

Sustainable Common Security

<https://sustainablecommonsecurity.org/>

Dr. H. Peter Langille, hpl@globalcommonsecurity.org

Chapeau

Our global challenges require: A United Nations Emergency Peace Service

to:

- **Prevent armed conflict and protect vulnerable people;**
- **Respond rapidly and reliably before crises escalate;**
- **Provide prompt help to address human needs in complex emergencies;**
- **Encourage military build-down and wider disarmament;**
- **Save succeeding generations and trillions of dollars to address our climate emergency, poverty reduction, sustainable development, and;**
- **Inspire people, political will and funding for the vital work of the UN.**

“This venture is of the greatest importance both to the UN as a responsible institution and to the millions as of yet unknown, innocent victims who might, in the future, be saved by this essential addition to the UN’s capacity to act on their behalf. There is one overwhelming argument for the United Nations Emergency Peace Service. It is desperately needed, and it is needed as soon as possible.” – (the late) Sir Brian Urquhart

Chapter II. International peace and security

Now more than ever, we need a more effective United Nations; one capable of preventing armed conflict, protecting people at risk and advancing sustainable common security.

Even before the war on Gaza, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned, “the world is now facing the [highest number](#) of violent conflicts since 1945. He identified the crux of the [problem](#): “we have no instruments to deal with crisis...we live in a dangerous situation.”

Last month, UN Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations, [Jean-Pierre Lacroix](#), repeated the plea, “the international community and multilateral system need a more diverse set of tools and responses to address widening challenges.”

One Step to Help

Last February, a proposed [United Nations Emergency Peace Service](#) (UNEPS) was selected by the [Global Futures Forum](#) from 40 peace and security proposals submitted. It’s now part of the [People’s Pact For The Future](#), for consideration at the 2024 [UN Summit of the Future](#).

A UNEPS is a simple idea. Much as civil society depends on professional emergency services, promptly available 24/7, our world needs a ‘UN 911/112’ first-responder.

With this one development the UN would finally have a capacity to fulfill four of its tougher assigned tasks – preventing armed conflict, protecting civilians at extreme risk, ensuring prompt start-up of demanding peace operations, and addressing human needs where other actors either cannot or will not.

Equally important, as a UN ‘emergency security-provider’, a UNEPS would encourage military build-down and the wider disarmament process urgently needed.

What’s proposed?

A UNEPS would be a standing, first-responder to manage the initial six months of demanding operations. Ten core principles characterize this proposal. It is to be:

- A permanent standing, integrated UN formation;
 - Highly trained and well-equipped;
 - Ready for immediate deployment upon authorization of the Security Council;
 - Multidimensional (civilians, police and military);
 - Multifunctional (capable of diverse assignments with specialized skills for security, humanitarian, health and environmental crises);
 - Composed of 13,500 dedicated personnel (recruited professionals, selected, trained and employed by the UN);
 - Developed to ensure regional and gender equitable representation;
 - Co-located at a designated UN base under an operational headquarters and two mobile mission headquarters (see Annex A & B);
 - At sufficient strength to operate in high-threat environments; and,
 - To complement existing UN arrangements, with a dedicated UN service to cover the initial six months until Member States can deploy, if needed.
-

This idea stems from the Government of Canada’s study, [Towards A Rapid Reaction Capability For The United Nations](#). It was developed with the guidance of senior UN officials, peacekeepers and peacebuilders, and subsequently refined in three books. The plans and composition are updated to ensure a sophisticated response to new developments and future requirements.

Unlike prior proposals, a UNEPS is to be multidimensional and multifunctional, as well as supportive of existing arrangements and gender-equitable.

Five potential benefits are evident.

First, fast. UN peace operations would improve with a standing first-responder to manage the initial six months of demanding operations.

Instead of taking 6 months-to-a year or more to deploy national contingents, there would be immediate access to a UN service composed of dedicated individuals, recruited world-wide (selected, trained and employed by the UN). This would also help to offset the political pressure governments face when confronted with awkward decisions about whether to deploy their people into potentially high-risk operations.

A UNEPS is to deliver more assistance faster and in a more sophisticated manner. Small teams of experts and planners are included to coordinate the larger formations immediate and subsequent responses to diverse crises. With its modular formation, UNEPS deployments can be tailored to various mission-specific requirements.

Thus, a UNEPS would clearly be a more reliable and rapid first responder to deter violent crime and respond, when necessary, to prevent conflict and protect civilians.

Second, the elusive key to prevention. It's far easier to prevent conflicts and protect civilians when help arrives promptly, before conflicts escalate and violence spreads. As with a police or defense effort, it's best to be known to have credible means to deter aggression and, when required, the means to intervene to stop crimes. In practice, this usually works by having a legitimate capacity that is recognized and ready to respond as needed.

A standing UNEPS would convey a legitimate presence ready 24/7 to discourage violence. Its deployable elements should be sufficient to deter most, if not all belligerents, to operate in high-risk environments and to intervene if needed to stop aggressive parties.

Third, useful. In what's increasingly a global neighborhood under strain, there will be a greater need for universal emergency services. A UNEPS is to provide prompt help in a wide array of emergencies. Aside from police services to restore law and order and a military formation to deter aggression and maintain security, there would be an array of civilian teams to provide essential services for conflict resolution, human rights, health care, disaster assistance and quick impact peacebuilding projects.

With a gender-equitable composition, peacemaking and peacebuilding would improve. Standards should also rise system-wide.

As an integrated first-responder, a UNEPS is not limited to simply stopping direct violence, but also extends to initiating quick-impact and long-term projects to address human needs. That should help to counter structural violence (exploitation and exclusion), and stem cultural violence. By including specialists in conflict resolution and

mediation, human rights monitors and educators, peacebuilding advisory units, and medical teams, there is a far better prospect of stemming or solving a crisis.

Fourth, wider security. Equally important, a UNEPS would be an ‘emergency security provider’ to offset fears and encourage wider disarmament. This isn’t a new idea, but one that’s now urgent.

As early as 1961, officials in the U.S. State Department acknowledged in ‘[Freedom From War](#)’ that preventing war and encouraging wider disarmament “can only be achieved” by a more effective UN with a UN Peace Force to safeguard legitimate interests.

The ‘[security dilemma](#)’ driving numerous states to arm-up in response to anarchy and uncertainty over potentially aggressive neighbours needs to be offset by a UN assurance of support. Similarly, it should be understood that progress in wider disarmament and even the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) depends on a coherent alternative to nuclear and conventional deterrence.

For both, the alternative need not be similar to what exists – large or powerfully destructive. It needs to be credible, respected and widely valued.

A UNEPS would be a more sophisticated option than a UN force. As an emergency security provider, its role would be similar to that of a ‘first-responder’, a trip-wire, a vanguard and a standing presence to dissuade, deter and, respond rapidly if necessary. The minimal deterrent and modest military capacity within are appropriate and likely to be adequate.

In this capacity, a UNEPS does not require heavy military elements nor a capacity for mid-to-high-intensity war-fighting. In representing the international community, it’s unlikely to encounter violent resistance from any national armed force. If needed for augmentation and support, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council will continue to have ample capacity. But they should not need so much in the long-term.

With a credible and legitimate UN capacity to offset fears and to deter aggression, a UNEPS would provide an incentive for countries to scale back on preparing for more war.

Further, a UN that could respond rapidly and reliably to prevent armed conflict would help to offset the need for nuclear and conventional deterrence, which underpin the current system of mutually-assured destruction and our ‘[balance of terror](#)’. And, that would also offset the ‘unwarranted influence’ now pushing for further confrontation. Within a few years, there would be no legitimate basis for offensive force projection or expeditionary capacity. Weapon sales would decline, with fewer threats and less violent conflict. Then, governments would have sufficient resources to address our shared climate emergency, poverty reduction and real social needs.

Fourth, cost-effective. The ever-higher costs and risks of war are unsustainable. The cost of preparing for more war is now over \$2.2-trillion annually, but that is dwarfed by the damage caused, with the [Global Peace Index](#) reporting, “the economic impact of

violence at \$17.5-trillion in 2022, equivalent to 12.9 per cent of global GDP, or \$2,200 per person” – absorbing urgently needed resources.

A UNEPS would inevitably entail a substantive investment. Start-up costs would be in the range of \$3.5 billion (U.S.), with annual recurring costs of approximately \$1.5 billion and, incremental costs for field operations of approximately \$1.2 billion. These costs would likely be shared proportionally among 193 Member States as part of each nation’s assessed share of the UN regular budget.

A UNEPS would not only help to prevent the escalation of volatile conflicts and deter groups from armed violence; it could also drastically cut the size, the length and the frequency of UN operations. Even with success in just one of these areas, it should provide a substantive return on the investment.

While relatively small in size, this ‘ounce of prevention’ would be worth a ton of cure.

Clearly, the major impediment to this development is not financial as the cost-savings would likely be in trillions of dollars. And, the bonus of a big joint project involving the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council is that in draining the fuel from confrontation to encourage cooperation, governments will have far more resources to help both their own people and the more vulnerable.

Two former U.S. House Resolutions ([H-Res 180](#) & [H-Res 213](#)), acknowledged that a UNEPS “could save millions of lives and billions of dollars and is in the interests of the United States.” In 2017, the British Labour Party raised a UNEPS as a peace priority and promptly discovered wide receptivity to the idea. So, the idea has the potential to inspire a global constituency of support, which is a key step toward the political will and financial support required.

Conclusion: A solution to multiple problems

The proposed UN Emergency Peace Service is no panacea, but it would be a game-changer for a more effective UN; for a legitimate rules-based system; for rapid and reliable responses to prevent armed conflict and protect civilians at risk; for addressing human needs, with prompt help and security; and, for developing the trust that enables wider disarmament.

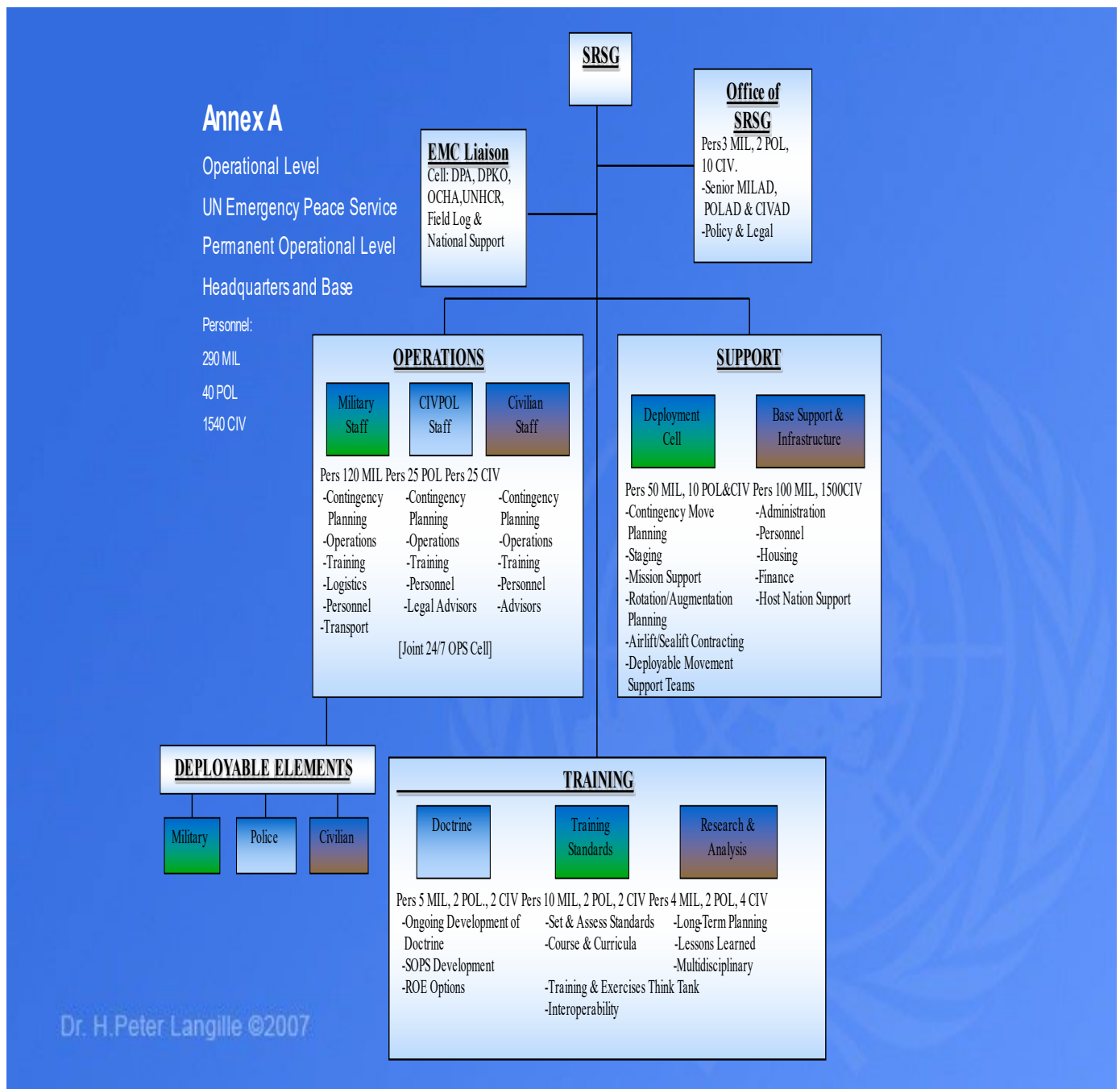
In short, this would be a crucial step toward an urgently-needed, UN-centred, global peace system.

Such a development will not be easy. Governments worldwide only consider new approaches and substantive reforms in the aftermath of tragic wars and/or genocides.

Yet the next opportune moment isn’t far off. Like it or not, system change will soon be a survival imperative, even for permanent members of the UN Security Council. They will need viable policy options that provide a win-win solution to their and the world’s more pressing problems.

Even if tentatively supported as meriting further study, this idea would attract a global constituency, with the political will and resources required.

Paradigm shifts do happen when prevailing systems are deemed inadequate or failing and when another option is widely viewed as better.



MSN HQ Includes:

- Military, Police and Civilian Staff
- Political and Legal Advice
- Translation/Comms/Signals/Intell.
- Defense & Security Platoon
- NGO Liaison Team

Annex B. Composition of Deployable Elements for a UN Emergency Peace Service

(assume 2 MHQ with 2 complete formations)
 (assigned to UN Base under a Static Operational HQ and 2 Missions HQs)
 Total Personnel in Each: MIL 5000, CIV 610, POL 400

Deputy/SRSG

Military & Police Commander

MIL-1 x 250 Pers

CIV-1 x 20 Pers

POL-1 x 20 Pers



Our Partners



- Global Governance Forum;
- International Peace Bureau;
- Peace Action;
- Genocide Watch;
- Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research;
- Democracy Without Borders;
- World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy
- Citizens For Global Solutions;
- Win Without War;
- Center for Victims of Torture;
- World Federalist Movement -Canada ;
- Young World Federalists;
- Sustainable Common Security

Dr. H. Peter Langille ©2007