



United Nations **Political Affairs**

DIPLOMACY. PREVENTION. ACTION

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2019

Endorsed by DPA Senior Management on 20 November 2015

Endorsed by Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction:

In 2013, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) developed its first Strategic Plan (SP) covering the activities in 2014-2015. While this document has proved useful, there is a need for a more comprehensive plan for the period 2016-2019 that covers the wide range of work of the Department, provides guiding principles for future work, and sets up a number of long-term strategic objectives, accompanied by a results framework. The SP is a planning tool for DPA at headquarters: Special Political Missions (SPMs) will devise individual plans based on their specific mandates.

The global context:

We are operating in a rapidly evolving, and seemingly deteriorating, strategic context. Large-scale crises are becoming more frequent, and a growing number of conflicts are becoming more intractable and less conducive to traditional political settlements. Long-simmering disputes have escalated or relapsed into wars. Violent extremism is sowing fear in many parts of the world. Transnational organized crime threatens the very fabric of a number of societies. In an age of increasing demands for human rights and political participation, we see how a mixture of poor governance, inequality, corruption and exclusion fuel violence and radicalization.

This SP addresses emerging patterns, and how to adjust our working methods, partnerships, structures and tools so that we are able to effectively respond to future challenges.

New directions:

Our guiding principle is the UN Charter's promise to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. The Department is also guided by a number of resolutions emanating from the General Assembly and the Security Council. Recent policy reviews such as the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) (to which the Secretary-General responded in his Report of 2 September 2015), the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, and the independent Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (on Women, Peace and Security) have explored the principles that should guide the UN, and DPA in particular. These include *(i)* the centrality of conflict prevention and mediation and the need to re-prioritize it; *(ii)* the primacy of political solutions to existing and potential conflicts; and *(iii)* the need to foster partnerships for prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding; *(iv)* a call for flexibility in using the different tools at the disposal of the UN; and *(v)* promoting women's empowerment and participation across all priority areas of work.

DPA's overall vision and approach:

This SP sets out a vision for DPA that is centered on the need to promote inclusive political solutions as the key to preventing, managing or resolving conflicts and acts of political violence, while ensuring long lasting solutions that reduce human suffering and make peace sustainable.

The scope and complexity of today's conflicts threaten to surpass our ability to address them effectively. Nonetheless, the Department has a unique position as the political adviser and arm of the Secretary-General and a wide range of tools. These include: *(i)* supporting the use of any of the diverse mechanisms outlined in Article 33 of the UN Charter (negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement), and preventive diplomacy, mediation and peacemaking in particular; *(ii)* providing dedicated support to the exercise of the Good Offices of the Secretary-General (under Article 99 of the Charter); *(iii)* deploying and supporting SPMs at both national and regional levels, as well as UN envoys or Special Advisors; providing technical advice and support to the growing role of regional organizations in conflict prevention; *(iv)* providing advice and support to the Peacebuilding Commission; *(v)* maintaining a Mediation Support Unit (MSU) with a Standby Team of Mediation Experts; and *(vi)* cooperating with UNDP, PBSO and other actors from the broader UN system to support UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and Peace and Development Advisors to undertake long term, structural prevention and peacebuilding.

In using its tools, DPA will aim to promote political solutions and frameworks that promote peaceful and inclusive societies and help to advance human rights.

DPA's Goals and Strategic Objectives:

DPA will focus on three goals involving eight strategic objectives:

Goal 1: Strengthening international peace and security through inclusive prevention, mediation and peacebuilding processes

Strategic Objective 1: Setting the agenda for conflict prevention

Strategic Objective 2: Reinforcing conflict response and resolution

Strategic Objective 3: Investing in sustaining peace

Goal 2: Deepening and broadening partnerships within the UN and beyond

Strategic Objective 4: Deepening relations with UN Member States and regional organizations

Strategic Objective 5: Strengthening ties within the UN system

Strategic Objective 6: Expanding the networks of partners

Goal 3: Fit for the future – ensuring organizational effectiveness

Strategic Objective 7: Reviewing and updating knowledge management, policy guidance and decision-making

Strategic Objective 8: Continued professionalization of human resources and their management

The SP as a whole emphasizes the importance of two cross-cutting thematic issues *(i)* gender and the Women, Peace and Security agenda; and *(ii)* preventing serious human rights violations, based on the Human Rights Up Front initiative.

A results framework is attached to the plan to assist in monitoring and evaluating DPA's performance in the period 2016-2019.

1. INTRODUCTION

DPA's Strategic Plan covers the period from 2016 to 2019. It presents DPA's vision, overarching goals and strategic objectives in light of the challenging global context

In 2013, DPA developed its first SP to provide a framework for its activities. The initial plan covered the period 2014 to 2015. Divisions developed Annual Work Plans and reported on achievements and challenges at the end of 2014. While it provided a basis for synchronizing divisional work plans across DPA, this was not linked to a results framework. Annual strategic reviews of the plan were institutionalized to take stock of SP implementation, review DPA's priorities, capacities and resources and develop a shared understanding of the evolving operating context. In January 2015, the strategic review concluded that *(i)* DPA had made progress, including strengthening its preventive mechanisms and partnerships, but *(ii)* the Department needed to update its strategic goals and planning to reflect an increasingly complex international security environment and recent policy discussions at the UN.

This new SP builds on the previous document and expands its scope to cover DPA's work from 2016 to 2019 with the objectives of:

- Articulating DPA's medium to long-term strategic vision to support the fulfillment of DPA's mandate and responsibilities.
- Providing the Department with a clear direction and a set of strategic goals to be achieved over a given period of time.
- Supporting decision making processes and the efficient allocation of resources according to departmental priorities.
- Supporting cross-department synergies and effective ways to integrate thematic issues.
- Ensuring a better alignment of human and financial resources to agreed objectives
- Facilitating the coordination with Member States and internal/external partners.

The SP is intended as a planning tool for the Department, and complements DPA's existing mandates and guidance from the Secretary-General as well as the Strategic Framework for the period 2016-2017, as approved by the General Assembly¹. While the SP's principles are relevant to the work of SPMs, their planning is based on their specific mandates and circumstances.

The SP consists of the following sections:

¹ Proposed Strategic Framework, (A/69/6).

- Brief discussion of the changing **global context and new directions** for DPA;
- Statement of DPA's overall **vision and approach** for achieving its objectives;
- Detailed outline of DPA's **goals and strategic objectives**;
- A **results framework** to monitor and assess DPA's performance against these priorities.

The SP builds upon key recent policy processes initiated by the UN Secretary-General and by Member States such as (i) the Report of the Secretary-General on the future of peace operations to respond to the HIPPO report; (ii) The Peacebuilding Architecture Review; (iii) the recommendations of the Global Study on Security Council Resolution 1325, as contained in the Secretary-General report on Women and Peace and Security; and (iv) the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additionally, the SP is in sync with the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative.

2. THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

The international community, the United Nations and DPA face increasingly complex conflicts and political challenges. The UN's work on prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding continues to make a significant contribution to limiting and mitigating violence and political tensions. But the scale of this task is likely to grow.

2.i Upsurge in violence:

After a long decline, violent conflict is rising globally once more. In 2014 there were 11 major conflicts – all but one of them were civil wars -- compared to just 4 in 2007.²

This upsurge in violence not only underlines the need for more effective international conflict prevention in general, but presents day-to-day challenges to DPA, SPMs and UN envoys. Over the last two years, SPMs have had to operate in the midst of major civil wars including in the Central African Republic, Libya, Somalia and Yemen. UN envoys have played a central role in Syria.

2.ii Violent extremism and transnational crime:

In a number of regions of the world there has also been a parallel increase in violent extremism involving groups such as Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISIL), often directly linked to patterns of exclusion, lack of political solutions and unresolved conflicts. Violence of all types frequently flows across borders, putting whole regions under political strain and fueling organized crime and trafficking networks.

² The Stockholm Peace Research Institute defines major conflicts as those involving more than 1,000 battle deaths in a year.

2.iii Humanitarian and economic consequences of conflict

The growth in conflicts, in addition to large-scale natural disasters, has placed the international humanitarian system under huge pressure. As of mid-2015, 60 million people were either refugees or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) due to conflict. More broadly, conflict can be considered to be one of the main risks to the attainment of the newly adopted global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Peace is, simply put, a “threshold condition” for development. Without peace, a large number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be impossible to attain. Conflict-affected states lagged far behind in progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) up to 2015. In recognition of this, for the first time, the SDGs fully emphasize the importance of “*peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels*”.

2.iv Conflict trends: regionalization, global interconnections and intractability

The interlinked dynamics of conflict, violent extremism and forced displacement are all contributing to an increased *regionalization* of conflict. DPA is currently working on conflicts in different regions – including Horn of Africa, North, West and Central Africa, the Sahel and the Middle East – where violence and refugee flows span national borders.

There are also increasing global *interconnections* between conflicts - organized criminal groups and extremist organizations based in one region can promote instability and conflict in other areas. Diplomatic tensions over certain conflicts can complicate cooperation elsewhere. With the emergence of multi-polar world, issues of intervention, sovereignty and non-interference loom large in discussions in multilateral bodies. New media spread information about crises globally, faster than the UN can respond.

A growing number of conflicts are also proving *intractable*, involving parties and conflict dynamics that mean that they cannot be resolved through traditional political settlements. The UN is often left to “manage” these conflicts, through political and humanitarian means, and sometimes through high-risk peace operations. It is also often left to support conflict management as a “by-stander” when regional organizations are in the lead to “manage” these conflicts.

2.v Pressures on DPA:

As a consequence of these trends, DPA faces a growing range of pressures. *Organizationally*, it has to respond to multiple, parallel demands on its time. *Operationally*, it has to backstop complex SPMs in highly volatile environments. *Financially*, it also faces a constant struggle to get the resources it needs to manage these tasks, as well as the political support required from Member States to succeed in

its efforts. There is also an inherent tension in the Department's expressed commitment to do more preventive action while Member States' attention and resource allocation tend to favor conflict response and management.

3. NEW DIRECTIONS

Although DPA's capacity is already stretched, the Department is likely to face a further significant increase in demand for its expertise and operational services. The series of recent policy reviews and initiatives noted above have charted new directions for the UN to address today's and future conflicts and challenges, and to support the creation of peaceful and inclusive societies.

A common message throughout the recent review processes is the need to bring **prevention and mediation** back to the fore. Prevention - the resolve to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war - is an underlying principle of the UN Charter and features prominently in the Secretary-General's five-year agenda for his second term. In his report on the future of peace operations, the Secretary-General calls for more political support to, and investment in, the Organization's core conflict prevention and mediation capacities³. While many parts of the UN System have a role to play in prevention, DPA is clearly at the center of this effort and in supporting mediation processes where the UN is in the lead or assisting partners, including regional organizations and Member States.

While DPA has a long experience in preventive diplomacy, it has continued to update its concept and approach over the years in light of changing realities at both normative and the operational level. It will continue to do so, particularly so as to address how conflict prevention can be a mechanism to address other pressing problems, such as massive human rights violations, violent extremism, including the use of conflict-related sexual violence as a method or tactic of warfare or terrorism, organized crime, etc.

There is a growing consensus that effective prevention must also take into consideration such as the participation of women, youth and civil society, and address structural issues such as good governance and rule of law. DPA will face increasing demand to engage in more preventive activities.

The Department needs to build a preventive agenda that factors in a wide range of actors and responds to twenty-first century conflict dynamics. One element of this, although one that features more prominently in some regions than others, is the need to prevent violent extremism, as both a cause and consequence of conflict.

³ *The Future of UN Peace Operations: Report of the Secretary-General on the Recommendations of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/357-S/2015/682)*, p.14 and p.16.

There is also a need to re-affirm **“the primacy of the political”** in the UN’s work.

The report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations captured a growing consensus inside and outside the UN that conflicts can only be prevented and resolved – and peace sustained over time – by addressing their political dimensions. The Secretary-General has highlighted the Panel’s message that *“a negotiated political settlement is the fundamental objective of UN peace operations.”*⁴ There is no purely military solution to today’s complex conflicts. Peacemaking and peacebuilding will make little progress without a political strategy and a commitment to support a peace agreement in its longer-term implementation phase. Equally, whether to prevent, manage or resolve violent conflicts, requests for UN mediation support both from UN mediators and those of our partners continue to grow, thus stretching thin DPA’s highly regarded mediation support services.

The recent expert study of the Peacebuilding Architecture has also emphasized that a focus on political issues is essential to **sustaining peace before, during and after conflicts.**⁵ This insight is central to the activities of many parts of the organization. DPA’s political analysis and expertise in areas such as mediation and electoral assistance are crucial to shaping solutions to actual and potential conflicts. The Department should advise and support the UN System to ensure that all of its efforts are contributing to agreed political solutions for sustained and lasting peace.

Yet DPA can rarely act alone. There is an emphasis on **partnerships** across the UN.

No organization and no country can face today’s multiplicity of challenges alone. Deepened cooperation among UN actors and with non-UN actors is a prerequisite for effective conflict prevention, response and resolution. The Secretary-General has underlined that *“stronger global-regional partnerships [are] central to effective international peace and security engagements.”*⁶ DPA has already invested heavily in expanding its range of partnerships. It has expanded the number of personnel deployed beyond headquarters in regional offices and liaison offices, in addition to the Peace and Development Advisers that it deploys jointly with UNDP. Related to this, DPA has recently become an observer member of the UN Development Group (UNDG).

DPA has standing networks in the field of mediation support and electoral assistance, and draws on these in practical ways to support its work in these areas. It is necessary for DPA to further expand its network of partnerships for prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding, engaging with actors ranging from the regional and subregional

⁴ *The Future of UN Peace Operations*, p.6.

⁵ *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace; Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture*, p.7.

⁶ *The Future of UN Peace Operations*, p.13.

organizations, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to civil society, think tanks and research institutions.

There is also widespread recognition of the centrality of two cross-cutting frameworks: the **Women, Peace and Security (WPS)** framework and **Human Rights Up Front (HRUF) together with the overall respect for human rights**. Concerning WPS, the recent policy reviews emphasize that the UN has made real progress on addressing gender and conflict issues, but that much still remains to be done. It is crucial that DPA strengthen its partnerships with UNDP, UN Women and other UN and non-UN-based actors emphasizing key WPS priorities, including particularly the promotion of women's effective political participation across all prevention efforts as well as peacemaking and peacebuilding processes.

For its part, HRUF offers a potent new framework for early warning and prompt action. Its key insight is that mass violations of human rights – deplorable in themselves – are also a tragically accurate predictor of impending conflict. Alongside what the Secretary-General has underscored is the UN's ethical obligation to prevent mass human rights abuses and the responsibility to act rapidly in such circumstances to prevent a broader degeneration into open warfare. Implementing HRUF across all DPA's actions demands a mindset change, and concerted normative and operational cooperation with both UNDP and OHCHR.

4. DPA's OVERALL VISION AND APPROACH

Through its analysis, advice and operational activities DPA is in a unique position to set the agenda for the wider UN system and wider international response in the fields of prevention, responding to conflicts and sustaining peace.

In addressing these complex and sensitive tasks, the Department must follow a simple vision:

To promote the search for, and assist countries to reach inclusive political solutions as the key to preventing or resolving violent conflicts and reducing acts of political violence, while ensuring long lasting solutions that reduce human suffering and sustain peace around the world.

This vision will require that the Department joins efforts with partners from inside and outside the UN system to prevent conflicts before they escalate, while working to resolve existing violence through, inter alia, mediation, advice on elections, promoting good governance and applying other necessary tools to sustain peace.

DPA plays a central role in the United Nations efforts to prevent and resolve conflict around the world. DPA's mandate is to *"maintain international peace and security by*

assisting Member States, at their request, and other international and regional organizations to resolve potentially violent disputes or conflict peacefully, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions emanating from the General Assembly and the Security Council. Wherever possible, this objective is achieved by preventing violent conflicts from arising through preventive diplomacy and peacemaking, through expansion of the United Nations range of partnerships with other international, regional and subregional organizations⁷”. This builds on the vision of the Department’s work set forth in the Secretary-General’s Bulletin, which states that DPA:

“Provides advice and support to the Secretary-General and the United Nations system in the discharge of the Secretariat’s global responsibilities related to the prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, including early warning, political mediation and post-conflict peacebuilding, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and under the mandates of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Department is the lead unit of the United Nations for political analysis, mediation and political guidance since they relate to the Organization’s efforts towards preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding. In the context of operations led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs contributes this expertise, in particular with regard to electoral support, mediation support and regional and other longer-term perspectives, through its participation in integrated mission task forces and other consultation mechanisms; in the context of peacebuilding, this expertise will be provided in close collaboration with the Peacebuilding Support Office;”⁸

Moving forward, DPA needs to examine how to apply the tools at its disposal and how they can work together with other parts of the system, and of the international community, in order to fulfill its mandate.

To achieve its objective and realize its longer-term goals, DPA’s approach to working with partners will include:

- Better sharing of analysis and broadening the perspectives and tools used for conflict and political analysis;
- More attention to the political economy of conflict and to transnational actors;
- Deepening strategic cooperation with other strategic actors such as International Financial Institutions, academia, Non-Governmental Organizations, local actors and grass-roots organizations, as well with “non-traditional” Member States on specific issues;
- Reinforcing our support to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and ensuring that our work promotes *inclusive* political settlements

7 DPA’s strategic framework for the period 2016-2017.

8 ST/SGB/2009/13/Corr.1, 5 November 2009.

- Strengthening our role in marshaling and coordinating international political responses with a focus on prevention and peacebuilding;
- Developing partnerships with regional and non-state actors to influence key political actors towards a strategy for peace; and
- Clearly articulating and prioritizing resources requirements and communicating them to Member States, particularly when resources are inadequate to meet all the goals.

To underpin all its activities, ongoing and new, the Department needs adequate resources. Working “within existing resources” has its limits and the Department has been pushing against them for years. While the relative success with raising voluntary contributions mitigated some of the challenges, the ability to take up new tasks will require proper funding. The Department needs to be both strategic and vocal in seeking the resources as well as in speaking up when resources are inadequate to meet all the goals.

5. DPA’s GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

On the basis of DPA’s mandate, vision and approach, the Department has defined **three goals** that are complemented by a set of **eight strategic objectives** for the next four-year period:

Goal 1: Strengthening international peace and security through inclusive prevention, mediation and peacebuilding processes

Strategic Objective 1: Setting the agenda for conflict prevention

Strategic Objective 2: Reinforcing conflict response and resolution

Strategic Objective 3: Investing in sustaining peace

Goal 2: Deepening and broadening partnership within the UN and beyond

Strategic Objective 4: Deepening relations with UN Member States and regional organizations

Strategic Objective 5: Strengthening ties within the UN system

Strategic Objective 6: Expanding our networks of partners.

Goal 3: Fit for the future – ensuring organizational effectiveness

Strategic Objective 7: Reviewing and updating information knowledge, policy guidance and decision-making

Strategic Objective 8: Continued professionalization of human resources and their management

GOAL 1: Strengthening international peace and security through inclusive prevention, mediation and peacebuilding processes

Strategic Objective 1: Setting the agenda for conflict prevention

Reflecting the Secretary-General's emphasis on prevention, DPA will focus on (i) strengthening its own preventive capacities in 2016-2019; and (ii) providing broader advice inside and outside the UN system on approaches to prevention. This work involves all parts of the department (Regional Divisions), as divisions such as the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) have specific expertise on identifying potential triggers of conflict that must feed into DPA's wider work. DPA also has specific responsibility for setting an agenda on preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism with wider implications for the UN as a whole through the work of Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF).

Potential tasks include:

- Expanding and reinforcing the UN's network of regional offices and liaison offices (and other types of regional presences) as platforms for early warning and preventive diplomacy;
- Expanding DPA's early warning mechanisms, including those related to human rights violations, conflict-related sexual violence, or other indicators of conflict; and strengthening strategic dialogue with the Security Council on potential situations of concern. Ensure awareness throughout the Department of the conflict prevention toolbox and mechanisms at DPA's and the UN's disposal;
- Increasing capacity for early preventive action, by (i) reinforcing support to envoys, SPMs, peacekeeping operations and Resident Coordinators working in complex political situations and (ii) by investing in light teams capable of deploying rapidly to respond to potential or emerging conflicts; (iii) developing a preventive action toolbox;
- Increasing the capacity of DPA, including its regional offices and SPMs, to address the causes and impact of violent extremism through collaboration with the CTITF-UNCCT, while ensuring women's effective participation in these efforts;
- Reviewing and strengthening DPA's mechanisms for offering timely advice to the Secretary-General on potential emerging conflicts, and for addressing threats with the Security Council and Member States in an early manner;
- Reinforcing the work of: (i) MSU in furthering preventive efforts with mediation support; (ii) EAD in assisting Member States (when requested) in their efforts to

prevent election-related violence and the promotion of women's political participation; and (iii) the Palestinian Rights Division and Decolonization Unit as contributors to peaceful political processes;

- Strengthening CTITF's capacity in the coordination of the UN system's strategy to prevent violent extremism;
- Promoting regional and thematic approaches to addressing existing and future conflicts; and
- Strengthening DPA's gender expertise/capacity and gender mainstreaming of conflict prevention and mediation efforts (in addition to areas covered under Strategic Objectives 2 and 3 below).

Strategic Objective 2: Enhancing conflict response and resolution

In spite of its efforts to prevent conflict, DPA will inevitably remain involved in responding to and resolving lapse or relapse into conflict. UN envoys, regional offices and SPMs are involved in addressing many of the world's most complex conflicts. DPA must be able to act as flexibly and rapidly as possible as new and emerging crises arise. In addition to supporting the design of effective mediation processes, it should also increase its focus on the effective implementation and accompaniment of peace agreements.

Potential tasks include:

- Streamlining crisis communications to ensure that DPA is able to react quickly to emerging crises and can make decisions quickly in response;
- Investing in the deployment of light teams to address crises early;
- Continuing to strengthen DPA's mediation support capacities in line with high demand, including with regular budget support;
- Identifying expertise and maintaining rosters of experts, both on elections and mediation support, and streamlining mechanisms for the rapid deployment of external experts and staff;
- Devising tools to address the regional spillover effects of conflicts more effectively, including political assistance humanitarian action when and where this engagement fits with the strategies of other UN agencies;

- Developing coherent strategies for prevention and peacebuilding, integrating human rights, good governance, gender, humanitarian, developmental aspects and regional approaches as well as the prevention of violent extremism and countering terrorism;
- Improving the Department’s mechanisms to support SPMs, including large-scale missions, in the early phases of conflict and in periods of intense violence;
- Strengthening existing tools and developing additional ones for early response and rapid deployment, as well as coordinating with other UN entities on multiagency support deployments in non-mission settings;
- Continuing to invest in the Department’s tools for managing and mitigating intractable conflicts (including through SPMs), avoiding the syndrome of “forgotten crises” and reflecting on new lessons about conflict dynamics.
- Maintaining and updating the Department’s expertise on the design, implementation and accompaniment of peace agreements, while also sharing lessons about effective monitoring and implementation arrangements with other relevant international actors; and
- Improving systematic coordination between the Security Council, the sanctions committees, sanctions expert panels and mediators, including in those cases where mediation efforts are led by regional or subregional partners.

Strategic Objective 3: Investing in sustaining peace

Endorsing the principle of the centrality of political solutions, “sustaining peace” embodies a key shared responsibility across the entire Organization. In practical terms, it includes a wide range of tools and tasks, including peacebuilding, promotion of human rights, women’s empowerment and participation, good governance and democratization that aim at establishing the basis for long-term, stable, inclusive societies.

Potential tasks include:

- Reviewing and reinforcing DPA’s engagement in the political dimensions of sustaining peace, such as long-term mediation support after conflict, in close coordination with the PBC, PBSO and PBF (see also Goal 2 on partnerships);
- Continuing to invest in EAD’s work on supporting legitimate elections, as well as supporting the focal point in providing strategic leadership to electoral assistance activities throughout the UN system;

- Emphasizing the regional and transnational dimensions of sustaining peace in analysis, briefings and policy initiatives, while also strengthening policy around the links between sustaining peace, promoting economic recovery and preventing violent extremism, including through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform and the rule of law;
- Investing more in building up national capacities for conflict prevention through the UNDP-DPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, to prevent both lapse and relapse into conflict;
- Continuing to develop DPA's capacity to provide advice and assistance to Member States in constitution-making and to coordinate closely within the UN system;
- Focusing on the management of transitions in UN engagement during mission start-up, drawdown, withdrawal, and handover to UNCT.
- Investing in the Department's work on democratization, constitutions and governance in both mission and non-mission settings.

GOAL 2: Broadening partnerships within the UN and beyond

Strategic Objective 4: Deepening relations with UN Member States and regional organizations

DPA's primary partners are the Member States of the UN. It is crucial that DPA forges the strongest possible relations with Member States, engaging both their representatives in New York and in their capitals. DPA must recognize and encourage the ambitions of a growing number of Member States in the developing world to play a part in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

DPA has also succeeded in developing close ties with a very wide range of subregional and regional organizations. Approaches to further strengthening the Department's ties with governments and non-UN organizations include:

- Continuing to provide advice and substantive support services to the Security Council and its subsidiary organs through the work of Security Council Affairs Division;
- Continuing to provide advice and support to other bodies including the General Assembly and its Committees (e.g. on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People);

- Strengthening ties with key governments involved in conflict prevention and resolution, with an emphasis on states from the Global South and those that play a leadership role in regional organizations;
- Working with Member States to strengthen their national preventive and mediation capacities and civil society's in partnership with other UN system agencies, funds and programmes;
- Strengthen ties with intergovernmental groupings, such as the Group of Friends on Mediation and the DPA donor group, who are supportive of DPA's mandate areas;
- Developing further regional offices and liaison presences where they are currently absent (such as for the League of Arab States, Southern Africa, South Asia and others) and strengthening those that exist but remain small (such as those for the European Union and Association of Southeast Asian Nations), while supporting the Secretary-General's intent to further institutionalize these partnerships⁹;
- Maximizing the use of DPA's network of regional and subregional offices, presences and liaison offices as platforms for early warning and preventive diplomacy, including by increasing their mediation support capacity and their capacity to work with relevant regional and sub-regional organizations to address more effectively peace and security challenges;
- Promoting institutionalized mechanisms with regional partners for consultations and collaboration, including information sharing, joint assessment missions, conflict analysis, planning and dialogue;
- Strengthening mechanisms for information sharing with regional partners to enhance cooperation between headquarters, especially during crises;
- Building on recent experiences of cooperation in the field (as with the African Union in Somalia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Ukraine) to develop specific protocols for future coordinated operations and operational coordination/support;
- Developing deeper thematic dialogues with regional partners on issues such as mediation, preventing violent extremism and the 1325 agenda; and
- Assist existing or nascent mediation support capacities in regional and subregional organizations and strengthen operational partnerships with such entities and with mediation NGOs, religious and traditional groupings and academic partners.

⁹ See *The Future of UN Peace Operations*, p.19.

Strategic Objective 5: Strengthening ties within the UN system

Through the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, Member States have stressed the *“important role and comparative advantage of an adequately resourced, relevant, coherent, efficient and effective United Nations system in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable development”*. The SDGs are a clear indication of the commitment of Member States to reducing the social, political and economic exclusion that is often at the root of conflict and extremism. To achieve them the whole UN system is called on to work closer together. DPA’s entry into the UNDG as an observer member is a notable signal of the importance of these connections going forward.

DPA also has special responsibilities to prioritize those areas – such as electoral assistance and preventing violent extremism – for which it acts as a focal point in the UN system.

Potential tasks include:

- Reviewing how DPA’s analysis, crosscutting or thematic work (e.g. on conflict prevention, mediation, WPS, democracy support, constitutions, natural resources, conflict, and elections) and guidance inform other departments - and how DPA is informed by them - to ensure it is fit for purpose;
- Strengthening the Department’s capacity, expertise and tools, to support UN system partners, especially in non-mission settings;
- Strengthening the Department’s role in supporting institution-building and good governance strategies of UNCTs, both in mission and non-mission settings, in line with Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Providing the necessary advice, political and conflict analysis, as well as substantive support to mediation, dialogue and longer-term peacebuilding strategies necessary to implement the different SDGs;
- Building on recent progress in cooperation with UNDP to enhance support to Resident Coordinators and the activities of PDAs and other joint tools, while also engaging in policy discussions in the UNDG;
- Reinforcing the Department’s role as a focal point on issues such as electoral assistance and strengthening existing ties with the PBC, PBSO and PBF;
- Strengthening our partnership with: *(i)* DPKO in the provision of DPA mediation, good offices and/or electoral support to peacekeeping operations; *(ii)* in security

sector reform and rule of law issues (with the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions -OROLSI); (iii) in common areas of policy, guidance, learning and training (with the Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training DPET); and (iv) in joined-up planning for mission transitions;

- Working with OCHA and humanitarian agencies to explore the most effective modes of cooperation for political support to international relief efforts (e.g. humanitarian access);
- Strengthening cooperation with UN Women, in line with the DPA/UN Women Joint Strategy on Gender and Mediation;
- Continuing to strengthen ties with UNODC in light of DPA's expanding work on preventing violent extremism and its ties to transnational threats;
- Working closely with DFS and DSS to improve mission support and security for SPMs, and with DPKO to streamline future transitions.
- Serving effectively as the chair of Inter-Agency Task Forces and Integrated Task Forces.
- Strengthening ties with Regional UNDG Teams;

Strategic Objective 6: Expanding networks of partners (including IFIs, the development community and civil society)

To engage effectively in preventing and responding to conflicts worldwide, DPA must continually search for new partners – and look beyond its “standard” contacts to maximize its effectiveness. This means engaging with a diverse range of actors.

While DPA has strong ties with UNDP and contacts with the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the latter are relatively under-developed, and DPA's work is not well known in the wider development community. DPA's engagement in the forthcoming Chief Executives Board (CEB) process around the UN system's engagement with the SDGs will be an important first step towards strengthening these linkages. It is equally important that DPA build more effective ties with relevant international, national and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including to address political issues affecting women and youth in conflict settings. DPA should also continue to build on its existing work on South-South cooperation.

Potential tasks include:

- High-level engagement with the IFIs, regional development banks and national development agencies to identify new areas for cooperation on prevention and peacebuilding/sustaining peace;
- Outreach to new actors such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and other regional development organizations;
- Continuing to work closely on South-South cooperation and on ensuring that the lessons of this work are fully shared across DPA to inform its other activities;
- Developing relevant skills to increase analytical capacity to address non-state actors through social media and “big data” analyses;
- Actively networking with academic institutions, think tanks, civil society, including youth groups, the media and the private sector, and allocating resources for these tasks;
- Building links with CSOs, including women’s organizations, around preventing violent extremism;
- Ensuring that the Division for Palestinian Rights and Decolonization Unit continue to involve CSOs fully in their work.

GOAL 3: Fit for the future – ensuring organizational effectiveness

Strategic Objective 7: Reviewing and updating information management, policy guidance and decision-making

Accurate and timely information and policy guidance - primary objectives of internal communication and knowledge management - remain central to DPA’s business. The Department will be at its most effective when staff are able to share information flexibly between divisions, and draw on policy guidance, lessons learned and expertise on best practices rapidly from across DPA and its partners to inform new strategies. It is also crucial that DPA staff communicate policy challenges in a timely fashion to their managers, allowing senior officials to make fully-informed decisions at short notice.

In the context of DPA’s increased emphasis on prevention, it is especially important that DPA staff are trained to recognize and highlight early indicators of conflict risks, and that there are mechanisms for them to flag their concerns with managers early. It is also important that senior DPA staff should have time to reflect on broader policy challenges as a group to create a clear cross-departmental sense of common goals.

Improved internal communication is also a necessary element in enhancing DPA's public diplomacy. It has long been recognized that the strategic use of communications is critical both to successful conduct of preventive and peacemaking diplomacy, as well as to the ability of DPA to build awareness and support – both political and financial -- for its efforts. With the current increasing focus on its core areas of responsibility, DPA has an opportunity to fully exploit the potential of its public diplomacy role, to a) better tell its unique story to different audiences and stakeholders and b) to make strategic communications, including digital diplomacy, an integral part of the way it responds to specific challenges. This is especially relevant in conflict prevention, an area in which strategic communications can be invaluable in alerting the international community and encouraging rapid response.

Strategic communications is one essential element of public diplomacy, along with advocacy and outreach; and they are all mutually reinforcing. Work on these three areas should be conducted in a coordinated manner, even if each should be the subject of a discrete strategy. Such coordination will go a long way in further affirming DPA's identity as the central player in UN efforts to prevent and resolve conflict around the world.

In sum, effective internal communication in DPA should be linked to a further expansion of its public diplomacy capacity – with a clear understanding of how effective communications can be mainstreamed into DPA's responses to specific challenges.

Additionally, DPA has a special responsibility to support the Secretary-General with the information necessary to use his good offices most effectively, and that DPA staff in turn have a clear sense of the diplomatic tools available to the SG.

Potential tasks include:

- Continue to take steps to maximize free flow of information across DPA, on both case-specific and thematic issues;
- Continue promoting inter-divisional work and sharing of lessons learnt among divisions and teams;
- Strengthen DPA's analytical capacity to provide early warning and timely analyses of emerging threats, including regional conflict dynamics and conflict-related sexual violence;
- Reinforce the capacity of the offices of the USG and ASGs to manage the flow of information and decisions to and from the wider Department;
- Regularly ensure that the Department's policy and thematic experts are "looped in" to case-specific work (by the regional divisions, etc.) to ensure that best practices and lessons learned are fully integrated;

- Draw on lessons learned and comparative analysis to develop guidance material and facilitate knowledge management to ensure that knowledge is captured, shared, stored and accessed across the Department;
- Strengthen the Department’s public affairs and strategic communications capacity, and develop guidance on the use of public diplomacy that uses gender lenses;
- Integrate strategic communications into planning work in outreach and advocacy as well as in the work of analysis further “upstream” so as to better identify opportunities to use public diplomacy in prevention, rapid response, etc.;
- Create a clear, recognizable ‘brand identity’ in order to communicate more efficiently the core areas of responsibilities and increase the visibility of DPA in the media and public forums;
- Continue working closely with EOSG to ensure that DPA gives the best possible support to the SG’s good offices through its information and advice;
- Maintain, update and develop relevant Standard Operating Procedures; and
- Convene regular Senior Management Team meetings with the USG and ASGs on cross-cutting issues, and ensure that decision points are prepared and shared in advance, and the main findings, decisions and action points are widely shared internally and implemented.

Strategic Objective 8: Continued professionalization of human resources and their management

DPA’s single most valuable resource continues to be its staff members. The quality and motivation of DPA’s staff are essential to the Department’s analysis, policy advice and support to envoys and SPMs in the field, as well as its engagement with partners, both within and beyond the UN system.

In the period covered by this SP, DPA will face considerable changes to its staffing due to changes to mobility policies. Past experience also suggests that DPA staff will need to (i) develop additional skill sets to respond to new challenges and policy problems; and (ii) balance an ability to respond to the exigencies of urgent crisis response with ring-fencing adequate time and resources to devote to the challenges of prevention and peacebuilding.

These are major challenges for a department with limited training resources.

Potential tasks include:

- Take best advantage of new staff selection and mobility rules to continue to draw in and retain talented individuals including those with recent field experience to strengthen teams;
- Support staff in their professional and career development, including facilitating field assignments in non-family and family duty stations;
- Promote diversity in recruitment processes at all levels;
- Continue the efforts to attain gender parity at different levels: senior professional, non-senior professional and general services staff.
- Build on the Department's new skills database to make best use of its wide range of substantive expertise, including those skills relating to backstopping SPMs;
- Continue to invest in innovative mechanisms to deploy mediation expertise for immediate and longer term engagements wherever needed, including through the Mediation Standby Team which is one of DPA's premier tools for conflict prevention and resolution;
- Invest in training for staff at all levels in the Department, with a particular emphasis on building skills and knowledge to support prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding, and in line with the DPA Training Strategy.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The Strategic Plan, like its predecessor, is intended to provide a stronger basis for planning and prioritization within DPA. In the last years, DPA has strived to improve its strategic planning processes, through the development of the Divisions' Annual Work Plans and the institutionalization of an Annual Strategic Review, led by senior management, to take stock of DPA's SP implementation, review DPA's priorities, capacities and resources and develop a shared understanding of the evolving operating context.

This SP will continue to act as the basis for the development of divisional work plans, individual staff performance targets and for the annual report on key challenges and results.

The SP is accompanied by a Results Framework (see annex) that identifies results, targets, measuring indicators and risks in line with the goals and strategic objectives set

out above. It also identifies the resources required to achieve the results, which are based on an estimation of projected future demand of DPA's work from 2016-2019. The amounts are indicative only.

DPA's overall approach to knowledge management will continue to be based on helping staff at headquarters and in the field to systematically capture, process, disseminate and implement knowledge. Establishing effective knowledge management systems allows DPA staff to work more effectively and improve accountability and quality within the Department.

In order to promote accountability and organizational learning, the Learning and Evaluation Board will continue to develop an annual Learning and Evaluation Plan -for approval by the USG - with a selection of evaluations and lessons learnt in line with departmental priorities and budget.

The SP and its Results Framework will be subject to an internal review of progress on an annual basis in order to make any necessary adjustments to annual targets in order to reflect changes in the context.

Additionally, an external evaluation will be conducted in 2018 at the end of the cycle, to provide lessons learned and inform strategic decision-making processes ahead of the next Strategic Plan.

7. DPA's RESOURCES

DPA is the only UN Secretariat entity with operational responsibilities in the field whose core funding depends exclusively on the UN's Regular Budget (the "biennium programme budget"). As the Headquarters budget has shrunk in real terms, and DPA's responsibilities have expanded - particularly bearing in mind the growth in the number of Special Political Missions - a large gap has grown between the resources required for execution of the Department's core functions and what is received under the regular budget. Therefore, in light of additional mandates and growing demands placed on the Department by Member States, voluntary contributions have been sought to cover the shortfalls. Indeed, DPA through its Multi-Year Appeal has successfully mobilized funding in areas such as rapid response, electoral assistance, partnerships, and mediation support.

Below is a snap shot of DPA's overall resources:

DPA resources	2014	2015	2016	2017
Regular Budget (approved)	43.30	43.30	43.20	43.20
Extra-budgetary contributions (MYA)	19.20	18.00*	25.00**	25.00**
SPMs budget (approved)	645,995	594,040	564,995 (proposal)	--
SG's unforeseen budget	0.390	0.386	--	--
TOTAL (in million USD)	\$708,885	\$655,726	\$633,195	--

* Represents funds already received from January to November 2015, plus the projection of the last months of 2015.

** Represents the total appealed per year.

8. **ANNEX:**

- Results Framework: in process of being developed by the Planning Group.



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