



# COVID-19 AND FIELD MISSIONS

## Biweekly Update

Biweekly Update for Member States | Issue # 3 | 9 June 2020

### *MESSAGE FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARIES-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AND PEACEBUILDING AFFAIRS, PEACE OPERATIONS, AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT*

This third edition of our update to Member States focuses on the efforts of the DPPA-DPO-DOS Field Support Group on COVID-19 over the past weeks to strengthen UN risk management systems globally and across the field missions that we support. This work builds on initial robust measures taken to protect our personnel and prevent transmission of the disease, while ensuring business continuity and supporting host countries. These preliminary measures were put in place at a time when COVID-19 had only started to take hold in areas where UN missions are deployed. The virus has now reached all areas in which field missions carry out their mandates and, unfortunately, has started to exact a heavier toll. Despite this, the number of confirmed cases among the more than 115,000 UN field personnel remains relatively low.

We are committed to ensuring that the infection rate remains as low as possible. Further to existing procedures such as social distancing, installation of hand washing stations, etc., additional recent measures taken include: (1) adopting a consistent, system-wide approach with regard to medical evacuations for UN staff; and (2) charting out the manner in which rotations of uniformed personnel in and out of peacekeeping operations and relevant special political missions will be conducted following the expiration of the suspension of rotations on 30 June.

Last week, the Secretary-General approved a comprehensive Plan of Action concerning medical evacuations and related treatment options for UN personnel and dependents in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation of the Plan of Action is already in progress, with several key elements, such as the network of local COVID-19 Coordinators and the Joint COVID-19 United Nations MEDEVAC Coordination Centre (known as the UN MEDEVAC Cell), already in operation. UN medical capacities on the ground continue to be strengthened.

Following the suspension of rotations of uniformed personnel, announced on 4 April and set to expire on 30 June, a policy of “temporary and extraordinary transitional measures for a partial resumption of uniformed rotations, repatriations and deployments to and from United Nations peacekeeping operations and relevant special political missions in a COVID-19 environment” was promulgated by the Secretary-General in his letter to Troop and Police Contributing Countries dated 5 June. The policy will take effect on 1 July for a period of six months and will be reviewed in October as the situation continues to develop. The measures prescribe mandatory and rigorous quarantines for all incoming uniformed units and personnel to ensure that anyone presenting COVID symptoms during that quarantine period is quickly detected and moved to an isolation area for treatment. We are confident that these steps will contribute to protecting vulnerable populations while enabling the continuation of critical work that missions are

carrying out to prevent conflict and sustain peace. This guidance does not apply to uniformed government-provided corrections personnel for whom separate guidance is being developed.

We are deeply saddened that five personnel serving in UN field missions have succumbed to COVID-19 related illnesses and paid the ultimate price for their dedication to global peace and security. Their deaths are a sobering reminder of the many risks that our personnel face on a daily basis in the field. We are redoubling our efforts to ensure that our field personnel receive the best possible protection, starting with the appropriate preventive measures and providing them with personal protective equipment in line with WHO guidance. We remain steadfast in our determination to mitigate the risks and will continue to count on your firm support, including to allow medevacs whether COVID-related or not, to proceed so that United Nations field missions can continue their important work to promote peace and security, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs  
Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support  
Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations

## **KEY PRIORITIES**

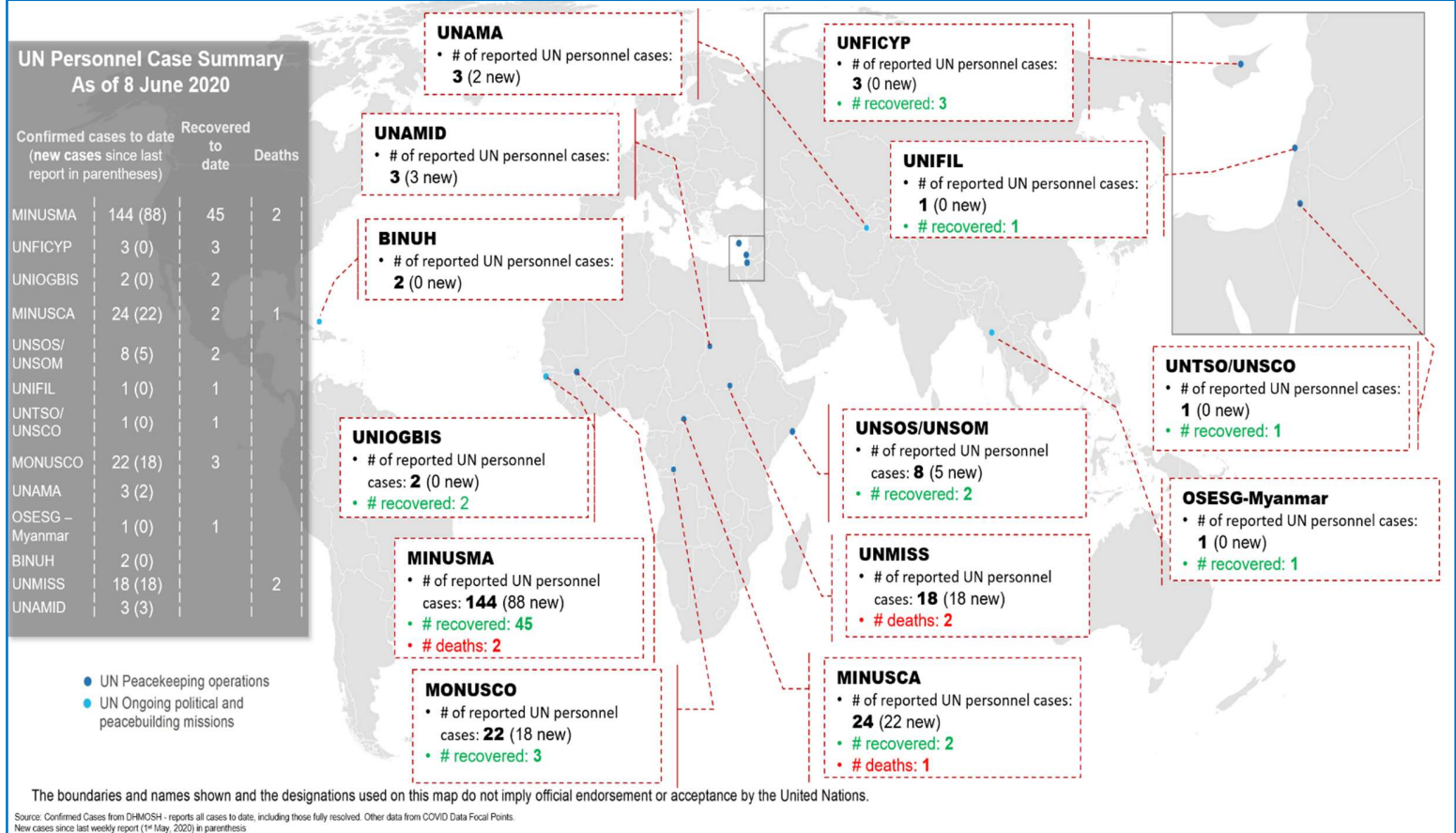
### **1. PROTECTING OUR PERSONNEL**

- There are 156 new confirmed COVID-19 cases in field missions since the last update on 20 May. Of more than 115,000 personnel deployed across peacekeeping operations and special political missions, the number of confirmed cases among our personnel remains low. As of 8 June, 232 cases have been confirmed amongst staff and associated personnel. 60 of those 232 personnel have recovered to date. Sadly, five of our personnel are confirmed to have died of COVID-related causes since the last issue.

- Further to our update of 20 May, the system-wide Medevac Task Force has mapped existing capacities across the UN system and explored additional investments to develop an effective, unified COVID-19 MEDEVAC Framework. As part of this system, all UN personnel and their eligible dependents, no matter where they are located, will have access to regional treatment facilities supported by medical personnel, air assets (aircraft and air ambulances), as well as a dedicated operations center that will coordinate the

joint resources of the UN system. The Task Force is proceeding with the necessary preparations for setting up regional treatment facilities in strategic locations, which will be announced once the necessary host country agreements are in place. The locations are based on a careful assessment of the prevailing epidemiological situation, the UN's footprint in the region and an assessment of local healthcare capacity by the UN Medical Directors' Network. In the meantime, COVID-19 related medical evacuations are being undertaken as required. In addition to COVID-19 antibody tests that have already been distributed to missions, we are also exploring options to provide diagnostic polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing, and the relevant expertise, in all Level I+ clinics and above in missions. Appropriate medical treatment to ill personnel will be provided without delay and without regard to pending test results.

- At the outset of the pandemic's spread, we conducted a thorough review of existing field medical capabilities and capacities to identify potential gaps and assist missions in identifying needs and ordering required equipment. The Office of Supply Chain Management in DOS has been working with clients across the Secretariat to adapt, respond to and support their needs for high-demand critical items, both



directly and through the UN COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force. UNHQ has provided occupational safety and health support and guidance to all field missions throughout the COVID-19 crisis. While telecommuting will continue in many duty stations, on 11 May, the Department of Operational Support disseminated comprehensive COVID-19 reintegration/reconstitution (“return-to-office”) guidance to all field missions, as well as a sample return-to-office plan. The guidance consists of several core planning components reflecting a four-phased, return-to-office concept. The guidance includes, among other elements: a planning framework; operating objectives and principles; templates; and selection/determination criteria as to which personnel should return to their offices and when, based on occupational safety and health hazard identification and risk assessment methodology. While solutions are pursued to test personnel, emphasis continues to be put on preventive measures, including in the most affected missions.

- The Staff Counsellors’ Office (SCO) in New York has been supporting the UN system in its psychosocial responses to support personnel during the pandemic. In late February/early March, SCO trained 154 mental health professionals and staff/stress counsellors throughout the UN system at Headquarters and in the field; and to date has offered 143 online workshops to 1,420 participants. Expanded online services include virtual café sessions and daily workshops on resilience-building.

## 2. CONTAINING AND MITIGATING TRANSMISSION

- On 4 April, the Secretary-General suspended all rotations, repatriations and new deployments of uniformed personnel through 30 June 2020, with limited exceptions. This was a key early measure taken to prevent the transmission of COVID19, both among UN personnel and to nationals of host countries.

- So far, 60 movements have been suspended, impacting 23,200 troops and police; and between April and June, 941 individual rotations have been affected. Individual uniformed personnel who were due to be replaced before 30 June have either been extended or exceptionally repatriated without replacement where required for medical or compassionate reasons and on administrative grounds.

- Since the implementation of the suspension of rotations, missions have pursued appropriate measures, including designating quarantine and isolation facilities, and stocking of medical supplies, to ensure effective response. As mentioned above, a global MEDEVAC arrangement is being established for all UN personnel and their eligible dependents.

- Looking beyond 30 June, temporary and extraordinary transitional measures for a partial resumption of military and police rotations have been developed and shared with Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) on 5 June. Effective from 1 July to 31 December, rotations under the proposed arrangement will be undertaken according to the mission’s operational requirements, their logistic capacities, including the existence of quarantine facilities for incoming and outgoing troops and police, financial costs, host State concurrence, T/PCC’s consent, as well as welfare and relief requirements of troops and police. For all incoming units and personnel, a 14-day quarantine period will first be required in the home country of the T/PCC, prior to deployment to the mission. On arrival in the mission area, the incoming unit and personnel will undergo a second 14-day quarantine period or a period specified by the host country, whichever is the longer, in a suitable quarantine facility. On successful completion of quarantine, the unit and personnel can commence operations in the Mission area. All outgoing units and personnel will be quarantined upon their return to their home country.

- The measures are designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during rotations in countries that host UN



*Bamako - SRSB Annadif accompanied by DSRSB/RC/HC Gasarabwe and an OMS representative guide the Secretary General of the Malian ministry of health and social affairs during the visit to the COVID-19 Medical Centre on the occasion of its inauguration on May 22, 2020.  
(UN/MINUSCA)*

Peacekeeping Operations and in relevant Special Political Missions, in T/PCCs and in the countries through which contingents transit. This will help protect vulnerable communities and populations, while maintaining the missions’ uniformed operational capabilities for mandate delivery, protecting the safety of UN personnel and mitigating reputational risk to the Organisation.

- This guidance does not apply to uniformed government-provided corrections personnel. Separate guidance on their deployment and repatriation is being developed. To reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect mission personnel, a number of field missions have availed themselves of the possibility of remote work for GPP within and outside of the duty station, in line with administrative guidance on recipients of Mission Subsistence Allowance issued on 15 April. Remote onboarding of justice and corrections GPP is also being considered, where feasible, to ensure continued Mission capacity in this area.

### Misconduct Risk Management

The Conduct and Discipline Service (CDS) of the Administrative Law Division in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) is operating remotely, continuing its vital work of recording, tracking and handling misconduct allegations in conjunction with mission Conduct and Discipline Teams. When new allegations are reported in the field, Member States continue to be notified and DMSPC, together with the Victims' Rights Advocate and other partners, continues to provide support and assistance to victims. CDS regularly communicates with Conduct and Discipline Teams in missions as well as focal points across the global Secretariat, to support the discharge of the function and ensure business continuity, including through technology innovation.

USGs Pollard, Lacroix and DiCarlo jointly communicated guidance to field missions on 1 April 2020 on the importance of managing the potential impact of the pandemic on the conduct of personnel. Key issues in the guidance include suspended rotations and travel restrictions, considerations for risk mitigation adjustments, as well as awareness raising among mission personnel.

Together with the Victims' Rights Advocate, USG DMSPC also disseminated guidance to missions on 9 April 2020 with options for victim assistance and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance highlighted that, in line with previous instructions of the Secretary-General, and in the absence of any other immediately available means, funds required to provide timely victim support for victims should be made available through existing mission budgets.

DMSPC adjusted its communications to T/PCCs, recognizing that travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic may now or in the future affect the nomination and deployment of National Investigation Officers, and/or the completion of national investigations into misconduct. Where restrictions impact investigations, DMSPC has asked T/PCCs to look at ways to gather and preserve evidence, working with host states and missions.

### 3. SUPPORTING NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

The United Nations has continued to support the efforts of national authorities to respond to the crisis. Highlighted below are examples of this support, including illustrations of collaboration between field missions and country teams, as well as endeavours to counter misinformation.

- In Central African Republic, MINUSCA and relevant UN agencies are represented on the crisis committee chaired by the President, in a COVID-19 technical sub-committee presided by the Prime

Minister and in an operational working group chaired by the Minister of Health. The Mission is working with the national defence and security forces to prepare plans for the eventual enforcement of wider lockdown measures in the capital and the prefectures. MINUSCA also organized a sensitization workshop on COVID-19 for 19 influential women community leaders in Birao, encouraging participants to sensitize their communities to adhere to preventative measures.

- The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia delivered biosafety kits comprising face masks, gloves and hand sanitizer and cassava, corn and bean seeds to the association of ex-combatants and the ASOPESARCACAO community.

- In Guinea Bissau, **UNIOGBIS**, and the UN Country Team, remain active in supporting the national authorities, at the technical level, to strengthen coordination of the National COVID-19 response plan's implementation. Under the leadership of UNICEF, the UN in Guinea-Bissau has notably established a Communication Task Force to support and amplify national communication efforts for COVID-19 response. The task force implemented an initial crisis communication plan that includes the distribution of over 9,000 posters, interactive radio programmes with experts and an information campaign on radio/TV and social media about prevention measures, targeting the general population and vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and people with disabilities. In addition, the UN trained journalists on safe and ethical reporting during the pandemic to prevent discrimination, and supported a fact checking team to combat fake news on COVID-19. A recently adopted communication strategy, based on micro-surveys and studies, proposes the recruitment of a crisis communication specialist to support the national crisis communication team for COVID-19 response.

- In Iraq, **UNAMI** and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) continue to engage with Prime Minister al-Khadimi, Finance Minister Allawi and other key stakeholders to help address the Iraqi economic crisis, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and low oil pricing. UNAMI and the UNCT are developing emergency response packages to counter the impact of COVID-19, including the drafting of a Socio-Economic Recovery Framework that will tackle the immediate and medium-term challenges to the social and economic sectors posed by COVID-19.

- In Kosovo, **UNMIK** is supporting local communities, including in Fushë Kosovë, Klokot, North Mitrovica and Kamenica, in their COVID-19 response efforts. UNMIK has delivered more than 2,100 food packages, and 1,450 hygiene packages, to communities in all municipalities. These donations are part of a month-long assistance drive, which also includes the donation of personal protective equipment and technological tools.

- In Lebanon, **UNSCOL** continues to provide advice to the Government of Lebanon to help manage the COVID-19 crisis, support the refugee community, and engage with the international community, including the International Support Group and International Financial Institutions, to unlock needed funding as quickly as possible. On behalf of the UNCT, UNSCOL engages with Government counterparts to express challenges the country team faces in its support to the Government and the Lebanese and refugee populations.

- **UNIFIL** recently handed over Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and veterinary medicines to benefit local communities in a number of villages in southern Lebanon.

- **MINUSMA** has re-directed resources for acquisition and distribution of equipment and material to prevent and respond to the outbreak and rehabilitate relevant infrastructure. The Mission provided technical



*Mitrovica - UNMIK has ensured food and hygiene packages reach all municipalities as part of its broader COVID-19 response as part of its month-long assistance drive, which also includes donation of personal protective equipment and technological tools.*

assistance to the national and regional prison administrations on COVID-19 related prevention, management and risk mitigation measures. MINUSMA, together with UNDP, is also providing sanitary and cleaning supplies, as well as other equipment critical to COVID-19 prevention, for 60 prisons, in collaboration/coordination with ICRC and the European Union. A project aimed at the prevention of COVID-19 through the acquisition of hygiene and cleaning products for 21 tribunals and their respective judicial and administrative services, through the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, is being finalized. In order to avoid burdening the Malian national health system, MINUSMA opened a 65-bed medical centre within the Mission Headquarters camp, to be used to treat COVID-19 patients while also offering isolation and quarantine facilities.

19 response under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator. The role of the Office of the Special Envoy helped strengthen the UN's partnership with national stakeholders and calibrate a conflict-sensitive approach in promoting inclusiveness and protection for all in election period.

- On 1 June, UNAMID handed over advanced medical equipment and furniture to the Isolation Center and Zalingei Teaching Hospital in Zalingei town in central Darfur. The ceremony is part of the Mission's overall response to improve local health facilities and support the host community in combating the spread of COVID-19.

- Across South Sudan, UNMISS is using its bases to help in cities, towns and villages. Peacekeeping engineers are renovating hospitals and clinics around the country, including Malakal, Juba, Terekeka, Torit, Wau, Yambio and Rumbek. Key COVID-19 messages are broadcasted through megaphone in 49 prioritized counties and 4 Protection Of Civilian (POC)/Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) sites, across all ten States. Media engagements are ongoing with 29 radio stations airing radio jingles and conducting talk shows on COVID-19 countrywide in 10 languages. Promo-trucks are also being sent into local communities to share these messages and 62,000 informational flashcards and 20,000 posters have been distributed.

- The UN has supported the Somali authorities in developing a preparedness and response plan. UNSOM has launched programming on risk communication and community engagement and is supporting the Federal Government and Federal Member States to detect, prevent, and interrupt the transmission of COVID-19. This also includes awareness campaigns, such as radio broadcasts and billboards highlighting COVID-19 prevention measures. Moreover, UN agencies have also provided personal protective equipment and trained health workers on how to respond to COVID-19.



*Mogadishu – SRSO Swan takes part in a virtual meeting, facilitated by the United Nations, between Somali leaders and representatives from the international community, to discuss elections, protection of press freedom, the constitutional review process, security, and reconciliation on May 18, 2020. (UN/UNSOM)*

- The Office of the Special Envoy for Myanmar, supported the Country Team with analysis on the political impacts of COVID-19 and facilitated liaison with key senior government officials, building on the Special Envoy's access to decision-makers. This has enabled the Country Team to effectively coordinate and communicate a 'whole-of-UN approach' to its COVID-

### Countering Misinformation

As the world confronts one of its biggest challenges, there has never been a greater need for accurate, verified information. Like the virus itself, misinformation spreads from person-to-person, heightening the risk to health and spreading fear and division. The world cannot contain the disease and its impacts without access to trusted, accurate information that promotes science and real solutions - and builds solidarity within and between nations. This is especially true in our field operations, where populations are already frequently confronting years of neglect, residual trauma and distrust. For the communities that host operations, a clear and impartial voice that dispels rumour, counters misinformation and provides a trusted source of accurate and impartial information is critical.

**Verified** (<https://www.shareverified.com>) is an initiative of the United Nations, in collaboration with “Purpose”, to provide content that cuts through the noise to deliver life-saving information, fact-based advice and stories from the best of humanity. Multilingual versions suitable for local contexts are being rolled out in the coming days.

### Policy brief: the impact of COVID-19 in Africa

In his report on the impact of COVID-19 in Africa published on 20 May\*, the Secretary-General outlines the pandemic’s threat to socio-economic advances, encourages citizen participation in response efforts, and stresses that the virus could strike hardest in countries with ongoing conflicts or fragile political transitions. The report underscores the need for a continued focus on peace and security, including implementing the appeal of the Secretary-General and the AU Commission Chairperson for a ceasefire and sustaining peace processes and critical peace operations. Arguing that the response to COVID-19 needs to be “conflict-sensitive” and avoid generating new tensions, the report recommends that decisions regarding planned national elections should be taken in an inclusive and consultative manner.

The report also describes the impact on local and international capabilities to support peace and security. Currently, there are several United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions based in Africa and working on African issues. The pandemic is affecting their operational effectiveness, for example through restrictions on troop rotations, regional travel or adjustments in operational practices, while some missions report hostility from local populations, as well as attempts to scapegoat the United Nations and exploit anti-UN sentiments. However, despite these constraints, field missions continue to fulfill their mandates, are supporting host-country preparedness and response plans; and have adapted to continue their work. On peace and security matters, the report recommends continued leadership by African and global actors, particularly the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council, to sustain progress in key peace processes across the continent; scaled up use of digital tools among negotiating parties and leverage opportunities to enhance the inclusivity of peace talks; and steady engagement of all contributors of personnel and political or financial support to UN and African Union peace operations.

\*[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_covid-19\\_impact\\_on\\_africa\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid-19_impact_on_africa_may_2020.pdf)



## 4. IMPLEMENTING MANDATES

Special Political Missions and Peacekeeping Operations continue to find innovative ways to implement their mandates despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

- The political engagement of field missions with national and international stakeholders has continued effectively with adjusted proceedings in light of COVID-19. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSES-GY) continues, despite challenges caused by the spread of COVID-19 in Yemen, to engage in intensive virtual shuttle diplomacy with the Parties with regard to its draft agreement proposals on a nationwide ceasefire, humanitarian and economic measures, and the resumption of the political process. In Lebanon, UNSCOL continues to provide good offices and work with the Lebanese authorities, and different Lebanese parties and sectors to promote long-term political, economic and social stability in the country. UNIOGBIS has developed a multilevel approach to support its Good Offices efforts, in coordination with UNOWAS and in the framework of the Group of Five international partners. In this context, UNIOGBIS continues to promote civil society re-engagement and reinforce women's participation and visibility in political dialogue to ensure inclusive participation for stability, rule of law, and public debate on the priority of reforms.

- UNIOGBIS continues to engage with the Human Rights Defenders Network (HRDN) on its human rights' promotion, protection and monitoring work. In the context of restrictive COVID-19 measures and the prevailing State of Emergency, the Mission particularly focuses on cases of excessive use of force and abuse of authority.

- In Haiti, following the proclamation of a national health emergency on 19 March 2020, the UN, in close

coordination with international partners, provided increased technical assistance and intensified its advocacy to accelerate the release of prisoners in prolonged pretrial detention in order to contain the spread of the virus in detention facilities. BINUH, in coordination with UNDP, and other partners, provided technical advice and support to the initiative launched by the National Network of Judges and the High Judicial Council to promote remote hearings with a view to fast tracking judicial reviews and accelerating prisoners release. Ongoing support is being provided through this collaboration to broaden eligibility criteria for detainees to be released in order to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19 in national correctional national prisons. Approximately 750 prisoners were released between 19 March and 31 May from Haitian prisons.

- Albeit with a reduced footprint and limited community engagement due to social distancing and quarantine measures, MINUSMA military and police operations continued to support national security forces and local authorities to protect civilians. The Mission prioritized mounted patrols and air operations to ensure continued medical and casualty evacuation,



*Buenaventura – The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia delivered biosafety kits comprising of face masks, gloves and hand sanitizer and cassava, corn and bean seeds to the association of ex-combatants and the ASOPESARCACAO community. (UN/Mision de la ONU en Colombia)*

quick reaction capacity and support to priority missions.

- In view of the rise in COVID-19 cases in South Sudan over the past weeks, UNMISS Police has altered its activities within the POC sites to protect displaced families as well as UN staff. UNPOL officers are providing protection at entry/exit points, intensifying patrolling of the perimeter and Weapons Free Zone 24/7, maintaining regular contact with community leaders, supporting the safe delivery of humanitarian services and are responding to incidents of public disorder, gender-based violence or other requests for

security assistance through their Quick Reaction Force. UNMISS also supported national authorities in completing court hearings for some 120 juveniles at the Juba Juvenile Reformatory Centre (JRC), in an effort to reduce a case backlog and decongest the Centre as part of the national strategy to prevent the spread of COVID 19. Judges prioritized cases involving less serious offences, which led to bail being granted to 85 young people on remand. Overall, 95 trials were held, resulting in 15 convictions. An additional 40 juveniles were ordered to be released following trial because of insufficient evidence or because they had already served the time of their sentences.

### *Mediation support in the context of COVID-19*

The outbreak of COVID-19 has fundamentally altered the environment for UN peacemaking efforts, and new and heightened risks of social collapse and crisis are emerging in fragile and conflict-affected settings. At the same time, travel restrictions have a profound impact on the ability of UN Special Envoys and other mediation actors to pursue their mandates.

DPPA has been quick to adapt in how it provides mediation assistance, including through the Policy and Mediation Division's Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers (SBT). Primarily designed to provide on-site technical support to nascent or ongoing peace processes, the SBT has shifted to deliver assistance remotely through virtual means. Working closely with regional divisions, SBT experts and Mediation Support Unit staff are engaged in providing analysis, technical advice and coaching through digital platforms, in support of the good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts of the UN and its partners.

Such initiatives include, for instance, remote support to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSES-G-Y) on process design issues, as the Special Envoy works to build upon the main Yemeni parties, welcoming the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen announcing a temporary unilateral cessation of hostilities. Substantive technical advice has also been provided remotely on potential political, security and transition arrangements in Yemen, on the inclusion of civil society in potential transitional institutions, as well as on the development of the Office's strategy to enhance the inclusion of women in the Yemeni peace process.

In Afghanistan, an SBT expert has provided ongoing remote technical support to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission as it conceptualizes its approach for engaging with future Intra-Afghan negotiations. This includes how the Commission could work with Afghan civil society to promote human rights during talks and developing options for the participation of war victims in the peace process. As part of a wider offer of technical support to the main negotiating parties of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban, SBT experts in process design and inclusion are also providing virtual briefings to members of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's negotiating delegation.

In response to a request from the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Cyprus (OSASG), an SBT expert has initiated a virtual training for the UN facilitators of the 12 bi-communal Technical Committees, established in the context of the peace talks to find a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus issue. The training aims to strengthen the facilitation skills of 22 participants from OSASG, the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and the UN Country Team (UNCT), and to continue to ensure consistency and coherence in the UN's facilitation approach across the bi-communal Technical Committees.

Peacekeeping operations have also adapted how they implement their mediation support mandates to the limitations brought up by COVID-19. For instance, in Sudan, UNAMID continues to support the peace talks held in Juba, which have turned to a virtual format, due to the escalation of COVID-19. UNAMID provides technical and logistical assistance to the South Sudanese mediator in finalizing details of the agreements already reached, developing implementation matrix, and facilitating negotiations on remaining issues. In addition to continuing its outreach and engagement with the Darfur armed groups, UNAMID supports the South Sudanese mediation secretariat in the facilitating the videoconferencing and finalization of agreed documents.

### *Impact of COVID-19 on Protection of Civilians mandates*

In most peacekeeping contexts the threat of violence against civilians remains, and has even, in some circumstances, been exacerbated during the crisis. Many perpetrators of violence are aware of the potential to benefit from the disruption caused by COVID-19 and some are already taking advantage of this.

As peacekeepers continue to implement their mandates and to effectively protect civilians, COVID-19 has placed operational constraints. This includes heightened sensitivities about the need to conduct activities with a 'Do No Harm' approach so as not to spread the virus. Community engagement activities, daily patrols by uniformed personnel, mentoring and advising of national defense and security personnel and the provision of armed escorts to humanitarian partners, for example, have been decreased or limited and have focused in large part on sensitization efforts related to COVID-19. In some settings, growing anti-UN and xenophobic sentiment, misinformation, limited mobility of civilian and uniformed personnel, reduced ground capacities, and risks related to community engagement have curtailed POC activities. This has impacted the missions' situational awareness of threats to civilians, and their ability to prevent and respond to such threats. This juncture demands new and renewed attention so that the POC gains made to date do not face setbacks.

In this context, peacekeepers have adopted several measures to adapt to the new circumstances, including through enhanced use of radio, telecommunications and virtual communication tools, as well as implementation of social distancing measures. For example, in the DRC and Mali, the MONUSCO and MINUSMA military and police components are continuing to project, show presence and, where possible, respond to emerging POC threats, including through aerial patrols where foot patrolling has been scaled down. At the same time, in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, civilian personnel in MINUSCA and UNMISS have been conducting remote human rights monitoring through their local networks and continue to engage in mediation as much as possible in areas of intercommunal violence. In other contexts, following instances in which the response of security actors has risked exacerbating threats to civilians, peacekeeping



missions have put in place initiatives, such as the COVID-19 Rights Watch in Darfur, aimed at monitoring whether the measures and responses taken by governments are compliant with human rights and protection norms and standards.

UN Headquarters continues to monitor the situation on the ground to capture best practices and lessons learned from the different responses of peacekeeping operations to COVID-19, with the aim of disseminating these among the POC community at large, via regular thematic meetings and a new Community of Practice on POC.

## SENIOR LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Topic	Date
General: Participation in the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development –‘High-Level Interactive Dialogue: Building Peace in the time of COVID 19’ (USG DPPA)	13 May 2020
General: Participation in virtual event hosted by the Antalya Diplomatic Forum and the International Peace Institute on the impact of COVID-19 on conflict dynamics and Mediation (USG DPPA)	19 May 2020
General: Briefing to the Atlantic Council on the impact of COVID-19 on conflicts in the Middle East (USG DPPA)	20 May 2020
General: Briefing to the European Union Political and Security Committee (USGs DPO and DOS)	20 May 2020
General: Participation in the Council on Foreign Relations virtual roundtable on Women, Peace and Security and Peacekeeping Priorities during the COVID Pandemic (USG DPO)	21 May 2020
T/PCCs: Briefing on transitional measures for the partial resumption of rotations (USGs DOS, DPO, DMSPC)	22 May 2020
Security Council: Briefing on peacekeeping with Force Commanders MINUSMA, UNMISS, UNDOF, on the impact of Covid-19 on the military components (USG DPO)	3 June 2020

## FOCAL POINTS

Office	Email
Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety (DOS)	<a href="mailto:dos-dhmosh-public-health@un.org">dos-dhmosh-public-health@un.org</a>
Office of Supply Chain Management (DOS)	<a href="mailto:oscm-oasg@un.org">oscm-oasg@un.org</a>
Human Resources Services Division (DOS)	<a href="mailto:DOS-HR-Advice@un.org">DOS-HR-Advice@un.org</a>
Uniformed Capabilities Support Division (DOS)	<a href="mailto:DOS-UCSD@un.org">DOS-UCSD@un.org</a>
Conduct & Discipline Service (DMSPC)	<a href="mailto:cdt-misconduct@un.org">cdt-misconduct@un.org</a>
Office of Military Affairs (DPO)	<a href="mailto:dpo-oma-oasg@un.org">dpo-oma-oasg@un.org</a> <a href="mailto:dpo-oma-ocos@un.org">dpo-oma-ocos@un.org</a>
Police Division (DPO)	<a href="mailto:dpo-orolsi-oasg@un.org">dpo-orolsi-oasg@un.org</a> <a href="mailto:orolsifrontoffice-unhq@un.org">orolsifrontoffice-unhq@un.org</a> <a href="mailto:dpo-orolsi-pd-opa@un.org">dpo-orolsi-pd-opa@un.org</a>
Strategic Communications (DPO)	<a href="mailto:dpo-scs@un.org">dpo-scs@un.org</a>
Strategic Communications (DPPA)	<a href="mailto:dppa@un.org">dppa@un.org</a>

## KEY REFERENCES

Topic	Date
<b>Official Correspondence</b>	
T/PCCs Letter from USG DOS: advising on training and other medical requirements for all uniformed personnel and uniformed medical personnel.	21 Feb 2020
T/PCCs Letter from USG DOS: advising suspension/postponement for planned deployments or certain rotations to UNMISS, MONUSCO, UNISFA, UNIFIL.	5 Mar 2020
T/PCCs Letter from USGs DOS, DPO: advice on extension of stay for deployed personnel.	12 Mar 2020

T/PCCs: Letter from SG: update on situation, including medical treatment.	20 Mar 2020
T/PCCs Letter from SG: overall update on medical capacity and capabilities in missions, and advising on the suspension of rotations and limited exemptions.	4 Apr 2020
T/PCCs Note Verbale from USGs DOS, DPO, DPPA: decision mechanism for exceptions to suspension of rotations; and arrangements for national resupply cargo flights and ships.	19 Apr 2020
T/PCCs: Letter from SG: on Transitional Measures for the Partial Resumption of Uniformed Rotations in a COVID-19 Environment	5 June 2020

### Policy and Guidance

T/PCCs: Administrative guidance on recipients of Mission Subsistence Allowance (MSA)	15 Apr 2020
T/PCCs: FAQ regarding Uniformed personnel (temporary administrative guidance)	23 Apr 2020
T/PCCs: FAQ regarding Government Provided Personnel (temporary administrative guidance)	23 Apr 2020
Guidance Note: Use of PPE & cloth face coverings for UN personnel in non-healthcare settings in areas of COVID-19 community transmission	2 June 2020

### Resolutions

GA resolution A/RES/74/270: Global solidarity to fight COVID-19	2 Apr 2020
GA resolution A/RES/74/274: International cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19	20 Apr 2020

### Glossary

DCO - Development Coordination Office  
DMSPC - Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance  
DOS - Department of Operational Support  
DPO - Department of Peace Operations  
DPPA - Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs  
GA - General Assembly  
GPP - Government-Provided Personnel  
IUP - Individual uniformed personnel  
Milad - Military Adviser  
OROLSI - Office of Rule of Law and State Institutions  
SG - Secretary-General  
SPM - Special Political Missions  
T/PCCs - Troop- and Police- Contributing Countries  
USG - Under-Secretary-General