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Latin American Dialogue on International Peace and Security

Reviewing the prospects for peace operations,
peacebuilding and women, peace and security





Index

- Summary 1
- Peace operations 3
- Peacebuilding 4
- Women, Peace and Security 5
- Security and development nexus 7

Latin American Dialogue on International Peace and Security

Reviewing the prospects for peace operations, peacebuilding and women, peace and security

Summary

The UN is undertaking a series of reforms to better confront new and emerging peace and security challenges in the twenty-first century. A series of reviews have been undertaken to help the UN system take the right decisions. As the 70th UN General Assembly prepares to deliberate on these reforms in May 2016, different regions are also reflecting on key priorities moving forward. To this end, the President of the 70th UN General Assembly suggested that Igarapé Institute take the lead in assembling governments and civil society from Latin America to identify opportunities and challenges to peace and security.

The following report summarizes several reflections emerging from a regional dialogue on the evolving international peace and security agenda. The dialogue was organized in partnership with the Pandia Calógeras Institute, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), at the Brazilian Ministry of Defense headquarters on 25 February 2016. A focus for the 30 participants representing government, think tanks and academia was examining Latin American perspectives on the UN peace operations review, the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture and the review of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

A number of specific priorities and gaps were identified by Latin American representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay. If the UN is to better deliver on the peace and security agenda, it must

- Increase political and financial investment in conflict prevention – continue emphasizing the primacy of the political;
- Focus aid toward the so-called root causes of conflicts (from poverty and inequality to injustice and impunity);
- Ensure a gender perspective at all levels of all UN policies and programs;
- Avoid securitizing and militarizing development assistance; but ensure security and development initiatives are strongly linked and complement each other
- Clarify distinctions between peacekeeping, peacebuilding and the women peace and security agendas and priorities associated with counter-terrorism and organized crime;
- Promote systemic reform of the UN system (including Security Council reform) as well as emphasis on decentralizing UN assistance; and
- Adopt a comprehensive agenda with regards to mediation and capacity support.

The dialogue is intended to serve as an informal contribution to a UN General Assembly High Level Debate in New York in May 2016. The discussions themselves were held using the Chatham House Rule. The following report was reviewed by core partners and is provided to the UN General Assembly as an informal set of reflections. They do not represent the official positions of the governments attending the dialogue.



Photo: Department of Communication of the Brazilian Ministry of Defence

Peace operations

The first panel focused on the findings emerging from the high level panel on peace support operations. Participants re-affirmed a number of its core recommendations. At the outset, participants agreed on the need to adapt UN rules and institutions to the changing nature of armed conflict. All participants affirmed the critical role of conflict prevention, strategic regional and local partnerships, and the adoption of a long-term planning horizon. Moreover, there was agreement on the primacy of politics in peace operations and the use of military assets only as a last resort.

A major area of discussion was on the importance of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Latin America has a more machiste tradition, participants agreed, and greater efforts were required in the region and in the UN to break down barriers. Participants also emphasized the importance of more field-focused activities and greater coherence in the UN system across shared priorities. All of these issues were identified as genuine priorities for the UN moving forward.

The panel also critically examined several potential obstacles to the implementation of the three reviews. A major challenge, for example, is ensuring sustained financial and in-kind commitment to peacekeeping given scarce resources. Likewise, participants highlighted the continued difficulties in applying norms and protocols to protect civilians in armed conflicts. A persistent gap relates to the inability of the UN or member states to effectively monitor and evaluate the success or failure of peace operations. Likewise, some participants underlined the persistent state-centric approach adopted by states and regional organizations to conflict prevention and the lack of coherence between UN agencies, national institutions and local groups on the ground.

Participants signaled how Latin America has considerably expanded its contribution to peace and security from the regional to the global level. Apart from increasing its financial and troops contributions to peace operations, the region has gained experience in early diplomacy and mediation, especially in its own neighborhood. Latin American states have launched innovative initiatives including presidential and ministerial measures in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and within UNASUR to prevent escalation of tensions among neighboring countries. Further afield, Latin American countries caution against conflating peace support operations with counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations.

The consultation also highlighted the importance of adopting realistic expectations with respect to Latin America's present and future contribution to peace support operations. A review of 33 countries across LAC suggests that contributions to the assessed UN peacekeeping budget are still comparatively modest. In 2012, for example, the cumulative spending of 33 countries was just 1.1% a year. In 2013 it was 1.4%, in 2014 it was 1.4 again, and in 2015 it was also 1.4%. Projected spending from 2016-2018 is around 1.7% a year. Meanwhile, from 2000 to 2010, the number of troops from LAC also went up tenfold, albeit from 753 to 7,523. MINUSTAH largely accounts for this surge since 2004, and these numbers are likely to decline considerably in coming years.

Peacebuilding

The second panel underlined ways that the UN can continue strengthening its approach to peacebuilding. Participants underlined the importance of fostering inclusive national ownership and a people-oriented approach. Also signaled was the importance of predictable and adequate resources to implement peacebuilding processes. Key to this is the development of more robust early warning systems and institutionalizing conflict prevention by incorporating local actors into analysis and response. Peacebuilding can also be strengthened by building more robust partnerships from the regional to the local level, increasing investment in political missions, and focusing not just on hot spots and low-income settings, but middle-income ones as well.

Latin American participants drew attention to the risks of securitization of peacebuilding (and development) assistance. Peacebuilding is thus not to be treated as a synonym of security sector/system reform. There are concerns among some participants of the risks of diverting aid from peacebuilding to policing and military activities. Participants also highlighted the continued relevance of South-South Cooperation (SSC), including as a positive means for Latin America to increase its support in and outside its neighborhood. However, UN member states are also advised to expand their support for the UN Office for SSC and build bridges between the office and the wider UN peacebuilding architecture.

Accountability is one of the watchwords of twenty-first century peacebuilding. Latin American participants stressed the importance of adopting clear benchmarks and indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of conflict prevention. This could elevate much needed attention to the advantages of prevention. Shifting from an ad hoc evaluation process to an institutionalized monitoring and evaluation system is essential to avoid new conflicts and better deal with ongoing ones. A greater emphasis on enhancing local ownership of peacebuilding - and not just of centralized national actors, but also civil society - is another means of expanding accountability on the ground.

It was stressed that Latin America has witnessed comparatively few armed conflicts when compared to many other regions. Latin American led initiatives have received comparatively little attention, however, and would do well to be mapped out and better communicated. For example, high-level diplomatic interventions have helped prevent the outbreak of territorial disputes between neighbors. Systems of regional cooperation such as UNASUR are also critical to resolving tensions. Bilateral arrangements - such as between Brazil and Argentina in the field of nuclear energy - is another example of how to stimulate more peaceful and constructive partnerships. National projects such as the Place of Memory in Peru or the Historical museums in Chile were designed to help these countries confront past wars.

Women, Peace and Security

The final panel explored the implementation of UN's WPS agenda in Latin America and the Global Study on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325. Participants acknowledged that since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) and the adoption of Resolution 1325 (2000), the WPS agenda has gathered pace in the UN. The launch of the global study was regarded as a major achievement. A number of practical recommendations emerged from the discussions.

All participants highlighted the importance of mainstreaming the WPS agenda across national institutions. For example, national action plans, predictable resources, and south-south and triangular cooperation on gender and women's empowerment were all

singled out as priorities. Likewise, more investment in capacity building for government and civil society bodies, including integrating the WPS agenda into peacekeeping training (centers), is also key. Latin American governments are also encouraged to take more action to end impunity with all sexual and gender-based crime.

The dialogue also focused on the challenges associated with implementing the recommendations of Resolution 1325 in the region. Notwithstanding recent important improvements, Latin American governments and civil society are still only too dimly away of the WPS agenda. The understanding of how gender and sustainable peace are connected remains disconcertingly low. As a result, the agenda is still too often regarded as a theme confined to the military sector and more specifically to the domain of peacekeeping operations. In order to overcome this challenge, participants stressed the need to engage all sectors of society in activities related to the prevention of gender-based violence and women's participation in security processes both at domestic and international levels.

Participants emphasized the progressive improvements that Latin American countries have made over the past few years regarding the WPS agenda. For instance, Argentina launched a pilot to specifically include gender perspectives into peacekeeping operations. In 2009, Chile became the first Latin American country to adopt a NAP on Resolution 1325 and then was followed by Argentina and Paraguay. Recently, Brazil has committed to developing a NAP. Brazil has also established gender commissions in the scope of both the country's Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Relations. Latin American governments - especially Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela - have also increased the inclusion of women into their armed forces.

In the domestic sphere, Latin American countries have increasingly adopted a gender perspective in their policies and programs. For example, "femicide" is now designated as a specific crime in many states. Other governments have created dedicated Women's ministries. For example, Brazil's Maria da Penha Law, the Women helpline (Dial 180) as well as the House of Brazilian Women - a venue offering psychological, health and legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence - were singled out as positive examples of initiatives that should be shared with countries from both inside and outside of the region.

Security and development nexus

While not a specific focus of the dialogue, participants repeatedly highlighted the interdependence of security and development. The participants commended the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Many Latin American participants highlighted the universal character of the newly agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While participants focused on SDG 16 on peace and justice, there was also agreement on the importance of implementing all 17 goals in an integrated manner to generate greater impacts on peace and security.

Participants also highlighted the extensive violence in Latin America, particular that associated with organized crime. Indeed, the region has some of the highest rates of homicide in the world and some sub-regions, especially Central America, are experiencing extreme volatility. Many participants stressed the distinction between “international” peace and security on the one hand, and “domestic” law and order on the other. There is a need to separate the two, ensuring that the latter not be taken up in the Security Council. Latin American governments also stressed the importance of public security and justice policies as key responses to the latter.

All participants highlighted the role of geopolitics and terrorism as key challenges to the reform of the peace and security architecture. Some Latin American participants were concerned that meaningful changes in peace operations, peacebuilding and the WPS agenda will be frustrated by the non-representative nature of the UN Security Council. Some participants also highlighted the role of the General Assembly and ECOSOC in rebalancing interests of the P5 and other member states so as to pave the way for more a more balanced peace and security architecture.

REGIONAL CONSULTATION: International Peace and Security

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Photo: Department of Communication of the Brazilian Ministry of Defence

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