

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 24 August 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the pleasure to inform you that Ireland, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of September 2021, will hold a ministerial-level open debate on the theme “United Nations transitions”, in connection with the item entitled “United Nations peacekeeping operations”. The open debate will take place on Wednesday, 8 September 2021, at 10 a.m. (Eastern Daylight Time).

In order to guide the discussions on the topic, Ireland has prepared a concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Geraldine Byrne Nason**
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 24 August 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council ministerial open debate on the theme “United Nations transitions”

Background

The Secretary-General has made United Nations transitions one of the priorities of his reform agenda in order to ensure a more coherent and effective transformation of the United Nations system’s response to evolving needs on the ground during transition. As part of this annual update on United Nations peacekeeping reform, the briefing and debate will include a focus on this important issue.

In accordance with Security Council resolution [2378 \(2017\)](#), an open debate on United Nations peacekeeping reform takes place annually. As President of the Security Council for the month of September, Ireland will hold this meeting at the ministerial level.

Peacekeeping and transitions

Peacekeeping operations are critical elements of the United Nations architecture for peacebuilding and sustaining peace; elements which, through their efforts to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of violence, can provide the bridge between conflict and sustainable peace. Peacekeeping operations support and create space for other peacebuilding actors and contribute to political solutions that advance peacebuilding goals. How a peacekeeping operation manages a transition will shape the durability of peace.

The Security Council has on several occasions declared its commitment to enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations in addressing conflict at all stages, from prevention to settlement to post-conflict peacebuilding. In the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, namely, General Assembly resolution [70/262](#) and Security Council resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#), and more recently, following the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture, through General Assembly resolution [75/201](#) and Security Council resolution [2558 \(2020\)](#), the Council reaffirmed that effective peacebuilding involves the entire United Nations system, including peacekeeping operations.

The meeting will draw attention to the central role that the Security Council has to play in establishing the importance of transitions within the wider peacekeeping and peacebuilding agenda.

The Security Council, in its presidential statement dated 21 December 2020 ([S/PRST/2017/27](#)), recognized that the process by which a transition is undertaken is also crucial, emphasizing the importance within peacekeeping mandates of clearly defined goals and objectives guided by specific agreed upon “milestones towards peacebuilding and sustaining peace”. Specific attention to how a peacekeeping operation is tasked – including its engagement on transition-critical issues, such as the protection of civilians; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; capacity-building in the security and justice sectors; and how it engages in integrated planning with local and national authorities, communities, civil society and with the broader United Nations system – is crucial in building towards a successful and sustainable transition.

Lessons can be learned from recent transitions, such as the closure of the peacekeeping operations in Côte d’Ivoire in 2017, Liberia in 2018 and Darfur in 2020. All demonstrate the need for coherence and cooperation across the United Nations system and with regional, national and local stakeholders, particularly women and

young people. Taking a phased and graduated approach that is in line with the security conditions on the ground and that fully considers the risks to civilians that arise during peacekeeping transitions, and the capacity and priorities of the national Government and citizens, accompanied by ongoing international engagement and support, is critical to cementing a sustainable peace.

Objective

With briefings from the Secretary-General and from those who have experienced and are experiencing peacekeeping transitions, the meeting provides an opportunity to consider how the United Nations is currently managing peacekeeping transitions, how transitions are experienced at the country level, and to consider the role peacekeeping can play in delivering an environment in which peacebuilding can thrive. It is also an opportunity to reflect on how the Security Council can build upon its aims as set out in the above-mentioned presidential statement to better shape peacekeeping operations to ensure they prepare for transitions in a phased manner in line with the prevailing security conditions on the ground and ensuring local and national ownership of a process that will be sustainable after the peacekeeping operation has reconfigured, drawn down or exited.

To assist in this reflection, the following questions could be drawn upon:

- How can the Security Council support a more integrated, coherent, sustainable and nationally owned transition process?
- How can the Security Council help support the engagement of communities and civil society, including young people and minorities, in transition planning? How can the Security Council ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in transition planning?
- How can mission mandates be structured to reflect the need for flexibility in the face of changing security situations? Would the prioritization and sequencing of mandates help?
- How can the United Nations more effectively ensure that transition planning takes account of the risks of violence against civilians and include efforts to sustain United Nations efforts to protect civilians during and after transition? How can the United Nations support the development of national protection of civilian strategies by national partners?
- What concrete measures can be taken in order for the Security Council to better engage with and avail of the advice of the Peacebuilding Commission in transition contexts?

Format

The meeting will be held in the format of an open debate.

The meeting will be chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence of Ireland, Simon Coveney.

Briefers

- The Secretary-General, United Nations
- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia
- Civil society briefer

Further details will be provided in advance of the meeting on arrangements for the participation of Member States and observers who wish to participate in the open debate.