

# The General Assembly's past practice and engagement on peace operations

Summary excerpts from [Assembly for Peace: A Digital Handbook on the UN General Assembly's Past Practice on Peace and Security](#)

By Erica Gaston

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During the 78<sup>th</sup> session, the General Assembly (GA) adopted [resolution 77/335](#), which recognized the functions, powers and role of the GA in the maintenance of international peace and security. It underlined the need to foster continued interaction with the Security Council (SC), and for greater awareness and practical information on the functions and powers of the GA with respect to peace and security. Pursuant to this, it requested a Digital Handbook, which was published in August 2024 as [Assembly for Peace: a digital handbook on the UN General Assembly's past practice on peace and security](#). The Handbook contained an overview of GA powers and role with respect to peace and security under the UN Charter, and contained five chapters covering key practice areas: peace operations, responses to conflict and use of force, sanctions, accountability mechanisms, and good offices.

This brief summarizes key learning from the chapter on Peace Operations, and includes additional information and case studies. As part of an initiative to increase awareness about the Handbook, a learning workshop was organized with more than 70 Member State representatives in May 2025.<sup>1</sup> This brief includes information and responses to some of the questions and issues raised in that workshop, as well as three expanded or new case studies of GA support for peace operations that were not in the 2024 Handbook. Hyperlinks within this brief connect to these three cases in the [Annex](#), or the case studies of peace operations in the 2024 Handbook.

## Background: General Assembly powers on peace and security

Over the past 78 years, the GA has helped maintain peace and security in a range of ways, including by establishing or supporting peace operations, mandating mediators or special envoys, recommending responses to use of force or sanctions, and creating or recommending accountability mechanisms. The GA

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## Contents of the Digital Handbook

- I. Overview of the Charter-based roles and responsibilities of the GA
- II. Compendium of GA engagement on peace and security in five key areas of practice:
  - *Mandating or supporting peace operations.*
  - *Responses to use of force or ongoing conflicts*
  - *Recommending adoption or restraint with regard to sanctions or sanctioning measures.*
  - *Establishment or encouragement of accountability mechanisms, including referrals to judicial bodies.*
  - *Support for good offices and mediation*
- III. Summary of key lessons derived from past practice, including synergies between the GA and the SC
- IV. Annex containing 61 mini-case studies of practice

has also called the SC's attention to matters of particular significance, noted past SC failure to address a situation, and/or requested that it take further action.

The GA's authority to engage on peace and security matters lies in Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the United Nations (UN) Charter. [Article 10](#) authorizes the GA to discuss or make recommendations on "any matters within the scope of the present Charter". [Article 11](#) empowers the GA to "discuss any questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security" and to "make recommendations" to the States concerned or to call them to the attention of the SC. [Article 14](#) further authorizes the GA to "recommend measures for the peaceful adjustment of any situation". [Article 12](#) was initially interpreted as restricting the GA from taking up matters on the SC's agenda, but over time consideration of matters by the SC and GA in parallel has become "accepted practice" and deemed consistent with the UN Charter by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).<sup>2</sup> As stated in the ICJ's *Certain Expenses* case, the SC's jurisdiction is "'primary', not exclusive ... the General Assembly is also to be concerned with international peace and security".<sup>3</sup>

Some of the GA's engagement with peace operations and other peace and security issues have taken place in connection with the Uniting for Peace ([UFP](#)) resolution, a special procedure created in 1950 to facilitate prompt GA consideration when there is a stalemate in the SC over a peace and security matter ([A/RES/377\(V\)](#)). However, GA consideration of peace and security matters also occurs in the course of the GA's regular sessions. The Handbook also covers some of these procedural mechanisms and developments, including the [2022 Veto Initiative](#).

## Summary of General Assembly practice on peace operations

Although in recent years the vast majority of peace operations have been authorized by the SC, the GA has a long history of engagement with peace operations, including both Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) and Special Political Missions (SPMs). It has directly authorized their establishment, enabled an extension of their mandate or functions, or passed resolutions that provide support for the mission or particular functions. Some of the key precedents established by GA-mandated peace operations include:

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<sup>2</sup> [A/ES-10/273](#), paras. 27, 28. The Court also observed a division of labour in which the "Security Council has tended to focus on the aspects of such matters related to international peace and security", while the GA has "taken a broader view, considering also their humanitarian, social and economic aspects", but that this did not preclude the GA from engaging on peace and security. *Ibid.*, para. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Certain Expenses of the United Nations (Article 17, Paragraph 2, of the Charter)*, *Advisory Opinion*, *I.C.J. Reports 1962*, p. 151, p. 163.

- In 1951, the GA extended support for UN forces to engage in enforcement action by extending support for [UN Forces on the Korean Peninsula](#).
- In 1956, the GA established what is now considered the **first armed UN peacekeeping operation**, the UN Emergency Force ([UNEF](#)), which was authorized in response to the Suez Crisis.
- In 1962, the GA provided the authority for the **first UN peace operation to administer a territory**, the UN Temporary Executive Authority ([UNTEA](#)), and a related security force, the United Nations Security Force (UNSF), which assumed direct administrative responsibility for the territory of West New Guinea (now part of Indonesia).
- In 1993, the GA authorized the **first joint UN peace operation with a regional body**, a joint monitoring mission in Haiti (International Civilian Mission in Mission Civile Internationale en Haïti ([MCIVIH](#))) with the Organization of American States.

GA engagement with peace operations has not been limited to the very early years. **GA authorization of peace operations or other forms of engagement and support have continued up to the modern period.** Three more recent examples of the GA lending support to peace operations are included in the Annex: supporting multiple phases of peace operations in [Guatemala](#) and [Afghanistan](#) in the 1990s, and supporting a regional monitoring mission and a special envoy in Syria in 2011 and 2012, actions which resulted in subsequent SC-authorized peacekeeping and special political missions in [Syria](#).

The table below offers a summary of GA engagement with peace operations, distinguishing between cases of GA authorization versus extension or provision of additional support. Case studies of each of the below are covered in [Annex 3 of the Digital Handbook](#).

Peace operation	Location of deployment	Relevant GA resolution(s)	Nature of GA engagement
UN Special Commission on the Balkans ( <a href="#">UNSCOB</a> )	Greece	<a href="#">A/RES/109(III)</a> (1947)	Mandating peace operation
<a href="#">UN Forces on the Korean Peninsula</a>	Korea	<a href="#">A/RES/498(V)</a> (1951)	Extending support for UN forces
<a href="#">UNEF</a>	Egypt	<a href="#">A/RES/1000(ES-I)</a> (1956)	Mandating peace operation
UN Observer Group in Lebanon ( <a href="#">UNOGIL</a> )	Lebanon	<a href="#">A/RES/1237(ES-III)</a> (1958)	Extending / supporting peace operation
UN Opération des Nations Unies au Congo ( <a href="#">ONUC</a> )	Congo	<a href="#">A/RES/1474(ES-IV)</a> (1960) <a href="#">A/RES/1885(XVIII)</a> (1963)	Extending / supporting peace operation
UN Temporary Executive Authority/ UN Security Force ( <a href="#">UNTEA/UNSF</a> )	West New Guinea	<a href="#">A/RES/1752(XVII)</a> (1962)	Providing authority for peace operation
UN Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea ( <a href="#">UNOVER</a> )	Eritrea	<a href="#">A/47/544</a> (1992)	Mandating peace operation

UN Special Mission in Afghanistan ( <a href="#">UNSMIA</a> )	Afghanistan	<a href="#">A/RES/48/208</a> (1993) <a href="#">A/RES/49/140</a> (1995) <a href="#">A/RES/52/211B</a> (1997)	Mandating peace operation
<a href="#">MCIVIH</a> ; International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti ( <a href="#">MICAHA</a> )	Haiti	<a href="#">A/RES/47/20B</a> (1993) <a href="#">A/RES/54/193</a> (1999)	Mandating peace operation
UN Verification Mission in Guatemala ( <a href="#">MINUGUA</a> )	Guatemala	<a href="#">A/RES/48/267</a> (1994) <a href="#">A/RES/51/198B</a> (1997)	Mandating peace operation; expanding peace operation

GA-mandated peace operations, operational bodies and mechanisms have taken on a range of functions and roles related to conflict management, de-escalation and resolution, including:

- **Helping negotiate, monitor or verify ceasefires:** UNEF (1956), ONUC (1961), UNTEA/UNSF (1962), [UNSMIA](#) (1993), [MINUGUA](#) (1994), [Joint Special Envoy to Syria](#) (2012).
- **Supporting law and order and policing:** ONUC (1961), UNSF (1962), MICAHA (1999).
- **Supporting transition processes, including elections or referenda:** UNOVER (1992), MCIVIH (1993), MICAHA (1999).
- **Peacemaking, facilitating and monitoring compliance with peace agreements:** [MINUGUA](#) (1994, 1997), Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan (OSGAP)(1990).
- **Facilitating transfer of prisoners of war and supporting disarmament and demobilization:** Repatriation Commission in Korea (1952), UNEF (1956).
- **Supporting mediation and good offices to defuse internal and/or cross-border tensions:** UNSCOB (1947), [UNSMIA](#) (1993), Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (1993, 1994), [Joint Special Envoy to Syria](#) (2012).
- **Monitoring human rights or other conditions related to conflict resolution:** MCIVIH (1993), MICAHA (1999), [UNSMIA](#) (1993), [MINUGUA](#) (1994).

### ***When does the GA authorize or engage with peace operations?***

While the GA can support peace operations in a range of contexts, there are some legal constraints, as well as limitations that have arisen in practice. A GA-authorized peace operation can deploy only with the host State's consent, given that the GA does not have mandatory or coercive power. In addition, while the GA could authorize a peace operation in any context, it has tended to defer to the SC and support peace operations only in limited situations, in particular where:

- 1) **Nexus with GA** – The nature of the operation is more attuned to GA mandates, or there has been substantial past GA engagement with the matter or country in question;
- 2) **By request** – The parties involved have expressly asked for GA authorization;
- 3) **SC divisions** – Vetoes or threats of veto by permanent members prevent the SC from taking necessary action in relation to the peace operation. In these cases, the SC has tended to tacitly or directly pass the issue onto the GA.

The case of GA support for a mediation- and transition-focused peace operation following the three-decade civil war in [Guatemala](#) offers a strong example of the first two conditions. As one of the first steps within this multi-stage peace process, the parties concluded a human rights-related agreement in 1994, which included a provision to establish a UN peace operation to supervise implementation. The Government of Guatemala, together with other key stakeholders, requested that it be mandated by the GA, rather than the SC, given the initial focus on human rights monitoring, which aligned more with the GA's mandate ([A/48/985](#)). The GA had also played a strong role in supporting negotiations prior to this point. The GA mandated the [UN Verification Mission in Guatemala \(MINUGUA\)](#) in September 1994 ([A/RES/48/267](#)). Over time the mandate grew to encompass supporting good offices and further mediation, as well as monitoring implementation of all parts of the agreement, including ceasefire conditions. This example also illustrates the frequent complementarity between the GA and the SC in peace operations. Though the mission was mandated from 1994 to 2004 by the GA, at one phase the SC mandated the deployment of military observers to MINUGUA ([S/RES/1094](#)).

Other examples of peace operations mandated by the GA due to the request of the parties (sometimes stipulated in the relevant peace agreement) and/or past GA engagement on the matter include the missions that provided a transitional administration and police and law and order support in western Indonesia in the 1960s ([UNTEA; UNSF](#)), and a mission in Haiti in the late 1990s ([MICAH](#)) mandated to support Haiti's transition back to democratic civilian rule following a military coup.

GA engagement with and authorization of peace operations in Afghanistan in the 1990s illustrates that **the GA may be more likely to step in where the authorization or renewal of a peace operation proves difficult in the SC**, as well as in situations in which the GA has a track record of past engagement in the country. Following the 1988 [Geneva Accords](#), the SC had established a peace operation to help oversee implementation, but the mission lapsed after disagreements among the key parties and guarantors (the latter of which included permanent members, the United States (US) and the Russian Federation). The GA had frequently passed resolutions related to Afghanistan in the past, and as of 1992 ([A/47/661](#)) had a standing agenda item to consider reconstruction and humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. When it became clear that a peace operation might be necessary to try to constrain the escalating civil conflict, support good offices, and address the human rights abuses and dire humanitarian needs that were engulfing Afghanistan, the GA took action. In December 1993, the GA requested that the Secretary-General establish a "special mission" to assist with political "rapprochement" and reconstruction in Afghanistan ([A/RES/48/208](#)), establishing what would come to be known as the UN Special Mission in Afghanistan ([UNSMIA](#)). The mandate grew over time to encompass support for refugee return, coordination of reconstruction and humanitarian aid, regional good offices, diplomatic engagement and mediation with the de facto authorities (the Taliban regime from 1996), and efforts to facilitate a durable ceasefire and inclusive transition process (see, e.g., [A/RES/51/195B](#); [A/RES/52/211B](#); [A/RES/53/203 A-B](#)). The mission also facilitated the initial transition and governance arrangements after the removal of the Taliban regime in 2001, before the SC's establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) ([S/RES/1401](#)).

Overall, GA support for UNSMA, as well an [intermediary body](#) that preceded it, reflects how GA-authorized missions can bridge gaps in SC engagement on peace and security issues, allowing for an ongoing UN presence. Moreover, as has been the case in many other examples where the GA supported a peace operation during a period of SC deadlock, the SC appeared to welcome this GA engagement, with several SC presidential statements welcoming the efforts of UNSMA throughout its tenure.

UNSMIA is not a unique example. A common spur to GA engagement with peace operations has been where those involved and international stakeholders tend to broadly agree on a need for a peace operation, or for

enhanced peace operation tasks or roles, but where the SC is unable to act due to divisions among permanent members or other sensitivities. This was the case with GA engagement with the peace operations in Greece in 1947 ([UNSCOB](#)), with supporting [UN Forces in Korea](#) in 1951, with the authorization of [UNEF](#) in response to the Suez Crisis in 1956, and with respect to the need to modify two operations in Lebanon and the Congo (discussed immediately below). The SC not only directly referred some of these matters to the GA, but in nearly all of these cases, there were subsequent resolutions, Presidential Statements, or other actions by the SC that effectively supported and ratified GA engagement with these peace operations after the fact.

### ***Can the GA add tasks or extend peace operations already mandated by the SC?***

Although not a common practice, the GA has the power to expand the mandate or tasks or extend peace operations established by the SC. Two cases discussed in the Handbook help illustrate how the GA might do this, and the complementary role this can have in helping the SC fulfill its peace and security role. In both cases, the GA stepped in after deadlock prevented the SC from making the modifications to the mandate that would be necessary for the missions to deal with a changed or more complex situation:

- [UNOGIL](#) (1958): UNOGIL was established to have a limited border monitoring mandate, to address the risk of cross-border armed group and arms infiltration. But its ability to carry this out, and to maintain peace in Lebanon became much more challenging after the US deployed forces to the region. The US deployment also made it difficult for the SC to reach agreement on necessary modifications to the mission's mandate, so the GA stepped in to request the Secretary-General to facilitate the withdrawal of foreign troops from Lebanon and Jordan, effectively adding an additional task to the mandate of the SC-authorized peace operation ([A/RES/1237\(ES-III\)](#)).
- [ONUC](#) (1960): SC differences over the 1960 Congo crisis prevented it from reinforcing ONUC's mandate in a way that would have allowed it to deal with escalating tensions and risk of civil war. The GA passed a resolution during the [4th emergency special session](#) requesting the Secretary-General to enable ONUC to continue supporting the Government in the maintenance of law and order, and to safeguard its "territorial integrity, and political independence" ([A/RES/1474\(ES-IV\)](#)). The resolution effectively not only allowed the mission to continue operating, but gave it a more robust mandate to help maintain law and order. The GA also stepped in later in 1963, using its budgetary authority to extend the duration of the mission for an additional six months ([A/RES/1885\(XVIII\)](#)).

In both cases, after the GA supported additional tasks or a more robust mandate within these two missions, the SC later re-engaged with these matters, tacitly accepting and ratifying the GA's changes. These situations (in particular that of the Congo) were reviewed as part of the ICJ's *Certain Expenses* case, with the Court ratifying that the GA's actions were within its powers and consistent with the UN Charter. Although in both of these examples, the primary action took place during emergency special sessions, this authority is not limited to UFP contexts. The UFP is a procedural vehicle, not a basis for the GA's authorities under the Charter. For example, the latter changes to the ONUC mandate, extending its duration, were made in a regular session.

### ***What is the legal basis for the GA to authorize or extend a peace operation?***

The GA's power to authorize or mandate peace operations, or to extend the tasks or duration of them, lies with its Article 10, 11 and 14 authorities to discuss and make recommendations relating the "maintenance of international peace and security", and to "recommend measures for the peaceful adjustment of any situation." In a 1961 advisory opinion (known as the [Certain Expenses](#) case, the ICJ explicitly considered the GA's authorization of UN peacekeeping forces in Egypt (the [UNEF](#) force mandated in response to the Suez

Crisis) and its extension of the mandate for UN forces in the Congo ([ONUC](#)). The ICJ not only affirmed that the GA could consider and offer recommendations on these matters despite their parallel consideration by the SC, but also emphasized that the GA's Article 14 power to recommend measures could involve authorization of more operational measures or action. It emphasized that the GA's powers "are not confined to discussion, consideration, the initiation of studies and the making of recommendations; they are not merely hortatory" but can include recommendations that "have dispositive force and effect".<sup>4</sup>

In analyzing this, the court noted the GA's powers under [Article 22](#) of the UN Charter, under which the GA can establish "such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions". This additional authority has been relied on to create mechanisms or bodies that can help facilitate crisis management, including establishing peace operations, Commissions of Inquiry, reconciliation committees or other subsidiary bodies. However, an important limitation established in the same case was that because the GA does not have mandatory or coercive authority, these operational bodies (such as peace operations) can only deploy with the consent of the State in question.

### ***Are there certain procedural mechanisms that the GA must rely upon to authorize or engage with a peace operation?***

The GA's engagement with peace operations in the early years tended to arise in [UFP contexts](#). The GA authorized [UNEF](#) via resolutions passed in the first emergency special session called under the UFP. It reinforced and/or extended the mandates of [UNOGIL](#) and [ONUC](#) during the third and fourth emergency special sessions, respectively. However, most of the GA's practice with regard to peace operations has taken place during regular sessions. Invocation of the UFP resolution 377(V), and the organization of a corresponding emergency special session, is not necessary for the GA to exercise its authority to mandate or otherwise engage with peace operations.

Nor is it necessary for a GA resolution on peace operations to cite to a particular provision (i.e. Articles 10, 11 and 14) when exercising these authorities. For example, in the case of the GA resolution that supported the establishment of [UNEF](#) in 1956, the GA requested the Secretary-General to develop a plan for setting up "an emergency international United Nations Force to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities" ([A/RES/998 \(ES-I\)](#)). No Charter provisions were cited in the resolution. Similarly, the GA did not need to invoke Charter provisions in establishing, or later modifying the mandate of the [United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan \(UNSMIA\)](#). The December 1993 resolution that established it ([A/RES/48/208](#)) did so by requesting that the Secretary-General establish a "special mission" to assist with political "rapprochement" and reconstruction in Afghanistan. Subsequent GA resolutions expanding UNSMA's mandate to negotiate and oversee a ceasefire, and facilitate a comprehensive political settlement ([A/RES/49/140](#) (1995), [A/RES/51/195B](#) (1996)) also did not cite to any articles of the UN Charter.

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<sup>4</sup> ICJ, [Certain Expenses](#), p. 163-164.

## Mandating other operational bodies and conflict management mechanisms

In some situations, the GA has not created a peace operation but instead provided the mandate for bodies or mechanisms that have taken on some of the functions of a peace operation, or have otherwise played an operational role in conflict management and response. These other operational bodies have sometimes acted as a pre-cursor to subsequent peace operations, or bridged gaps between peace operations.

### **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 1949**

UNRWA’s mandate stemmed from the GA’s response to the Palestinian refugee crisis during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. UNRWA was created by [A/RES/302\(IV\)](#) with the dual mandate to provide direct relief and to implement “works” projects to foster self-sufficiency, as well as to engage on political aspects of the refugee crisis. Though not a peace operation, it illustrates the GA’s ability to create and sustain multi-dimensional operational bodies that play a central role in conflict management and response.

### **[Repatriation Commission \(Korea\)](#), 1952**

In December 1952, following the conclusion of the Korean War, the GA established a [Repatriation Commission in Korea](#) which was mandated to facilitate the return of prisoners of war, an operational function deemed crucial for ceasefire implementation and conflict de-escalation ([A/RES/610\(VII\)](#)).

### **Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan ([OSGAP](#)), 1990**

A GA resolution ([A/RES/43/20](#)) related to a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan was the basis for OSGAP (a UN field office), which supported implementation of the 1988 Geneva Accords after the drawdown of the SC-mandated good offices mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan ([UNGOMAP](#)). OSGAP’s purpose was to facilitate a political settlement in Afghanistan, support humanitarian efforts, and lay the groundwork for a future military monitoring or peace operation response. It lay the groundwork for (GA-mandated) [UNSMIA](#).

### **Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, later UNSCO, 1993/1994**

After the signing of the Oslo Accords, the GA passed a resolution ([A/RES/48/213](#) (1993)) leading to the appointment in 1994 of a Special Coordinator who would coordinate the UN’s support for the Palestine, and support continued good offices. This Special Coordinator role was later transformed into the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) in 1999, which though not technically a SPM (it is a “field office” under DPPA) plays a role similar to a Special Envoy’s office.

### **Joint Special Envoy to [Syria](#), UN-League of Arab States, 2012**

Following SC vetoes of resolutions pertaining to the post-2011 conflict in Syria, the GA backed the League of Arab States’ Observer Mission in Syria and requested the SG to appoint a special envoy ([A/RES/66/176](#); [A/RES/66/253](#)), initially a joint envoy between the UN and League of Arab States. Mediation led by the Special Envoy (Kofi Annan) later enabled the UN Supervision Mission in Syria ([UNSMIS](#)), a short-lived SC-mandated peace operation focused on ceasefire monitoring. The Special Envoy role evolved into the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria, an ongoing special political mission.

## Other support to peace operations

The GA has also engaged with and supported peace operations in a number of other ways. The GA's good offices and mediation support have contributed to processes that laid the groundwork for peace operations. In the years following the Khmer rouge regime and also Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Kampuchea in 1978 (profiled in another chapter of the 2024 Handbook), it was the GA rather than the SC that provided momentum behind the peace talks leading to the Paris Peace Agreements in November 1991 ([A/RES/34/22](#), [A/RES/46/18](#), para. 2). The agreement's terms provided for the creation of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia ([UNTAC](#)), which was subsequently mandated by the SC. In addition, as noted earlier, GA-mandated peace operations [UNSMIA](#) and [MINUGUA](#) helped support implementation of the Geneva Accords in Afghanistan, and supported the peace talks in Guatemala. UNSMA also laid the groundwork for the subsequent (and current) UNAMA mission, including by overseeing the initial post-2001 transition process in Afghanistan following the Bonn Accords.

The third case study in the annex, concerning GA engagement with the conflict in Syria in 2011 and 2012, illustrates how the GA can support peace operations by both the SC and other regional bodies. During this period of conflict escalation in Syria, regional Member States, coordinating via the League of Arab States, were seeking support for a diplomatic resolution of the conflict and a ceasefire monitoring mission. SC draft resolutions condemning the violence and supporting an Arab League Plan of Action and observer mission, and a UN Special Envoy were vetoed. The GA stepped in to provide this support, reinforcing the League of Arab States' diplomatic initiative and observer mission, and jointly creating a Special Envoy position with the League of Arab States ([A/RES/66/176](#), [A/RES/66/253](#)). These and other GA resolutions lent momentum toward diplomatic efforts by the joint special envoy (initially Kofi Annan) to reach a cessation of violence, which the subsequent SC-authorized mission, the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), was later tasked with monitoring. The joint special envoy position established by the GA was also later formalized by the SC as the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Syria and is considered a special political mission (a peace operation) that is still active to the present.

In addition to this support of support in the lead up to or creation of a peace operation, the GA has supported mandate-fulfillment in ongoing peace operations by encouraging warring parties and Member States to cease activities interfering with the mission, to comply with SC resolutions, or to undertake other activities that would support the mission's mandate.

- GA resolutions have called for **respect for the freedom of movement and mandate** of the UN and regional organizations involved in peace operations and cessation of hostilities monitoring in Somalia ([A/RES/48/201](#), 1993); Liberia ([A/RES/50/58 A](#), 1995); and Syria ([A/RES/66/253](#), 2012).
- The GA has **urged full compliance with SC-mandated sanctions regimes** operative in and linked to peace operations contexts, for example, at multiple points throughout UNAMA's mission in Afghanistan,<sup>5</sup> and those applied to Serbia and Montenegro (the former Yugoslavia) alongside the SC-mandated UNPROFRO. In the latter, while the GA urged full compliance, it also sought to limit negative economic impact of these sanctions on neighboring countries ([A/RES/50/58 E](#)).
- GA resolutions have also sought to **mitigate potential spillover effects for neighboring countries** of those where peace operations were ongoing. For example, the GA passed several resolutions related

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<sup>5</sup> Examples include: [A/RES/66/13](#) (2012); [A/RES/67/16](#) (2013); [A/RES/71/9](#) (2016); [A/RES/74/9](#) (2019).

to the need for peacebuilding and humanitarian support in Sierra Leone (see, e.g. [A/RES/48/196](#), 1993) during the period when UNOMIL was active in neighboring Liberia.

The GA has also taken on an important peacebuilding role, recommending collective support and other actions by Member States to **facilitate transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding**:

- UNTAET (Timor-Leste) – The GA called for continued humanitarian assistance, and additional investment in infrastructure, education, and health, as Timor-Leste moved toward independence (in 2002), and re-assumed responsibility from the SC-mandated transitional administration provided by UNTAET ([A/RES/56/104](#), 2002; [A/RES/57/105](#), 2003).
- ONUMOZ (Mozambique) – The GA supported the continuation of tasks in Mozambique during the peacekeeping operation ONUMOZ’s drawdown phase, including refugee and IDP support, DDR, reconstruction support and demining ([A/RES/48/249](#), 1994).
- UNMIL (Liberia) – In addition to supporting UNMIL’s operations, GA resolutions commended the comprehensive peacebuilding approach of ECOWAS, the AU, donor countries, and UN actors, and called on all States, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to support an enabling environment for the promotion of peace and regional security ([A/RES/61/218](#), 2007; [A/RES/63/136](#), 2008).
- UNSOM II (Somalia) – In anticipation of the drawdown of UNOSOM II, the GA repeatedly called attention to steps by both conflict parties and the international community that would help the country move from active conflict response and peacekeeping to a period of reconstruction, development and peacebuilding ([A/RES/48/201](#), 1993; [A/RES/49/21 L](#), 1994; [A/RES/50/58 G](#), 1995).

The GA has also passed other resolutions related generally to peacekeeping transitions and/or peacebuilding support, for example, several in the 1990s related to supporting “the process of peace-keeping and post-conflict peacebuilding” in Central America (see, e.g., [A/RES/50/58 B](#)).

## Conclusions

The GA has a long history of engagement and support for peace operations, across a range of functions and measures. The following list summarizes the key take-aways from this brief:

- The GA can authorize peace operations, and can also reinforce the mandate or extend the tasks or duration of existing (SC-authorized) peace operations. The authority for this lies in Articles 10, 11, 14, and 22 of the UN Charter; however, consent of the host states is necessary for deployment. The UFP does not need to have been invoked for the GA to exercise these powers.
- The GA has tended to be more engaged with peace operations (authorizing or significantly supporting them) when 1) there is a strong nexus with the GA, either a link between the purpose of the mission and the GA’s mandate, or significant past GA engagement on the matter; 2) there is a request for GA engagement; 3) SC divisions or sensitivities prevent SC action with respect to a peace operation.
- The GA can take a number of other actions to support peace operations short of authorization:
  - Extending the budgetary resources, or duration of peace operations, or encouraging additional funding sources for peacekeeping to peacebuilding transitions;

- Creating operational bodies that take on some of the conflict management or resolution functions critical to peace operations;
- Enabling good offices and intermediate steps that lay the groundwork for future peace operations;
- Calling for respect for respect for the freedom of movement and mandate of the peace operations;
- Supporting peacekeeping to peacebuilding transitions, and offering recommendations for containing spillover effects in neighboring countries.

## Annex: Cases of Practice

These three cases of practice were developed as a supplement to a learning workshop on peace operations that was hosted in May 2025 for Member States in New York. The first two, on GA-supported peace operations in Afghanistan and Guatemala, were part of the 2024 Handbook, but in more abbreviated form. The third, related to GA support to peace operations and other good offices in 2011 and 2012 in Syria was not in the 2024 Handbook.

### United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan

Two UN peace operations and one operational body were mandated to deal with the situation in Afghanistan between the Soviet withdrawal in 1988 and the overthrow of the de facto authorities known as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (led by the Taliban movement) in 2001. The first was authorized by the SC and the next two were provided for in resolutions by the GA. This demonstrates the complementary relationship between the GA and SC, taking alternating but mutually reinforcing steps to address a peace and security matter despite fluctuations in Member State preferences and capacity to engage over a period of time.

The [Geneva Accords](#) were signed on 14 April 1988, establishing principles of non-interference and non-intervention between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Afghanistan (the two main signatories), and including a timetable for withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan (to be completed by February 1989). One of the provisions of the Geneva Accords requested that the Secretary-General deploy good offices to assist implementation of the agreement and to investigate possible violations for a twenty-month period. Pursuant to this, the Secretary-General sent a series of letters ([S/19834](#); [S/19835](#)) to the SC proposing to send up to 50 military observers to Afghanistan and Pakistan to serve as “inspection teams”. The SC responded on 25 April 1988 expressing provisional agreement ([S/19836](#)); formal authorization of these observers as the United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) followed on 31 October 1988 ([S/RES/622](#)).<sup>6</sup> While the GA did not authorize UNGOMAP, it lent its support to the Geneva Accords, and to UNGOMAP, in two resolutions during this time, including providing explicit support for the Secretary-General’s good offices to “encourage and facilitate the early realization of a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan” ([A/RES/43/20](#); see also [A/RES/44/15](#)).

In accordance with the terms of the Geneva Accords, UNGOMAP was mandated to monitor and report on: 1) the withdrawal of Soviet troops, 2) non-interference and non-intervention by Afghanistan and Pakistan in each other’s internal affairs, and 3) the voluntary return of refugees.<sup>7</sup> Refugee resettlement was not achievable within the Mission’s twenty-month mandate in light of ongoing fighting and resourcing limitations on UNGOMAP.<sup>8</sup> The SC approved a two-month extension of the Mission ([S/RES/647](#))<sup>9</sup> but consensus around another extension could not be reached between the Geneva Accords’ signatories and guarantors (the US and the Soviet Union) and so the mandate lapsed on 15 March 1990.<sup>10</sup> On the same day that UNGOMAP was

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<sup>6</sup> Following this provisional agreement, 40 military representatives were deployed immediately, such that the Mission’s two headquarters (in Kabul and in Islamabad) were fully operational in advance of 15 May, when the Geneva Accords entered into force. United Nations, “[Afghanistan / Pakistan – UNGOMAP](#)” Backgrounder.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, “[Afghanistan / Pakistan – UNGOMAP](#)” Backgrounder.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Adam Baczko and Gilles Dorransoro, “United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP),” *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, Oxford University Press, (2015): pp.269 - 275.

<sup>9</sup> The Resolution approved the extension request posed by the SG to the SC in his 9 January 1990 letter ([S/21071](#)).

<sup>10</sup> [S/21188](#) (1990): “My consultations with the signatories of the Geneva Accords indicate that another extension of the existing arrangements would not be met with the necessary consensus.”

terminated (15 March 1990) the Secretary-General created the Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan (OSGAP), citing his mandate under the November 1988 GA resolution that had welcomed the Geneva Accords and encouraged his “good offices” ([A/RES/43/20](#)). OSGAP took up some of the functions of UNGOMAP, in particular the refugee resettlement activities that were unresolved when UNGOMAP terminated ([A/46/577-S/23146](#)). OSGAP also had a Military Advisory Unit of officers (the same previously deployed to UNGOMAP),<sup>11</sup> to provide military advice and planning that would have laid the groundwork for future peace operations had the situation evolved to that point.<sup>12</sup> As such, although not a peace operation, OSGAP provides an important example of GA-supported operational body or unit that can help fill a gap or bridge some of the roles of peace operations where one is not active.

Shortly after this, in April 1992, the Afghan Government that had been left behind following Soviet withdrawal collapsed. It was replaced by a power-sharing government comprised of competing *mujahedeen* (armed group) factions, but this too proved unsustainable, and the country quickly fell into open civil war between competing militias and warlords, many of whom had been part of the power-sharing government. Against the background of multiple years of widespread fighting and atrocities, the Taliban armed group rose to power, taking control of Kabul and most of the territory of Afghanistan by 1996, and declaring itself to be the governing authority for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

During this period of heightened internal conflict and widespread atrocities and human rights abuses, the GA came to the fore as the more active body in trying to de-escalate the situation, address human rights violations and humanitarian assistance needs, and broker an end to the conflict. In November 1992, the Government of Afghanistan had requested that the item “Emergency international assistance for the reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan” be included on the GA agenda ([A/47/661](#)), resulting in annual GA consideration of the matter until 2005. Its consideration in December 1993 produced resolution 48/208 ([A/RES/48/208](#)), which requested that the Secretary-General establish a “special mission” to assist with political “rapprochement” and reconstruction in Afghanistan. The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSM) was initially mandated to canvas Afghan views on reconstruction, develop an action plan for rehabilitating the country, and support donor mobilization (*ibid.*) Subsequent renewals by the GA<sup>13</sup> requested that UNSMA (still under the vein of facilitating national reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan) aim to:

- Promote the establishment of an “authoritative council” to negotiate and oversee a ceasefire, and form a transitional government ([A/RES/49/140](#) (1995), para. 2).
- “Mediate an end to the conflict and [...] facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive peaceful settlement” ([A/RES/51/195B](#) (1996), para. 8).
- “Bring about an immediate and durable ceasefire among the Afghan parties and to institute a negotiating process leading to the formation of a fully representative, broad-based transitional government of national unity” ([A/RES/52/211B](#) (1997), para. 9).

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations, “[Afghanistan / Pakistan – UNGOMAP](#)” Backgrounder. The Secretary-General made the SC aware of this arrangement by letter and no objections were raised ([S/21218](#)). United Nations Office of Public Information, “Part Two: Regional Questions, Asia and the Pacific, Afghanistan,” *Yearbook of the United Nations*, 1990, vol. 44 (United Nations publication, 1990), pp. 236-237.

<sup>12</sup> The Secretary-General intended that the Unit would conduct an “updating of plans for military support to a possible increased future United Nations involvement in Afghanistan” ([A/45/645-S/21879](#)). “Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan (OSGAP),” Government of Canada, last accessed on 11 June 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/past-operations/asia-pacific/osgap-1990.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Additional resolutions renewing UNSMA’s mandate include: [A/RES/50/88B](#) (1995), [A/RES/51/195A](#) (1997), [A/RES/53/203A](#) (1999).

In 1999 the GA further expanded UNSMA’s mandate to include facilitating a durable ceasefire between all parties ([A/RES/53/203 A-B](#)). In 2000, the GA again modified UNSMA’s mandate to play a “primary role in conducting UN peacemaking activities” and encouraging the UN to set up additional presences in neighbouring countries ([A/RES/54/189A-B](#)). As scholar Rebecca Barber has noted, the gradual expansion of GA-authorized UNSMA “began to look increasingly like the type of operation that would more commonly be authorized by the SC.”<sup>14</sup>

The UN’s mandate in Afghanistan evolved again following Al Qaeda attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, and the subsequent US-led invasion of Afghanistan and removal of the Taliban regime from power. Lakhdar Brahimi, UNSMA’s chief, mediated the Bonn Agreement, signed on 5 December 2001, which outlined an interim governance arrangement for Afghanistan. UNSMA supported implementation of the Agreement initially, as planning for a SC-mandated mission was underway.<sup>15</sup> The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was authorized by the SC ([S/RES/1401](#)), replacing UNSMA in March 2002.

GA action in establishing UNSMA, and before that, providing the support for OSGAP, offers an important example of complementarity with the SC, with GA-mandated bodies taking up key good offices and conflict management roles in between the SC-authorized peace operations of UNGOMAP and UNAMA. In addition, from 1994, SC presidential statements welcomed and repeatedly expressed appreciation for UNSMA and called on all parties to assist them in their mandate.<sup>16</sup> This case study reflects how GA-authorized missions and other operational bodies can bridge gaps in SC engagement on peace and security issues, allowing for an ongoing UN presence.

### **United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala**

The UN Secretary-General appointed Jean Arnault to facilitate negotiations between the Government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) rebel group in an effort to end the Guatemalan civil war, which lasted from 1960 to 1996. The GA played an active role in encouraging these negotiations, passing multiple resolutions from 1990 through 1993 that expressed support for dialogue between the Government of Guatemala and the URNG, and encouraged the Secretary-General and his representative to continue offering support to the negotiations.<sup>17</sup> The peace process that ultimately brought about the end of the civil war was comprised of a series of agreements, beginning with the Framework Agreement for the Resumption of the Negotiating Process (10 January 1994) and concluding with the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace (29 December 1996). One of the earliest of these agreements precipitated the GA authorizing a peace operation to verify agreed-upon conditions, to further good offices, and ultimately to facilitate the transition process in Guatemala.

The Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights was signed on 29 March 1994, within the early stages of the peace process. It formally requested that the United Nations deploy a human rights verification mission to oversee implementation of the agreement immediately, prior to the conclusion of the final peace agreement.

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<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Barber, “A survey of the General Assembly’s competence in matters of international peace and security: in law and practice”, *Journal on the Use of Force and International Law*, vol. 8, No. 1 (2021), p. 147.

<sup>15</sup> UNSMA had “very limited capacity to monitor or assist in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement throughout the country” given the security situation, which had already led to the relocation of international staff to Islamabad in September 2001 ([A/56/875-S/2002/278](#)).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, [S/PRST/1994/12](#) (1994); [S/PRST/1994/43](#) (1994); [S/PRST/1997/20](#) (1997); [S/PRST/1997/55](#) (1997).

<sup>17</sup> Prior to MINUGUA’s establishment, a series of GA resolutions had encouraged these negotiations and endorsed the peace process: [A/RES/45/15](#) (1990); [A/RES/46/109\[A\]](#) (1991); [A/RES/47/118](#) (1992); and [A/RES/48/161](#) (1993).

In a 1994 advisory report laying out the proposed mandate and operations of the mission ([A/48/985](#)), the Secretary-General recommended a limited initial scope, confined to verifying the parties' human rights commitments and helping strengthen national human rights institutions. Given this primarily human rights mandate, the Government and key stakeholders involved requested that the body be mandated by the GA rather than the SC, as detailed in the Secretary-General's report:

“I have received strong representations from some of the Member States who constitute the friends of the Guatemalan peace process to the effect that, as international verification will, in its initial phase, be concerned only with human rights, **its establishment is a matter for the General Assembly rather than the Security Council**. I have also been informed by the Government of Guatemala that, although it wishes the mission to be approved rapidly, it cannot for that reason favour a matter related to a specific mechanism for human rights being submitted to the Security Council” ([A/48/985](#)) (emphasis added).<sup>18</sup>

Accordingly, the GA authorized MINUGUA with resolution 48/267 ([A/RES/48/267](#)) on 19 September 1994. Its mandate matched the Secretary-General's recommendations.

The Guatemalan peace process concluded with the Agreement on the Definitive Ceasefire (4 December 1996) and the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace (29 December 1996). Also signed on 29 December, the Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance, and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements requested that the UN deploy a mission verify all aspects of the accord ([A/51/796-S/1997/114](#), Annex 1, para. 197). This triggered complementary action by both the GA and the SC in support of MINUGUA. In December 1996, the GA extended MINUGUA's initial mandate for a three-month period, subject to further renewal and extension upon further recommendations from the Secretary-General for restructuring it to align with the new final agreements and changed situation ([A/RES/51/198A](#)). A month later, in January 1997, the SC authorized the deployment of an attachment of military observers to MINUGUA for a three-month period to verify implementation of the ceasefire agreement ([S/RES/1094](#)).<sup>19</sup>

In April 1997, the GA passed another resolution renewing MINUGUA for one year, and adjusted its mandate to include both verification of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights (the original scope of the mandate) and the subsequent commitments in the Comprehensive Agreement ([A/RES/51/198B](#)). The resolution provided that the mission should “carry out international verification of the peace accords” in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General (ibid., para. 5). A previous Secretary-General report had proposed aligning the mission's structure and activities with the five verification areas requested by signatories: human rights; indigenous affairs; social, economic and agrarian matters; strengthening of civilian power and the role of the army in a democratic society; and resettlement and integration ([A/51/828](#)).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The friends of the Guatemalan peace process at the time included: Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Spain, the United States, and Venezuela. The report ([A/48/985](#)) also noted that the Secretary-General had originally considered seeking Security Council authorization for the mission given that “the UN will in due course be called upon to verify will include agreements on military matters”; however, the consultations with the Government and friends of the Guatemalan peace process persuaded him to instead recommend the immediate establishment of the mission (ultimately by the GA) and to immediately deploy the human rights monitors, “in advance of other components”.

<sup>19</sup> The attachment was mobilized on 3 March 1997 and withdrew on 14 May 1997, the conditions of the ceasefire having been fully implemented.

<sup>20</sup> The Secretary-General's report ([A/51/828](#)) had been requested in the previous GA resolution renewing the mission for three months ([A/RES/51/198A](#)).

To reflect the broadened mandate, the mission was renamed the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala but retained the acronym MINUGUA.

One notable addition to MINUGUA's mandate during this phase was to conduct good offices, which were requested by parties to the conflict in the Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements ([A/51/796-S/1997/114](#), Annex 1). MINUGUA's good offices were intended to help resolve disagreements arising during implementation of the peace agreement, particularly through the Follow-Up Commission, which was established by the peace agreement to oversee implementation (the head of MINUGUA was given a non-voting seat on the Commission). In the Secretary-General's final report on MINUGUA ([A/59/746](#)), he noted that through the Follow-Up Commission, MINUGUA helped the parties to the conflict reach the Fiscal Pact of 2000, which was key to full implementation of the Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects of the Agrarian Situation.

MINUGUA's mandate was continually renewed by the GA until 2004 – the end date determined by parties to the peace process.<sup>21</sup>

### Syria ceasefire monitoring and Special Envoys (2011 - 2012)

After the outbreak of conflict in Syria in 2011, several proposed SC responses were stalled due to divisions among permanent members. The GA stepped in during this period to play a crucial role, supporting a regionally led observer mission and diplomatic initiatives, and mandating the creation of a Special Envoy to advance peaceful resolution of the crisis. In doing so, GA resolutions not only supported immediate good offices and de-escalation efforts but also laid the groundwork for subsequent peace operations.

By summer 2011, initially peaceful protests in Syria inspired by the Arab Spring had transformed into the beginnings of civil war. Government crackdowns on protestors, including through mass arrests, use of live fire and heavy weapons, and deployment of tanks and troops to populated areas, sparked international outcry and condemnation by many regional and international Member States. On 4 October 2011, France, Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom introduced a draft SC resolution that would have demanded an immediate end to all violence, that Syrian authorities cease violations of human rights and use of force against civilians, and enable humanitarian access ([S/2011/612](#), paras. 1-4). The draft resolution also requested the appointment of a Special Envoy, called for States to exercise restraint in the sale or transfer of arms into Syria, and expressed an intention to consider Article 41 sanctions measures (*ibid.*, paras. 6, 9, 11). Although nine Council members voted for the resolution, it was vetoed by Russia and China, who argued it could serve as a pretext for foreign military intervention referencing the example of the SC resolution preceding intervention in Libya ([S/PV.6627](#), pp. 3-5).<sup>22</sup> There were also sensitivities to the reference to sanctions.

Throughout this period, the League of Arab States remained actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to address the situation, and were supported in doing so by the GA. In November 2011 the League of Arab States adopted a 'Plan of Action' and created an Observer Mission to monitor it.<sup>23</sup> The Syrian Government signed the Plan of

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<sup>21</sup> [A/RES/48/267](#), [A/RES/49/236A](#), [A/RES/49/236B](#), [A/RES/50/220](#), [A/RES/51/198A](#), [A/RES/51/198B](#), [A/RES/51/198C](#), [A/RES/52/175](#), [A/RES/53/93](#), [A/RES/54/99](#), [A/RES/55/177](#), [A/RES/56/223](#), [A/RES/57/161](#), [A/RES/58/238](#).

<sup>22</sup> Both countries also criticized the draft as unbalanced, arguing it placed disproportionate blame on the Syrian Government while failing to sufficiently address violence by opposition groups.

<sup>23</sup> The full plan was included in a letter ([S/2012/71](#)) transmitted from the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (by the UN Secretary General) to the President of the SC. See also League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria, Report of the Head of the League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria for the period from 24 December 2011 to 18 January 2012, 27 January 2012, Document [259.12D](#).

Action on 19 December 2011. On the same day, the GA passed a resolution strongly condemning the “grave and systematic human rights violations by Syrian authorities”, calling on Syrian authorities to end such violations and to fully comply with the Plan of Action ([A/RES/66/176](#), paras. 1-3).<sup>24</sup> The resolution also invited the Secretary-General to provide support to the League of Arab States Observer Mission (*ibid.*, para. 4).

The League of Arab States Observer Mission deployed teams in over 20 locations across Syria in December and January 2012, but faced resistance in many areas, including limitations on access and attacks on observers.<sup>25</sup> A second draft SC resolution ([S/2012/77](#)) introduced on 4 February 2012 that would have condemned the widespread and gross rights violations and demanded that the Syrian Government comply with the Plan of Action, among other provisions, was again vetoed by Russia and China.

Only days after the SC veto, on 16 February 2012, the GA passed a resolution that largely replicated (even using verbatim language in many operative paragraphs), the content of the vetoed SC resolution ([A/RES/66/253](#)).<sup>26</sup> In addition, the GA went one step further and requested the Secretary-General to provide support to peace efforts led by the League of Arab States, through good offices and “the appointment of a special envoy” ([A/RES/66/253](#), para. 11). Drawing authority from this GA resolution, the Secretary-General and the LAS Secretary-General then jointly appointed Kofi Annan as the Joint Special Envoy on 23 February 2012.<sup>27</sup>

As one of his first steps in the role of the Joint Special Envoy, Annan proposed a six-point plan for peace that called on Syrian authorities to commit to a Syrian-led political process, steps toward cessation of all violence, ensuring humanitarian assistance, and a number of measures related to human rights obligations. Annan’s plan also proposed that a UN supervision mechanism oversee any sustained cessation of hostilities. Annan consulted with the Government of Bashar al Assad before submitting his plan to the SC, an approach that appears to have contributed to shifting some of the positions of the permanent members.<sup>28</sup> Two subsequent SC resolutions proposed in April 2012 passed unanimously. The first of these affirmed the SC’s full support for the six-point plan, called upon the Syrian Government to respect its commitments (including by taking steps such as ceasing troop movement and use of heavy weapons in population centres), and supported an advance team of 30 military observers to begin reporting on the cessation of violence ([S/RES/2042](#)). The second reiterated these points and also established the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) to monitor and consolidate the cessation of violence ([S/RES/2043](#)).

After a brief pause in fighting, violence quickly resumed and there was no longer a ‘cessation of violence’ to monitor. An intermediate SC resolution extending the mission had provided that the continuation of UNSMIS was contingent on reaffirmed commitments to a cessation of violence, which did not come to pass ([S/2012/523](#), paras. 59-61).<sup>29</sup> As a result, when the mission’s mandate expired on 19 August 2012, the SC did

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<sup>24</sup> The resolution was adopted on the report of the Third Committee ([A/66/462/Add.3](#)). It was introduced by a group of 62 Member States, including the US, the UK, and France ([A/66/PV.89](#)).

<sup>25</sup> League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria, Report of the Head of the League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria for the period from 24 December 2011 to 18 January 2012, 27 January 2012, Document [259.12D](#).

<sup>26</sup> Ten of the 12 operative paragraphs in the GA resolution had a direct parallel to provisions in the vetoed SC resolution, with most of these containing either verbatim or only slightly modified text to that in the SC resolution. The main substantive difference was that the SC resolution included a demand that the Syrian Government comply with the League of Arab States plan and enable access for the Observer Mission, while the GA resolution included the additional provision related to promoting good offices and the request to appoint a joint special envoy.

<sup>27</sup> See also [S/PRST/2012/6](#).

<sup>28</sup> Statements by the Russian Federation and China illustrate that the consensus on resolution 2043 was rooted in support for Annan’s six-point plan and mediation efforts, as well as the deference given to consent by the Syrian Government to the plan. [S/PV.6756](#), pp. 2, 8.

<sup>29</sup> See also: United Nations, “[UNSMIS: United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria](#)”, backgrounder.

not renew it. A further GA resolution that was adopted a little over 2 weeks before the mandate would lapse seemed intended to help avert this by placing renewed pressure on the parties, in particular the Government of Syria, to comply with the prior SC resolutions and halt the violence ([A/RES/66/253 B](#)). Passed on 3 August 2012, GA resolution 66/253 B reinforced some of the same elements as prior resolutions – condemning human rights violations, supporting the Special Envoy, his six-point plan and other efforts at political dialogue, as well as other humanitarian access and support. However, it also placed significant emphasis on the Syrian Government’s lack of compliance with the SC resolutions from April 2012, in particular the conditions designed to enable a cessation of violence (*ibid.*, paras. 2-3).

Annan stepped down on 31 August 2012.<sup>30</sup> The joint special envoy position was subsequently transitioned into a Special Envoy only of the UN (rather than jointly with the League of Arab States) from 2014. With SC resolution 2254 in December 2015, the Special Envoy was given a formal mandate under oversight by the SC, effectively formalizing it as a special political mission ([S/RES/2254](#)).<sup>31</sup>

This example illustrates an important example of SC and GA concurrence and mutual support in responding to an active conflict situation, and of the GA stepping in to support good offices and conflict management and de-escalation mechanisms (notably peace operations) at periods when the SC was deadlocked.

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<sup>30</sup> United Nations, “[Note to Correspondents: Transcript of Press Conference by Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy for Syria, Geneva](#)”, press transcript, 2 August 2012. In the statement, Annan expressed frustration over the SC’s failure to act.

<sup>31</sup> Since 2016, the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSE-Syria) has been listed as such in UN planning and budget documents (see, e.g., [A/70/7/Add.11](#)).