

## 5. Peace operations and conflict management

### Overview

*The year 2016 was a relatively uneventful one in which it seems that many trends, in terms of the number of missions and personnel, peaked and were now slowly declining or levelling out. Two new peace operations were started in 2016—the United Nations Mission in Colombia and the European Union (EU) Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) (EUTM RCA). Four missions were terminated: the EU Military Advisory Mission in the CAR (EUMAM RCA); France’s Operation Sangaris, also in the CAR; the EU Advisory and Assistance Mission for Security Reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (EUSEC RD Congo); and the EU Police Mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan. The number of peace operations active during 2016 decreased by one compared to 2015 to 62. The total number of personnel deployed in the field (153 056) declined by 6 per cent.*

*The fall in the total number of personnel deployed in peace operations—including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its follow-up Resolute Support Mission (RSM)—which began in 2012 but stalled in 2015, continued in 2016. The trend since 2012 for increased personnel deployments excluding ISAF and the RSM was reversed in 2016, as the number of personnel in all the other operations combined (primarily UN peace operations) decreased by approximately 10 000. Therefore, although the UN is clearly still the principal actor in peace operations, three consecutive years of personnel increases in UN operations came to an end in 2016. Future projections are difficult to make. The UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) are planned to drawdown, while other UN operations are reaching their authorized personnel levels and long awaited operations in Burundi, Libya, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen may never see the light of day (see section I).*

*Africa has been the primary focus of peace operations since 2013. As recommended in the report by the UN High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (the HIPPO report), the UN, the African Union (AU) and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms are deepening their partnerships. One major challenge continues to be the funding of African operations. In 2016 the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government decided to increase AU funding for all AU peace support operations to 25 per cent by 2020, by means of a 0.2 per cent import tax on ‘eligible imports’ into the continent. In spite of these ambitions, however, African actors will remain dependent on external actors for funding in the short to medium term. At a time when*

*such external actors, particularly the EU and its member states, are becoming less generous and more demanding, this has presented financial challenges for African operations—particularly the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB)—and led to talk of possible closure as contributors consider withdrawing their troops (see section II).*

*Increasingly, military and civilian personnel are being deployed in operations that fall in the ‘grey zone’ of just within or just outside the SIPRI definition of multinational peace operations. While in some cases troop contributing countries and host nations would be helped if the UN Security Council considered mandating and financing these operations, such as the Regional Task Force (RTF) against the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram, in others the host nation is resistant to hosting something clearly labelled a peace operation on its soil. Peacekeeping or peace support operations are seen as an infringement on national sovereignty and can contribute to an image of state failure. Burundi’s resistance to the deployment of the African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (MAPROBU), the AU human rights and military experts and the UN police contribution to Burundi; Syria’s reluctance to allow even observation of the evacuations from eastern Aleppo to other districts of the city; and Colombia’s insistence on making the UN Mission in Colombia a political mission rather than a peacekeeping operation should all be seen in this light. These developments stress the importance of further expanding data collection and analysis of operations in this grey zone.*

*Another continuing challenge is the inability of the AU and the UN to deal with the protection of civilians. The impotence of the international community in Ukraine and Syria is painfully obvious and frequently covered in the media. The inability to deal with the situation in South Sudan receives less attention. With some 200 000 civilians under its care in Protection of Civilian (POC) sites, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) faces unprecedented challenges. Providing protection to and within the POC sites is far beyond the capability of UNMISS and raises unrealistic expectations among those who expect to be protected. The February 2016 attack on the Malakal POC site and the events of July 2016 in Juba show that UNMISS contingents and commanders are not only unable, but at times also unwilling to protect civilians. Moreover, many civilians have been living in the POC sites for more than three years. Rather than a temporary solution, these sites have become more structural internally displaced person camps that require adequate standards of internal security and accommodation. As the POC sites in South Sudan are likely to remain for many years to come, it is important for UNMISS to draw lessons from the events of 2016.*