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## SRI LANKA

# After the war in Sri Lanka

Following the end of Sri Lanka's long war with separatist rebels, the United Nations has been at the forefront of international efforts to advocate the humane treatment and speedy resettlement of civilians uprooted by the conflict, as well as the adoption of policies to achieve political reconciliation as the basis for lasting peace and accountability for war-time atrocities.

These were among the key issues raised by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon when he traveled to Sri Lanka in the immediate aftermath of the fighting in May 2009 — the first international official to do so after the war. On a follow-up mission in September 2009, part of a steady stream of high-level visits, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe pressed urgently for progress.

*Families at a camp for internally displaced persons, northern Sri Lanka, September 2009.*

During a tour taken by Pascoe of the former conflict zones in the north, the wounds of the conflict were still visibly fresh. Cratered roads wound past shells of homes, churches and schools damaged or destroyed in years of fighting. Villages once teeming with farmers

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## Letter from the Under-Secretary-General



### Ten Keys to Transforming DPA

When Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed me to head the Department of Political Affairs, he presented the following challenge: At a time of overstretch and over-reliance on UN peacekeeping, how can the United Nations make better use of the political tools of diplomacy and mediation to reduce the massive cost of conflicts and their aftermath?



UN Photo

The Secretary-General's marching orders were simple. Be proactive. Get out in the field and try to solve problems before they spread. Do what it takes to transform the Department of Political Affairs into a more agile and effective option for crisis response.

Midway through the Secretary-General's term, I believe we have made substantial progress in realizing his vision of DPA as a more mobile and operational platform for conflict prevention, peace-making and post-conflict peacebuilding. With the support of Member States, DPA has embarked on a determined effort to reshape its structures, bolster its resource base, and change its institutional culture to be able to rise to the demands and expectations it faces.

#### Here are ten ways we are taking on that challenge:

**First**, by introducing greater regional diversity, operational skills and field experience into our professional ranks. These are the qualities the Department is emphasizing today as it recruits new staff, including the roughly 50 positions provided for by the General Assembly in response to the Secretary-General's requests for the strengthening of DPA.

**Secondly**, by instilling a stronger culture of action. Transforming a traditionally desk-bound and analytical organization into one that puts a premium on speed, prevention, and results in the field is a huge challenge, but DPA staff have enthusiastically embraced the concept and are responding effectively.

**Third**, by professionalizing our approach to mediation. The Mediation Support Unit (MSU) and its rapidly deployable Standby Team of Mediation Experts is working with DPA regional divisions to have a multiplier effect on the advice and support the Department can provide to UN and non-UN mediation initiatives.

**Fourth**, by viewing electoral assistance as another tool for conflict prevention. Elections can contribute to stability or become flashpoints for conflict, and thus managing the broader politics of elections can be just as important for Member States as receiving technical assistance. DPA has increasingly deployed high-level electoral missions to help increase confidence in election processes and peaceful acceptance of the results.

**Fifth**, by putting in place more flexible sources of funding for rapid response. Our efforts at early and effective mediation are only as good as our ability to mobilize human resources and to finance deployments. We are making the most out of regular budget allocations while increasingly tapping into more flexible voluntary funds. DPA is currently exploring the development of a Rapid Response Fund to ensure that we can react more quickly to demands for our services.

**Sixth**, through stronger management of field operations. DPA has greatly enhanced its backstop-ping and management of political missions under its purview, and is working closely with the new Department of Field Support to provide a level of assistance to the missions that simply was not possible in the past.

**Seventh**, through more effective partnerships with the UN system. The UN is a more potent actor on the ground when its political, human rights, humanitarian and development assistance work together behind a coherent strategy. Considerable work is underway, in particular, to strengthen and broaden the vital partnership between DPA and UNDP in the area of crisis prevention.

**Eighth**, through a focus on integration in peace-building. DPA-led peace building offices are being transformed into truly integrated operations that enjoin the entire set of UN actors into a more effective structure for helping countries emerge successfully from conflicts.

**Ninth**, through strengthened regional partnerships. Today, it is the rare exception for DPA to be involved in conflict prevention and resolution in the field and *not* be working closely with a regional or sub-regional organization. These organizations are increasingly at the forefront of peacemaking and preventive diplomacy in their neighborhoods, with the UN often playing a supporting role.

**Tenth**, by raising awareness among Member States of what a revitalized DPA has to offer within a broad menu of crisis response options, from peacemaking and prevention, to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Just as the problems we face are unique, so, too, should be the solutions applied.

Although the retooling of DPA remains a work in progress, the Department is already taking a more proactive approach in the field. A few recent examples are described in the pages of this newsletter — rapid response to the political crisis in Madagascar; a fact-finding inquiry to prevent conflict between Ghana and the Gambia; the contributions of our Mediation Support Unit to the negotiations on Cyprus; ground-breaking work on peace building in Sierra Leone, a proactive envoy's good offices to calm tensions in Lebanon. There have been numerous other examples over the past two years, from Kenya to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from Nepal to Somalia.

We look forward to continuing to work with Member States as this process moves forward. Reaching our goal will require time, patience, political commitment and further investments, but I am convinced that we are well on our way.



B. Lynn Pascoe  
Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs



# Sierra Leone: Getting Peace-building Right

After a previous assignment for the United Nations in Baghdad, Michael von der Schulenburg may have expected less stressful duties as the Secretary-General's senior envoy in Sierra Leone, a country now

youths from the country's main opposition party had taken refuge on a rooftop from an angry group of opponents on the street below. Schulenburg negotiated their safe passage through the crowd, and the youths all made it home safely that day, averting a bloodbath that

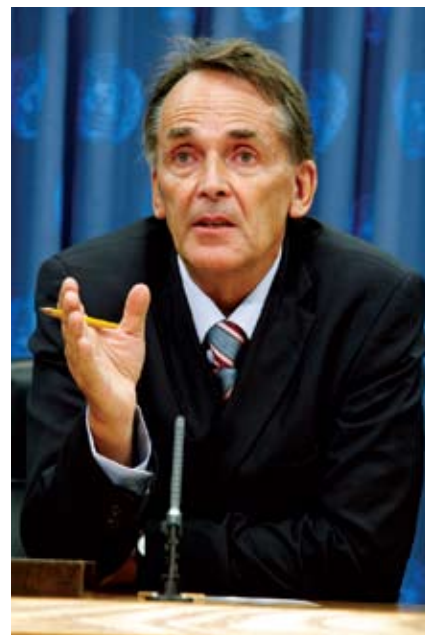
could have spiraled out of control. Talks mediated by Schulenburg in the days that followed put an end to the worst eruption of political violence in the country since the war ended in 2002. Sierra Leone's main political parties signed a Joint Communiqué in which they agreed to prevent any further violence by their supporters and recommitted themselves to moving forward in peace.

*Building a professional civilian police is one of the many challenges of peace-building in Sierra Leone.*

seven years removed from the end of its civil war.

Yet there he was, one day last March, rushing from UN offices in Freetown to a tense scene across the city as an outbreak of political violence threatened to escalate. A frightened group of

Putting out the political embers still smoldering in Sierra Leone is only part of the challenge facing the United Nations today in helping to build peace in the aftermath of one of Africa's ugliest civil wars. As host to one of a new wave of fully "integrated" United Nations



*Michael von der Schulenburg briefs the press in New York.*

UN Photo

peace-building operations, the country has become a laboratory of sorts for the Organization as it seeks to more effectively help countries rebuild after conflict.

"I was sent here to help develop a strategy for what peace-building really means in practice," said Schulenburg. His efforts are blazing the trail for others.

Since establishing the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Support Office for Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) in October 2008 under the supervision of the Department of Political Affairs, the Security Council has moved to make similar transitions in other UN peace-building operations. BONUCA in the Central African Republic and UNOGBIS in Guinea-Bissau are slated to become "integrated" peacebuilding offices by January 2010. Also shifting to DPA supervision in 2010 is the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, BINUB, whose successful



*Sierra Leone's president and main political party leaders celebrate signing a Joint Communiqué ending political violence in March 2009.*

*Photo: UNIPSIL*

efforts to date have been led by UN Executive Representative Youssef Mahmoud.

The effect of the integration process in UNIPSIL is immediately visible at the top, where Schulenburg wears three hats at once. He is the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, the UNDP Resident Representative and the United Nations Resident Coordinator.

Joining functions in this way, is intended to help the UN truly “deliver as one”, making it easier to avoid the lack of coordination and the dispersion of efforts that have diminished the potential of UN peacebuilding efforts in the past. This is particularly important for the country as it now seeks greater harmonization and coordination of international assistance to Sierra Leone, in accordance with the Paris declaration on aid effectiveness.

The change is one of philosophy, as well. Whereas some may see peace-building as a largely

developmental concern, it is now being better understood as a part and parcel of a broader political process. “Peacebuilding is nothing other than development with a political agenda,” says Schulenburg.

A first achievement of integration in Sierra Leone came in May of this year with the adoption of a unified UN strategy known as the Joint Vision for the United Nations system in Sierra Leone. The 60-page document was hashed out over months of difficult discussions in both Sierra Leone and New York. Schulenburg says he had to overcome well-worn tendencies of the various parts of the UN system to establish priorities independently of one another.

The joint vision statement is a huge step forward in that regard. It sets post-conflict peacebuilding as the overarching goal for UN assistance and establishes

common priorities, benchmarks and programs. Funding is to be pooled in a multi-donor trust fund. Most importantly, says Schulenburg, the vision statement aligns UN assistances behind an Agenda for Change established by the government of Sierra Leone, focusing on critical problems such as rampant youth unemployment, failing public services, drug trafficking and corruption. A three-year horizon for priority action is intended to help Sierra Leone make it peacefully through its critical 2012 elections.

“We need to build effective institutions over the long term, but peace dividends must come much sooner than that,” says Schulenburg.

The drive for greater cohesion also encompasses key players in the UN’s evolving peacebuilding architecture. UNIPSIL is working closely in this regard with the

United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, which adopted Sierra Leone as one of the first cases on its agenda. Its Special session in June marked a new beginning of a relationship between the Peacebuilding Commissions and

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# After the war in Sri Lanka

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and fishermen and their families appeared eerily devoid of life. Rice paddies stretching for miles in every direction lay barren and untilled just weeks ahead of the seasonal monsoons.

## DELAYS IN RESETTLEMENT

Government public works projects had begun in some places and crews from the military and international NGOs were busy clearing mines from the fields. But restoring the vibrancy of the region would depend ultimately on the return of the people who call it their home. At the time of USG Pascoe's visit, more than a quarter of a million of them, mostly Tamils who once lived under the yoke of the LTTE, had been languishing for months inside government-run camps ringed by barbed wire and guarded by soldiers. Their

resettlement was moving excruciatingly slowly, due in large part to an army screening operation intended to weed out rebels from the general population.

A military logic was driving this "closed camps" policy, and Pascoe acknowledged that the government had legitimate security concerns. Officials were fearful of giving the LTTE even the smallest chance to regroup at a time when rebel arms caches were still reportedly being discovered. But as Pascoe pointed out in his conversations with authorities, the political effects of the policy could be disastrous for reconciliation in Sri Lanka if not phased out quickly and balanced by a conscious effort to

**The political effects of the policy could be disastrous for reconciliation in Sri Lanka if not phased out quickly and balanced by a conscious effort to treat the displaced population with dignity and respect for its basic rights.**

treat the displaced population with dignity and respect for its basic rights. Not long after his visit, two children were shot and wounded during a clash between restless residents and guards in one of the camps. "At a time when winning hearts and minds should be paramount, the men, women and chil-

dren I spoke with in the camps expressed mostly their growing anger and resentment," Pascoe told a press conference in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo. "All they want is to go home," he said.

As the Under-Secretary-General prepared to depart Sri Lanka, President Mahinda Rajapaksa

announced his government would accelerate the process of resettlement, moving everyone back home by the end of January.

"This is an ambitious but encouraging goal that we hope can be realized in the months ahead,"

said Pascoe. His visit was followed by those of Walter Keilin, the Secretary-General's Representative on the Rights of IDPs, and UN Humanitarian chief John Holmes, who confirmed in November the release of about half of the IDPs from camps.

## LONGER RUN ISSUES

In the long-run, prospects for a peaceful future for Sri Lanka also hinge on the success of broader efforts at political outreach, a point USG Pascoe also emphasized in his



*Sri Lankan soldier using remote controlled vehicles to clear landmines.*

discussions. “The war is over, but there must still be a fair political accommodation with Tamils and other minorities whose grievances and aspirations may have been hijacked by the LTTE, but have not gone away or lost their legitimacy,” he said.

President Rajapaksa and Tamil politicians with whom Pascoe spoke in Colombo both indicated a willingness to begin that process, and he encouraged them to do so without delay. “A military solution without addressing the underlying political roots of the war is a potential recipe for future conflict,” he said.

The United Nations is also encouraging Sri Lanka to launch a serious effort to address the many allegations of grave human rights abuses by both sides during

the conflict. Calls have emerged for an international inquiry. Pascoe said Sri Lanka should take the initiative towards establishing a process that is both credible and impartial. In a brutal

conflict that spanned nearly three decades, there is blame on all sides. “Sweeping this issue under the rug would undermine the future of Sri Lankan democracy,” he said.

*Under-Secretary-General B. Lynn Pascoe visiting Sri Lankan war refugees, September 2009.*



## Sierra-Leone: Getting Peacebuilding Right

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UNIPSIL. Member states agreed to rally behind the Government's Agenda for Change as the only strategic framework for Sierra Leone's development. The Special Session also endorsed the Joint Communiqué as well as the Joint UN Vision, and launched the Multi-donor Trust Fund — all important steps for an effective peacebuilding process.

The shift from peacekeeping to peacebuilding has been underway for several years, and has meant a huge reduction in the UN

footprint in the country. Whereas nearly 20,000 peacekeepers were once deployed to Sierra Leone, UNIPSIL operates today with a lean civilian staff of just 70.

The events of last March showed the value of even a small office, with a combined political and developmental mandate. The UN-brokered Joint Communiqué did more than just end the immediate political violence. It set out a longer-term agenda of state-building to which UN agencies can gear their assistance.

Even with a revamped UN structure on the ground, peacebuilding in a country such as Sierra Leone remains an uphill task. Despite progress, Schulenburg sees ethnic fissures

widening in the country, and is concerned that West Africa's drug trade could fuel new conflicts in the way that “blood diamonds” did in the past. Research has shown that half of all countries coming out of civil wars slide back into conflict within the first decade.

“If we succeed in Sierra Leone it would provide a powerful message that even one of the poorest countries in world, a country that has gone through eleven years of an exceptionally brutal civil war can build a functioning democratic state,” Schulenburg told the UN Security Council in September. “Sierra Leone is on the way to present us with such a success story. Let's not miss this chance,” he added.



## Reviving Momentum in Nepal's Peace Process

Nepal's peace process got off to fast start after the signing of a 2006 peace agreement. Three years later, the process has bogged down, and the United Nations is doing its best to help rekindle the lost momentum.

Leading the UN's efforts in Kathmandu is Karin Landgren, the Representative of the Secretary-General in Nepal and head of the United Nations political mission in the country, UNMIN. She discussed the state of the peace process with *Politically Speaking* at the beginning of November after delivering a sobering briefing to the Security Council in which she spoke of "protracted" political deadlock and the dangers of renewed confrontation in the country.

Today's tone of concern contrasts with the optimism expressed

not long ago. After a conflict that killed some 16,000 people, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of November 2006 promised to usher in a "new Nepal". The monarchy was replaced with a republican government and in April 2008 Nepalis elected a diverse assembly to draft a more inclusive and democratic constitution. UNMIN provided electoral assistance and its presence around the country helped build confidence in the process. But trust between the party of the former Maoist insurgents and Nepal's other major political parties soon dissipated, and key provisions of the peace process have gone unfulfilled as a result.



*Karin Landgren, Representative of the Secretary-General in Nepal, briefs the press in New York.*

UN Photo

Chief among these is the question of the future of the Maoist army personnel. Both sides agreed they would be temporarily cantoned, but the CPA was vague as to long term solutions. As a result, three years after the end of the conflict, some 19,000 Maoist army personnel remain in camps around the country, and discussions over their future rehabilitation or integration into the security forces, have proceeded too slowly. This, and the continued confinement to barracks of the Nepal Army, need to be addressed at the soonest, and with consensus among the parties, says Landgren.

UNMIN has provided some technical assistance and advice at the request of the parties and its arms monitors remain stationed at cantonment sites around the country. The reconstitution of a high-level committee on the supervision, integration and rehabilitation of Maoist army personnel is an encouraging sign, said Landgren. "As long as there are still two armies in Nepal, the peace process will not have been brought to an end. This is a very central part to achieving a sustainable peace," she added.

### A NEW CONSTITUTION

Another key step is the writing of the Constitution. Position papers have been working their way slowly through committees, but high-level negotiations have yet to take place. Although Nepal's political leaders have shown an



*Women participated enthusiastically in Nepal's Constituent Assembly election in April 2008.*

UNMIN Photo





*Nepal's  
Constituent  
Assembly  
in session.*

UNMIN  
Photo

ability to reach last minute agreements, Landgren says observers are increasingly pessimistic about the prospects for a new constitution by the May 2010 deadline established in the CPA. While Nepalis are grateful that the war is over, she said, they have yet to see other tangible dividends of peace.

The current political crisis reflects continued mistrust and deterioration of relations among the major parties linked to the circumstances of the resignation in May 2009 of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the Maoist leader also known as “Prachanda”. The Maoist party, the UCPN-M, have since blocked the functioning of the parliament and taken their protests to the streets. While other major parties question the Maoists’ commitment to democracy, the Maoists counter that Nepal’s traditional political parties are unwilling to carry out the deeper social and economic transformations called for in the peace agreements.

*UN arms  
monitors are  
stationed in  
cantonment  
sites around  
the country.*

UNMIN Photo

“There is an urgent need to de-escalate the tensions and to find a framework for taking the peace process forward,” Landgren told the Security Council.

UNMIN’s quiet diplomacy has been sustained over a period of time to support the nationally-driven peace process. The Security Council has called on the Government and the parties to work together in the spirit of compromise in order to implement the CPA and carry forward the peace process.

“What we try to do is to find places of commonality. We find

one party or another saying the same thing to us and we emphasize that fact and encourage them to build upon it. The difficulty comes when there are very rigid positions and irreconcilable demands,” says Landgren.

## REVIVING TRUST

The parties can do more themselves, she argues, to revive trust and momentum in the peace process. Rather than lurch from crisis to crisis through “ad hoc” eleventh-hour solutions to problems, UNMIN has urged them to establish a more routine mechanism for dialogue and negotiation.

The mission will continue under its mandate to do the best it can to encourage cooperation and progress between the parties, mindful, as Landgren puts it, that “resolving things” is in their hands alone. “We have always made scrupulously clear that this is a Nepali-led and run peace process,” she said.





# Cyprus: a Political Challenge

**T**he Cyprus question has confounded diplomats for decades. More than a year into a new UN-backed effort to reunify the island, hopes for a settlement are riding on the ability of two politicians — Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and his Turkish Cypriot counterpart, Mehmet Ali Talat — to find a “win-win” solution that their constituencies can embrace.

A third politician, UN Special Adviser Alexander Downer, is trying to help them get there. Downer, a former Australian foreign minister, party leader and parliamentarian, is bringing a seasoned politician’s

sensibilities to the job of assisting the negotiations.

“I spend a lot of time dealing with people in the diplomatic community and I explain to them that this is not a diplomatic problem, it is a political problem,” he said. “The issues that divide Cypriots are intensely political issues, and the solution here is going to be a solution negotiated between politicians. It has to be a solution that meets the appropriate political benchmarks of being publicly understood, publicly saleable and publicly acceptable.”

**“The issues that divide Cypriots are intensely political issues, and the solution here is going to be a solution negotiated between politicians.”**

## SECOND PHASE OF TALKS

Downer discussed the state of the talks with *Politically Speaking* at the beginning of October 2009, as the two Cypriot leaders began a stepped-up phase of the negotiations. While “cautiously optimistic” about a settlement this time, he is also mindful of the challenges and the disappointments of the past.

The last attempt at reunification ended unsuccessfully in 2004, when a UN-arbitrated plan was accepted by Turkish Cypriot voters but rejected by Greek Cypriots in referenda. A UN peacekeeping mission, UNFICYP, has been stationed since 1974 in the buffer zone between the North and the South.

## CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM

Talks were re-launched under

UN auspices in September of 2008 in the wake of the election in the South of Mr. Christofias, a pro-settlement politician and longtime friend of Mr. Talat. The two met face-to-face more than 40 times during the first year of the talks in an environment Downer described as friendly and informal.

“Here we have two leaders who want an agreement and have dedicated their political careers to achieving an agreement, and



*Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias (left) and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat (right) meeting under UN auspices on Cyprus.*

*UNFICYP  
Photo*





*Secretary-General's Special Adviser Alexander Downer (center left) and UNFICYP chief Tayé-Brook Zerihoun (center right) look on as the two leaders engage in discussion.*

UNFICYP Photo

After decades of division, Cypriots in both the North and the South each have compelling economic and political reasons to reach a settlement. Equally important, says Downer is the emotional factor of wanting to see their homeland reunited.

"That may sound a bit unconvincing to some, but for most of its history Cyprus has been a united island and

so people who are Cypriot feel very strongly about the fact that their island is now divided," he added.

## BENEFITS TO SETTLEMENT

Downer says failure to reach an agreement would prolong an undesirable status quo — or worse. But he is also careful to stress the positive rather than paint doomsday scenarios.

Sensitivities on the island run high, meaning the United Nations must walk a careful line in trying to be helpful in the talks without being overbearing.

Cypriots must design their own solution. "We can come up with ideas which they can take or leave, but not impose ideas

upon them," said Downer. "You cannot just force people into an agreement if they don't want to make one."



*Alexander Downer briefs the press in New York.*

UN Photo

that's very important," he said. "Secondly, the issues are difficult but they are not beyond the capacity of the two sides to resolve. That's why I am cautiously optimistic."

Downer described "good progress" during the first year of talks, while acknowledging that the two sides had focused first on clearing away the least contentious issues on the agenda.

The end goal of the talks has been agreed between the parties and endorsed by the Security Council: a bizonal, bi-communal federation, with political equality and a single international personality.

## PROGRESS THUS FAR

At this writing, Downer said the two sides had agreed on issues such as the structure of the federal government, the functioning of the parliament and judiciary, the powers of the president and

the notion of a presidency that rotates between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. How the president would be elected was still being discussed.

Among the toughest matters still to be resolved, said Downer, was the complex issue of

"property". He was referring to the large number of property claims held mainly by Greek Cypriots who fled to the South after the Turkish army occupied the northern part of the Island in 1974. "That is very difficult negotiation, a very complex legal and economic question," he said.

Other "big questions" still outstanding between the parties, said Downer, include the drawing of the boundary between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot constituent states.

**The United Nations must walk a careful line in trying to be helpful in the talks without being overbearing.**

# Nurturing Peace in Lebanon

This past summer, as Lebanon and Israel neared the three-year anniversary of their devastating 2006 war, the explosion of a large Hezbollah arms depot placed in stark relief one of the serious challenges still faced by the United Nations as it tries to nurse a fragile cease-fire into an enduring peace in one of the most historically volatile hotspots in the Middle East.

The blast in a southern Lebanese town was still reverberating weeks later, when *Politically Speaking* caught up by phone to Beirut with Michael Williams, the UN's senior political envoy for Lebanon.



*Michael Williams briefs the press in New York.*

Maj. General Claudio Graziano, to lower the temperatures on both sides of the border.

Over the weeks and months that followed, national attention shifted to protected efforts to form a national unity government following successful parliamentary elections. Williams was again active in trying to encourage Lebanon's leaders to set aside parochial interests and come to agreements that would allow the country to move forward. Emerging from a September meeting

with the Speaker of Lebanon's parliament, he issued an impassioned plea for unity.

"Democracy needs compromise," said Williams. "Lebanon must not return to the old days of polarization and crisis." The government was finally formed in November 2009.

## UN INVOLVEMENT

Lebanon has a long history of UN involvement, dating back to its 1975-1990 civil war. In a country where even street vendors and taxi drivers can rattle off the numbers of UN Security Council resolutions, Williams said giving "political care and attention to 1701" — the resolution that ended the 2006 conflict with Israel — is his number one responsibility as United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and head of the Beirut based political office, UNSCOL.

"That means engaging with all Lebanese parties, including Hezbollah, and with neighboring countries, especially Israel and in some aspects Syria," he said.

It also means providing political direction and coordination to a diverse and longstanding UN

## CRISIS MODE

Williams had been in crisis mode since news broke of the explosion, holding urgent discussions with leaders from across Lebanon's fractured political spectrum and also shuttling to Israel for talks. He worked closely with the commander of the UN peacekeeping force in the South,

*Special Coordinator Michael Williams visiting a reconstruction project in southern Lebanon.*

UNSCOL Photo





presence in Lebanon spanning political, peacekeeping, developmental and humanitarian concerns.

UNSCOL works closely with UNIFIL, whose mandate and force strength was greatly expanded following the 2006 war, particularly in helping Lebanon's national army extend its authority into the areas of the South traditionally dominated by Hezbollah.

### TERRITORIAL ISSUES

The office is also providing proposals for resolving territorial disputes that continue to cause tension. In his reports to the Security Council on the implementation of 1701, Williams has pointed with frustration to the failure of Lebanon, Israel and Syria to respond to a UN cartographer's findings on the long-disputed Shebaa farms region. He has called on Israel repeatedly to withdraw troops that have remained since 2006 in the northern part of the Lebanese village of Ghajar.

In both its combustible fusion of religion with politics and the internationalization of internal divisions, Williams, who is British, sees in Lebanon parallels both to Northern Ireland and to the Balkans, where he served the United Nations during the 1990s.

"Countries have long seen it in their interest to interfere in



*UN peacekeeper patrols the blue line dividing Lebanon and Israel.*

UNIFIL Photo

the former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. A team of UN border management experts working through UNSCOL has provided advice on better management of Lebanon's borders.

The disarmament of Hezbollah as well as Palestinian militias in Lebanon can only be resolved through national dialogue, says Williams. He finds hopeful examples in the dissolution of Protestant and Catholic militias as part of the peace process in Northern Ireland. "This will take time in Lebanon, but I am guardedly optimistic we can resolve that problem in the coming years," he said.

### REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

Williams also finds comfort in the fact that peace along the border with Israel has withstood numerous tests since 2006, from the war in Gaza, to the July arms depot explosion, to periodic bouts of rocket fire into Israel and the constant irritant of Israeli overflights of the South.

"Despite the fears and the strong feelings that exist, both countries have seen it in their interests to remain committed to 1701. There's real hope for the future provided they take it forward and implement its remaining aspects," he said.

Lebanon and have been drawn in to support one party or faction inside the country, sometimes with calamitous results. It's a push-pull situation," he said.

Indeed, one of the key objectives of UN resolutions on Lebanon is to help the Lebanese cast off this heavy legacy of foreign interference.

On the Syrian front, there has been progress of late. Williams welcomed the recent opening of Syrian and Lebanese

embassies in each other's respective capitals. This follows the withdrawal of Syrian troops in the wake of demonstrations and a strong international outcry following the 2005 assassination of

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**One of the key objectives of UN resolutions on Lebanon is to help the Lebanese cast off this heavy legacy of foreign interference.**

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# Preventing Conflict between Ghana and the Gambia

When the West African countries of Ghana and the Gambia came together in 2009 to peacefully resolve a long simmering dispute, it capped a multi-year effort at conflict prevention by the United Nations in partnership with a regional organi-

Gambian complicity and cover-up, setting off mutual recriminations.

Even the most basic of facts were in dispute in the case, which became a hot-button political issue in both countries. Under encouragement to prevent the tensions from escalating, the two govern-

August 2008 under the leadership of a former Jamaican Ambassador to the United Nations, Curtis Ward, and including well-regarded jurists, Justice Albert J. Redhead of Antigua and Barbuda and Justice Ariranga G. Pillay of Mauritius. Working out of ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja, the team carried out field research in both countries and delivered its report to both organizations in April 2009.

## FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

In Accra, the Ghanaian capital, the Team held hearings involving witnesses, family members of the victims and human rights organizations who championed the case. In Gambia, the Team interviewed security officials, and traveled to the site where the bodies were discovered outside “Ghana Town”, a half-century-old settlement of some 6,000 Ghanaians in the Gambia.

Four years after the deaths and disappearances, the facts could only be partially ascertained. In its report, delivered first to the

United Nations and ECOWAS, the Fact-Find Team concluded that the victims had been part of a group of as many as 56 West Africans, some 40 of them Ghanaians, who had fallen prey to a scam in which they paid for passage on a non-existent ship to Europe. The group set off by canoe on 22 July 2005 from a port in Senegal with assurances that they would be meeting up with a larger vessel in the waters off



*President of Ghana, John Evans Atta Mills (left) and President of the Gambia, Al Hadji Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, addressing the UN General Assembly in September 2009.*

UN Photo

zation, the Economic Community of West African States.

Traditionally friendly relations between the two countries had turned tense and ugly following the discovery in the Gambia during the summer of 2005 of the bodies of eight Ghanaians who had gone missing while trying to migrate to Europe by sea. The deaths provoked outrage in Ghana along with accusations of

ments agreed in late-2007 to begin working peacefully towards a resolution. They invited the United Nations and ECOWAS to set up a joint fact-finding inquiry into the “causes and circumstances” of the deaths.

## TEAM ESTABLISHED

With DPA leading the UN response, the three-member Fact-Finding Team was established in



the Gambia. Instead, they were dropped on a remote shore of the Gambia, and most have not been heard from since.

What happened on the Gambian side remains somewhat a mystery. The Fact-Finding Team found evidence that the group was separated upon arrival and at least some were eventually detained by different branches of the security forces and local police. They concluded rogue members of the Gambian security forces, “acting on their own”, were probably responsible for the deaths and disappearances. Exactly how and why that happened was not elucidated in the report, and the fate of many of the original group of seafarers remains unknown.

## STATE RESPONSIBILITY

In a key determination of the inquiry, the Team found no credible evidence to suggest that Gambian security force members who allegedly took part in the deaths and disappearances were acting on orders from superiors. Nonetheless, the report still found that the Gambia bore state responsibility for failing to guarantee the human rights of the persons killed or disappeared on its territory. It recommended the Gambian government provide compensation to the families of victims and work with Ghana

to ensure the exhumation and identification of the bodies and their repatriation for proper burial back home in Ghana. The Team also called for stepped-up efforts throughout the ECOWAS region to cooperate in curbing

the increasingly deadly trafficking in illegal migrants in West Africa.

With the UN-ECOWAS Fact-Finding report as the basis, the two countries, met on the sidelines of the July

2009 African Union Summit in Libya to sign an agreement to peacefully put the controversy behind them. They accepted the findings of the report, and agreed on monetary payments by the Gambia as a “humanitarian gesture” to the families of the victims whose bodies had been found. The two sides also agreed to cooperate

in the pursuit of arrests and prosecutions of those responsible for the killings and to work together to determine the fate of those still missing. The bodies of eight victims were repatriated to Ghana in September 2009.

## CONFLICT AVOIDED

Officials involved in the negotiations and the mounting of the fact-finding mission, expressed relief that an amicable solution had been found. “While it may never have deteriorated into deadly conflict between the countries, the dispute between Ghana and the Gambia was serious — an unwelcome source of added stress in a

West African region with sufficient tensions and problems to begin with,” said Sammy Buo, Director of DPA’s Africa II Division.

“This case shows we can work creatively with our regional partners to find solutions to problems before they escalate.”



*Ghanaian fishermen mending their nets.*

*World Bank Photo*

# Mediation in Madagascar: Crisis and Transition

Mediating a solution to the latest political crisis in the turbulent Indian Ocean nation of Madagascar has been a major challenge for the region and the international community. The United Nations has worked closely with regional organizations to promote a return to constitutional order and a path toward longer term stability in the country.

Agreements signed in Maputo, Mozambique in August 2009 under the joint auspices of the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the United Nations and the International Organization of the

*Madagascar parties and international mediators in talks in Maputo, August 2009.*

*Photos: Mozambique News Agency*

Francophonie, establish a roadmap for a peaceful, democratic transition in Madagascar — but one that will need to be nurtured along the way.

## CRITICAL TRANSITION

“If we want to end instability in Madagascar over the long haul we have to make sure this transition succeeds,” said Tiébilé Dramé, the UN’s senior envoy to the talks.

A former foreign minister and politician from Mali, Dramé was brought on board to lead UN mediation efforts on Madagascar in March 2009, following an initial crisis response effort led by the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Haile Menkerios.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon dispatched Menkerios urgently to Madagascar in February in an effort to defuse tensions and kickstart dialogue between then-president Marc Ravalomanana and Antananarivo mayor Andry Rajoelina, after street protests boiled over into violence that left more than a hundred people dead.

UN follow-on mediation efforts led by Dramé, with assistance from DPA and its Mediation Support Unit, initially focused on providing support and advice to a national mediation initiative

of Madagascar’s National Council of Christian Churches. The March coup ousting Ravalomana changed the scenario, forcing a reframing of regional and international

efforts. Against the backdrop of measures such as the suspension of Madagascar from both the African Union and SADC, a four-way Mediation Team comprising the United Nations, AU,

**“If we want to end instability in Madagascar over the long haul we have to make sure this transition succeeds.”**





*Street protests  
boiled over into  
violence in early 2009.*

SADC, and the OIF was established in July under the leadership of former Mozambique president Joaquim Chissano.

The agreements signed in Maputo on 9 August by Rajoelina, Ravalomanana and former presidents Didier Ratsiraka and Albert Zafy, were a major breakthrough. The accords bring the key power brokers and potential spoilers into a unified plan to address not only the immediate crisis, but to set the country onto a more stable path in the long term. Mediation efforts over the months that followed focused on the composition of the transitional government to be tasked with organizing new elections and establishing other key institutions over a 15-month timeline agreed to in Maputo.

## ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT

In Dramé's opinion, the National Reconciliation Council envisioned in the accords is "the key institution of the transition" given its mandate to delve into the root causes of Madagascar's chronic instability. The Council is tasked with organizing regional and national reconciliation conferences and reviewing existing legislation with



an eye to "rebuild the Republic". The Council will also prepare the groundwork for the writing of a new constitution. It is the only body set up in the Maputo accords to address the need for transitional justice.



*UN special adviser Tiébilé Dramé during talks in Madagascar.*

This year's upheavals are only the latest such episode in a country that has known little stability since independence from France in 1960. "Seven out of eight of the country's presidents have been ousted, one of whom was assassinated, since 1972, and the president elected that year with 90% of the vote was still kicked out of office,"

said Dramé.

Along with constitutional and electoral reform, Dramé says it will be critical to reform the country's security forces and political

parties, as well as to bridge deep social inequalities.

"If every time there is a political dispute it is resolved in the streets this shows a lack of democratic avenues through institutions," he said.

International assistance will be needed to help monitor and implement the agreements. Dramé sees a likely role for the United Nations, particularly in areas such as electoral assistance and development funding. "The quality of the transition will depend on the support it receives, and the people of Madagascar are expecting a lot from the international community in this regard," he said.

While there had been no further bloodshed since the spring, demonstrations and tensions on the streets continued, underscoring the importance of pressing ahead quickly with the transition. "Although the violence ended in April 2009, this does not mean things are stable. There is still a lot of potential for violence in Madagascar," said Dramé.

# Conflict Mediation by the United Nations: Examining the Past, Charting the Future

As efforts continue to strengthen the capacity of the Department of Political Affairs, increased attention is being devoted to mediation as one of the most promising tools at the disposal of the United Nations for conflict prevention and resolution in the field.

A major report released during 2009 shows the Organization is determined to move forward in this field based on a thorough assessment of decades of UN experience in mediation. The *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing Mediation and its Support Activities* (S/2009/189) was presented in April 2009 in response to a request from the Security Council. It constitutes the most detailed examination to date by the United Nations of lessons learned from its previous mediation experiences, and contains recommendation that should be of interest to Member States, regional organizations and other UN partners in the field.

## KEY FINDINGS

A number of key findings stand out: the importance of early engagement by the UN and its envoys at the first signs of problems, before crises escalate and become harder to resolve; the need to apply leverage, to neutralize spoilers, ripen situations,

manage the tensions between peace and the pursuit of justice, and pursue solutions that address the root causes of conflicts. While taking on these perennial themes in mediation literature and practice, much of the report also speaks to the “nuts and bolts” of organizing effective negotiations in the field — the value of systematic planning in order to effectively structure, staff and resource successful talks; the role of experts in infusing a mediating process

with ideas and comparative experiences that can help parties to bridge differences; and the need for readily available resources that can be tapped to quickly start up a mediation process.

## REGIONAL DIMENSION

The importance of a regional and sub-regional approach to conflicts, and of building partnerships with regional organizations, is also a major emphasis of the

## Mediation “Standby Team” completes pilot phase

Ensuring that the right expertise can be swiftly dispatched to respond to crises in the field has been a critical challenge in peacemaking efforts. The United Nations’ ability to do so has been greatly enhanced since the establishment of DPA’s Standby Team of Mediation Experts, which in mid-2009 completed its initial 15-month pilot phase of operations. While recruiting a new group of experts to compose the team during the next phase, the Department used the transition period to take stock of the experience to date and work to maximize the effectiveness of this tool in the future.

Addressing an event at UN headquarters in June 2009 marking the completion of the pilot phase, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios,

said the Standby-Team had become a “unique and valued tool in our peacemaking toolkit.” He thanked the Government of Norway for its generous seed funding for the project, which has permitted rapid deployment of expertise to the field on a wide range of issues that frequently arise in peace talks, including security arrangements, power-sharing, the management of natural resources, human rights and transitional justices, as well as constitutional issues.

During the first year of operations alone, the six-person team assisted mediation efforts for Kenya, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Cyprus, Iraq, Madagascar, Nepal and Somalia and also facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The Standby Team serves not only UN political envoys but



report. Regional organizations are increasingly at the forefront of conflict prevention and resolution on the ground, with the UN often playing a supportive role in providing mediation support at their request. Among many examples provided in the report, the United Nations has worked in close partnership with the African Union, ECOWAS and SADC in mediation efforts in Sudan, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Madagascar, Guinea, and Burundi. In Europe, significant strides were made in developing mediation partnerships with the Europe Union, including the Commission, at a time when the EU is looking to develop its own mediation structure.

As the report makes clear, UN mediation needs to be

also peacekeeping missions, UN resident Coordinators and regional organizations such as the African Union. Demand for its services is expected to continue to grow as the Team becomes better known as a peacemaking resource.

The Standby Team is just one item on a comprehensive menu of mediation support sources being provided by DPA's Mediation Support Unit. MSU staff work closely with DPA's regional divisions to assist in the operational planning, support and coordination of mediation efforts; in conducting training and capacity building with counterparts; in carrying out assessments and evaluations; and in developing policy guidance, lessons learned and mediation best practices to guide future efforts.



*Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, arriving for peace talks in November 2008 in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

UN Photo

professionalized in important ways. The UN needs better training and career development in order to prepare a "new generation" of UN mediators from within its ranks. Far greater efforts are also in order to increase the numbers of women in leadership roles in UN mediation efforts, as the Security Council has also requested. "Too often in the past, mediators have been dispatched without the full benefit of specialized training and background information, giving United Nations efforts an ad hoc quality too dependent on trial and error," the report frankly states.

### APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

In presenting the report to the Security Council, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe described strong efforts underway to remedy shortcoming. He appealed for Member State political and financial support in making needed enhancements. He noted that the United Nations' ability

to deliver faster and more reliable peacemaking support tremendously improved since the setting up of a Mediation Support Unit in 2007, the subsequent launch of DPA's Standby Team of Mediation Experts [see box] and the establishment of a small mediation start-up budget, funded by donors.

Mediation can provide a cost-effective alternative at a time when peacekeeping resources are facing an unprecedented demand and available military capacities are scarce. "A United Nations more effective in the practice of mediation will be more adept both at heading off conflicts before they become full-blown crises and at bringing such crises to a peaceful and lasting end before it is necessary to resort to peacekeeping", Pascoe told the Security Council.

*The April 2009 Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing Mediation and its Support Activities can be found online at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/docs/S-2009-189.pdf>*

## Counter-Terrorism: a New Office in DPA

The adoption in 2006 of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was a major milestone for the Organization, a sign that Member States were moving beyond the stale debates of past and towards a sense of common purpose in defeating a global threat.

an increasingly important contribution to the collective efforts of more than two dozen UN entities in the fight against terrorism.

The establishment of the office in June 2009 comes in response to General Assembly Resolution 62/272 of 5 September 2008, calling for the institutionaliza-

“Understanding terrorism’s spread and its repercussions requires a grasp of local, regional and global political dynamics that DPA can consistently provide,” said Laborde. “DPA is also closely connected to the Secretary-General, which sends a strong message that implementing the strategy remains one of his top priorities.”

In addition to hosting the new office, one of DPA’s functions on the Task Force is to chair its Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Terrorism, which recently launched as one of its first operational activities a series

of high-level meetings in Central Asia with the support of DPA’s Policy Planning and Mediation Support Unit. The meetings beginning in January 2010 will be co-organized by the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) a DPA-managed political office based in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan with a mandate to help the five countries of the

*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon observes a moment of silence for terrorism victims during September 2008 symposium.*

UN Photo



The Department of Political Affairs has been an active participant since that time in a system-wide Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) dedicated to assisting Member States in implementing the Strategy in all its dimensions. With the establishment, now, of a small CTITF office within DPA, the Department is poised to make

tion of the Task Force within the Secretariat. Jean Paul Laborde, a French senior judge, was appointed in June 2009 to head the Office. He says its location within DPA makes sense given both the “major” political dimensions of counter-terrorism activities and the strategic leadership the Department can provide within the system.

regions to cooperatively manage threats including extremism.

The meetings are intended to culminate in the adoption of a Central Asian regional strategy for implementing the UN Global Strategy along each of its four main “pillars” of action. These are: measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent



and combat terrorism; measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard; and measures to ensure respect for

**"Understanding terrorism's spread and its repercussions requires the grasp of local, regional and global political dynamics that DPA can provide."**

human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

DPA is planning a similar series of activities beginning in 2010 in West Africa, a region with a growing terrorism problem. The Department has also taken the lead

in developing guidance related to terrorism for UN mediators and Special Representatives to the Secretary-General.

The CTITF was established by the Secretary-General in 2005 to enhance coordination and coherence of counter-terrorism efforts of the UN system. It currently consists of 25 United Nations entities plus Interpol. Each member makes contributions consistent with its mandate.

Many of the activities are taking place outside the spotlight — efforts to protect human rights while countering terrorism, strengthen the protection of vulnerable targets, counter the use of

the internet for terrorist purposes, tackle the financing of terrorism, protect and responding to WMD terrorist attacks, and counter the appeal of terrorism.

Other activities, such as the September 2008 Secretary-General's Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism, have been covered widely in the media. The event held at UN headquarters in New York, helped put a human face to terrorism by giving a voice to victims and providing a forum to discuss concrete ways to assist them.

The CTITF office and CTITF activities have been funded thus far largely through voluntary contributions from Member States. Proposals are expected soon to apportion the necessary resources through the regular budget of the United Nations.

"This is an important final step to be taken in institutionalizing the Office and guaranteeing its functions," said Laborde. "Fighting terrorism is a core activity of the United Nations."



## Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Entities

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| » Counter-terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) | » International Monetary Fund (IMF)                             | » Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism |
| » Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)             | » International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)         | » United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)   |
| » Department of Political Affairs (DPA)                    | » Monitoring Team of 1267 Committee                             | » United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)                     |
| » Department of Safety and Security (DSS)                  | » Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) | » United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)                    |
| » Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG)         | » Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA)                          | » United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)  |
| » Expert Staff of 1540 Committee                           | » Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)      | » World Customs Organization (WCO)  |
| » International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)                | » Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)                                 | » World Bank  |
| » International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)         | » Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)   | » World Health Organization (WHO)   |
| » International Maritime Organization (IMO)                |   |   |

(More on the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and wide-ranging UN actions to counter terrorism can be found at <http://www.un.org/terrorism>)

## ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

**The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe** traveled extensively to areas under his responsibility and briefed the Security Council on issues including the **Middle East, Somalia**, and the **Central African Republic**.

USG Pascoe visited **West and Central Africa** during June 8-13 2009, holding high-level discussions on threats and challenges in

the region such as drug trafficking, coups and other unconstitutional changes in government, and visiting political and peace-building missions. The six-nation tour took him to **Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone**, the **Central African Republic** and **Guinea-Bissau**. Later that month, USG Pascoe represented the Secretary-General in Yekaterinburg, **Russia** at the Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. He

also accompanied the Secretary General in meetings in Trieste, Italy of the **Middle East Quartet** and G-8 foreign ministers on **Afghanistan**.

**Under-Secretary-General Pascoe accompanied the Secretary-General** to Myanmar in early July 2009 following stops in **Japan** and **Singapore**. He joined the Secretary-General later that month in **Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt** at the fifteenth **Summit of the Non-**

**Aligned Movement**, as well as during a five-day visit to **China** and **Mongolia** focused especially on climate change. On 24-25 August, USG Pascoe was the senior UN representative at a high-level meeting in **Istanbul, Turkey** of the Group of Friends of Democratic Pakistan. On 16-18 September, he traveled to **Sri Lanka** on the Secretary-General's



*Under-Secretary-General Pascoe lands in Guinea-Bissau during west African tour. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation, Lansana Touré is at left and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau Joseph Mubaboba is at center.*

## STAFF NEWS

### **DPA welcomes new Assistant-Secretary-General.**

Oscar Fernández-Taranco of Argentina took up the post of Assistant



Secretary-General for Political Affairs in July 2009, following his appointment by Secretary-General Ban

Ki-moon. His responsibilities include overseeing DPA regional divisions dealing with the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and West Asia, as well as the Division for Palestinian

Rights and the Decolonization Unit. Mr. Fernández-Taranco brings to the job 25 years of prior experience with the United Nations both at headquarters and in the field, managing development, political, peacebuilding and humanitarian operations in the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Europe. From 1994 to 1998, he served as Deputy Special Representative of the UNDP Administrator in the West Bank and Gaza Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People. He was also the Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Regional Director in the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States in

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for five years. From 1998 to 2001, he served as Resident Representative, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti. Immediately prior to this appointment to DPA, Mr. Fernández-Taranco had been serving as Resident Coordinator in the United Republic of Tanzania, leading the United Nations reform initiative of "Delivering as One".

**Ian Martin**, a veteran leader of numerous UN field operations, joined the Department of Political Affairs in July 2009 for a six-month



behalf to urge further progress on the resettlement of IDPs, political reconciliation and human rights accountability. A five-nation visit to **southern and eastern Africa** from 15-23 October focused on strengthening partnerships with key Member States and regional organizations in conflict prevention, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building, with a particular emphasis on **Somalia**. USG Pascoe visited **South Africa, Angola, Burundi, Uganda and Kenya**.

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**Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios** visited **Nigeria** in May 2009 to consult with Ministers from **Ghana** and **Gambia** on the conclusions of the joint **United Nations-ECOWAS** Fact-Finding Mission into the deaths of Ghanaian citizens in the Gambia. In June, he traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in



*Assistant-Secretary-General Haile Menkerios briefs the press on Guinea.*

UN Photo

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**Assistant-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernández-Taranco** represented the United Nations in a high-level delegation to **Honduras** led by the Organization of American States to promote dialogue and the restoration of democracy in the country. In early November 2009, he traveled to **Iraq** on behalf of the Secretary-General for preliminary consultations following a

the Forum for Supporters of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in **Sudan**. In August, he was in **Libya** to attend the **African Union Special Summit on the Consideration and Resolution of Conflicts in Africa** and in September, he visited **Senegal, Mali and Guinea-Bissau**. In October, at the request of the Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General Menkerios led a mission to **Guinea** and the sub-region to prepare the ground for a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the violence that took place in Guinea on 28 September 2009.

*Assistant-Secretary-General Oscar Fernández-Taranco briefs the Security Council on the Middle East.*

UN Photo



assignment as part of DPA's Mediator Debriefing and Lessons Learned Programme. The Programme provides senior envoys and mission chiefs with

an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences in the field in order to inform future UN mediation efforts. Building on his last posting until February 2009 as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), Mr. Martin is leading a lessons learned exercise on the UN's role in support of Nepal's peace process, in

collaboration with the Center for International Cooperation of New York University. Mr. Martin is also contributing to the training of political affairs officers in the Secretariat and to the development of guidance for mediators.

**Jean Paul Laborde**, an accomplished French judge and former official of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), joined DPA in June 2009 as a Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary General for Political Affairs on Counter Terrorism matters and head of the Office established within DPA to support the United Nations Counter-

terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). Prior to joining DPA, Mr. Laborde served for 14 years in various senior positions within UNODC, most recently since 2003 as Chief of its Terrorism Prevention



Branch. During 22 years spent previously in the French criminal justice system, Mr. Laborde held senior positions including President of Chamber of the second French Court of Appeals, Head of National Service for the Inspection of Penitentiary Services of France, Chief Prosecutor, Assistant Prosecutor-General, and Judge.



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon applauds the release of white doves at September 2009 observance of International Day of Peace, along with General Assembly President Ali Abdussalam Treki (center) and Japan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Yukio Takasu (left).

UN Photo

request from the Government of Iraq for a UN inquiry in the aftermath of a series of bombings.

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## DPA Support to General Assembly Committees

**Decolonization.** As part of its continuing assistance to the activities of the General Assembly's Special Committee on decolonization (C-24), DPA's Decolonization Unit provided full support to the May 2009 decolonization seminar in Saint Kitts and Nevis and its follow-up actions. This was one of the Special Committee's most interactive and innovative seminars in years. It focused on the contemporary challenges

and opportunities in the process of decolonization, and on how the overall work of the Special Committee could be made more effective and accountable. Seven Non-Self-Governing Territories (mostly from the Caribbean); nineteen Member States (mostly C-24 members); and a number of experts and representatives of civil society participated actively in the seminar. The presence of two administering Powers, the United Kingdom and the United States, as observers, as well as a statement sent by New Zealand, also added to the proceedings.

**Palestinian Rights.** DPA's Division for Palestinian Rights continued to support the work of

the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People by organizing a number of events. Notable among these was the **United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace**, held in Nicosia on 6 and 7 May 2009 — the first event of its kind to focus exclusively on the role of parliamentarians and inter-parliamentary organizations in promoting Israeli-Palestinian peace. It was followed a month later in Jakarta by the **United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting in Support of the Palestinian People** (8 and 9 June), focusing on strengthening international consensus on the urgency of a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the **United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People**. The **United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine**, held in Geneva on 22 and 23 July, highlighted the international community's responsibility in upholding international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the wake of the war in Gaza. The events brought together internationally renowned experts, Israeli and Palestinian, representatives of United Nations Member States and Observers, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations system entities, civil society organizations and the media. Additional information can be found on the "Question of Palestine" website maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights at [www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal)

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