



## **Enhancing the Work of the C-34:**

An options paper presented to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations

December 2011

### **Introduction**

As the only body charged with reviewing, comprehensively, UN peacekeeping operations in all their aspects, the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) has succeeded in moving forward a number of important operational and institutional reforms of UN peacekeeping over the years. However, many have come to feel that the Committee's work could be carried out more efficiently and to greater effect. This acknowledgement has led to a recommendation in the Committee's 2010 and 2011 reports for an informal discussion among member states "with a view to enhancing the work of its Working Group." It is in this context that in May 2011, the Governments of Canada and Morocco commissioned the International Peace Institute (IPI) and the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) to conduct a short-term research project aimed at identifying, through consultations with member states, ways and means to improve the working methods of the C-34.

From June through November 2011, IPI and CIC convened a number of group and individual consultations with member states, secretariat staff, and experts. In the process, the study team listened to the views of nearly 100 individuals. This options paper gives a brief background of the Special Committee before outlining general member-state concerns related to the working methods and output of the C-34. It follows with a list of reform options for consideration by the Committee's Bureau in consultation with the full membership, and concludes with some suggestions to the Secretariat regarding its support to the Committee.

### **Section I: Background of the C-34**

In February 1965, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 2006 (XIX) authorizing the President of the General Assembly to establish a Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations under his/her chairmanship. The Committee was charged with conducting a comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations "in all their aspects," but with a particular emphasis on "ways of overcoming the present financial difficulties of the Organization." It was requested to submit its report to the General Assembly (through the Fourth Committee, charged with Special Political and Decolonization issues), within three months' time. The membership of the Committee was to be determined by the Secretary-General and the GA President "after appropriate consultations."

The People’s Republic of China became the Committee’s 34th member in 1989, and the Special Committee then came to be known by its more familiar moniker – the C-34. Membership of the Committee remained at 34 until 1997, when the General Assembly decided to increase the size of the Committee’s membership to include past or present troop/personnel contributors to peacekeeping operations (A/RES/51/136). In addition, those member states who were observers at the 1996 session of the Special Committee could, “upon request in writing to the Chairman of the Committee, become members at its 1997 session.” The resolution also stipulated that member states which contribute personnel in future years or which participate as observers for three consecutive years could, upon written request, become members at the following year’s session. As such, the Committee began its expansion to the current level of 147 member states.

The Committee is presided over by a Chair, four Vice-Chairs, and a Rapporteur. The composition of the Bureau of the Committee is detailed below:

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|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Chair</b>  | Nigeria (since 1972)           |
| <b>Vice-Chair and Chair of the Working Group of the Whole</b> | Canada (Vice-Chair since 1966) |
| <b>Vice-Chair</b>   | Argentina (since 1988)         |
| <b>Vice-Chair</b>   | Japan (since 1972)             |
| <b>Vice-Chair</b>   | Poland (since 1991)            |
| <b>Rapporteur</b>   | Egypt (since 1966)             |

The Working Group of the Whole is charged with coordinating the recommendations of the Committee’s annual report. In recent years there have been 6 (2009), 9 (2010), and 8 (2011) sub-working groups established to consider the text of the draft report. The decision on how to divide the work of the Committee into sub-working groups rests with the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole, and is based on an assessment of the text to be reviewed and discussed by the membership. Although some sub-working groups deal with a specific thematic issue (e.g., peacebuilding, field support arrangements, etc.), others combine sections dealing with a range of themes, based on the volume of paragraphs to be reviewed.

The Special Committee’s annual session lasts for approximately four weeks, in recent years beginning in February, with the aim of adopting, by consensus, its annual report to the General Assembly in late March. Since 2007, the functions of the secretariat to the Committee are shared with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support providing substantive support, while the Disarmament and Peace Affairs Branch of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management provides the Secretary as well as technical and procedural support to the Committee.

During its first week of consultations, the plenary opens with the election of officers, the adoption of the agenda, and the organization of work. For the next two days, the General Debate takes place, in which the member states of the Committee present their prepared remarks. The debate is followed by two-to-three days of briefings to the Committee from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the

Department of Field Support, and other relevant parts of the Secretariat. The draft report is distributed at the end of the first week, based upon the text submissions of member states or blocs.

Week two is set aside for consultations within the member-state blocs. The second week offers member states an opportunity to review the report text and to consult with their capitals and each other. Weeks three and four are devoted to consideration of and negotiations over the draft report's conclusions and recommendations within the sub-working groups. The final day of week four should see the adoption of the report to the General Assembly. In 2011, the report was not adopted until 9 May.

## **Section II: Member-state Concerns Related to the Working Methods and Output of the C-34**

The research team heard a number of concerns related to the work of the C-34. The relevant concerns can be grouped into four distinct, but related areas: the Committee's agenda; the Committee's processes, including briefings, debate, and negotiations; the Committee's annual report; and the briefings and other support from the Secretariat. The following concerns are not to be interpreted as representing a consensus among the C-34 members. However, the views expressed in brief below were noted throughout several, if not all, consultations.

### Agenda

An increasing concern of C-34 members is that the peacekeeping agenda has become too broad to be considered comprehensively in all its aspects in one four-week session of the C-34. Member states feel that the broadening of the agenda may have led to a corresponding decrease in depth. That is to say, by attempting to consider every aspect of peacekeeping, no one aspect is given the proper amount of consideration it deserves. In particular, member states with fewer resources and smaller mission staffs find it increasingly difficult to keep informed of, let alone participate in, the discussions of all the sub-working groups during the negotiation process. Hence, one of the growing concerns among the membership is the issue of ownership over the content of the report. This situation has also contributed to concerns about the increasing length of the Committee's report, detailed below.

### Processes

The process by which the C-34 goes about its work could be improved. The working methods of the Committee have evolved at times during its history, and are now in need of further adjustment. In particular, the four-week period during which the Committee members meet to be briefed, debate, negotiate, and write a report could be used more efficiently. Member states, in general, do not feel that there is sufficient time to discuss the substance of issues, since only two of the four weeks are actually devoted to negotiating text. Others feel that they are not sufficiently prepared to begin formal negotiations at the outset of the session and could use more opportunities for informal discussion and preparation prior to the formal session.

## Report

The Committee's annual report is seen as an unwieldy and unclear document by many. Some expressed concerns about the overall length,<sup>1</sup> and others about vagueness in the language or a lack of clarity regarding the report's recommendations. Many question the utility and relevance of the report to the realities of peacekeeping in the field. A review of past reports revealed a heavy repetition of certain text from year-to-year, and a growing list of substantive issues due to the rapid expansion of the UN Peacekeeping agenda. In addition, many have found it a challenge to differentiate between operative and non-operative text in the report, as well as to understand which recommendations are intended for which actors.

## Secretariat Support

Member states agree that the number of requests they make to the Secretariat for briefings has grown precipitously over the past few years. In the past, requests for briefings by the negotiating groups were channeled through the Bureau, which helped to reduce duplication and avoid straining the capacity of the Secretariat. Despite an increase in the number of briefings, however, the quality of the briefings has remained steady or even improved. Yet, many believe there is a need for more detailed written materials to accompany the briefings, as many cannot attend all the briefings (especially those who are based in capital). The PowerPoint presentations that are often distributed are not perceived to be as informative as a more detailed, written briefing would be. A better system for compiling and disseminating the briefing information could help member states better prepare in advance of the C-34 session. Some Member States feel that, like the briefings, the addendum to the SG's report (the implementation matrix) is often vague and could be improved as a resource tool through the inclusion of more detailed information.

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<sup>1</sup> The length of the Committee's 2011 report was more than triple the size of the 10,700-word guideline for committee reports, as part of the reforms to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. For the past two years, the Secretariat has, with some difficulty, obtained a waiver to permit the publication of the C-34's report.

### **Section III: Member-state Options for Strengthening the C-34**

The following list of options for reforming the methods of the C-34 is not exhaustive of the range of possibilities; it represents the ideas that were consistently raised in consultations with member states. These options are meant to be considered separately, rather than as a package. A first set of ideas may be able to be quickly adopted in time for the 2012 session. Other ideas, listed in the second section, would likely need more time to be implemented, possibly for the 2013 session.

#### **A. Options for implementation prior to the 2012 Formal Session:**

##### ***(1) Standardize agreed-on parts of report in advance of session***

A popular option by which to make the Committee's agenda more manageable would be to identify and agree on standardized text for the paragraphs of the report that have not changed significantly from year to year (e.g., the peacekeeping principles, safety and security, conduct and discipline, cooperation with regional arrangements), thus reducing the total amount of text to be negotiated during the formal session.

##### ***(2) Streamline inputs for first draft of report***

Encourage the main negotiating partners, in coordination with the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole, to consolidate some inputs to the first report draft (i.e., combine very similar text inputs from two or more delegations). In this regard, delegations with very similar inputs would be asked to reach agreement and submit one version to the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole, thereby reducing the number of inputs that have to be reconciled during negotiations of the first draft. For comparison, a non-edited, comprehensive first draft – that would show all inputs received – would be available to the Working Group of the Whole as well. In case of disagreement between the negotiating partners on a paragraph, they can request the support of the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole to suggest an agreeable text.

Once the inputs of the first draft are compiled by the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole, the negotiating partners would refrain from adding text during the negotiation process.

##### ***(3) Reduce the number of sub-working groups***

There is keen interest among many delegations in reducing the number of sub-working groups. Fewer groups would enable missions to more easily cover the sub-working group discussions, which is particularly important when parallel discussions on different "high profile" issues are underway in different committees. It should be noted, however, that without narrowing the agenda somewhat, fewer sub-working groups will result in an increased work load for each group. This complication could be mitigated by standardizing some text in advance of the formal session (option 1), streamlining the inputs to the first draft (option 2), biennializing a few issues (option 7), or through prioritization of issues (option 8).

***(4) Within each section of the report, separate the “non-operative” paragraphs from the recommendations made and briefings requested***

In response to the request by delegations and the Secretariat for greater clarity, it should be possible to explicitly separate the “operative” text from the “non-operative” text of each section of the report. Thus, requests for briefings and recommendations would come at the end of each section and would clearly identify which recommendations are aimed at which actors. This could have the added benefit of making it easier for all parties to keep track of what has been requested, the status of implementation, and, potentially, any impact on the ground. It could also facilitate a better understanding of whether the number of briefings requested for the coming year is realistic and help ensure that the briefings are not duplicative.

***(5) Split the Committee’s output into two separate documents: a report with only commentary, and a resolution with only the operative recommendations***

Another option, in response to concerns about the overall length of the Committee’s report and the lack of clarity regarding the report’s recommendations, is to split the output of the Committee such that its recommendations would be expressed in a resolution of the Fourth Committee, while the report would contain the policy discussion. The resolution would, of course, make reference to the report. The use of both a report and a resolution would be similar to the process used by the GA’s Committee on Information.

***(6) Agree to an informal set of ground rules***

An informal set of ground rules among delegations would lay out the agreed-on deadlines and procedures for submitting text for consideration to the chair, and the process by which text is edited. This could also include any other outstanding issues to increase the transparency and impartiality of the work of the Committee by standardizing its procedures.

Ground rules could aim to streamline the report. Delegations would agree to exercise self-restraint in the submission of text. Moreover, to facilitate the negotiation process, each negotiating partner would identify a lead negotiator. The final agreement on text would be validated by only the lead negotiators. Another ground rule could be for delegations to refrain from asking for Secretariat briefings in the report, but rather to channel those requests through the Bureau before the opening of the formal session.

**B. Options for Implementation beyond 2012:**

***(7) Biennialize 2-4 issues***

Given the expanding range of issues considered by the C-34, it may also be possible for C-34 members to identify a few issues that would only be considered by the Committee every other year, rather than each year. It may be wise to start small and agree on two issues that would be taken up only in even years (2014, 2016, etc.), and another two issues that would be considered

only in odd years (2013, 2015, etc.).<sup>2</sup> This could apply to issues/paragraphs or to chapters of the report.

In addition, Committee members could have the option to call for biennialization of a particular issue if it is decided during the formal session that more than one year would be needed for the Secretariat to implement a particular recommendation and/or to assess the impact/effectiveness before that particular issue is again placed on the agenda of the Committee.

***(8) Prioritize a limited number of issues for discussion each year***

The Bureau could work with Committee members to prioritize four or five issues that would comprise the main agenda of that year's C-34 session and report. This would provide more time for substantive discussion and negotiation of the key issues, particularly those where there is no immediate consensus.

*N.B.:* Options 7 and 8 could help focus the agenda and report of the Committee. It will, however, be important to retain the flexibility of the Bureau to add a pressing issue to the agenda that might otherwise be delayed a year.

***(9) Eliminate formal briefings held during the first week of the substantive session***

Moving the briefings out of the first week of the Committee's agenda would provide more time for substantive discussion, and for intra- and inter-group consultations. As noted earlier, the briefings during the first week are sometimes a repeat of briefings previously given informally. Some member states, though, felt the formal briefings remained useful for delegations visiting from capitals, as it provided them the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the Secretariat. To ensure that member states – including representatives from capitals – receive sufficient information, some suggestions for improving the timeliness and relevance of the briefings are identified in Section IV of this paper.

***(10) Hold an informal C-34 preview meeting two-to-three months ahead of the session***

This option is intended to help delegations and the secretariat better prepare in advance of the formal session. It could enable member states to prioritize the issues for discussion in the formal session, or identify possible areas of consensus, as well as issues on which there are substantive differences. Or, this could allow the member states to begin discussions on the report structure. An informal "preview day" could also be an opportunity for the Secretariat to give an update on their implementation progress, and enable member states to prioritize requests for briefings and additional documentation prior to the start of the Committee's formal session. This option may require the Bureau/Secretariat to provide a more detailed program of work earlier in the year to include the preview meeting.

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<sup>2</sup> GA Resolution 65/315 "requests that the General Assembly and its Main Committees, at the sixty-sixth session, in consultation with Member States, continue consideration of and make proposals for the further biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items on the agenda of the Assembly." (para. 14)

#### **Section IV: Suggestions related to the Secretariat's Support to the C-34**

This final section includes some suggestions to the Secretariat intended to increase the timeliness, availability, and quality of the Secretariat briefings and other support to member states.

##### ***Briefings and related material:***

To ensure adequate time for the Secretariat to provide briefings on all of the topics requested by member states, more briefings could be spread throughout the year. As was started in 2011, these briefings could include making opportunistic use of visits to UNHQ by peacekeeping missions' leadership to provide an update on the situation in particular missions, outline challenges, and exchange views on areas of needed support or guidance from the C-34. Such meetings (in person or through VTC) could also provide useful input from the field on the use and relevance of the recommendations made in the Committee's previous report. The Committee might consider organizing field visits, as is the current practice of the Fifth Committee, the Peacebuilding Commission, and the Security Council.

PowerPoint slides distributed ahead of briefings, as well as the given titles of briefings, are sometimes seen as insufficiently informative, especially for those unable to attend a briefing. PowerPoint slides could be supplemented with more detailed notes, references, or other documentation as necessary. Titles of briefings should be as specific as possible. In addition, electronic access to the briefing materials on a centralized, web-based or other electronic platform would provide a reference library for member states and would enable capitals to be kept informed on a timelier basis. It could reduce the need to duplicate briefings. In general, the Secretariat should design its briefings to make them as informative, field-relevant and streamlined as possible.

##### ***Written Reporting:***

Due in part to the increased number of requests made to the Secretariat, as well as space restrictions for reporting, the implementation matrix submitted by DPKO/DFS is often composed of abbreviated text or text without much detail. Member states feel that better and more complete descriptions, possibly through an electronically-available online version that could be regularly updated throughout the year by the Secretariat, would improve the quality of information-sharing between the Secretariat and the Committee, and give the Committee a more comprehensive understanding of DPKO/DFS implementation progress. Member States continue to emphasize that every effort should be made to produce any required reporting, translated, more than 6 weeks ahead of the C-34 session. Six weeks gives delegations – and their capitals – ample time to review and process the Report of the Secretary-General and other documentation.

##### ***Programme of work:***

A Programme of Work containing a calendar of C-34 meetings and briefings should be prepared by the Secretariat and approved by the Bureau. The Programme could be prepared after the Fourth Committee debate on Peacekeeping in October, and should be updated regularly.