



MEDIA ADVISORY
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Obama-led Peacekeeping Summit at United Nations to address personnel shortfalls; Canada can and should do more to help

(Ottawa) – When world leaders gather at United Nations headquarters September 28 for a Summit meeting initiated by U.S. President Obama, they will need to strengthen international commitments to the UN’s beleaguered machinery for maintaining peace and security.

As reported in [the 2015 WFM – Canada fact sheet on Canada and United Nations Peacekeeping](#), the UN’s peacekeeping system is expanding rapidly. There are now close to 130,000 military, police and civilian personnel deployed to 16 missions around the world. However, Canada’s contribution to UN peace operations currently includes only 111 uniformed personnel. This includes 26 military personnel, and 85 police, as of July 2015.

“If Canada returned to UN peacekeeping, it could have a real and lasting impact on peace and security in many of the world’s most dangerous regions,” says **Walter Dorn**, Professor of Defence Studies at Canadian Forces College.

Indeed, U.S. officials have been encouraging NATO allies and others to do more to contribute to UN peace operations. [Reportedly](#) the summit will generate commitments of over 10,000 peacekeepers. “Canada should be among those making new commitments to UN peacekeeping,” says Dorn.

(Canada’s commitment to the UN and UN peace operations is an area that reveals sharp differences in the policies of the three main parties in the Canadian federal election and is expected to be discussed at the [Munk debates](#) on Canadian foreign policy.)

In June of this year UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon received the report of a High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations chaired by former Nobel Peace Prize recipient Jorge Ramos-Horta that generated a number of recommendations for improvements to the UN’s peacekeeping machinery.

Peter Langille coordinated WFM – Canada’s submission to the Ramos-Horta experts panel. According to Langille, “the attention from world leaders to the challenges facing peacekeeping is welcomed, and much needed. As well as commitments of personnel, the Americans are clearly focused on overcoming the challenges the system presently faces getting troops into the field in a timely manner. European governments are being asked to provide assistance and capacity to facilitate rapid deployment. We shall see whether this actually takes place. My own view is that the UN needs its own permanent, standing peacekeeping capacity, such as the proposed [UN Emergency Peace Service](#).”

Another crucial component of the UN’s machinery for the maintenance of peace and security is the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), a body set up in 2006 to coordinate international efforts to ensure the sustainability of peace in post-conflict countries and avoid relapse into conflict. The PBC is supported by a Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), a

multi-year standing fund to launch immediate activities for post-conflict peacebuilding, and a small Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) to assist and support the Commission. Improving the performance of these organs has recently been the focus of a mandated 10-year evaluation, with the publication of an international report entitled, “The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture.”

Carolyn McAskie was UN Assistant Secretary-General and head of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office from 2006 to 2008. She says that “This report makes clear what many of us knew -- that a member state body, with an inadequately funded support system and a small fund, would not be able to solve all the problems with which countries coming out of conflict are faced. Much has been accomplished with support given to peace processes and critical interventions, both political and through the Peacebuilding Fund. But the Report goes much further to say that Peacebuilding must be everyone’s responsibility and advocates an ambitious system-wide UN approach to sustaining peace.”

“From the Security Council, to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to the PBC and including the various UN development agencies, there is a recognition at the UN that a more coordinated, holistic approach is needed,” says McAskie. “The question is, will member states, each with their own interests, deliver? In this era of the new sustainable development goals, perhaps we will see a renewed commitment to international cooperation. Undoubtedly middle powers like Canada will be expected to do more. Support for UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding will be a complex challenge facing whomever forms our government after October 19.”

Recommendations for improving Canadian support for UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding are included in the [2015 Special Election Issue of the WFM – Canada publication, *Mondial* which focuses on “The United Nations and Canada.”](#)

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