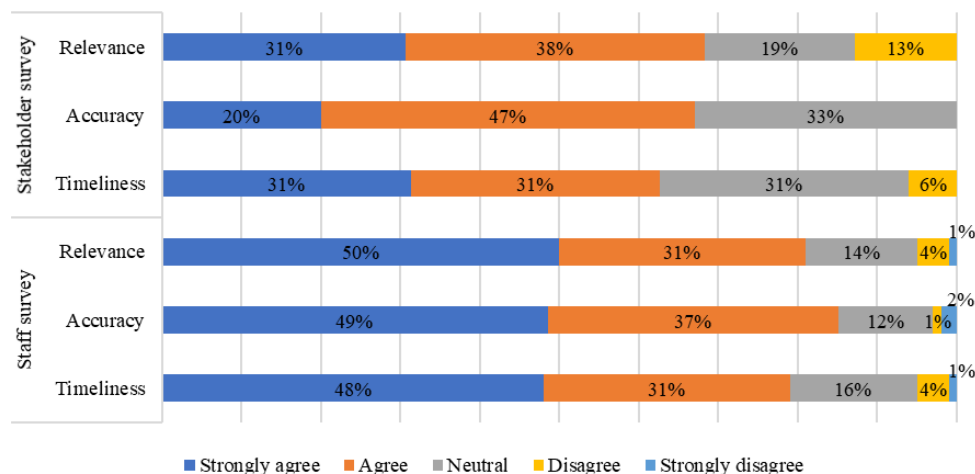
Table 3
Political analysis documents scored well on integrating gender but not on human rights, disability and environmental inclusion

<i>All missions</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Human rights</i>	<i>Disability</i>	<i>Environment</i>
Percentage of documents rated 4 or 5	28%	8%	0%	0%
Percentage of documents rated 3	19%	15%	2%	2%
Percentage of documents rated below 3	53%	77%	98%	98%

Source: OIOS expert assessment of key political affairs documents.

35. Both stakeholders and staff surveyed rated the political analyses produced by political affairs staff highly. As shown in figure V, at least 60 per cent of staff and 80 per cent of stakeholders respectively considered that the reports and advice produced to support peace processes were timely, accurate and relevant.

Figure V
Most stakeholders and staff surveyed rated political analysis reports and advice to political processes as relevant, accurate and timely



Source: OIOS stakeholder and staff surveys.

Nevertheless, there was an opportunity to further strengthen the utility of political analyses, particularly in providing specific political strategies and in supporting Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and other senior leaders

36. The assessment of political analysis documents identified a small number of examples in which they appeared to directly contribute to a strategic decision on political engagement with a positive outcome. These included:

- In UNMIK, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo used political analyses in planning the Mission's trust-building work, as evidenced by subsequent speeches at the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum and the Security Council.
- In UNMISS, the breadth and depth of coverage of political analyses informed the senior Mission leaders in the process of the Mission's 2020 strategic review which provided recommendations to the Secretary-General on the renewal of the Mission's mandate.
- In MINUSCA, analyses regarding the situation in Bangassou identified the necessary conditions for peace (e.g., arresting militia leaders and making it possible for internally displaced people to return to their neighbourhood safely), and the need for the Mission's contribution both to local security and to monitoring the work of the new government forces.
- In MONUSCO, analyses addressed barriers to and opportunities for women's participation in Congolese politics, informing strategic decision-making on how to enhance their participation.
- In MINUSMA, analyses addressed relations between the two main non-governmental signatory groups to the 2015 Mali peace agreement, which was useful for ensuring effective follow-up to the agreement.

37. Despite these positive examples, however, it was less clear how the analyses aligned with one of the primary functions of mission political affairs components:

developing strategies to help parties in conflict resolve disputes.²⁸ The assessment of mission political analyses revealed that this was addressed inconsistently across the documents reviewed; also, as noted in paragraph 33, the political analysis documents scored lowest on the assessment criterion regarding presenting options for political engagement.

38. Senior mission and Headquarters leadership feedback on mission political analyses was generally positive but also identified areas for improvement. About half (four out of nine) of the Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General interviewed volunteered that their mission's reporting, analysis and early warning was one of its biggest successes. Furthermore, three out of nine volunteered that they relied strongly on political and situational analyses provided by the political affairs staff.²⁹ Similarly, about half of Headquarters managers interviewed (5 out of 11) considered political analyses conducted by the missions to be one of their main expectations from the missions and noted that they were generally satisfied with these outputs. However, some senior leaders expressed views that the outputs could be more analytical rather than descriptive, timelier and include more diverse sources of information.

39. Stakeholders surveyed and staff interviewed also identified opportunities for further enhancing the utility of political analyses. Close to one third of staff surveyed (31 per cent) believed that senior mission leaders did not use the advice and reports produced by the political affairs component when interacting with parties to conflict and making decisions; related to this, a few staff interviewed stated that they received limited feedback on their work, resulting in missed opportunities for improving their analyses. Furthermore, some mission staff members interviewed noted that, in cases where the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had appointed political advisers in his/her immediate office, the political affairs division or office function was relegated to a secretariat rather than an advisory role. Some staff interviewed also reported an absence of regular consultations between the political affairs division or office and senior mission leadership other than the senior mission team meetings. Several mission staff interviewed felt that their analyses were overlooked owing to Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General having their own political vision which was not widely understood or openly communicated to the rest of the mission, including the political affairs division or office; staff in at least three missions also noted that the personality of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General played an important role in how the mission approached its political work.

D. Mission structures for political affairs functions were not always efficient in achieving its political outcomes

Despite articulating a whole-of-mission approach to political work, coordination within the political affairs component and across other components was a challenge, and the linkages between headquarters-based and field-based political work were not always strong

40. While only two of the five missions had political strategies separate from their mission concept document, all missions articulated a whole-of-mission approach to political affairs work, including depicting political approaches as a whole-of-mission responsibility. Most staff surveyed (73 per cent) reported that political approaches to

²⁸ *Handbook on the United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations*, p. 23 (see footnote 2).

²⁹ The remaining six did not discuss this issue during the interview.

conflict prevention and resolution were always or to a large extent prioritized in the mission; most stakeholders surveyed (68 per cent) also agreed.

41. Implementing the missions' political work, however, required an integrated structure that did not always exist in the five missions assessed. The political pillar – presided over, in some cases, by a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General-Political – included only part of the mission; in some cases, political affairs advisers in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and major mission components such as the communications and gender units operated outside the political pillar. Significantly, in some instances the political pillar excluded the mission's field office networks, staff of which are among the first responders to local conflicts and undertake mediation, facilitation, training and other political work in local communities.

42. Most staff interviewed (64 per cent) believed that mission structures and processes did not always support achieving positive political outcomes, and mission structures were volunteered as one of the top five challenges identified by staff surveyed in delivering their political affairs mandate. Staff interviewed from the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs identified negative effects resulting from this lack of an integrated structure, including competition and an unclear division of labour among mission offices in relation to political affairs; lack of clarity as to whether the political affairs division or office director or the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General had the lead on political matters; and exclusion of political affairs staff from high-level political meetings.

43. Chief among the concerns of mission staff surveyed and interviewed was the perceived disconnect between political work undertaken in mission headquarters and in the field. Budget documents list the human resources allocated to support for political, peace and related processes in each mission: in 2020/21, in three of the missions, less than half of those resources were allocated to political affairs components.³⁰ Others may have been political advisers in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or other units, and many of the remainder are likely to have been in the field. Interviews with heads of field offices and directors of political affairs divisions or offices suggested that headquarters-based and field-based staff view their roles differently, with the former focusing primarily on national-level political issues and the latter on subnational and community-level issues. As a result, they saw themselves as working on parallel rather than integrated tracks. Additionally, workplans produced by the political affairs components did not always indicate how and to what extent they planned to work with other mission components, including field offices.

Reporting lines for political affairs did not always facilitate coordinated planning or prioritization of political affairs activities

44. The structural challenges of implementing a whole-of-mission approach to political matters were also reflected in reporting lines. In each of the missions evaluated, headquarters-based political affairs staff reported to a different senior mission leader than field-based staff, including those with political designations. It thus followed that, even when high-level coordination mechanisms were in place, day-to-day activities and interactions were not routinely coordinated between headquarters and the field.

³⁰ MINUSCA, MONUSCO and UNMISS (see [A/74/756](#), p. 4; [A/74/738](#), p. 4; and [A/74/742](#), p. 4, respectively).

45. Additionally, in the five missions evaluated, while regular and ad hoc meetings among component and field office heads, as well as personal connections, facilitated horizontal information flows at senior levels, interactions among lower-level staff in mission headquarters and in the field were inhibited by physical distance and lack of opportunity. Staff interviewed noted that the formal networks that promote such interactions for other professional groups of United Nations staff reportedly do not operate for political affairs staff, limiting the opportunity to share experiences and information, work collaboratively and support colleagues.

V. Conclusions

46. The 2015 High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations identified the primacy of politics as a “guiding light” of modern peace operations. The political affairs component of the peacekeeping missions, as primarily undertaken by the political affairs divisions and the offices of the Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, has been critical to the successful implementation of this vision. All the senior mission leaders interviewed for this evaluation cited the significance of political work to their mission effectiveness; illustrating this view, one Special Representative of the Secretary-General stated that “the really important stuff, the transformational stuff, gets done in our political role”, while another noted that “a strong political team is the key to the mission succeeding”.

47. To achieve desired outcomes in advancing national, regional and local peace processes, missions need to create space for political engagement and agreement. Doing this effectively involves a complex mapping of activities and approaches to navigate between Security Council dynamics, the political will of Governments, and stakeholders’ appetite for peace, as well as numerous mission-specific factors including leadership perspectives, mission structures, staff competencies and linkages and complementarities with other mission components. The often dynamic and fluid external political context has made the work of the political affairs components challenging: across all five missions and all staff levels, this was consistently cited as the primary inhibiting factor to the achievement of results, necessitating innovative and flexible approaches and solutions.

48. Both peace agreements and political dialogue are essential milestones for achieving long-lasting peace. By harnessing their political knowledge and networks, identifying the best strategic options for engagement through sound analysis, advocating with stakeholder groups, facilitating the necessary conditions for dialogue and mediating to find peaceful solutions, the political affairs function has played a direct role in reaching these outcomes. Evidence also suggests that in some instances where agreements have been reached, conflict has decreased (or at least not increased) and local populations have reported feeling more secure. Political dialogues have brought together disparate groups, often at the community level, to enhance mutual understanding and inclusivity.

49. Several changes can be made to further strengthen these results. They include more efficient structural arrangements, more consistent and institutionalized work of the political affairs division or office in the missions’ political affairs work, enhanced mission support for staffing, performance and accountability matters, better use of and feedback loops on political analyses, enhanced use of social media, more targeted and integrated mission strategies and bolder engagement with Governments. It is only through the successful transition from conflict to development that Member States can achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensure that no one is left behind.

VI. Recommendations

50. OIOS makes three important recommendations to the five peacekeeping missions and one important recommendation to the Department of Peace Operations.

Recommendation 1 (results A and B)

Each mission should strengthen its political affairs component performance assessment and reporting, including through linkages with the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, to determine the relevance of its political affairs activities to achieving longer-term outcomes and to articulate key expectations and outcomes of its political work.

Indicator of achievement: Strengthened performance assessment and reporting on the relevance and effectiveness of political affairs work.

Recommendation 2 (results C and D)

Following each mission's mandate renewal, or at the appropriate time given the mission context, and following from recommendation 1, each mission should develop a mission-specific political strategy, clearly communicated to the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and to all mission staff³¹ that identifies:

- (a) Priorities among different activities, such as reporting, political analysis and direct engagement;
- (b) Roles and responsibilities for political activities in the mission, including communication between the different mission components involved in political work;
- (c) A communication strategy, including possible use of social media;
- (d) Approaches to the inclusion of subgroups such as women, youth and the disabled;
- (e) Approaches to engaging with civil society;
- (f) Linkages with the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

Indicator of achievement: Written mission political strategy that is updated on an agreed upon time frame and is shared with the Department of Peace Operations headquarters and discussed in senior leadership and political affairs divisions or offices meetings.

Recommendation 3 (results A, C and D)

Each mission should strengthen the utility of the political analyses produced by its political affairs component by:

- (a) Seeking regular feedback on analyses conducted, including from senior mission and (through the Department of Peace Operations) Headquarters leaders, as well as the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to be taken into account for future improvements;
- (b) Ensuring clear linkages between the analyses conducted and the mission's political strategy, to ensure that the analyses are relevant, strategic and meaningful.

³¹ This should take into account the possible need for confidentiality with regard to highly sensitive issues.

Indicator of achievement: Introduction of a regular feedback mechanism for political analyses and specific references to the objectives and goals of the overarching political strategy.

Recommendation 4 (result D)

Department of Peace Operations headquarters should conduct a review of the current peacekeeping mission structures that are in place for implementing their political affairs mandate, with a view to improving overall efficiency and effectiveness. The review should cover:

(a) The linkages between the various units with political affairs staff and/or functions, including political affairs components, the offices of the Special Representative and/or Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and field offices;

(b) The reporting lines within and between those units;

(c) The size and distribution of resources allocated to political affairs, including extrabudgetary funding initiatives;

(d) Coordination with other mission components contributing to political activities, such as Civil Affairs.

Indicator of achievement: Review conducted and shared with all missions.

Annex I***Comments received from entities on the draft report****United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic**

With reference to your memorandum addressed on 13 October 2021 (OIOS-2021-01469), on the above captioned-subject matter for your consideration, kindly find attached Appendix 1** with the comments of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

I am pleased to receive the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight on the evaluation of political affairs in peacekeeping missions, and express our general agreement with its finding and recommendations, reflected accordingly in the Mission action plan.

I take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for the excellent cooperation and guidance during this process

* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services sets out the full text of comments received from entities on the draft report. The practice was instituted in line with General Assembly resolution [64/263](#), following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

** On file with the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Reference OIOS interoffice memorandum OIOS 2021-01469, dated 13 October 2021.

In response to the referenced correspondence, please find attached Management comments and action plan of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)** for the implementation of the recommendations stemming from the evaluation exercise, as presented in the subject report.

With the goal of enhancing the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the entire political affairs component, the Mission commits to fully and timely addressing all areas warranting action by MINUSMA, as per the attached recommendation action.

With reference to paragraph 32 of the subject report, MINUSMA would like to request replacing references to “*an alliance of rebel groups seeking autonomy for the desert region of northern Mali*” and “*a coalition of pro-government armed groups from northern Mali*” by a reference to “*signatory movements*”.

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I would like to thank the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS-IED) for having included the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in the comparative review of political affairs components and share the Mission’s responses through the enclosed action plan.

I am pleased to note that the Mission has been engaging with the evaluators throughout the process and provided the requested data and evidence to substantiate findings.

Whilst I do not object the recommendations, I wish to highlight that MONUSCO has expressed a concern regarding the scope of the evaluation. For instance, there has been a very narrow focus on “*peace agreements and peace processes*”, thereby neglecting the Mission’s good offices work based on thorough analysis of the political dynamics, both at national and provincial levels, as well as broader aspects of political engagement, including in support of the protection of civilians mandate and in support of institutional reforms.

The case study samples used for MONUSCO, as chosen by OIOS, focused on local-level peace processes without paying due attention to core issues related to political stability and power dynamics in the country during the review period, including during the past electoral period.

Regarding the strengthening of the political affairs component performance assessment and reporting, including through linkages with Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) (recommendation #1) I should highlight that the Mission has developed its CPAS results framework in close consultation with the Political Affairs Division and our first mission-wide performance assessment is expected to be undertaken during the first quarter 2022.

Regarding the development of a political strategy (recommendation #2), the Mission has noted that this is amongst the deliverables under the Secretary-General’s Action for Peacekeeping+ initiative. Whilst the Mission supports the recommendation, it should be highlighted that MONUSCO’s mandate has been rolled over for a number of years now and the expected improvement in political performance is not related to

** On file with the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

producing every year a “political strategy” but to adapting and making use of good offices to advance mandate implementation.

Good political work to address complex and dynamic political processes therefore requires a versatile, dynamic, proactive and creative process that cannot be captured in a yearly document. In this regard, I shall like to emphasize that the Mission will continue to engage all political actors across the political spectrum of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, support advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda and work towards greater inclusion of the Youth into political processes. All these elements are of course included in our ongoing efforts and will be of great relevance as we approach the 2023 electoral process. A revised Mission Concept, following mandate renewal in December will reflect these core aspects of our political engagements.

Finally, regarding the utility of the political analyses produced by our political affairs (recommendation #3), I wish to highlight that I have regular weekly exchanges with the Director of Political Affairs and benefit greatly from the timely and sound analysis; equally, the weekly exchanges of the Mission with the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), through the Integrated Operations Team, benefit from the analysis provided by Political Affairs which includes both national and provincial political aspects, as well as regional political and security developments. I would therefore suggest this recommendation can be closed.

United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

I am pleased to receive the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Evaluation of Political Affairs in peacekeeping missions.

I would like to inform you that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) concurs with the report and the recommendations and is currently preparing a recommendation action plan which will be shared with your office shortly.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for the excellent cooperation and guidance during this process.

Department of Peace Operations

On behalf of Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, I am conveying the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) management response to the evaluation of political affairs components conducted by OIOS.

The Department of Peace Operations thanks the Office of Internal Oversight Services for its useful evaluation of political affairs components in peacekeeping operations.

In reference to the draft report shared by OIOS, the Department of Peace Operations would like to clarify that the statement in paragraph 30 of the draft report that “MONUSCO focused its political affairs work on supporting the execution of national elections in 2018.” is not fully accurate. Resolution [2348 \(2017\)](#) and [2409 \(2018\)](#) more broadly mandated the Mission to support the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement and the electoral process through its good offices. The Mission was not focused on the execution of elections but on promoting a political environment in which such elections could take place peacefully.

The department notes the concurrence of evaluated missions with the recommendations addressed to them and will support their implementation through the issuance of guidance. As relates to recommendation 2 that “each mission should develop a mission-specific political strategy”, the department notes that these strategies will be developed under Department of Peace Operations guidance, based

on the responsibilities of the Department of Peace Operations in the strategic and political oversight of peacekeeping operations, and will be approved by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations. The department further accepts recommendation 4 and will consider how best to implement it, either as a standalone review, as suggested, or as part of distinct review processes of missions.

The Department of Peace Operations appreciates the collaborative approach of the OIOS evaluation team throughout the process.

United Nations Mission in South Sudan

Reference is made to the above subject and as requested in your memo dated 13 October 2021, UNMISS confirms its agreement with the recommendations of the report.

I also take this opportunity to present the following comments in regard to the

- Page 9, paragraph 14: In analyzing the impact of peace agreements, the report does not seem to reflect the reduction in the level of fatalities in South Sudan since the signing of the 2018 Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), which is premised at the national level.
- Page 20, paragraph 20 (e): During the specified period, the Mission conducted 5 political parties' forums and 2 leadership dialogue forums. These aimed to advance engagements on the peace process and foster trust-building amongst peace stakeholders. Importantly, these initiatives led to increased inclusivity of opposition actors into the national dialogue process.

As requested, please also find attached the UNMISS Action Plan and associated timetable for implementing each of the recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and continued support to UNMISS.

Annex II

Response of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to comments received from United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) management

In response to comments received from MONUSCO, OIOS notes that the scope of the thematic evaluation was discussed and agreed to with the mission focal points during the inception phase. The OIOS evaluation was outcome-based, focusing specifically on two intermediate outcomes – peace agreements and political dialogue – and included an assessment of the good offices function. Additionally, the thematic nature of the evaluation – covering five different peacekeeping missions – did not allow for a more in-depth and detailed analysis of the work at individual mission provincial levels.
