

IMPROVING U.N. SITUATIONAL AWARENESS



Enhancing the U.N.'s Ability to Prevent and Respond
to Mass Human Suffering and to Ensure the Safety
and Security of Its Personnel

Haidi Willmot

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ABOUT

About the Author

Haidi Willmot is a non-resident fellow of the Stimson Center. She has extensive United Nations experience, having worked for the United Nations at headquarters, in the field, and at the Australian Mission to the United Nations. Willmot was integrally involved in the establishment of the United Nations Operations and Crisis Center. She drafted the early warning strategy for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, worked in the United Nations Peacekeeping Situation Center, and served as a national intelligence analyst. In addition to publishing articles on a range of United Nations topics — including the protection of civilians, intelligence, safety and security, and peacekeeping law — in several peer-reviewed journals, she was the lead editor of *Protection of Civilians*, published in 2016 by Oxford University Press. Willmot holds a BA/LLB (Hons.) from the Australian National University and an MPhil in International Relations from the University of Cambridge.

About Stimson

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AEWU	Analysis and Early Warning Unit
ASG	Assistant Secretary-General
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CIMS	Common Information Management System
CIU	Criminal Intelligence Unit
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DFS	Department of Field Support
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPI	Department of Public Information
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DSS	Department of Safety and Security
EISAS	Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
FPU	Formed Police Unit
GIS	Geospatial Information Systems
HIC	Humanitarian Information Center
HIPPO	High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IAC	Information and Analysis Center
IAH	Integrated Analysis Hub
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IIH	Integrated Information Hub
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Center
JOC	Joint Operations Center
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MONUSCO	United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office of the Coordination for Humanitarian Assistance

OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMA	Office of Military Affairs
OPSCEN	Emergency Operations Center
PCC	Police-Contributing Country
PDA	Peace and Development Advisor
RAB	Research and Trend Analysis Branch
RG REWP	Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness
RMR	Regional Monthly Review
SGITT	Service for Geospatial, Information and Telecommunication Technologies
SIOC	Security Information and Operations Center
SMC	Strategic Military Cell
SOC	Security Operations Center
SPM	Special Political Mission
SRSG	Special Representative to the Secretary-General
TCC	Troop-Contributing Country
TRS	Threat and Risk Service
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
U.K.	United Kingdom
UMAIC	Unidad de Manejo y Análisis de Información Colombia
U.N.	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHQ	United Nations Headquarters
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCC	United Nations Operations and Crisis Center

UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOSAT	United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Program
UNPOL	United Nations Police
UNSAS	United Nations Situational Awareness System
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
U.S.	United States
WFP	World Food Programme
WHE	Health Emergencies Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations (U.N.) is mandated and resourced to prevent and respond to mass human suffering caused by conflict, natural disaster, and disease. Yet it is often criticized for failing to act in a timely way. There are many structural, political, and practical reasons for these failures, and the solutions are not easy. One important remedy lies in improving the U.N.'s situational awareness — that is, its *knowledge, understanding, and anticipation* of a situation or event. Improved situational awareness cannot force U.N. decision makers to take more potent action, but it can enable earlier and more informed decision making and remove one important cause of late and inadequate response. In addition to promoting more timely and effective U.N. actions, better situational awareness is also critical for ensuring the safety and security of U.N. personnel.

The need for improved situational awareness is clear. In the aftermaths of several major failures, the U.N. commissioned experts to review its actions.¹ In each of the reviews, poor situational awareness was identified as a reason for failure, and improvements were recommended. While successive Secretaries-General made efforts to implement such recommendations, they were often frustrated by both political and practical constraints. U.N. member states repeatedly declined to provide sufficient resources, resulting in the establishment of ad hoc capacities, and internal fragmentation undermined efforts to develop a coherent system.

This report offers pragmatic recommendations to improve U.N. situational awareness, cognizant of the constraints that have undermined past attempts. It begins by defining and explaining key concepts (situational awareness, intelligence, early warning, etc.). It then examines the need for improved situational awareness, comparing the U.N. with national systems, and considers the fate of past reform efforts. The report goes on to map out existing situational awareness entities and processes within the U.N. before analyzing the opportunities and challenges involved in improving U.N. situational awareness. Finally, it offers recommendations for the establishment of a U.N. situational awareness system.

Analysis of the existing U.N. situational awareness entities and processes reveals several opportunities and fundamental challenges. The U.N. has an abundance of information at its disposal, and more would be available if it were to develop partnerships further and increase outreach. It already has significant capacity dedicated to situational awareness — although gaps exist, particularly at the regional level and in country teams. The issue-specific needs of many departments and agencies as well as some field presences are well met by their internal analysis capacities, but there is a real thirst among U.N. leaders for better *predictive* and *integrated* analysis. Existing situational awareness entities are not joined up into a coherent whole. Although interagency decision-making and coordination fora exist, they are seldom fed by systematically gathered and analyzed information. There is no overarching framework pulling the system together, harnessing the information,

and integrating perspectives. Responsibilities are diffuse and accountability unclear. Situational awareness processes are not always linked to decision-making fora. The cadre of professional analysts is limited. There are challenges related to information sharing and security that need to be managed. Traversing these issues are internal and external sensitivities relating to U.N. situational awareness efforts, the absence of an “information-led” approach in the U.N., and the need for clear direction and demand from leadership.

Undertaking integrated analysis of a situation in support of occasional planning processes or in response to a crisis is insufficient to enable preventive and proactive actions. The U.N. needs to establish a robust, forward-looking system — one that maintains *ongoing* situational awareness, is responsive to immediate information requirements, and injects integrated analysis into decision-making fora at key points in the policy cycle. It should leverage a common pool of information to inform multiple U.N. purposes, including strategic decision making at headquarters, mission and programmatic planning, humanitarian preparedness and prepositioning, crisis response, and safe and effective execution of operations. The U.N. needs a system that complements, not replaces, existing political, policy, and operational processes. Situational awareness products should *inform* the recommendations and advice produced by individual departments and agencies and the decision-making processes of senior leaders at headquarters and in the field. To maintain objectivity, the situational awareness system needs to be independent, providing policy-relevant but policy-neutral analysis.

Given the U.N.’s needs, as well as its resource and political constraints, the report proposes a simple and modest system designed to address the basic requirements. The system seeks to pull together and reduce the complexity of current mechanisms by capitalizing on economies of scale, streamlining existing capacities, leveraging existing processes, and harnessing the wealth of information accessible to the U.N. The proposed architecture is designed to be light while providing a level of commonality and predictability across the system. It is woven into the present U.N. structure, using existing situational awareness entities as the building blocks and feeding into current decision-making fora. At the heart of the proposal is the joining up, systematization, and further professionalization of what already exists — all under a unified framework with a common goal.

This study recommends that the Secretary-General establish a U.N. situational awareness system (UNSAS) with the following attributes:

- **Structure:** Networked model. Integrated Information and Analysis Centers (IACs) established at the country, regional, and headquarters levels. Situational awareness processes directly linked to decision-making fora.
- **Governance:** Secretary-General’s Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness responsible for system oversight, and accountable for its efficient functioning. Heads of IACs accountable to the Senior Advisor. Mechanism for sanctioning mishandling of information.

- **Customers:** Senior U.N. leaders and planners at the country, regional, and headquarters levels.
- **Processes and products:** Light global process that deliver timely information and analysis. Set of common products providing: foundational information, long- and medium-term integrated analysis and assessment, current information, and crisis warnings and alerts. Processes also informed by external partnerships.
- **Personnel:** Empowered Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness. Experienced heads of IACs. Professional analysis staff with common training, independent from political/policy stream.
- **Technical:** Common, secure communications and information technology platform to link IACs.

To that end, this study recommends that the Secretary-General enact the following reforms:

Culture

Recommendation 1: Produce a system-wide U.N. situational awareness strategy.

Recommendation 2: Organizationally prioritize situational awareness.

Recommendation 3: Adopt a proactive “information-led” approach.

Recommendation 4: Initiate bureaucratic incentives that encourage information sharing and analysis collaboration.

Architecture

Recommendation 5: Establish a network of integrated Information and Analysis Centers (IACs) at the country, regional and headquarters levels.

Recommendation 6: Appoint a Secretary-General’s Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness.

Recommendation 7: Structurally link situational awareness processes to decision-making fora.

Policy, process, personnel, and partnerships

Recommendation 8: Prescribe a set of global processes and minimum product requirements.

Recommendation 9: Develop a cadre of professional analysts.

Recommendation 10: Develop a system-wide information-sharing protocol.

Recommendation 11: Develop a system-wide information-sharing platform.

Recommendation 12: Develop partnerships and outreach.



Achieving such reform involves considerable challenges. The recommendations touch upon the difficulties of integrating the efforts of various U.N. entities with different mandates, interests, funding streams, governance arrangements, and reporting lines. Such issues have long frustrated U.N. reform efforts and go to the heart of fundamental issues regarding the reach of the Secretary-General's authority and the common goals of the U.N. organization. To effectively address duplication of effort, capitalize on economies of scale, and develop a unified U.N. approach to a particular country or situation, difficult integration issues need to be addressed comprehensively. In the interim, the proposed system could be implemented through shared funding arrangements — as are currently in place for the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) — and dual reporting lines — as are currently employed in the U.N. Operations and Crisis Center (UNOCC). Additionally, much could be achieved through the exercise of the Secretary-General's authority to draw the system together under a single situational awareness strategy and in pursuit of a common vision and agreed upon objectives.

The other significant challenge to the implementation of the proposed system is residual member state sensitivity related to U.N. situational awareness efforts. The proposed system does not expand the U.N.'s information collection mandate, nor is it a vehicle to expose member states or force their hand. It is the politicization of past efforts that has hampered their development. To be successful and sustainable, a U.N. situational awareness system must be *objective*, and to do so needs to sit apart and be independent from the U.N.'s political, policy, and operational processes. What is proposed, therefore, is a simple, internal system to ensure that the U.N. has better knowledge, understanding, and anticipation of the environments in which

it operates and the situations it may be called upon to address. Without these, the U.N. is forced into a responsive posture, which frustrates efforts at early action and a coordinated response.

The proposed reforms are essentially internal organizational issues, lying within the powers of the Secretary-General. Because they can be achieved largely by reorienting and reprioritizing existing resources, seeking member state approval for the U.N. to “do better” what it is already doing may be unhelpful, as it forces member states to reopen sensitive issues that have already been dealt with at length. Secretary-General António Guterres has signaled an intention to move forward boldly on the U.N.’s prevention agenda, of which situational awareness is an important part. Historically, it has been early in a Secretary-General’s tenure that member states have provided the greatest scope and support for such reform initiatives.

This report aims to present a holistic vision for a simple system that meets the U.N.’s common situational awareness needs. It does not seek to supplant existing situational arrangements, such as those in place for peacekeeping operations, but to build upon them and ensure that they are leveraged to meet the U.N.’s broader needs. The proposed reforms could be implemented in a phased manner, as they would each deliver discrete benefits. However, it is only through establishing a coherent organization-wide *system* that the U.N.’s situational awareness needs will be properly met.

The U.N. is experiencing a crisis of relevance and needs to prove that it can effectively fulfil the mandate given to it by member states through the U.N. Charter. The international community should be able to rely on the U.N. having an organized and efficient situational awareness system, which delivers accurate information and forward-looking analysis to enable activities that prevent and respond to human suffering and ensure the safety and security of its personnel.



CONCEPTUAL CLARITY

Improvements in U.N. situational awareness have been hampered by unclear and loaded terminology and the absence of a common understanding of key concepts. Ideas have sometimes been rejected due to definitional misunderstandings and political baggage instead of being considered on their merits. Until recently, the word “intelligence” was avoided in the U.N. lexicon due to its association with clandestine and reprehensible behavior, as well as fears of the U.N. taking on such a role and what that would mean for member states. Unfortunately, the visceral reaction to the lexicon of intelligence resulted in shying away from the broader effort of improving situational awareness, which need not involve controversial activities nor challenge notions of sovereign

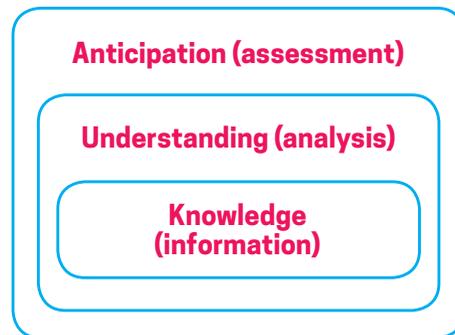
This section examines key concepts and defines terminology used throughout this report to reduce misunderstandings.

Situational Awareness

Situational awareness is essentially about understanding a situation or environment. Good situational awareness is critical in any context in which decision making with significant consequences takes place in a complex setting. Initially appearing in relation to aviation during the First World War, the term soon expanded into common use and is now employed in a wide range of sectors, from military and government to applied sciences and commercial enterprise. There is, however, no universally agreed upon definition.

There are broad and narrow views of situational awareness and much literature on its relationship with related concepts.² The most authoritative comes from academic work on decision making by Mica Endsley, one of the most influential thinkers and writers on the subject, who takes the view that situational awareness involves three levels:

- **Level 1:** perception of data and the elements of the environment;
- **Level 2:** comprehension of the meaning and significance of a situation; and
- **Level 3:** projection of future states and events.³



Situational Awareness

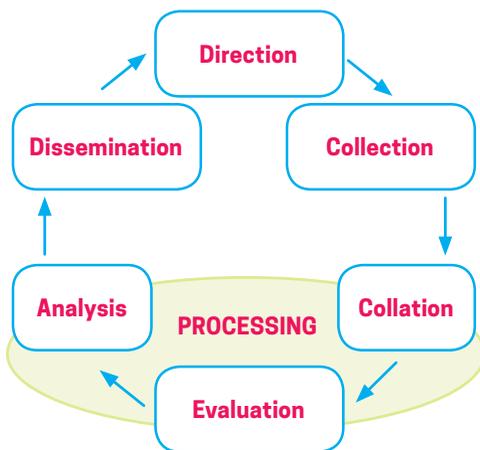
In broad terms, situational awareness can be conceived as comprising three elements:

1. **knowledge**, brought about by information;
2. **understanding**, brought about by analysis of that information; and
3. **anticipation**, brought about by an assessment based on the analysis.

Situational awareness is about understanding a situation and its likely trajectory (what is happening, why, and what might happen next), not about response options (what the U.N. should do about it). The two aspects have different objectives and require different processes and skill sets.

In the U.N. context, a range of terms are used by various actors to capture these ideas, including information, analysis, assessment, intelligence, early warning, and information management. However, none of these terms is used consistently across the system, as different communities (e.g., the humanitarian community, the peacekeeping community) prefer different terminology.

This report uses the term “situational awareness” to encapsulate knowledge, understanding, and anticipation relating to decision making at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels and across the spectrum of U.N. activities (e.g., political, security, human rights, humanitarian, development, etc.). The term effectively describes what the U.N. needs, is sufficiently innocuous to be used by the full range of U.N. actors, and is accepted by member states (see, for example, the Security Council Situational Awareness Briefing) as it is considered much less loaded or threatening than some other terms.



Common Representation of the Intelligence Cycle

Intelligence

The term “intelligence” is used widely across public and private sectors, but has also defied definition.⁴ There is little agreement on whether it is a process or a product, if secrecy is required, whether collection methods make a difference, if there is a need for a defined adversary, or whether it must be official or can be private or industrial. There is, however, a high level of agreement on the concept of the intelligence cycle, comprising a series of steps for the production of intelligence

products to meet decision makers' needs.⁵ In this context, it is often argued that it is the *processing* (collation, evaluation, analysis) of information that gives it meaning and renders it *intelligence*, not the method by which it was collected nor its sensitivity.

Intelligence is often broken down into three types that differ in terms of level of application, purpose, scope, and detail:

- **Strategic intelligence:** required for the formation of policy and military plans at national and international levels.
- **Operational intelligence:** required for planning and conducting campaigns and major operations to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or operational areas.
- **Tactical intelligence:** required for the planning and conduct of tactical operations.⁶

Early Warning

“Early warning” is yet another amorphous concept. It is also widely used, including in the context of conflict, natural disasters, humanitarian situations, cyber security, and financial markets. In the security sphere, it is only relatively recently that the term has thrown off its Cold War associations.⁷ Scientific and technological advances have allowed the development of early warning systems for meteorological, seismological, and thalassic events. Advances have also been made in warning systems to halt the spread of infectious diseases. However, conflict early warning, which unlike its counterparts doesn't lend itself to definitive indicators, has proved more difficult. Nevertheless, some organizations have persisted in their efforts.⁸

Conflict early warning systems differ. They can employ analysis methods that are qualitative, quantitative, or both; consider a range of structural, accelerant, and trigger indicators; have different customers and a spectrum of event horizons; focus on the strategic or operational level; and be linked or not to response fora. However, they generally have two common features: 1) the systematic monitoring of a situation against predefined indicators, which are analyzed for risk of conflict or instability over a defined period; and 2) the dissemination of warnings.

Some commentators argue that the same result can be achieved through good intelligence assessments, which should contextualize information, identify trends, and be forward-looking.⁹ While this is true, it lacks the systematic element of early warning systems, which is crucial for catching evolving situations outside existing focus areas.

Analysis and Assessment

Analysis and assessment are common activities in many professions. Analysis and assessment of a situation (determining what is happening, why, and what might

happen next), however, should not be confused or conflated with analysis of response options (determining what should be done about it). Unclear use of these terms within the U.N. has undermined progress on situational awareness, as it has unhelpfully mixed information and policy considerations, effectively politicizing the former.

In the situational awareness context, “analysis” and “assessment” are terms of art, couched in professional tradecraft and carrying with them a number of conventions.

Analysis

“All-source” analysts are encouraged to consult a wide variety of sources, which may include academia, news media, social media, big data, geospatial information, quantitative data, scientific and technical information, financial information, information from signals intercepts, and information from contact with human sources, including governments, diplomats, military, academics, think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and journalists.¹⁰

Analysis is undertaken following evaluation of information, in which its reliability and validity are assessed on the basis of the source and its consistency with other information. The information may then be graded accordingly, often using a system based on the Admiralty Code (alternatively known as the NATO system).¹¹

Reliability of the source	Credibility of the information
A Completely reliable	1 Confirmed by other sources
B Very reliable	2 Probably true
C Usually reliable	3 Possibly true
D Not usually reliable	4 Doubtful
E Unreliable	5 Improbable
F Reliability cannot be judged	6 Truth cannot be judged

Common Grading System

Information is then contextualized at the most basic level. One of the primary tasks of analysts is to guard against “raw” information being taken out of context and misleading decision makers. The information is then subjected to structured analytic techniques, such as analysis of competing hypotheses, and tested through challenge analysis, such as red teaming.¹² This can be done by an individual analyst or collaboratively.

Assessment

An “assessment” goes further, with the analyst drawing conclusions from the analysis. The analyst applies his or her judgment of the likely outcome or trajectory of a situation, being careful to avoid cognitive biases. An assessment product will usually contain *key judgments*, which are the analyst’s informed opinions. In presenting assessments, analysts will often use predictive terminology with a common understanding among the producers and consumers.¹³

Qualitative term	Associated probability range
Remote <i>or</i> highly unlikely	Less than 10%
Improbable <i>or</i> unlikely	15-20%
Realistic probability	25-50%
Probable <i>or</i> likely	55-70%
Highly probable <i>or</i> highly likely	75-85%
Almost certain	More than 90%

Common Predictive Terminology

Products

The result of the analysis and/or assessment is presented as a written *product*, which may also be orally briefed. Such products often adopt a common analytical format, such as a joint assessment note, a trend analysis, an early warning matrix, a threat assessment, a capabilities assessment, an intelligence estimate, or a warning note. Each paragraph may be classified on the basis of the sources used to produce that paragraph, and the product will hold the overarching classification of the highest classified paragraph.

Integrated analysis

“Integrated,” “joint,” or “whole-of-government” analysis carries a special value. Instead of being carried out by a single department or agency, the analysis is produced collaboratively, harvesting a broad range of information and leveraging several perspectives. This is intended to achieve a well-rounded, comprehensive view of a situation, which is of value to a broader spectrum of decision makers. In this way, decision makers share a common understanding of a situation, based on an assessment that has harmonized views at the working level. Integrated analysis can also contribute to fostering a shared understanding of the situation at the working level, which can be particularly important for planning. Integrated, joint, or whole-of-government analysis is challenging to produce, but highly valued.

Integrated analysis is produced either by a group of individuals from several departments and agencies convening to jointly undertake analysis and produce a product, or by a lead analyst consulting each expert separately and bringing their views together. When trying to harmonize a range of views, the imperative of reaching agreement must be balanced with the need to maintain clarity and strength of judgments. Disagreement can be noted, but should be avoided where possible to retain the value of integrated analysis as a harmonized product.

Situational awareness versus policy

To avoid being politicized, situational awareness analysis should inform but be independent from policy — it should be policy-relevant, but policy-neutral. “Policy”

includes political and diplomatic work, the development of strategies, policies, plans, and operational activities. Such work might require analysis of policy options, analysis of the most economical deployment approach, etc. However, the analysis of a situation should be separate from analysis of the response.

The separation of situational awareness and policy is essential for maintaining analytical objectivity. This guards against assessments being engineered or presented, intentionally or not, to support a particular policy objective or departmental perspective and protects analysts from having to please senior policy personnel by telling them what they want to hear instead of what they need to know.

“Let things be such, that if our policymaking master is to disregard our knowledge and wisdom, he will never do so because our work was inaccurate, incomplete, or patently biased.”

—*Sherman Kent*

Quoted in John G. Heidenrich, “The State of Strategic Intelligence,” *Studies in Intelligence* 51, no. 2 (2007).

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS WITHIN THE U.N.

The work of the U.N. is extensive and fast paced. The Security Council meets daily with almost 50 items on its agenda. The Secretariat manages 13 sanctions regimes,¹⁴ 16 peacekeeping operations,¹⁵ and nine special political missions,¹⁶ and there are 131 U.N. country teams delivering humanitarian and development assistance in 161 countries. The organization operates in many complex and high-threat environments. It is sometimes asked to use force to protect civilians from attack, and sometimes U.N. staff and buildings themselves are targeted. Yet despite such high-tempo, high-stakes, and complex operations, after 70 years the organization still does not have a robust situational awareness system.

The U.N. has experienced several significant failures, partly due to poor situational awareness — responses to conflicts in Rwanda and Sri Lanka, attacks against the U.N. in Baghdad and Mogadishu, and the reaction to the Ebola outbreak. With each successive failure, member states have expressed consternation at the U.N.'s poor performance. Each time, a group of experts has been commissioned to review the U.N.'s actions and has found that poor situational awareness was one of the reasons for failure. In response, the Secretary-General in office has attempted to improve the organization's situational awareness, but has often faced resistance both internally from some departments and agencies and externally from the very member states that criticized the U.N.'s performance.

There have been a striking number of initiatives aimed at improving U.N. situational awareness over the years. Significant progress has been made, but a distinct need for improvement remains. With each iteration of the cycle of crises, review, and reform, positive steps were taken. There are now numerous situational awareness entities and processes strewn across the U.N. Most of the information needed is already being gathered, and much of the analysis is already taking place. These efforts, however, need to be joined up into a coherent system so that they meet the requirements not only of an individual department, agency, or mission, but of the organization more broadly. It is time to break the cycle of failure and blame, to look pragmatically at the U.N.'s needs, and finally — after 70 years — to put in place a coherent situational awareness system.

The Need for Improved Situational Awareness

Comparison of U.N. and National Needs

The purpose of situational awareness within the U.N. has many similarities to national contexts, but also important differences. As in national systems, situational awareness in the U.N. is needed to inform decision-making, planning, and operational activities. In both environments, decision makers need knowledge, understanding, and anticipation of the trajectory of a situation

to act preemptively or to respond quickly. However, in national systems, that knowledge is used to protect and promote national interests domestically and abroad, whereas in the U.N., it is used to support intergovernmental processes, implement operations and programs mandated by member states, and ensure the safety and security of U.N. personnel.

Unlike national and sub-national actors, the U.N. is not part of a competitive system where political entities seek to defend or extend their power, wealth, influence, or territory in a world of finite resources, representing a zero-sum game. Instead, the U.N. seeks to identify and implement collaborative solutions to a range of issues (political, security, human rights, humanitarian, development, etc.) as agreed upon by the international community in its constituent instruments, through specific organizational mandates, and within the limitations imposed by international law. For this reason, it does not need and would never be resourced to carry out many of the offensive and defensive intelligence operations of national systems.

While the purpose for which the U.N. needs situational awareness is narrower, the scope of the need is broader. National systems tend to focus on particular areas of interest or influence, but the U.N.'s global role demands that it be prepared to act anywhere in the world at short notice.

The “Early Warning” Panacea

Consideration of U.N. situational awareness needs has often centered on the idea of conflict early warning. In 1985, U.N. Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar observed that “as crises have frequently been brought before the Council too late for preventive action, it would seem to follow that the Council might well establish a procedure to keep the world under continuing survey to detect nascent causes of tension.”¹⁷ Twenty years later, in 2006, Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, “I regret to report that no significant progress has been made in this area. In fact, unlike some regional organizations, the United Nations still lacks the capability to analyze and integrate data from different parts of the system into comprehensive early warning reports and strategies on conflict prevention.”¹⁸ A decade later, in 2015, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations found the same challenges still existed.¹⁹

The failure to establish such a system can be attributed partly to internal organizational fragmentation and partly to member state apprehension. Micah Zenko and Rebecca Friedman proposed three reasons for member states' resistance: (1) a general aversion to being monitored by any outside organization for activities that occur within their sovereign territory; (2) the risk that predictions will embolden conflicting parties and become self-fulfilling prophecies; and (3) the risk of adverse economic consequences of “watch list” designation.²⁰ They concluded that since such a system would never be permitted, the U.N. should instead strengthen existing capacities and build cooperation with the United States (U.S.) intelligence community and regional organizations. However, Simon

Chesterman warned that without an independent system, the U.N. would remain dependent upon member states' intelligence — the danger of which, he asserted, was highlighted in 2003 when the U.S. government presented the Security Council with what they claimed was reliable evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.²¹

Early warning within the U.N. is often approached through the frame of Article 99 of the Charter, which authorizes the Secretary-General to “bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.” This power has been used sparingly by successive Secretaries-General, causing Bruno Stagno Ugarte to urge its increased use, avoidance of which he described as “not only a manifest absence of courage... but also a dereliction of duty.”²²

While early warning may be attractive in its intuitive logic and seeming simplicity, the heavy focus on the concept has not always been helpful given the attendant political sensitivities, and the fact that the U.N.'s situational awareness needs are actually much broader and less threatening. The U.N. needs situational awareness not only to support its political and security work, but also to fulfil the human rights, humanitarian, and development aspects of its mandate. Moreover, situational awareness is essential to ensure the safety and security of U.N. staff, troops, and police.

A 2015 report of the International Peace Institute recommended the establishment of a system that would harness information to meet the needs of the spectrum of U.N. decision makers:

A U.N. [situational awareness] system should stretch from the field to headquarters. The primary clients should be mission leadership, headquarters leadership, and the Security Council. It should include: an overarching leadership and direction capacity; consistent and sensitive collection policies appropriate to the purposes of the U.N.; a common collation platform; unification of existing situational awareness bodies; staff members with relevant backgrounds and professional training; systematic output of consistent products; implementation of information-handling protocols; and professionally managed product dissemination. The system should be geared toward informing preventive and responsive action at the field and headquarters levels, supporting mandating, and planning and operational activities. It should inform but operate independently from the political and policy streams.²³

The call for such a system was subsequently echoed in the 2016 report of the U.N. Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34).²⁴

The Contours of U.N. Needs

The existing U.N. situational awareness entities and process do not meet the organization's needs. At headquarters, timely U.N. response was hampered in recent

years by the lack of predictive integrated analysis on the Arab Spring uprisings and the crises in South Sudan and the Central African Republic. At the operational level, the U.N. has been criticized for failing to heed warnings in many situations, including in Somalia,²⁵ the Democratic Republic of the Congo,²⁶ and South Sudan.²⁷ Across much of the system, situational awareness efforts tend to focus on longer-term planning and crisis response. In order to support early action, to identify trends and triggers, there is an ongoing need for systematically produced, forward-looking situational awareness. The same pool of information can be drawn upon to develop a series of products that serve a range of needs. Decision makers do not need masses of information — they need robust, objective analysis and assessment provided at key points in the policy cycle.

In the Security Council, the U.K., the U.S., and France continue to look to each other and their own intelligence networks for “ground truth,” which they consider will be more timely and less sanitized than information from the Secretariat.²⁸ Conversely, the ten elected members of the Council, which generally do not have the expansive intelligence networks of the five permanent members, rely heavily on the Secretariat for information and analysis to be able to participate actively in Council decision making.²⁹ Security Council members not only need better information and analysis from the Secretariat, but they need it to be more frank and timely to effectively inform their decision making and enable earlier action on conflict prevention and response.

Troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs and PCCs) need threat assessments of the situations into which their personnel are about to deploy. Such analysis may carry host state sensitivities, but the U.N. has a duty to ensure that TCCs and PCCs fully understand the environment into which they are being asked to deploy and are therefore able to prepare and equip their troops and police accordingly.

Senior leaders at U.N. headquarters need situational awareness both to support intergovernmental processes and to provide strategic direction to missions, programs, and field presences. They are often well served by their own departmental or agency issue-specific analysis (focusing on the political situation, the security situation, the humanitarian situation, etc.), and they currently receive an integrated daily situational report containing a description of global events. However, information sharing between departments and agencies is often poor, and integrated, predictive analysis and assessment are missing. Senior leaders need a common understanding that reconciles various perspectives to enable better informed and coordinated decision making and planning.

In the field, senior U.N. leaders need a greater granularity of information and analysis to manage missions and programs and ensure that operations are executed safely and effectively. They too need predictive, integrated analysis and assessment to help them act earlier and in a more coordinated manner. The situational awareness of U.N. senior leaders in the field differs significantly. There is a large gap at the regional level. Some are well-served at the country level, especially where

there is a peacekeeping mission present, but where there is only a country team the unmet needs are far greater.

Beyond senior leaders, further need exists. Experts (such as those recruited to the Standby Mediation Team) need a base level of information and analysis, which they do not currently receive.³⁰ Most staff arriving in a field post are reliant upon their own knowledge and research; they too would benefit from a situation overview to bring them up to speed more quickly and ensure that they operate from a common knowledge base.³¹

Past Efforts to Improve Situational Awareness

In order to address the need to improve U.N. situational awareness, it is important to understand the reasons for the success and failure of past efforts. As the following review demonstrates, the need for improved situational awareness within the U.N. has long been recognised, and a plethora of initiatives have been launched with varying success. Those that were organizationally anchored and framed in the context of the political work of the U.N. often attracted member state resistance, while those that attached to the organization's peacekeeping, humanitarian, development, and safety and security work met with greater member state support — even when focused on crisis prevention and response.

Reform efforts have tended to be piecemeal and targeted at a specific part of the U.N. system (e.g., the Security Council or senior U.N. officials at headquarters), since comprehensive and systematic reform has been seen as an overwhelming task. However, such approaches are not effective, given the very wide and interconnected set of agendas for which the U.N. is responsible.

From the outset

The absence of a robust situational awareness capacity has hampered the efforts of the U.N. since its inception. The U.N.'s second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, viewed the absence of a situational awareness system as a “serious handicap”³² and advocated a conflict prevention role for the organization, premised on the early identification of potential conflicts.³³ However, he rejected the establishment of a permanent U.N. intelligence capacity, insisting that the U.N. must have “clean hands.”³⁴ Hammarskjöld's successor, Secretary-General U Thant, held the view that “the lack of authoritative information, without which the Secretary-General cannot speak ...” was one of two “insuperable obstacles” he faced during his tenure.³⁵

1960 – Intelligence in peacekeeping operations

As the U.N.'s peacekeeping role grew, so too did its situational awareness activities, primarily in the form of military intelligence at the tactical and operational levels. The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), established in 1960, eventually developed a Military Information Branch with extensive operations, including wireless message interception, aerial surveillance, and detainee interrogation.³⁶

“Interestingly, U.N. headquarters in New York City rarely or never asked for such personnel, but once in the field, intelligence officers were much used and appreciated by colleagues, both in the field and at U.N. headquarters. It was found, for example, that professional intelligence officers had better knowledge of intelligence procedures and better access to foreign intelligence sources and agencies. Those who had security clearances were able to obtain information that otherwise would not have been available.”

—Walter Dorn

Walter Dorn, “Intelligence at Headquarters? The Information and Research Unit in Eastern Zaire,” *Intelligence and National Security* 20, no. 3 (2005).

Most subsequent U.N. peacekeeping operations have had at least some military intelligence element.³⁷

As successive peacekeeping missions differed significantly in mandate, composition, and permissiveness of environment, so too did their military intelligence capabilities. Some had no dedicated intelligence capabilities, while others were more progressive, from the inclusion of intelligence officers in national contingents to the use of paid informants,³⁸ unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)³⁹, and eventually Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) companies.⁴⁰ Often, however, military intelligence was a national contingent activity, not a mission-driven effort, and information sharing proved difficult.⁴¹ The evolution of intelligence within U.N. peacekeeping operations is unsurprising given its central role in military operations generally. Intelligence is a core element of a military contingent, without which most commanders would not deploy due to reduced force protection, increased risk, and difficulty of

understanding the environment and therefore achieving the mission.

While the use of intelligence progressed expeditiously in the field in response to operational exigencies, the evolution at the strategic level was much slower.

1987 – Office for Research and the Collection of Information

In 1987, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar established the Office for Research and the Collection of Information (ORCI) at U.N. headquarters. The office was mandated with an early warning role, “gathering information, conducting research, assessing global trends, and bringing potential trouble spots and critical security situations to the attention of the Secretary-General.”⁴² It was supposed to coordinate information-gathering and analysis among U.N. agencies and be the center of an early warning system. However, the work of the ORCI was beset with political and bureaucratic challenges.⁴³ Departments were unwilling to share information with it, and in the end, the 20-person office was limited to summarizing news

media and other open-source information.⁴⁴ It was disbanded in 1992 as part of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's reform efforts, and its functions were disbursed into the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

1993 – Peacekeeping Situation Center

The expansion of U.N. peacekeeping in the early 1990s⁴⁵ was accompanied by the creation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) at headquarters, and in 1993, the establishment of the Situation Center within DPKO. The Situation Center was intended to function as a 24/7 link between peacekeeping missions, U.N. headquarters, and diplomatic missions in New York. In addition to monitoring field missions, it drew on both open sources and information generated from within the U.N., to produce daily situational reports. However, when that proved insufficient and there was a need to draw on member states' diplomatic and intelligence networks, the Information and Research Unit (IRU) was established within the Situation Center.⁴⁶ The IRU was staffed by U.S., U.K., French, and Russian "gratis" officers, seconded from their national military intelligence branches. This carried no cost to the U.N. and therefore didn't require budgetary approval.⁴⁷ However, member states comprising the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)⁴⁸ objected to the practice of providing gratis officers because it was limited to wealthy and primarily Global North countries. When this practice ceased in the late 1990s, it resulted in the dissolution of the IRU.⁴⁹

1995 – Humanitarian Early Warning System and ReliefWeb

In 1995, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (subsequently the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA), initiated an ambitious early warning project, the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS). With a very small staff, HEWS attempted to use a range of information sources to monitor deterioration in over 100 countries, focusing on those most likely to escalate to the level of humanitarian crisis. The small staff was overwhelmed with information and unable to undertake focused, substantive analysis. Having become essentially a database of mainly statistical information with automated programs for pattern recognition, and having issued no early warnings of armed conflict, HEWS was wound up in 1998.⁵⁰ A less ambitious version of the initiative was revived in 2004 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Sub-Working Group on Preparedness as the Humanitarian Early Warning Service (HEWSweb),⁵¹ which was essentially a web-based platform for collating and displaying information from a range of sources. The website was relaunched in 2011, but has since been abandoned.⁵²

In 1996, OCHA established ReliefWeb, partly in response to what was perceived as a critical lack of sharing humanitarian information during the Rwanda crisis. Not an early warning mechanism, but an important situational awareness initiative, the website consolidated humanitarian information (e.g., reports and maps) from

many sources, making it widely available to humanitarian actors at headquarters and field levels. It was endorsed by the U.N. General Assembly in 1996 and 2003.⁵³ Heavily utilized and highly valued, ReliefWeb remains in existence 20 years later.

1998 – U.N. Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action

Initially established in 1995 to coordinate peacekeeping, humanitarian, and political functions, in 1998 the Framework Team expanded its focus to include early warning and preventive action, and in 2002, a small secretariat was established within the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP).⁵⁴ Early warning became one of the team's primary objectives, with a mandate to "proactively identify situations that are prone to, or at risk of, intra-state or inter-group violence; to monitor such situations for signs of increasing risk of violence; and to encourage and/or facilitate interagency exchanges on recommendations for early action."⁵⁵ However, with no organized, systematic early warning system to draw upon, the early warning role had little depth, and in any case, the team was equally concerned with preventive actions, preparedness measures, and capacity building. The Framework Team ceased its activities following the 2014 restructure of UNDP. It was replaced by a similar mechanism, the Conflict Prevention Task Team; however, the work of that team has since been suspended.

1998 – Department of Political Affairs Prevention Team

In 1995, the Policy Analysis Team was established within DPA with a mandate including the improvement of the department's ability to carry out early warning. DPA was subsequently charged with convening the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, created in 1997 as a forum for "high-level discussion and decision-making" on early warning and prevention.⁵⁶ In 1998, the DPA Prevention Team was created to identify situations at risk of escalating into violent conflict and to plan a system for early warning and prevention.⁵⁷ The Prevention Team produced monthly notes, but the envisaged system was never realized. DPA continues to hold responsibilities related to early warning in support of conflict prevention and is the lead for political analysis within the U.N. ⁵⁸ One of the core functions of DPA's regional divisions is "[i]dentifying potential crisis areas and providing early warning to the Secretary-General on developments and situations affecting international peace and security."⁵⁹

2000 – Report of the Panel on U.N. Peace Operations (Brahimi Report) and the Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat

Following failures in Rwanda⁶⁰ and Srebrenica,⁶¹ the U.N. entered a period of reflection. Secretary-General Annan commissioned a panel to review U.N. peace and security activities with an aim of conducting them better in the future. The resulting Brahimi Report,⁶² released in 2000, recognized the need for a better situational awareness system within the U.N. and recommended the establishment of a peak analysis body at headquarters, the Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat (EISAS).⁶³

EISAS was intended to draw together existing U.N. peace and security situational awareness and policy planning capacities to provide early warning, analysis, current reporting, and background information. The Secretary-General and senior U.N. Secretariat officials were intended to be the main beneficiaries, although EISAS products were also intended to assist the Secretariat provide the Security Council and TCCs and PCCs with risk assessments of the areas into which they were deployed or about to deploy.⁶⁴

Despite the Secretary-General reducing the size of the proposed body and the Security Council stressing the need to “improve the information gathering and analysis capacity of the Secretariat, with a view to improving the quality of advice to both the Secretariat and the Security Council,”⁶⁵ certain member states were uncomfortable with what they viewed as a U.N. intelligence agency that might probe into their internal affairs.⁶⁶ As a result, the membership declined to provide the resources needed to establish the entity. This was the first of several occasions on which member states limited the U.N.’s situational awareness capabilities by not providing sufficient resources despite stated political support, including a recognition by the General Assembly of the “need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations for early warning, collection of information and analysis.”⁶⁷

2001 – UNDP Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery Early Warning Team

From the late 1990s, there was a growing recognition within the international development community of the importance of conflict prevention as an integral part of poverty reduction and sustainable development. In 1997, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee published guidelines on Helping Prevent Violent Conflict.⁶⁸ Integral in that was the need to improve analyses of violent conflicts and their trajectory. This spurred the establishment of conflict early warning systems at the global, regional, and national levels, many of which were funded by international development agencies.⁶⁹ In 2001, the UNDP Executive Board established the Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) and within it a small early warning team. Following the 2014 restructure, an early warning capacity was retained within the Crisis Response Unit that replaced BCPR.

2001 – IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness

Also in 2001, efforts were made to improve early warning in the humanitarian community. The IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness was established. One of its objectives was “promulgation of early warning/early action information and advisories.”⁷⁰ Largely to reflect tasking, in 2013 the Sub-Working Group was retitled the Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience, and in 2016 as the Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness.⁷¹ An analysis subset of these entities has been responsible for producing the quarterly, latterly biannual, IASC Early

Warning-Early Action Report (currently titled IASC Early Warning, Early Action and Readiness Analysis). This analysis is currently the most comprehensive U.N. effort at global humanitarian early warning.

2003 – Humanitarian Information Centers

Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs) were an OCHA-led initiative that existed primarily between 2003 and 2008. They were deployed at the request of the Humanitarian Coordinator to sudden-onset disasters or complex emergencies to support the humanitarian community in the systematic and standardized collection, processing, and dissemination of information with the aim of improving coordination, situational understanding and decision making.⁷² Although HICs had challenges,⁷³ they were widely used and valued. However, following the 2005 humanitarian reforms that resulted in the cluster approach and the 2007 IASC guidelines calling for an information management capacity within each of the clusters,⁷⁴ HICs were disbanded – possibly prematurely.

2003 – Report of the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of U.N. Personnel in Iraq (Ahtisaari Report) and the Department of Safety and Security Threat and Risk Assessment Service

In August 2003, 22 U.N. staff were killed and over 150 people injured in the bombing of the Canal Hotel, the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad. Secretary-General Annan appointed a panel to review the incident. The resulting Ahtisaari Report highlighted the need for professional tools for the collection and analysis of threat information, and recommended among other things the establishment of, first, a “dedicated risk and threat assessment unit at Headquarters with dedicated links at the field level,” and, second, a “dedicated 24-hour operations centre.”⁷⁵ It stressed that security analysis needed to be shared widely across the security structure through “specialized information management tools that can guarantee both the efficacy of information sharing and the necessary security of communications.”⁷⁶

The reforms to the U.N. security system precipitated by the Ahtisaari Report resulted in the establishment of the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) incorporating the Threat and Risk Unit (latterly the Threat and Risk Assessment Service) and 24/7 Communications Center. Although the membership did not initially approve the full complement of posts requested by the Secretary-General, both units were well staffed and signaled the beginning of a trend of member states demonstrating a greater willingness to fund situational awareness for the purposes of internally focused U.N. safety and security, as opposed to externally focused conflict prevention and operational effectiveness.

2004 – Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change

In 2004, the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change highlighted the need for better information and analysis to meet the challenge of conflict prevention:

Prevention requires early warning and analysis that is based on objective and impartial research. Although the United Nations has some early-warning and analysis capacity scattered among different agencies and departments, the Secretary-General has not been able to establish any properly-resourced unit able to integrate inputs from these offices into early-warning reports and strategy options for purposes of decision-making. [...] ⁷⁷

Although some field-based agencies participate in early-warning mechanisms [...] the Secretary-General's access to local analysis of conflict is sharply limited. Greater interaction by United Nations political, peacekeeping and humanitarian departments with outside sources of early-warning information and of local knowledge of conflicts would enhance United Nations conflict management. [...] ⁷⁸

With member states having already rejected the EISAS proposal, this time the Panel called for the creation of a second Deputy Secretary-General post. The Secretary-General instead opted to create a “cabinet-style decision-making mechanism [...] to improve both policy and management.”⁷⁹

2005 – In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All and the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

Following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, it was assessed that thousands of lives could have been saved had an effective tsunami early warning system been in place. In the 2005 report *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All*, Secretary-General Annan called for “the establishment of a worldwide early warning system for all natural hazards” and requested the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) to undertake a survey of existing capacity and gaps.⁸⁰ Although there were significant gaps and varying effectiveness, the ISDR survey found a multitude of early warning systems for meteorological, hydrological, geological, and biological hazards existing at the country and sometimes regional level. It recommended the development of a globally comprehensive early warning system, rooted in the existing early warning systems and capacities.⁸¹

The report also proposed that the international community embrace the “responsibility to protect” as a basis for collective action.⁸² At the conclusion of the 2005 World Summit, the General Assembly stated that the international community should “support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability” to assist the protection of populations from atrocity crimes, which became part of the mandate of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the

Responsibility to Protect.⁸³ However, the following year, the Secretary-General observed with regret the lack of progress on developing the U.N.'s broader early warning and conflict prevention capacities.⁸⁴

2005 – Joint Operations Centers (JMACs) and Joint Mission Analysis Centers (JOCs)

Meanwhile, progress continued in peacekeeping operations. The development of JOCs and JMACs was driven from the field. Military personnel realized that military intelligence capabilities could not fulfil the entire information requirements of senior mission leaders, so missions started filling the gap in innovative ways. Eventually the issue was taken up at headquarters, with the Office of Military Affairs leading a working group. In 2006, a policy directing all missions to establish a JOC and JMAC was issued. In 2007, a three-person Research and Liaison Unit was established within the Situation Center to support the development of mission JMACs and produce their own analysis products. Coming soon after the Canal Hotel bombing and the Ahtisaari Report, member states supported the establishment of JOCs and JMACs in missions. Despite the fact that the scope of their work spanned the entire mission mandate, member states continued to highlight JOCs' and JMACs' positive impact on safety and security, and supported them on that basis.⁸⁵

2008 – Office of Military Affairs Assessments Team

Following the cessation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006, the Security Council broadened the mandate of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and increased the force strength. In 2007 the Strategic Military Cell (SMC) was established within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Military Division to "effectively support the scope and complexity of military tasks to be performed."⁸⁶ In essence, the European nations who contributed forces to the expanded mission lacked confidence in the management capabilities of the DPKO Military Division and were only prepared to participate on the condition that a dedicated management capacity staffed by their own personnel be included at U.N. headquarters. A key part of the SMC was the "J2" military intelligence function, which developed threat assessments and reported daily on UNIFIL military activities. This function was considered of such utility that when the SMC was drawing down, it was one of the capacities retained until the end.⁸⁷ Always intended to be a temporary measure, the SMC was wound up in 2010.

The intelligence function in the SMC paved the way for the establishment of the DPKO Office of Military Affairs Assessments Team in 2008 as part of the departmental restructure and reinforcement of the Military Division.⁸⁸ The NAM's wariness of intelligence was partly overcome by a sense of inequity at a headquarters J2 function being established especially for a European-dominated operation. Nevertheless, member states declined to provide the full resources requested by the Secretary-General.

2012 – *Report of the Secretary-General’s Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka (Petrie Report) and the Human Rights Up Front initiative*

Following the death of thousands of civilians in the final months of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2008-2009, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established a panel to review the U.N.’s actions. The resulting 2015 Petrie Report found that inadequate analysis and understanding of the conflict was one factor that contributed to the U.N.’s poor performance.⁸⁹ It advocated for additional analysis capacities within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) and U.N. Country Teams (UNCTs) in crisis situations.⁹⁰

In response to the Petrie Report, the Secretary-General instigated the Human Rights Up Front initiative, which instituted a series of mechanisms intended to use a human rights focus to enhance the U.N.’s preventive posture. The initiative committed the U.N. to establish an information-sharing and early warning mechanism and a common information system for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law to strengthen early warning and prevention. The former manifested as a series of regional quarterly (now monthly) review meetings. Actions are now underway to implement the proposed common information management system (CIMS) with efforts initially focused on: (1) ensuring all missions and UNCTs holding regular analytical discussions; (2) establishing at headquarters a remote monitoring and analysis capacity; and (3) enabling better information sharing.



2013 – U.N. Operations and Crisis Center

In 2011, an internal effort was launched to bring together existing entities to capitalize on organizational synergies and economies of scale, and in doing so improve the situational awareness of U.N. leaders and crisis coordination at headquarters. As a result of this process, in 2013, the UNOCC was established by drawing together the Peacekeeping Situation Center, the DSS Communications Center, and staffing contributions from other operational departments and agencies (DPA, DPI, OCHA, OHCHR, and UNDP). Organizationally situated within the EOSG, the UNOCC has the dual role of ensuring the situational awareness of U.N. leaders at headquarters and supporting system-wide crisis management efforts in New York. Because the UNOCC was established from within existing resources rather than seeking new posts, it was not subject to member state review and approval.

2015 – Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Analysis and Planning Team

In 2015, the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO Report)⁹¹ stressed the need for the Secretariat to “significantly enhance its strategic analysis of conflict dynamics at the local, national, and regional levels to support the formulation of strategy and policy.”⁹² It recommended the overhaul of information and analysis structures within missions,⁹³ and at headquarters highlighted the need for “a system-wide dedicated capacity to serve as the institutional hub for strategic analysis and planning [...]”⁹⁴ In this context, the report recognized the requirement for professional analysts with access to system-wide knowledge, given that desk officers are stretched thin over many portfolios and often overwhelmed by the day-to-day demands.⁹⁵ The report also argued that the Secretary-General should bring “early analysis and frank advice to the Security Council on matters that may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security,” consistent with the powers provided under Article 99 of the Charter.⁹⁶

In response to the HIPPO recommendations, Secretary-General Ban established a small centralized analysis and planning team in EOSG⁹⁷ and tasked the Secretariat with “developing parameters for an information and intelligence framework that can support field missions in operating effectively and safely.”⁹⁸

2016 – Security Council Situational Awareness Briefings

In the 1990s, the Secretariat provided a daily situational awareness briefing to Security Council members. The practice ceased with broader changes in Council working methods, particularly informal consultations. Security Council Report (an NGO that promotes transparency and effectiveness in the Council) assessed that “[t]he cessation of the daily high-level comprehensive situation briefing from the Secretariat has meant that the Council members are less informed about developments and less able to respond quickly.”⁹⁹

The U.K. instituted monthly horizon scanning briefings to the Council, which

were held between 2010 and 2013. Delivered by the DPA Under-Secretary-General, briefings were held at the invitation of the monthly president, which was not always issued. Early warning in the Council is very sensitive and highly political, and the horizon-scanning briefings were eventually abandoned¹⁰⁰ and succeeded by DPA briefings, which focus more on the activities of the department rather than analysis and assessment of emerging or evolving situations.¹⁰¹

In 2016, while a non-permanent member of the Security Council, New Zealand, in partnership with Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, instigated monthly Security Council situational awareness briefings. These briefings are not dependent on a request from the Council president. They are informal and orally presented (supported by maps and graphics), and no written document is produced. The briefings are followed by interactive dialogue between Council members and Secretariat staff. Security Council situational awareness briefings were intended to be integrated — drawing together the political, security, humanitarian, human rights, and development analysis into a single U.N. voice. However, the Secretariat has struggled to pull the system together to deliver the briefings in a unified manner.



EXISTING U.N. ENTITIES AND PROCESSES

This section presents an overview and analysis of existing U.N. situational awareness entities and processes, focusing first on the headquarters, and then on the field. Annex A provides a more detailed description of each of the entities and processes, supplemented by brief comments.

Numerous dedicated situational awareness entities exist within the U.N., information-sharing fora are scattered across the system, and related responsibilities are mainstreamed into the policy and operational work of many staff at the headquarters and field levels. However, the existing situational awareness entities and processes are not joined up into a coherent system. Information-sharing fora are seldom built upon or fed by systematic information gathering and analysis processes. Desk officers are often too busy to fulfill situational awareness responsibilities. Information-sharing and analytical collaboration is often dependent upon personalities.

While the needs of some individual departments and agencies are well served by existing arrangements, the broader situational awareness needs of the U.N. remain unmet. Many of the situational awareness entities produce excellent analysis, but it is usually issue-specific (e.g., focusing on just physical security issues or just drugs and crime issues). There is very little analysis that draws together political, security, human rights, humanitarian, and development perspectives. Nor is there much analysis that is forward-looking, focused on predicting or forecasting the likely evolution of a situation.

Fractures in the system exist both horizontally, among entities in the same location, and vertically, between the field and headquarters. This results in both gaps and duplication, and in some instances breeds competition between entities and a reluctance to share information or analysis.

The main gaps identified are:

- a lack of dedicated situational awareness capacities at the regional level;
- a lack of dedicated situational awareness capacities in country teams;
- a lack of predictive analysis; and
- a lack of integrated analysis.

Headquarters Entities and Processes

There is significant situational awareness capacity at the headquarters level, spread across locations in New York, Geneva, Vienna, and Rome. Although efforts have been made to join up existing capacities, including through the UNOCC and the IASC, collaboration could be improved. While the individual situational awareness needs of some departments and agencies are well-served by their internal capacities, others

do not have sufficient capacity and require more or better issue-specific analysis for their internal decision-making and planning purposes.

The main gap at the headquarters level is the production of integrated, predictive analysis and assessment products. There are a number of mechanisms that bring together representatives from departments and agencies (e.g., the Executive Committee, Deputies Committee, Regional Monthly Review (RMR), integrated task forces, inter-agency task forces), but these tend to be focused on information exchange, policy harmonization, and activity coordination rather than predictive analysis and assessment of a situation or event. Moreover, while they provide useful fora for information sharing, they are generally not fed by regular, systematic, integrated situational awareness analysis processes or products.

Access to information in countries in which the U.N. field presence does not have a dedicated situational awareness entity remains a significant challenge for situational awareness capacities at the headquarters level. Even where there is such a capacity, headquarters entities sometimes lack the authority to “reach into” the U.N. field presence to request information and analysis.

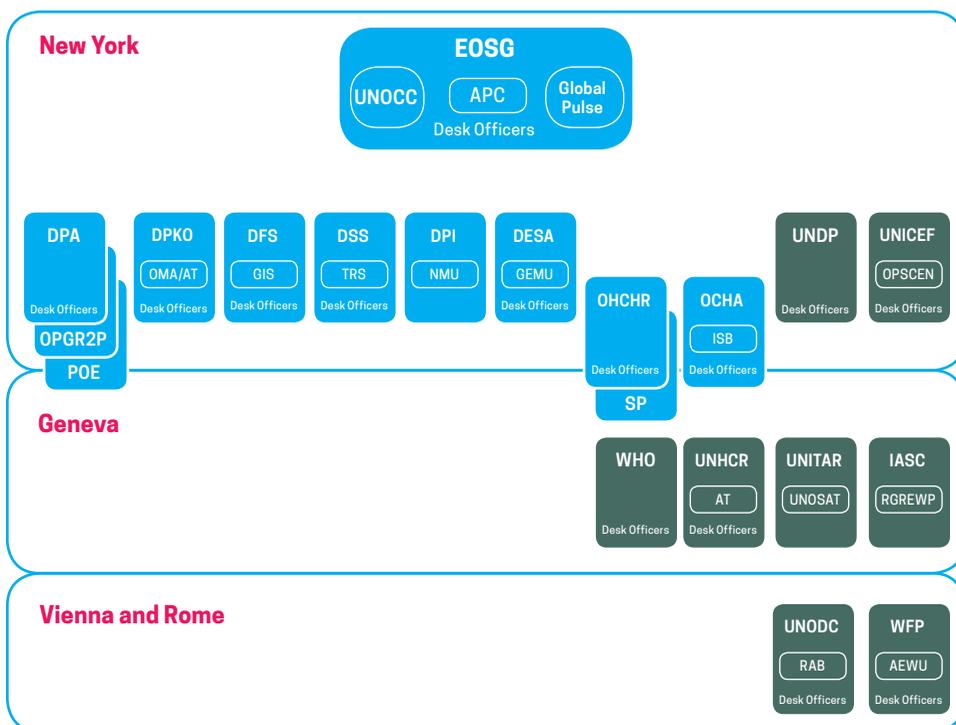
Headquarters Entities

The following lists situational awareness entities at the headquarters level. Some are dedicated to situational awareness, while others have a significant situational awareness function as part of their broader role. Dedicated entities are indicated with an asterisk.

- Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG)
 - Analysis and Planning Capacity (APC)
 - U.N. Operations and Crisis Center (UNOCC)*
 - Global Pulse*
- Department of Political Affairs (DPA)
- Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)
 - Office of Military Affairs Assessments Team (OMA/AT)*
- Department of Field Support (DFS)
 - Geospatial Information Section (GIS)*
- Department of Safety and Security (DSS)
 - Threat and Risk Assessment Service (TRS)*
- Department of Public Information (DPI)
 - News Monitoring Unit (NMU)*
- Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
 - Global Economic Monitoring Unit (GEMU)*
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
 - Information Services Branch (ISB)*
- Office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect (OPGR2B)
- Security Council Sanctions Committees
 - Panels of Experts (POE)
- Human Rights Council
 - Special Procedures (SP)
- U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
 - Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB)
- U.N. Development Programme (UNDP)
 - Crisis Response Unit
- U.N. International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
 - Emergency Operations Center (OPSCEN)*
- World Food Programme (WFP)
 - Analysis and Early Warning Unit (AEWU)*
- U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
 - Analysis team*
- U.N. Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
 - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT)*
- World Health Organization (WHO)
 - Health Emergencies Programme (WHE)
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC; not technically a U.N. entity)
 - Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness (RG REWP)*

DPA has a long-standing conflict early warning mandate that it has struggled to fulfil due to political resistance and related resource challenges. The department does not currently have a dedicated situational awareness unit, but relies on its desk officers. These staff members have a range of other policy and operational duties and do not always have the time to devote to producing regular, robust, and predictive analysis. Given the primacy of political and security issues within the U.N., successive Secretaries-General have relied upon DPA for information and advice in the first instance. However, the department is not in a position to draw information from across the U.N. system and to provide an integrated and holistic analysis of a situation. As a result, analysis produced by DPA is often focused on political issues and geared toward political engagement options.



Several departments and agencies have well established, dedicated situational awareness entities that effectively fulfil their issue-specific situational awareness needs — for example, the DSS Threat and Risk Assessment Service, the DESA Global Economic Monitoring Unit, the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch, and the WFP Analysis and Early Warning Unit. Human rights analysis has long been a key part of instability prediction, as violations are often a precursor to broader conflict, and human rights analysis considers systemic and structural issues that may act as a trigger for a deterioration or crisis. However, in the absence of a dedicated situational awareness capacity within OHCHR, it does not have the capacity to produce systematic analysis on a regular, ongoing basis. This is one of the issues that the Human Rights Up Front initiative seeks to address.

The UNOCC was established in 2013 with a broad situational awareness mandate, intended to support decision makers across the spectrum of U.N. operational departments and agencies. It represented a concerted effort to bring existing situational awareness capacities together, incorporating DPKO and DSS entities and seeking staffing contributions from its other stakeholders within the U.N. system (DPA, DPI, OHCHR, OCHA, UNDP, etc.). It has been successful in its 24/7 situation monitoring, current information reporting, and crisis management support functions, but has struggled to fulfil its integrated analysis role. This is partly due to a lack of departmental cooperation, insufficient authority, and inadequate staffing of its analysis capacity.

The resources directed at situational awareness within OCHA exceed those in the rest of the U.N. It is unsurprising, therefore, that OCHA situational awareness products often surpass those produced elsewhere in the system. However, they do tend to focus on quantitative data and past events, and there is a recognized need for more qualitative and forward-looking analysis.

Headquarters Processes

In addition to issue-specific reporting and analysis undertaken by individual departments and agencies, there are a number of processes through which information is drawn together to support senior leaders' decision-making and planning efforts at the headquarters level:

- Formal and informal briefings to the Security Council
- Executive Committee, Deputies Committee, Regional Monthly Review, and Interagency/Integrated Task Forces
- UNOCC daily briefing notes and integrated situational analysis
- IASC Early Warning, Early Action, and Readiness Report
- Analysis in support of planning processes

Although efforts are made to incorporate information from across the pillars, formal briefings to the Council have been criticized for being politicized, sanitized, and often too heavily focused on the political and security aspects of a situation, to the detriment of humanitarian and human rights issues. In the 1990s, the Secretariat provided an informal, daily high-level comprehensive situation brief to Security Council members at a morning meeting. However, as Council working methods changed, the practice ceased.¹⁰² The current DPA Security Council briefings are the successor to horizon-scanning briefings that took place from 2010 to 2013. While the horizon-scanning briefings had broad scope and situational focus, the current format tends to focus more on DPA operational activity. The monthly Security Council situational awareness briefings introduced in September 2016 provide an opportunity for the Secretariat to brief the Council in an informal setting, enabling more frank briefings, including on situations not on the Council's agenda. However, the Secretariat has struggled to deliver integrated briefings, and it is still left to Council members to reconcile a series of departmental and agency perspectives.

The Executive Committee (principal level), Deputies Committee (Assistant-Secretary-General level), Regional Monthly Review (director level) and Interagency/Integrated Task Forces (working level) are the main U.N. integrated decision-making and coordination mechanisms. The Executive Committee and Deputies Committee are very important high-level decision-making fora focused on developing and harmonizing U.N. positions and policy. Such fora should be informed by an integrated situational awareness briefing at the outset, so that

senior decision makers can focus their efforts not on trying to work out what is happening, but on what the U.N. should do about it. The Regional Monthly Review process, however, was always intended to have an early-warning type function. In the current format, the joint situational analysis takes place by way of discussion at monthly meetings. The problem is that discussion is not underpinned by a systematic process that monitors indicators, looks for triggers, and analyzes trends. Additionally, there are many countries/situations to be covered in a short period of time, and the meeting is also intended to be a forum for coordinating U.N. positions and activities. Because there is no written analytical input or output that can be shared outside of the meeting, the benefit of any joint situational analysis undertaken in the meeting is often limited.

The UNOCC produces daily briefing notes, which draw together information from across the system and are disseminated to U.N. leaders at headquarters. They focus on current information and do not provide analysis. In order to produce the report, UNOCC policy requires its stakeholders to provide information on a daily basis. This has had the downstream effect of causing some departments and agencies to set up systems for their field presences to provide information on a more regular basis. However, this remains a work in progress. The UNOCC daily briefing notes are valued by senior leaders and mean that they start the day with a common information base and frame of reference. Although the policy requirement exists, the UNOCC has been less successful in fulfilling its integrated situational analysis mandate. The process has not gained traction among some departments, and the demand pull from senior leadership has been inconsistent.

The IASC Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness successfully harnesses situational awareness capacities within the humanitarian and development community to produce the biannual Early Warning, Early Action, and Readiness Report. While that analytical product is highly valued, challenges persist with its production and dissemination, and the Reference Group is not a standing body with the capacity to provide ongoing, responsive situational awareness support to decision makers.

Other integrated fora, such as the integrated task forces and inter-agency task forces provide a valuable mechanism for information-sharing, planning, and coordinating U.N. activities. However, they are generally not used to produce regular, predictive, integrated analysis and assessment products. The U.N. Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning requires that integrated analysis is undertaken in support of major planning efforts connected with mission start-ups, draw-downs, or significant changes in the environment.¹⁰³ The strategic assessment process is robust but heavy, and as result is undertaken infrequently. For example, it was not conducted following the outbreak of violence in South Sudan in December 2013. It usually is conducted over a significant period of time, involves many actors, and is geared toward developing specific planning options. While the assessment is of great value, the need remains for regular, ongoing, responsive integrated analysis and assessment.

Field Entities and Processes

U.N. situational awareness capacity in the field is very uneven, differing significantly depending on the U.N. presence deployed. In countries where there is a peacekeeping operation, a large political mission or an OCHA presence, the U.N.'s situational awareness is generally good. The biggest gaps are at the regional level, where the U.N. is particularly fragmented and there is very limited dedicated situational awareness capacity, and in country teams without an OCHA presence or a Peace and Development Advisor (PDA). Even where there is significant situational awareness capacity, integrated predictive analysis consistently remains a major gap.

Field Entities

The following lists identify situational awareness entities at the regional and country levels. Those dedicated to situational awareness are indicated with an asterisk.

Regional Level

- Regional Commissions
- Regional Special Political Missions
 - Research and Analysis Unit* (RAU)
- Regional Humanitarian Coordinators
 - Information Management (IM) Unit*
- Department of Safety and Security
 - Regional Security Information Teams* (RSIT)
- Regional offices of UNDP, OCHA, OHCHR, UNODC, etc.

The U.N. has significant presence at the regional level. There are five regional commissions,¹⁰⁴ several political missions with a regional mandate,¹⁰⁵ three regional humanitarian coordinators,¹⁰⁶ and a number of departments and agencies (including DSS, UNDP, OCHA, OHCHR, and UNODC) with substantial regional offices. While most of the U.N. presences have analysis of the regional situation as part of their broader mandate, there is very little dedicated situational awareness capacity at the regional level and few mechanisms that bring the system together to share information and conduct joint analysis.

Some special political missions with regional mandates have very small research and analysis units. Regional humanitarian coordinators have dedicated information management teams within their offices. Because of the decentralized nature of UNDP, much conflict analysis occurs in regional bureaus. The most concerted effort at regional situational awareness analysis is that of the DSS Threat and Risk Service, which has very modest dedicated situational awareness capacity at the regional level, with Regional Security Information Teams (comprising two

analysts each) in the Sahel, Central Africa, and the Middle East, and stand-alone analysts for Asia, the Pacific, North Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.¹⁰⁷ Those analysts are mandated to undertake analysis and assessment drawing on information from across the region, but with such limited capacity their ability to produce in-depth, robust product is minimal.¹⁰⁸

While there are several excellent regional initiatives that aim to facilitate the sharing of information (e.g., the Middle East Intermission Platform) and analytical collaboration (e.g., the U.N. Office for West Africa forecasting group and horizon scanning exercises), these tend to be ad hoc and do not necessarily draw in the spectrum of U.N. system actors. Despite most conflicts having a significant regional dimension, they are still often analyzed within the confines of the nationally bound mandate of a particular U.N. office or country presence. Both at headquarters and in the field, the lack of integrated analysis of the regional situation is considered a critical gap.

Country Level

Peacekeeping operations

- Joint capacities – Joint Operations Center (JOC),* Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC),* and the GIS team*
- Military intelligence capacities – U2 in the force headquarters,* intelligence officers in infantry battalions,* special forces units, and military reconnaissance units*
- Police intelligence capacities – Criminal Intelligence Units (CIUs)* and intelligence officers within formed police units*
- Security Operations Centers (SOC)/Security Information and Operations Center (SIOC)/Security Information Coordination Unit (SICU)*

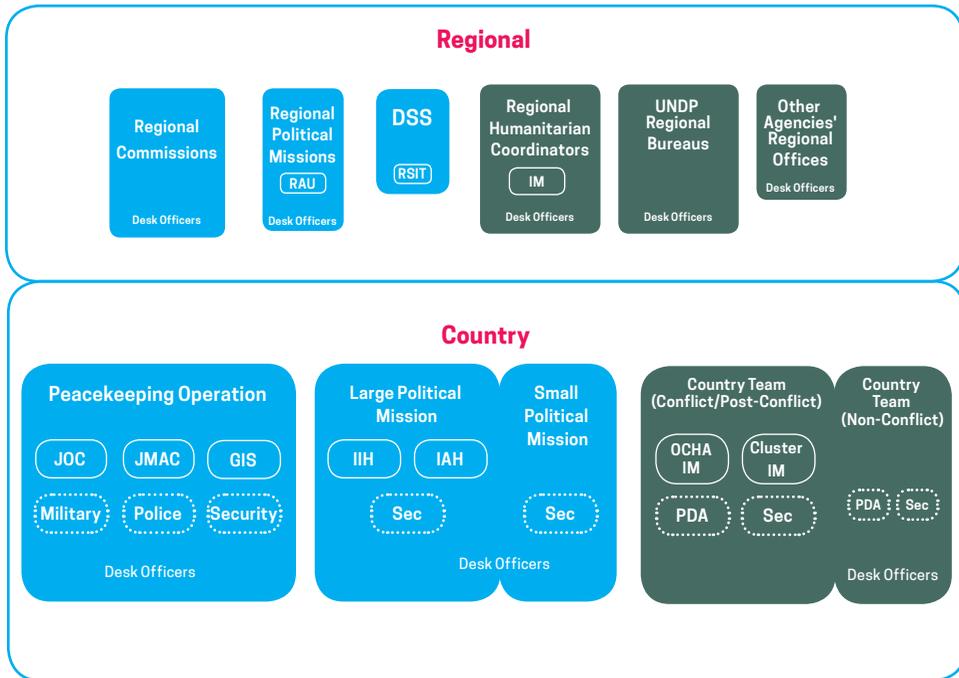
Special political missions

- Joint capacities – Integrated Information Hub (IIH),* Integrated Analysis Hub (IAH),* and GIS team*
- SOC/SIOC/SICU*

U.N. Country Teams

- Peace and Development Advisors (PDA)
- OCHA Information Management (IM) Team*
- Security Section

U.N. leaders in peacekeeping missions are usually well-served by their dedicated situational awareness capacities. However, the composition, capability, and performance of those entities differ significantly across missions. Work is currently



underway within DPKO to improve information collection, collation, and analysis across all elements of peacekeeping operations,¹⁰⁹ with notable advancements on the adoption of more advanced technologies (such as UAVs¹¹⁰ and information and geospatial technologies¹¹¹) and the peacekeeping intelligence framework.¹¹² There remains, however, a need for more forward-looking, collaborative, and integrated analysis prepared jointly by the mission and country team.

The situation in special political missions differs between the larger, more operational presences (e.g., in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and Colombia) and smaller diplomatic entities (e.g., in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan and South Sudan, and Myanmar). Drawing from the JOC and JMAC concepts, larger missions have included integrated information hubs (IIH) and integrated analysis hubs (IAH). Often these entities are very lightly staffed with limited capacity, but their output is generally valued by the mission. In special political missions without a dedicated situational awareness capacity, related responsibilities fall to political affairs officers, who are often too busy with diplomatic support and policy activity to properly fulfil a situational awareness role. As a result, there is often a significant gap, which in some cases efforts are made to fill with news media and security summaries.

Country teams do not have a dedicated situational awareness capacity. In addition to the situational awareness role played by some Resident Coordinators' offices and the subject-specific reporting through each agency, the broader



situational awareness of country team leaders is derived from several sources: (1) the security team, (2) the OCHA information management team, where deployed, (3) the PDA, where deployed, and (4) the situational awareness capacities of the peacekeeping or special political mission, where deployed. Where there is an OCHA information management team, more qualitative analysis and analysis beyond humanitarian issues is needed. Where there is a PDA, integrated analysis is good, but it is a heavy burden for one person whose role is only partly analysis and partly “strategic guidance and implementation of conflict prevention initiatives.”²¹³ Where there is a mission, integrated analysis remains a gap, and in most cases analytical collaboration between the mission and country team could be improved. Where these elements are not present, country teams are heavily dependent on news media and the security section. One of the first focus areas of the common information management system instigated by the Human Rights Up Front initiative is promoting the holding of regular analytical discussions at the country level.

Responding to the need for better situational awareness, several country teams have instigated their own innovative initiatives. In Lebanon, for example, the Resident Coordinator’s office is leading a process to pull together information and analysis from across U.N. presences in the country. In Colombia, OCHA and UNDP have joined forces to establish an interagency information management and analysis unit. In Kenya, an information management group of 12 UNCT members, co-led by the senior human rights advisor and PDA, is producing regular integrated analysis related to possible election risks. The country teams for both Libya and Syria have each commissioned a consultant to undertake a detailed conflict analysis.

Field Processes

In addition to issue-specific reporting and analysis through individual mission components and agencies, there are two main ways that information is drawn together to support senior leaders' decision-making and planning efforts in the field: (1) peacekeeping missions' integrated daily situational awareness reports and (2) analysis in support of planning processes.

DPKO policy requires all peacekeeping missions to produce daily situation reports that integrate information from across the mission. Some missions have issued directives requiring each component to provide information to the JOC daily. Information from country teams can also be incorporated, but there is no system in place and no policy requirement for country teams to share information regularly with the JOC. The integrated daily situation reports produced by the JOC are disseminated to mission leaders and shared with the UNOCC in New York, but there is no policy requirement for them to be shared with the country team. JMACs are required to produce integrated analysis and assessment, but the policy does not prescribe particular products, and again, there is no requirement to include information and analysis from country teams or to share the analytical products with them. Where the mission and country team are integrated, the Resident Coordinator (also a DSRSG) will receive JOC and JMAC products; otherwise, practice varies across missions.

Mission personnel are also required to contribute to situational analysis undertaken in support of major planning activities, such as integrated strategic assessments. Similarly, agency personnel conduct an in-depth situational analysis as part of the common country analysis (CCA) that feeds into production of country development assistance frameworks (UNDAFs)¹¹⁴ and as part of the development of humanitarian response plans (HRPs).¹¹⁵ Country teams are also encouraged to undertake conflict and development analysis in support of program development, strategic positioning of a country team, etc.¹¹⁶ However, these are also heavy processes, which are undertaken infrequently.

Given that there is no obligatory process that brings the U.N. system together at the country level to conduct regular integrated analysis and assessment, some individual initiatives have sought to fill the gap. For example, the UNMISS weekly early warning matrix is based on analysis undertaken jointly by mission and country team personnel.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

An analysis of the existing U.N. situational awareness entities and processes reveals a number of opportunities and several fundamental challenges.

Opportunities:

- The U.N. has a wealth of information at its disposal and would have access to more if it were to further develop partnerships and outreach.
- The U.N. already has significant situational awareness capacity and integrated decision-making and coordination fora into which situational awareness processes and products could feed.
- There is a thirst among U.N. leadership, at headquarters and in the field, for better integrated analysis and assessment.
- Secretary-General Guterres has signaled his intention to improve the U.N.'s situational awareness through a whole-of-U.N. approach.

Challenges:

- Sensitivities remain regarding U.N. situational awareness activity.
- Internal fragmentation of the U.N. undermines integrated efforts.
- Situational awareness is not organizationally prioritized and valued.
- The U.N. is often reactive because it does not employ an “information-led” approach.
- There is no overarching framework joining situational awareness entities and processes into a coherent whole.
- There is insufficient U.N. capacity dedicated to situational awareness at some levels.
- Situational awareness responsibilities are diffuse and accountability unclear.
- Situational awareness processes are not always linked to decision-making fora.
- The mixing of situational awareness and policy streams compromises objectivity.
- There is a very limited cadre of professional analysts.
- There are no common product requirements.
- There is no system-wide information-sharing protocol.
- There is no system-wide information-sharing platform.

“The problem I have is too much information. We don’t have standardized products and methods of communication. What I need is clearly set out EEs [essential elements of information] – just the stuff I need to know to make decisions.”

—Senior U.N. leader in the field

Interview with senior U.N. leader in the field,
October 2016

Opportunities

A Wealth of Information

The U.N. has an expansive global presence, and U.N. staff have access to an abundance of information in the course of their daily work. The information comes from a range of sources, and although it may be specialized, it can create a comprehensive and powerful picture when brought together and processed.

U.N. decision makers usually have a problem with quality rather than quantity of information. The amount of information that is useful is limited by their absorption capacity. Often senior leaders find themselves

overloaded with information, coming in through various channels and not organized, prioritized, rationalized or deconflicted. They are forced to spend time trolling through emails, trying to determine what they really need to read, and reconciling different perspectives. The wealth of information within the U.N. needs to be harnessed and processed into a few quality, targeted products so decision makers can read less, but with the assurance that those few products contain what they need.

Greater Benefit from Partnerships

The U.N. is never acting alone. In any situation, there will be member states, regional organizations, academic and research institutions, NGOs and other civil society actors engaged. While some U.N. entities undertake substantial outreach, U.N. conservatism relating to the protection of information can manifest as an unwillingness to substantively engage with external actors, which is often perceived as arrogance and results in missed opportunities. The U.N. has legitimate concerns about sharing information with external actors and must be careful to guard against undue influence, protect sensitive information, and maintain the independence of its own system. However, it can do those things while being open to the receipt of information from a diverse range of partners and engaging in analytical dialogues with external actors.

Currently member states share intelligence with the U.N. on an ad hoc basis. Efforts have been made in the past to institute more formal arrangements. However, in most cases, the intelligence that member states were able and willing to share with the U.N. was so sanitized that it was of little utility. Additionally, a perception arose that member states were exerting influence over some of the entities with

Improving U.N. Situational Awareness

Headquarters level	
U.N. entities present	Situational awareness capacity
EOSG, departments, and agencies	UNOCC in EOSG. Some departments and agencies have dedicated SA capacities. Need: - Integrated analysis
Regional level	
U.N. entities present	Situational awareness capacity
Regional Commissions, regional SPMs, regional HCs, regional offices of DSS, OHCHR, OCHA, UNDP, etc.	Minimal dedicated situational awareness capacity. Need: - Dedicated situational awareness capacity - Integrated regional analysis
Country level	
U.N. entities present	Situational awareness capacity
PKO	Always a JOC and JMAC. Need: - Integrated analysis (broader analysis, beyond political and security issues) - Regional analysis
SPM	Depends on size and function of SPM, sometimes an IIH and IAH. Need: - Dedicated situational awareness capacity - Integrated analysis (broader analysis, beyond political issues) - Regional analysis
UNCT (including OCHA)	Always OCHA information management team, sometimes a PDA. Need: - Integrated analysis (more qualitative and broader analysis beyond humanitarian issues) - Regional analysis
UNCT (no OCHA)	Sometimes a PDA. Need: - Dedicated situational awareness capacity - Integrated analysis - Regional analysis

which they were sharing information and thus compromising them, which ultimately contributed to their demise. While the U.N. should be open to receiving intelligence from any member state willing to share, there should not be undue dependence upon it, and the information should be evaluated in the same manner as any other. Of perhaps greater benefit would be regular informal discussions between U.N. situational awareness analysts and their counterparts in member states.

Several regional and sub-regional organizations, including the African Union and the European Union, have early warning systems¹⁷ with which a U.N. situational awareness system could link. Although the U.N. should not be dependent upon such mechanisms, it could derive great benefit by drawing from them and engaging in analytical exchanges.

There are usually many academic and research institutes, NGOs, civil society groups, and private sector actors that are monitoring or operating in situations in which the U.N. has an interest. Most have a particular agenda, which needs to be taken into account. However, if carefully approached, engagement with these communities can be mutually beneficial.

Significant Existing Capacity

As can be seen from the previous section, the U.N. has significant situational awareness capacity, although entities are not always well linked. The main capacity gaps exist at the regional level and in U.N. country teams. However, mechanisms for integrated analysis and assessment remain a gap across the board.

The U.N. organization has integrated decision-making and coordination fora into which situational awareness processes could feed. At the headquarters level, integrated situational awareness analysis products should inform the work of the Executive Committee and Deputies Committee, the Regional Monthly Review Meetings, and the integrated and inter-agency task forces. Integrated analysis should also support the work of the Security Council through the informal Security Council situational awareness briefing. There is less in the way of integrated decision-making fora at the regional level, but at the field level, integrated analysis should feed into the mission leadership and UNCT meetings.

Desire for Better Situational Awareness

There is a demand for improved situational awareness within the U.N. Leaders at headquarters and in the field, and across the spectrum of U.N. configurations have expressed a strong desire for better information, analysis, and assessment. At headquarters, Security Council members want more frank and timely information and analysis, provided discretely to inform their decision making rather than force their hand. TCCs and PCCs want more information on the environments into which their personnel are deploying. The U.N. senior management team wants predictive integrated analysis, produced regularly through more agile mechanisms, and some individual departments and agencies want better issue-specific analysis. Among

“The U.N. shouldn’t be operating late because information doesn’t get to the right people at the right time. The cost of those excuses has been borne in blood, and the time for those excuses has long past.”

—U.N. Security Council member

Interview with member of Security Council delegation, December 2016

U.N. leadership in the field there is a strong desire for better situational awareness, particularly forward-looking analysis of the situation in the country and the broader region. Even in peacekeeping missions, many of which are well served by their situational awareness capacities, there is an eagerness for analysis beyond threats to the mission mandate and U.N. staff and assets.

High-Level Focus

Secretary-General Guterres has signaled his intention to actively bolster the U.N.’s conflict prevention efforts. It has been a focus of his major speeches and his first activities

in office.¹¹⁸ Historically, it has been in the early stages of a Secretary-General’s tenure that member states have provided the greatest scope and political support for the office bearer to undertake initiatives such as organizational reform. The organizational adjustments needed to improve the U.N.’s situational awareness lie within the power of the Secretary-General, and the success of such a project will depend heavily on his leadership of the initiative.

Challenges

Cultural Challenges

Because the U.N. is dealing with repeated and fast-paced crises, there is a tendency for its efforts to focus on the urgent rather than the important. With little time to take a breath and consider what might be looming on the horizon, the organization becomes stuck in a reactive posture.

One way to help break that cycle is to adopt an “information-led” approach, which demands forward-looking, predictive analysis and assessment products to inform decision making. However, such a culture shift will only be realized by a demand pull from senior leadership, recognition of the importance of situational awareness, and accompanying prioritization of time and resources.

Two threshold issues that need to be addressed before an information-led approach can be effectively implemented are residual concerns about U.N. situational awareness activities and the difficulties of pulling the system together in an integrated manner.

Concerns and Sensitivities Regarding U.N. Situational Awareness

Legitimate concerns about U.N. situational awareness activities persist both externally and internally. Some member states remain apprehensive about impingement on their sovereignty and the U.N. undertaking inappropriate activities. Some U.N. officials, particularly within humanitarian agencies, are wary of being viewed as spies or information gatherers, which they fear will compromise their sources, operations, principles, or reputations.

There are a number of important elements to addressing member states' concerns: being clear about the purpose and mechanics of a U.N. situational awareness system; ensuring that the system does not become politicized; ensuring common application of the system in all countries; and including situational awareness within U.N. mandates. Addressing internal concerns additionally requires building trust in the system and proving the value of the system to contributors.

The purpose of a U.N. situational awareness system is simple — to provide U.N. decision makers with better knowledge, understanding, and anticipation of situations and environments and to enable earlier, safer, and more effective U.N. action, as provided for in the Charter and consistent with international law. It is intended to support better U.N. engagement across the full spectrum of activity and, in doing so, to enable more U.N. coherence. The mechanics are also simple — the collection, collation, analysis, and internal dissemination of information to U.N. decision makers. It is important to note that most of the information needed is already readily available through open sources, member states, NGOs, and other partners, and is being gathered in support of U.N. mandated activities — i.e., the monitoring and assessment of development indicators, humanitarian needs, disease outbreak, human rights violations, security threats, drug flows, economic trends, refugee flows, political developments, etc. The U.N. would not need to expand its information collection mandate and certainly not engage in clandestine or reprehensible collection activity. Many of the elements of the system are already in place; what remains is to systematically bring the information together and jointly analyze it to create a common, holistic, and forward-looking understanding of a situation or environment.

Some member states may be justifiably concerned that a U.N. situational awareness system might be used to expose internal matters, publicly admonish them, or force their hand. Member states already open themselves to a level of scrutiny through certain mandates provided to U.N. organs and adherence to international legal regimes. Nevertheless, to avoid a U.N. situational awareness system being politicized, it is critical that it is independent from the U.N.'s policy and operational work. There must be no question about objectivity and it must clearly serve no political agenda. U.N. situational awareness products must never be made public; they are internal, intended purely to inform decision making. It is important to ring-fence the system from the thick layer of established political and diplomatic processes, to which member states have agreed and from which official U.N. positions and public activity derive.

The U.N. must be prepared to operate anywhere in the world, and so it must have global situational awareness. The system can accommodate different countries and regions facing different risks and have varying response capacities, but it must have common application. It must not be — or be perceived as — uneven, biased or externally influenced in its focus.

A nuanced knowledge and understanding of the environment in which it is operating and of the likely trajectory of a situation is a fundamental requirement of the U.N. being able to do its job safely and effectively. The absence of such situational awareness is not only counterproductive, but may be considered negligent and a breach of a duty of care to U.N. staff, troops, and police. An acceptance and acknowledgment of this in the foundational instruments that establish the relationship between the U.N. and host states enables the U.N. and protects its staff. The U.N.'s situational awareness needs should be acknowledged in the mandates of U.N. peace missions, as is the case for UNMISS,¹¹⁹ and in UNDAFs, as is the case for Lebanon.¹²⁰

U.N. humanitarian agencies cannot afford to do anything that would jeopardize their access to communities or endanger their partners. It is for this reason that they need to guard against even the slightest accusation of inappropriate information collection, and for the same reason that they are disinclined to share with U.N. partners. U.N. human rights actors are concerned about sharing information that might expose or compromise sources. U.N. country teams also have some reservations, knowing that displeasing the host government can result in expulsion. It must be made clear to all, therefore, that U.N. staff are in no circumstances being asked to spy or collect information beyond their mandate. Nor are they being asked to share with other U.N. actors information that might compromise sources or operations. In fact, streams of raw information are often less helpful than information that has been cleaned of sensitive detail, contextualized, and analyzed. What U.N. actors are being asked to do is to contribute curated information and partake in analytical processes.

Such contributions will only be forthcoming if relevant actors trust the system — if they clearly understand why information is being sought, what will happen to it, how it will be protected, and for what purpose it will be used. They need to be assured that mechanisms are in place to ensure that their information will not be misused or mishandled. Additionally, they have to see that the risk is outweighed by the value of being part of such a system. They need to see that it is genuinely enabling better U.N. engagement and also see particular benefit for their own activities. The information flow must not be unidirectional. It is critical that the system does not only pull information into the center, but also pushes it back out to the contributors.

Bringing about such a cultural change will not happen swiftly, and a level of instinctive resistance is inevitable. Some countries will continue to resist the U.N. having an improved situational awareness capacity, as they do human rights and other U.N. efforts that they feel impinge on their sovereignty. However, as the system comes to be understood and proves its discretion, sensitivity, and, most importantly, utility over time, that resistance should dissipate.

Organizational Fragmentation and Integration Challenges

Pulling the system together to produce integrated situational awareness products is critical to meeting the organization's common needs. Such products are particularly valuable because they allow decision makers to share a common understanding of a situation, based on an assessment that has already harmonized views at the working level through a robust process that has challenged assumptions. A much greater understanding and fuller truth can be gained from drawing together these multiple perspectives.

Organizational fragmentation is not unique to the UN¹²¹ — it is a problem experienced by many large national and multinational bureaucracies. In the U.N. situational awareness context, it manifests as both gaps and overlaps, with poor information sharing and little integrated analysis.

At the headquarters, the inability of the Secretariat to produce an informal integrated analytical briefing on a monthly basis as requested by the Security Council reflects very poorly on the ability of the system to work cohesively. This results from certain departments and agencies refusing to cede to an overarching entity or process for fear of losing influence and control of the narrative. In the field, some U.N. actors seek to distance themselves from others for fear of being conflated with them and being perceived as becoming too close to the host government or coming into conflict with it. Some progress has been made in this area, including with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹²² and the World Humanitarian Summit¹²³ recognizing a role for human rights and conflict prevention in development and humanitarian activity. However, what remains missing is a common vision of U.N. action in pursuit of shared objectives that balances different imperatives, transcends individual mandates, and binds U.N. actors in a unified effort.

The U.N. system is a complex network of entities, comprising organs created by the Charter (e.g., Security Council and Secretariat), subsidiary organs created by the General Assembly (e.g., Human Rights Council), funds and programs (e.g., UNDP and UNICEF), specialized agencies (e.g., WHO and UNESCO), and related entities (e.g., WTO and IAEA).¹²⁴ With differing (and in some instances competing) mandates, funding streams, governance arrangements, and guiding principles, organizational fragmentation is difficult to avoid and challenging to overcome. While the Secretary-General has clear and direct authority over the departments and offices of the Secretariat (e.g., DPA, DPKO, DSS, OCHA, and OHCHR),¹²⁵

“I’m like a conductor. The SRSG wants to hear Dvořák’s Symphony No 9. But when all I have is one oboe and a couple of violins, she’s not going to get a symphony.”

—Head of military intelligence (U2), U.N. peacekeeping mission

Interview with head of military intelligence, U.N. peacekeeping mission, December 2016

the extent of that office's reach over the funds, programs, and particularly the specialized agencies, is more limited.¹²⁶ Additionally, the U.N. is very operationally decentralized, with significant authority being delegated to senior U.N. officials (i.e., Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Resident Coordinators) in the field.

In the absence of a comprehensive central authority, integrating U.N. activities is extremely challenging yet necessary for promoting coherent U.N. efforts. In reality, the Secretary-General's authority extends well beyond formal governance lines into the amorphous realm of leadership and symbolism. The global public sees one U.N., a single organization with the Secretary-General at its head. As a result, the expectation of the international community is that the Secretary-General will be the standard bearer, the defender of U.N. principles, and the voice of the U.N. family. Within the U.N. system that translates to a strong convening power — the ability to bring disparate parts of the system together — and a substantial level of influence. It is only through the office of the Secretary-General that U.N. actors can be galvanized to work together toward common goals. While the Secretary-General may not be able to direct the establishment of an integrated situational awareness system, they can establish such a system among the departments, offices, missions, and regional commissions under their control, then invite and strongly encourage relevant agencies, funds, and programs to participate.

“Yet, the U.N. has little experience in analysis, scenario-building, and prediction. Desk officers do virtually none of this, being overloaded with simple information-gathering and a minimal of organizing.”

—Walter Dorn

Walter Dorn, “The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence* 12, no. 4 (1999).

Adopting an Information-Led Approach

Developments in national military and police forces have seen a renewed focus on “intelligence-led” operations. Essentially, this approach emphasizes enabling preventive and preemptive rather than reactive actions, through the gathering and production of forward-looking information and analysis. While the U.N. also seeks information to inform decisions, analysis is often backward looking, and there is little emphasis on forecasting or predicting the likely trajectory of situations.

The power to execute change in this area lies squarely with senior U.N. leaders, as it is only through a demand pull that such products are delivered. Until forecasting products are requested by senior leaders, they will not be routinely produced. For analysts, predictive products carry risk — the risk of being wrong, of not warning, or of warning too often — particularly in the conservative culture of the U.N., and there is a natural reluctance

to take those risks if not required. However, the delivery of such products would be promoted by a culture that expects, values, and consistently uses them. This in turn would nurture analytical professionalism and nuanced forecasting.

Not all U.N. officials come from backgrounds where they have experienced intelligence support in national environments and therefore appreciate its value or utility. Given that it is incumbent upon them to set the tone and instigate cultural changes within the organization, it is important for U.N. senior managers to understand their responsibilities within the information cycle, to be aware of the range of products they might request, to utilize analysis products, and to appreciate the workings of a broader U.N. situational awareness system. It is only through their leadership that the critical demand pull will be created and the cultural transformation take place.

Prioritization of Situational Awareness

Situational awareness is an enabler. It does not attract the attention and investment of some of the more substantive functions, such as military and humanitarian activities, nor the more tangible support functions, such as security and logistics. As a result, situational awareness is often not prioritized in terms of resourcing, access to leadership, and seniority of staff.

With the exception of peacekeeping missions, dedicated situational awareness units are not included as part of the standard package of a U.N. field presence. When planning is taking place, a basic capacity should be considered an essential element of any U.N. mission or country team. Where situational awareness capacities do exist, they are often very lightly staffed and their leaders are less senior than comparable units. This can create barriers for situational awareness units to secure unimpeded access to senior leaders and obtain cooperation from other U.N. entities.

The decision by Secretary-General Guterres to move the UNOCC within his executive office sends a signal about the importance of situational awareness. This is essential for a cultural shift that ensures that dedicated capacity exists where it is needed and that entities are staffed with highly capable personnel, led at the appropriate level, organizationally situated to ensure direct access to decision makers, and able to draw information from other U.N. entities.

Structural Challenges

The greatest challenge to improving U.N. situational awareness is the absence of an overarching framework. This is needed to draw the system together, join up existing entities, leverage existing processes, and harness the wealth of information, all under a unified framework with a common goal. It is essential to achieving a holistic and coherent system.

A number of governments have faced common challenges in considering how to integrate the efforts of various national agencies into a cohesive system. The solutions they have alighted upon have featured three key elements: (1) a central

individual with oversight responsibilities and accountability, (2) a central office with the authority to convene the agencies, and (3) a strategy or policy setting out the organizing principles of the system. The U.N. situational awareness architecture should be informed by relevant national experiences, but needs to be simple and elegant, light and uncomplicated. As has been seen time and again in reviews of U.N. failures, bureaucratic complexity works against effective response.

A Network of Situational Awareness Entities

There is a need for dedicated situational awareness entities to meet the U.N.'s common information and analysis needs. While integrated situational awareness products may be produced through mechanisms that bring relevant actors together, an individual or group is needed at the heart of such mechanisms. This individual or group should be empowered and accountable for producing integrated products, be conversant with professional analytical techniques, have the time to dedicate to situational awareness, and serve as the network point for interacting with other U.N. situational awareness entities.

While the environments in which the U.N. operates are diverse and U.N. presences varied, much benefit can be gained from a level of uniformity of situational awareness entities and consistency of products and processes. Commonality across the system underscores that situational awareness is an essential element of U.N. activity in all countries, ensures that U.N. leadership in all locations has a common base level of situational awareness support, enables global processes, and provides the level of predictability essential for swift and secure information sharing.

A network of dedicated integrated situational awareness entities, referred to as Information and Analysis Centers (IACs), should be established at the headquarters, regional, and country levels. These information hubs should have a number of common functions:

- provide situational awareness (integrated information, analysis, and assessments) to the respective U.N. leadership (headquarters/region/country);
- contribute to global situational awareness processes through the IAC network; and
- serve as the 24/7 contact for other IACs.

The following paragraphs offer a summary of how the IACs could be developed at the headquarters, regional, and country levels. For more detail on these proposals, see Annex B.

At the headquarters level, a central IAC should be established within EOSG, strongly staffed and led at the D2 level. The primary customers should be the Secretary-General, the Executive Committee, and the Deputies Committee. The central IAC should incorporate the existing UNOCC, DSS ComCen, DPI News Monitoring Team, and Global Pulse. It must also have an internal GIS capacity, which may be embedded

from DFS and UNOSAT. DPA, DPKO, DSS, DESA, OCHA, and OHCHR should each be required to provide one or two posts at the P4 level or above. Relevant agencies, funds, and programs (including UNDP, WFP, UNHCR, UNODC, U.N. Habitat, and WHO) should be invited and strongly encouraged to second an officer at the P4 level or above. UNICEF should be invited to merge its OpCen into the central IAC. While the majority of posts should be New York-based, there should be a Geneva-based liaison capacity, and arrangements in place for redundancy operation, should the central IAC in New York be unable to function. Liaison relationships should be developed with relevant agencies, funds, and programs who do not second an officer.

Situational awareness capacity for departments and agencies could also be enhanced. A number of departments and agencies have found benefit in developing their own internal dedicated situational awareness capacities (e.g., DSS Threat and Risk Assessment Service, WFP Analysis and Early Warning Unit) to complement the work of desk officers, while others have left the function solely with desk officers (e.g., DPA, OHCHR). Where possible, departments and agencies should consider developing small, dedicated situational awareness capacities to enhance their issue-specific analytical capabilities. Where dedicated situational entities exist, they should be brought into the IAC network. Where they do not exist, departments and agencies should identify an IAC focal point to be responsible for identifying people from the department or agency to contribute to integrated information, analysis and assessment efforts.

At the regional level, five IACs should be established— organizationally part of the central IAC, housed within the regional commissions, and led at the D1 level. The primary customers should be the Secretary-General and U.N. leadership in the region, including in the countries comprising the region. Regional IACs should also be responsible for supporting country IACs, particularly those that are minimally staffed. It should be incumbent upon them to organize biannual exchanges among regional analysts, and to link with regional organizations' early warning systems. There is some existing situational awareness capacity at the regional level (e.g., DSS Regional Security Information Teams) upon which regional IACs can be built.

At the country level, an IAC should be established for each country, situated within the office of the senior-most U.N. official, and led at the P5 or P4 level. The structure and functioning of country IACs should be flexible to enable them to be tailored to the specific environment and U.N. deployment configuration. They should build on and draw from existing situational awareness entities. Ideally, existing situational awareness entities would be collocated in the same physical space and become the country IAC. However, where this is not possible the IAC mantle may be assumed by a single entity (e.g., the JMAC) or individual (e.g., an analyst in the Resident Coordinator's office) capable of and responsible for regularly bringing elements of the U.N. system together to create common products. In cases where existing entities are brought together to create an IAC, they should continue fulfilling their specific mandate, while also contributing to the IAC network requirements.

While IACs may differ in structure and working methods, they must share several critical features:

- the head of the IAC is accountable through the UNSAS for the production of a suite of common products;
- the head of the IAC is empowered to convene U.N. actors to produce integrated products;
- the head of the IAC is a professional analyst;
- all IACs employ common secure information technology and communications technology; and
- all IAC staff commit to the information sharing and information security requirements of the UNSAS.

Responsibility and Accountability

Within the U.N., it is not clear who is responsible for getting what information to where and by when. This lack of clarity was identified as one of the causes for U.N. failures in Rwanda and Sri Lanka. In the case of the former, the Secretariat had warning information about a possible genocide in Rwanda, which it did not share with the Security Council largely because Rwanda was a Council member.¹²⁷ In the case of the latter, there was no established process for gathering information on the atrocities taking place, and once an ad hoc method was established, the information was not shared with the Council.¹²⁸ Situational awareness responsibilities are diffuse, with many people having a role to play in various aspects of the information cycle. However, the expectations can be clarified by having a unified system in place, where certain key roles (i.e., the heads of IACs) have specific responsibilities and there is an accountability mechanism in place.

A U.N. situational awareness system needs at its center a Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness with direct access to the Secretary-General. Good practices from national environments have demonstrated that a common system functions best with an individual or office at the center of the community with oversight responsibilities for effective implementation. That office holder should bear ultimate accountability for ensuring the timely flow of information and analysis. In line with this accountability burden, the Senior Advisor must have direct relationships with the heads of IACs and be empowered to request and receive information from them. The Office of the Secretary-General's Special Advisor for Situational Awareness should be responsible for:

- ensuring the situational awareness of the Secretary-General;
- overseeing and ensuring the effective implementation of the UNSAS;
- developing and maintaining the U.N. situational awareness strategy;
- developing and reviewing U.N. situational awareness policy; and
- cultivating the U.N. situational awareness community, including through training and professional standards.

Annex C contains further detail on the proposed Office of the Secretary-General's Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness.

Linking Information to Action

Situational awareness is only an enabler. The best information and analysis is of little utility if it does not lead to action. It is essential, therefore, that situational awareness processes are strongly linked to decision-making and planning fora. An example of where this works well is in South Sudan, where the weekly early warning meetings bring together experts from across the mission, country team, and key NGOs to conduct a joint analysis. The following day the early warning matrix is updated based on that analysis, and the day after, the matrix is presented at the senior management meeting.

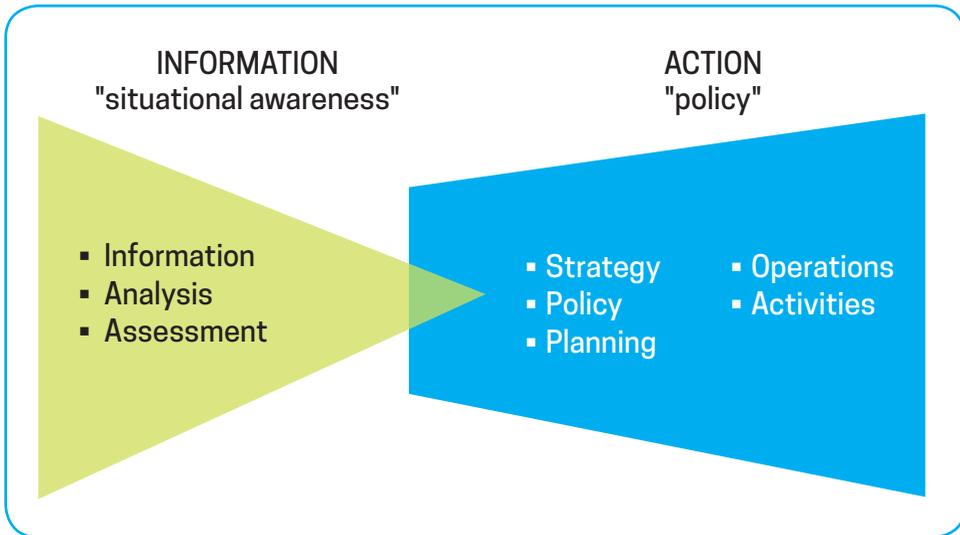
However, it is not just about linking processes to fora. For situational awareness product to be truly valuable, it must meet the specific policy needs of decision makers. The heads of IACs need to be dynamic and agile, able to recognize the decision makers' needs, and design or adjust their products and processes to meet them. They must ensure that the IAC is not just pumping out regular product for the sake of it, but injecting the needed analysis at key points in the policy cycle and producing actionable products that enable the generation of policy options or courses of action.

Practical Challenges

Maintaining Independence and Objectivity

In order to maintain objectivity and prevent U.N. situational awareness from being politicized, it is important to maintain distance between situational awareness activities (information, analysis, assessment) and policy activities (strategy, policy, planning, political, operational activity, etc.). Situational awareness should inform policy, but is intended to support, not supplant, decision making. In practice this means that a situational awareness analyst will produce a written assessment of a situation or brief it at a meeting (what has happened, why, and what might happen next), and then take a step back while the decision makers, political affairs officers, planners, etc., consider response options (what the U.N. should do about it) and come up with politically calibrated recommendations and advice.

Many national systems have separate entities dealing with situational awareness and policy. Where the streams exist within the same organization, staff usually focus on one or the other. Within the U.N., the situational awareness and policy roles are often mixed, to the detriment of the former. The mixing of the streams has resulted in staff not having sufficient time to conduct regular, robust analysis and assessment product being more subjective and, intentionally or not, geared toward supporting policy objectives and the particular department's or agency's view. Additionally, the skills needed to be a good situational awareness analyst are not the same skills needed to be a good political affairs officer, humanitarian affairs officer, planner, etc.



Independence and objectivity are core tenets of situational awareness analysis and assessment. Analysts need to provide frank and fearless assessment and to be able to speak truth to power without fear of negative repercussions. Situational awareness products should not provide policy recommendations so that there is no temptation to reverse engineer or present the analysis to support a particular policy recommendation. Analysts should be subject to a separate governance structure so they are not beholden to the preferences of policymakers.

Situational awareness products are internal working documents and should not be considered different than formal U.N. external facing products, which are carefully politically calibrated. They contain the views of analysts and do not necessarily reflect the official U.N. position. In order to guard against politicization and censorship, situational awareness analysis needs to be ring-fenced from the policy activity and intergovernmental discussions, in which political and operational concerns are dealt with before any opinion or decision can be officially attributed to the U.N.

Cadre of Professional Analysts

Professional situational awareness analysts fulfil a specific role in the information cycle. They have training in structured analytic techniques, experience producing a range of analytical products, and, importantly, have the time and independence to prepare robust, objective analysis because they are working in positions dedicated to information analysis and assessment. They spend their days gathering information — researching, collating documents and images, and talking to a range of people — seeking to understand an issue or situation from multiple perspectives. They evaluate the information they have obtained, subject it to individual and collaborative analytical techniques, and challenge their assumptions and test their conclusions with others before preparing products to meet the customer's

needs. Analysts spend time developing their judgment and expertise so that when analysis is needed quickly, they are able to provide an informed and considered opinion that is historically and socially contextualized, avoiding alarmism and knee-jerk reactions. Most importantly, they are answerable within their own hierarchy so they can maintain objectivity, and if necessary offer dissenting opinions, without fear of negative professional fall-out.

While there is a wealth of committed, talented, and capable staff within the U.N., the cadre of professional analysts is very small. It is primarily limited to JMAC analysts, security analysts, and information analysts working for some of the agencies. There is no sense of professional community binding them, and certainly no career path. The U.N. runs a number of analysis training

courses,¹²⁹ and has issued guidance material.¹³⁰ While efforts to improve the analytical capabilities of staff across the board are valuable and will hold them in good stead in their various roles, the U.N. needs to invest in building a more robust cadre of professional analysts. The organization should offer a common training package and continuing learning opportunities, nurture a community of analysts, and develop the job stream as a profession so that staff may move between different departments and agencies, headquarters, and the field and may have career progression opportunities. U.N. situational awareness analysts should interact and have regular professional exchanges with diverse analysts outside the organization — from national systems, think tanks, NGOs, and academia. They should become part of that professional community and be subjected to similar professional standards.

When recruiting into the cadre, U.N. experience should not necessarily be prioritized. The organization should seek people with intelligence, diplomatic, journalism, and risk assessment backgrounds, for example, and people with deep knowledge, such as regional specialists, economists, and historians. The skill set for analysts is different from the skill set for political affairs officers, program officers, etc., and the attributes the U.N. usually looks for may not be relevant.

Common Processes and Products

The lack of global processes and common products results in a failure to fully harness information from across the system and capitalize on economies of scale.

“Every good analyst knows the importance of objectivity. By following evidence-based logic, an objective analysis holds the potential to debunk a policymaker’s preconceptions, even reveal how his preferred policy actually fails. What keeps the policymaker receptive to such analysis, despite the bad news it may contain, is its claim to objectivity.”

—John Heidenrich

John G. Heidenrich, “The State of Strategic Intelligence,” *Studies in Intelligence* 51, no. 2 (2007).

A greater level of systematization would improve the utilization of the information within the organization. It would bring a higher level of rigor and consistency to each of the elements of the information cycle. Importantly, it would also result in a rationalization of products and a higher degree of predictability, so that customers could rely on receiving relevant products at the right time, both in the field and at headquarters. While different customers in the vastly different U.N. presences have a wide spectrum of situational awareness requirements, these can be met through combining a generic and more tailored approach. A set of global processes producing common integrated products should provide a solid base, which can be supplemented by additional efforts to meet specific needs as required.

The situational awareness need and the common processes and products to address that need are set out below. These are further detailed in Annex D.

Need	Process	Products
Foundational information	Maintenance of basic information suites	Includes a comprehensive country analysis; an in-depth conflict analysis; profiles of key actors and organizations; mapping; and technical information.
Long term analysis and assessment (3+ months)	Quarterly indicator monitoring	Regular indicator monitoring matrices, quarterly, and annual assessments.
Medium term analysis and assessment (1 week to 3 months)	Integrated analysis and assessment	Regular, predictive analysis and assessment products prepared by drawing together analysts from relevant U.N. entities to undertake joint analysis.
Current information and analysis (24-48 hours)	Integrated situational monitoring and reporting	Regular situation reports prepared by drawing together information from relevant U.N. entities.
Crisis information, warnings, and alerts	Integrated crisis reporting, warnings, and alerts	Warning notes issued in advance of a crisis. Alerts issued after a significant event. Regular situation reports prepared by drawing together information from relevant U.N. entities.

Information Sharing and Information Security

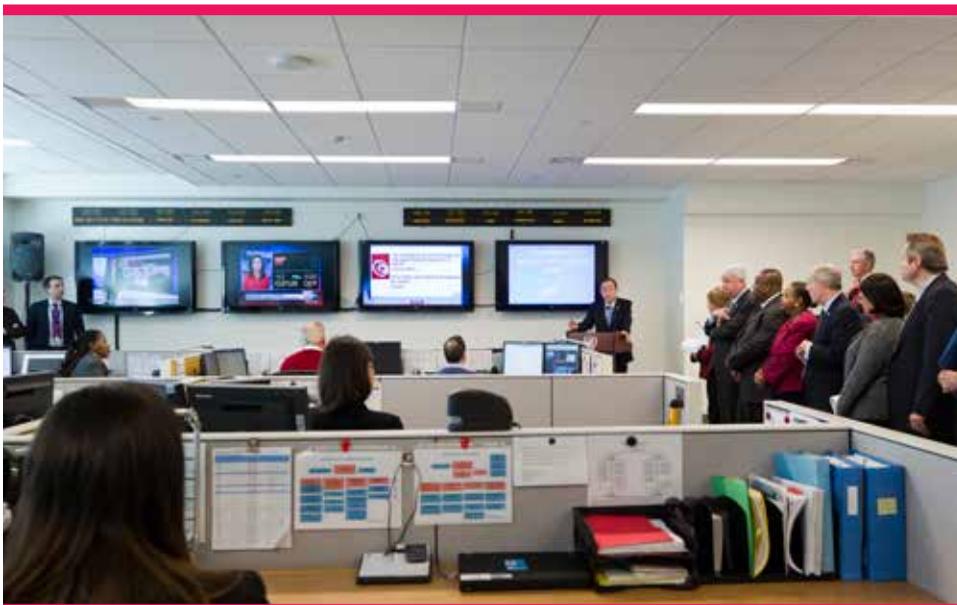
Increased information sharing would enable improved situational awareness. The absence of system-wide information-sharing protocols and common, secure information technology and communication platforms discourages the sharing of information. It exposes staff to allegations of information security breaches, as it is seldom clear what information is allowed and expected to be shared with whom and how.

The U.N. has information security challenges that cannot easily be overcome and so have to be managed. Due to its international nature, the U.N. cannot vet staff or hold them criminally liable for revealing classified information — measures which are commonly employed in national environments. The only leverage that the U.N. has at its disposal is ethics and disciplinary proceedings. The Secretary-General’s bulletin on information sensitivity, classification, and handling,¹³¹ which is not applicable to the whole system, is poorly implemented

and seldom enforced, partly because of insufficient information management capacity in many field presences.

In recognition of the role they would play in receiving, producing, and handling a high volume of sensitive information, IAC staff should be required to sign an information protection undertaking, in addition to the usual declaration that U.N. staff are required to sign. This should directly tie the mishandling of information to disciplinary action or dismissal. Seconded military and police personnel working in IACs should be required to sign the same, and in the Memorandum of Understanding between the U.N. and a TCC or PCC, the contributing nation should commit to pursue the relevant national judicial proceedings for breach. As the U.N. has no recourse against interns, they should not be employed in IACs. While the adjudicatory mechanism would remain in the U.N. internal justice system, an information security officer should be included in the Office of the Special Advisor for Situational Awareness to help ensure adherence to the information protection undertaking.

The same officer should be responsible for supporting the implementation of information security measures within IACs. Additional security mechanisms often employed by national agencies could also be instituted. IAC products should always include a distribution list. Mechanisms may be implemented to prevent copying, forwarding, or printing. Products that are particularly sensitive could be printed, numbered, and signed for, or disseminated by way of a read-only service or oral briefing. An information security strategy should be developed and implemented by the Office of the Special Advisor.



Currently information and analysis is often shared on the basis of personal relationships built on trust, although ad hoc initiatives have been developed to bring more consistency. For example, for some time neighboring U.N. missions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire systematically shared analytical products, and analysts from various U.N. presences in the Middle East have weekly information-sharing video conferences. An information-sharing protocol setting out what kinds of information are to be shared with whom, for what purpose, and how the information is to be handled and used would bring clarity, predictability, and accountability to the process. Having such a protocol would reduce staff exposure to unintentional information security breaches and would also provide assurances to U.N. actors concerned that sharing information will compromise their sources and operations. Again, the Office of the Special Advisor should be responsible for developing, supporting implementation of, and ensuring enforcement of the protocol.

The U.N. has a number of secure information technology platforms, but none that are system-wide. It is likely that those that exist can be penetrated by national intelligence agencies. U.N. communications could be improved by employing more advanced encryption technology and more secure and compartmentalized information technology platforms to counter the currently widespread use of local drives. Some peacekeeping operations, such as the U.N. mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), use bespoke platforms developed within the mission, while others are adopting Sage, an incident database designed by DFS and part of a larger peacekeeping situational awareness information technology project. However, it is still common for different sections within the same peacekeeping mission to use different databases, and these systems do not extend beyond peacekeeping. An efficient U.N. situational awareness system requires a common secure information technology platform and communications systems, at least among IACs.



RECOMMENDED REFORMS

To improve the U.N.'s ability to prevent and respond to mass human suffering caused by conflict, natural disaster, and disease and to ensure the safety and security of U.N. personnel, the organization needs to establish a robust, forward-looking situational awareness system. This system should address capacity gaps at the regional level and within country teams, as well as the overarching need for integrated, predictive, actionable analysis injected at key points in the policy cycle. Given the organization's needs, as well as the resource and political constraints, a simple and modest system is proposed to address basic requirements. It seeks to pull together and reduce the complexity of current entities and mechanisms, capitalize on economies of scale, streamline existing capacities, rationalize existing products, leverage existing processes and partnerships, and harness the wealth of information already in the system — all under a unified framework with a common goal.

Drawing from good practices and lessons learned within the U.N. and national environments, the system design is based on the following precepts:

- **Simplicity** – complexity works against efficiency; simplicity and clarity are critical to the swift movement of information during crises.
- **Security** – security facilitates information sharing, production and dissemination, but the U.N. faces particular information security challenges that cannot be overcome and so must be managed.
- **Unification** – entities operating in the same environment and/or dealing with the same situation would benefit from common, integrated information, analysis and assessment.
- **Predictability** – the standard, format, and regularity of certain products and processes should be consistent across the system.
- **Professionalism** – staff should be trained, have experience, and uphold high professional standards.
- **Accountability** – individuals should be held to account through a governance and oversight mechanism.

It is recommended that a U.N. situational awareness system (UNSAS) be established with the following attributes:

- **Structure:** Networked model. Integrated Information and Analysis Centers (IACs) established at the country, regional, and headquarters levels. Situational awareness processes directly linked to decision-making fora.
- **Governance:** Secretary-General's Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness responsible for system oversight, and accountable for its efficient functioning. Heads of IACs accountable to the Senior Advisor. Mechanism for sanctioning mishandling of information.
- **Customers:** Senior U.N. leaders and planners at the country, regional and headquarters levels.

- **Processes and products:** Light global processes that deliver timely information and analysis. Set of common products providing: foundational information, long- and medium-term integrated analysis and assessment, current information, and crisis warnings and alerts. Processes also informed by external partnerships.
- **Personnel:** Empowered Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness. Experienced heads of IACs. Professional analysis staff with common training, independent from political/policy stream.
- **Technical:** Common, secure communications and information technology platform to link IACs.

To this end, it is recommended that the U.N. Secretary-General enact the following reforms:

Culture

Recommendation 1: Produce a system-wide U.N. situational awareness strategy.

Because of the complex, decentralized nature of the U.N. family of entities, a strategy that unites relevant departments and agencies in a common vision and commits them to jointly implementing the UNSAS is needed. Led by the Secretary-General, the strategy must be voluntarily agreed to by relevant agencies, funds, and programs. The strategy should identify the unified objectives of the U.N., recognize how common analysis of situations can serve those, and incentivize both leaders and staff to work collaboratively. It should set out the fundamental precepts and attributes of the UNSAS and clearly articulate the system's purpose and workings to obviate possible concerns.

Recommendation 2: Organizationally prioritize situational awareness.

Situational awareness needs to be recognized as a necessary requirement for fulfilling the U.N.'s mandate, a critical enabler for decision making and planning. Dedicated situational awareness entities must be established in existing U.N. presences at the country, regional, and headquarters levels and included as a priority in future planning. They should be organizationally located to have direct access to the leadership, sufficiently resourced to fulfil their functions, led at the appropriate level, and staffed by able personnel. The U.N.'s situational awareness needs and activities should be acknowledged in the mandates of U.N. peace missions and UNDAFs.

Recommendation 3: Adopt a proactive “information-led” approach. To enable the U.N. to be more proactive rather than reactive, an information-led approach should be employed. This must be a leadership initiative. Senior leaders at headquarters and in the field must demand forward-looking situational awareness products that do not just report on past events or the existing situation, but identify potential issues and assess the likely outcome and trajectory of situations. Only if senior leaders regularly request, use, and rely on such products will a demand

pull be created to enable the production of predictive analysis and assessments. To complement this, training for U.N. senior managers should include a module on situational awareness so they fully comprehend its utility, are aware of the range of products that they might request, understand their responsibilities within the UNSAS, and appreciate its workings and how it supports the broader activities of the U.N. Senior leaders should be judged on their engagement in the UNSAS as part of their performance assessment.

Recommendation 4: Initiate bureaucratic incentives that encourage information sharing and analysis collaboration. Organizational siloing and information-sharing challenges are not unique to the U.N. and not surprising given the size, varied governance arrangements, and decentralized operations of the organization. However, overcoming organizational fragmentation and competition is essential for addressing the need for integrated analysis and assessment. A number of practical initiatives can be implemented to this end, which are identified in later recommendations. In addition, several bureaucratic incentives should be introduced to catalyze a culture shift by dissuading competitive and protectionist behavior. The Secretary-General should clearly communicate the requirement for integrated analysis products. Collaboration with other U.N. actors should be part of the performance assessment of all staff. Departments and agencies should be required to report on their situational awareness efforts, including contributions to integrated analytical products. Failure to share information should be sanctioned. When an integrated product is judged particularly good or valuable, all contributing departments and agencies should be recognized.

Architecture

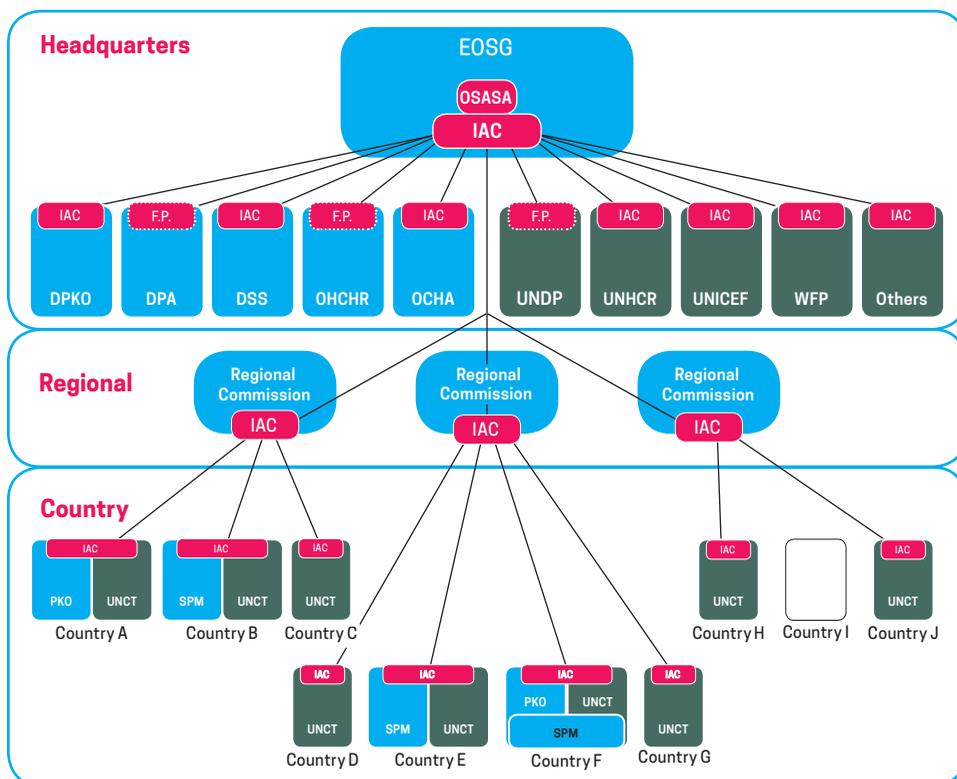
Recommendation 5: Establish a network of integrated Information and Analysis Centers (IACs) at the country, regional, and headquarters levels. An effective U.N. situational awareness system requires a network of dedicated situational awareness entities. IACs should be established at the country, regional, and headquarters levels to meet the U.N.'s situational awareness needs and provide commonality and predictability across the system. They should serve three core functions: (1) provide integrated situational awareness to their respective U.N. leadership; (2) contribute integrated situational awareness to global processes through the IAC network; and (3) be the 24/7 information contact for other IACs. Information should be gathered from a wide range of U.N. and other sources, and analysis should be forward-looking, integrated, and actionable, developed through the use of robust structured analytic techniques.

IACs should adhere to a unified situational awareness policy, generate a set of common products, and contribute to global processes. However, the structure and workings of IACs should be flexible so that they can be tailored to various U.N. deployment configurations and the actual and evolving needs in various regions. IACs should be thought of as a vessel, to be staffed as appropriate to the context

while pursuing the ideals of bringing together existing situational awareness entities and ensuring a sufficient staffing complement to fulfil their functions. IACs should be staffed by personnel dedicated to situational awareness. Their size and composition will differ, some may be large (20 or more personnel), others small (one or two). All should have either inherent or regionally provided GIS support. The head of the IAC must be sufficiently senior and empowered to draw the system together to produce integrated analysis and assessment. The central IAC should be led at the D2 level, the five regional IACs at the D1 level, and country IACs at the P4 or P5 level. A situational awareness analyst should be included as part of the “package” of all Resident Coordinator’s (P4) and an SRSG’s offices (P5), and it is around those posts that the IAC should be built.

The head of each IAC plays a critical role, and in some instances may be the only situational awareness professional. The head of each IAC is the network point for interacting with other IACs and they are accountable for and empowered to produce integrated products. IAC heads should have a dual reporting line, both to the senior-most U.N. official in the respective country or region and to the Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness through the UNSAS.

Additional detail on the recommended IACs can be found at Annex B.



Recommendation 6: Appoint a Secretary-General’s Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness. Having a senior official to both advise the Secretary-General and oversee the UNSAS is critical to its success. The Senior Advisor should be situated within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and appointed at the Assistant Secretary-General level. They should have direct access to the Secretary-General and serve as an observer in their “cabinet.” In addition to ensuring the situational awareness of the Secretary-General, the Security Council (via the Secretary-General), and the U.N. leadership at headquarters, the office bearer should be responsible for oversight and ensuring the effective implementation of the UNSAS. They should bear ultimate responsibility for ensuring the timely flow of integrated information and analysis throughout the system, and be empowered to do so. They must be adept at identifying information needs, and ensuring they are met at the critical time. The Special Advisor should also be responsible for developing the U.N. situational awareness community, ensuring the maintenance of professional standards, and managing strategy, policy, and training. The Deputy Advisor, appointed at the D2 level, should both deputize for the Senior Advisor and lead the central IAC.

Additional detail on the proposed Office of the Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness can be found at Annex C.

Recommendation 7: Structurally link situational awareness processes to decision-making fora. Even the best information cannot force action, but it can enable better and timelier decisions. To this end, analysis and assessment should be injected into the policy cycle at key points. To do this, situational awareness processes need to be systematically linked to decision-making fora, including the following:

- **Security Council:** The Secretary-General’s Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness should provide an informal weekly situational awareness briefing to Security Council members and ad hoc briefings at short notice and upon request.
- **U.N. leadership at the headquarters level:** The Secretary-General’s Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness should brief the Secretary-General on a daily basis. They should provide a situational awareness briefing at the weekly meetings of the Executive Committee and the Deputies Committee. The Deputy Senior Advisor should provide a situational awareness briefing at system-wide crisis management meetings and present a written analytical product at regional monthly review meetings.
- **Strategic planning at the headquarters level:** The central IAC should produce scenarios and integrated analysis and assessment in support of integrated strategic planning. They may also produce scenarios and integrated products for interagency/integrated task forces upon request.
- **U.N. leadership at the regional level:** The head of the regional IAC should provide a situational awareness briefing to regional U.N. leadership meetings as requested.

- **U.N. leadership at the country level:** The head of the country IAC should provide a situational awareness brief at the weekly meetings of the mission leadership, the country team, and the crisis management team.
- **Operational planning and coordination at the country level:** The country IAC should produce scenarios and integrated analysis and assessment in support of integrated operational planning and operations coordination efforts.

Policy, Process, Personnel, and Partnerships

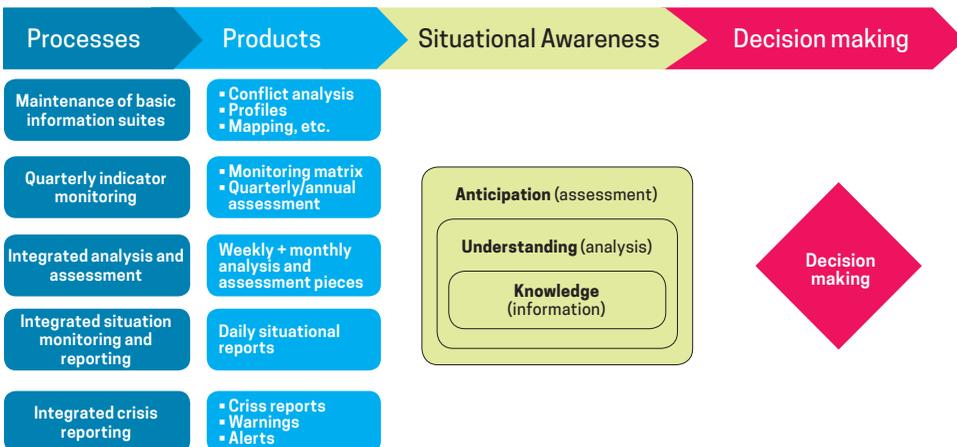
Recommendation 8: Prescribe a set of global processes and minimum product requirements. To ensure situational awareness (knowledge, understanding, and anticipation) for conflict prevention, humanitarian preparedness, and operational safety and effectiveness, decision makers need the following:

- Foundational information
- Long term analysis and assessment (3+ months)
- Medium term analysis and assessment (1 week to 3 months)
- Current information and analysis (24-48 hours)
- Crisis information, warnings and alerts (immediate)

Processes

In order to meet these needs, the U.N. should implement five global processes:

1. **Maintenance of basic information suites.** The IACs at the regional and country levels should lead the production and maintenance of a product suite containing foundational information, including comprehensive conflict analysis, profiles of key actors and organizations, mapping, and technical information.



2. **Quarterly indicator monitoring.** The central IAC should lead the development of a set of common indicators to be monitored by IACs at the country and regional levels and collated by the central IAC at the global level. The indicators should provide warning of growing instability or vulnerability to natural disasters to enable early U.N. action and preparedness. The common global indicators should be supplemented by context-specific indicators based on scenarios developed by regional and country IACs. Matrices and trend assessments should be produced on the basis of regular indicator monitoring and should highlight possible triggers.
3. **Integrated analysis and assessment.** IACs at the country, regional, and global levels should be responsible for convening the system to produce predictive, integrated analysis and assessment products. The focus and frequency of the products will depend on the context. Such products should be succinct and forward-looking and should provide key judgments on the subject matter. They should be produced using structured analytical techniques, including alternative analysis methods to challenge assumptions and conclusions (such as “red teaming”), and make full use of the U.N.’s geographic information technologies.
4. **Integrated situational monitoring and reporting.** All IACs should fulfil the role of 24/7 information contact. The central IAC and country IACs in conflict and post-conflict situations should be responsible for constant monitoring and producing daily integrated reports focused on the current situation.
5. **Integrated crisis reporting, warnings, and alerts.** Country IACs should issue a warning notice when a situation is deteriorating and becoming volatile and an alert when a significant incident or event has occurred. During crises, the frequency of situational reporting should be increased. Working closely with the country IAC, the central IAC should produce similar products for U.N. leadership at headquarters.

Products

The output of these processes is a number of common products. This will help bring consistency and analytical rigor to the UNSAS and will ease the information burden on senior leaders. The product suite composition will differ somewhat between country, regional, and headquarters IACs, and the frequency of certain products will also vary depending on the level of conflict and size of the IAC. They must link directly to the information requirements of decision-making processes, be tailored to the customers’ needs, and produced to support key decision points in policy, planning, and operational cycles. Common products should include:

1. Comprehensive country/regional analysis;
2. Comprehensive conflict analysis;
3. Profiles of key organizations and actors;

4. Maps and technical information;
5. Scenarios;
6. Indicator monitoring matrix and trend assessments;
7. Situation reports;
8. Predictive assessments of certain situations, events, trends, etc.;
9. Crisis situation reports; and
10. Warning notes and alerts.

Additional detail on the recommended processes and products can be found at Annex D.

Recommendation 9: Develop a cadre of professional analysts. The production of high quality situational awareness products requires skilled analysts with particular professional competencies, including adept handling of sensitive information, the ability to define analytical questions and structure information gathering accordingly, experience evaluating and contextualizing information, competence using structured analytic techniques, proficiency producing a range of analytical products, and highly refined judgment.

There is an existing U.N. job category of “Information Analyst,” but the number of posts needs to be expanded to staff IACs. People with appropriate professional backgrounds should be recruited. All U.N. information analysts should undergo common analytical training. There should be a career path with both lateral and promotional opportunities. Analysts should be encouraged to stay in post for five or more years to develop subject matter expertise, but also to move between headquarters and the field and between mission and non-mission settings. Situational awareness analysts should be held to a set of professional standards. Critically, they must be encouraged to speak truth to power, incentivized to provide frank and fearless analysis, and protected from negative professional repercussions resulting from dissenting opinions.

Recommendation 10: Develop a system-wide information-sharing protocol. In line with the system-wide U.N. situational awareness strategy, the Secretary-General should issue a directive setting out the requirements for U.N. entities to share information with IACs and for IACs to share with each other. Sensitive to the mandates of various agencies, the directive should articulate how information is to be shared, used, and handled, providing sufficient assurances and accountability mechanisms to prevent information leaks that may compromise entities’ reputations, operations, or sources. The information shared should not be raw or granular enough to reveal sensitive detail about sources or operations. It should be curated by the sharing entity and provided with verification assurances. The Secretary-General’s bulletin on information sensitivity, classification, and handling¹³² should be strictly implemented and enforced by the Office of the Administration of Justice in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness.

Recommendation 11: Develop a system-wide information-sharing platform.

Ideally all U.N. entities at headquarters and in the field would use common secure information communications and technology systems with a high level of encryption. However, given the established systems and the fragmented nature of the organization, that is unlikely to happen soon. At a minimum, all IACs should employ a common secure information technology platform and have common secure communications in order to facilitate information sharing among those entities. This should include a secure data storage and visualization platform through which producing offices can directly publish curated and authoritative data, and encrypted video and telecommunications facilities.

Recommendation 12: Develop partnerships and outreach. Much can be gained from information provided by partners and from analytical engagement with external actors. However, when collaborating with external actors, the U.N. must be careful to guard against undue influence, protect sensitive information, and maintain the independence and integrity of its own situational awareness system. The U.N. should be open to accepting intelligence from any member state willing to share. At the headquarters, the Secretary-General's Senior Advisor and the Deputy Senior Advisor should be the contact points for this transaction. In the field, it should be the senior-most U.N. official in the country and the head of the country IAC. Additionally, IAC analysts should engage with analysts from national systems. The heads of regional IACs should be responsible for linking the UNSAS with the early warning systems of regional organizations. They should establish a mechanism through which alerts can be shared and analytical discussions can take place. They should also arrange biannual regional analysis forums, including analysts from U.N. IACs, regional organizations, and other experts. The heads of IACs should be encouraged to reach out systematically to key research and academic institutions, NGOs, civil society groups, and private sector actors to maintain an open channel of communication. IACs should welcome any information and analysis external actors may be willing to share.



ANNEX A: EXISTING U.N. ENTITIES AND PROCESSES

Headquarters Entities

Secretariat

Executive Office of the Secretary-General – Analysis and Planning Capacity

The Analysis and Planning Capacity within EOSG was created in 2015 following a recommendation of the HIPPO Report.¹³³ The three-person team is mandated to (1) prepare options for U.N. responses to conflict situations, drawing information and analysis from across the system; (2) translate the Secretary-General's guidance into strategic directives on U.N. engagement, strategic assessments, and roles and responsibilities; and (3) ensure that integrated planning complies with the Secretary-General's directives and relevant planning policies.¹³⁴

The establishment of the Analysis and Planning Capacity within EOSG was a response to system fragmentation and competition between departments. The HIPPO identified the need for an entity that could act as the Secretary-General's agent to draw the system together during planning efforts, and in that context, improve the U.N.'s common understanding of the conflict situation. Being of such modest size, however, the capacity of the team is limited, and its activities have primarily tended toward planning coordination. While it has produced guidance to support improved conflict analysis, it does not have the capacity itself to undertake ongoing analysis of evolving and crisis situations. In the absence of a system that compels departments/agencies to collaborate, even drawing such analysis from across the system has proven challenging. The scope and status of the Analysis and Planning Capacity is currently under review.

Executive Office of the Secretary-General – U.N. Operations and Crisis Center

The U.N. Operations and Crisis Center (UNOCC) was established in January 2013. It has the dual purpose of supporting the situational awareness of U.N. leaders at headquarters and facilitating U.N. crisis management efforts. The primary functions of the UNOCC are (1) 24/7 situation monitoring and reporting, (2) integrated situational analysis, (3) crisis management facilitation, and (4) executive communications.¹³⁵ Led at the D1 level, the Center has a staff of approximately 30 comprising a watch room, and a small (three-person) analysis team. It was built upon the existing DPKO Situation Center and the DSS Communications Center, supplemented by staff seconded from the other stakeholder departments (DPA,

DPI, OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP). The main outputs of the UNOCC are (1) daily reports, (2) peacekeeping briefing notes, (3) crisis-specific reports and alerts, and (4) analytical products.

The concept of bringing together U.N. operational departments to develop common situational awareness products and to support coordinated crisis management makes sense in terms of capitalizing upon economies of scale, producing well rounded products, and improving collaboration within the system. However, in its first years of operation, the UNOCC was unable to live up to its full potential due to several challenges. It was not properly resourced, but cobbled together without certainty of ongoing staffing contributions. It was viewed by some as retaining overly strong links to DPKO. And although it was mandated to lead the joint production of analysis products, it did not have the authority to overcome system fragmentation and departmental resistance in the face of inconsistent demand pull. The recent organizational consolidation of the UNOCC within EOSG represents an opportunity to overcome some of these difficulties.

Executive Office of the Secretary-General – Global Pulse

Established in 2009, Global Pulse was an initiative of the U.N. Secretary-General aimed at harnessing big data in support of humanitarian and development activities.¹³⁶ The Global Pulse team comprises approximately 14 people organizationally situated within EOSG in New York, and another 18 in “labs” in Jakarta and Kampala. The main activities of the team are (1) providing U.N. and development partners with access to the data, tools and expertise required to discover new uses of big data for development; (2) implementing data innovation programs; (3) developing toolkits, applications, and platforms to improve data-driven decision making and support program evaluation; (4) contributing to the development of regulatory frameworks and standards; (5) driving an innovation agenda; and (6) providing public sector organizations with policy guidance and technical assistance to harness big data in support of their development and humanitarian operations.¹³⁷

When national and international crises move swiftly, the utility of traditional indicator tracking methods (e.g., household surveys) is limited. In such circumstances, the data passively generated by a population can be invaluable in terms of understanding and predicting the trajectory of a situation. Global Pulse works with partners (public and private sector) to this end. However, such work is not without controversy. While some data is publicly available (e.g., social media posts, online food prices, job advertisements), other data is corporately owned (e.g., mobile phone interactions, bank transactions, loan repayment trends), and even when that data is anonymized or aggregated or the processed analytics shared, privacy concerns remain.¹³⁸ While the use of big data by the U.N. is accompanied by a number of challenges, it holds significant opportunity for all aspects of the U.N.’s work, particularly when used alongside more traditional situational awareness techniques. This would, however, require Global Pulse to expand its mandate beyond the development sphere and into peace and security. Efforts have been made

in this direction, with Global Pulse undertaking a project for UNSOM. Further expansion into the peace and security area would effectively be a broadening of customer base rather than a change in substantive focus.

Department of Political Affairs

The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has a long standing and broad early warning mandate. However, it has experienced difficulty fulfilling this function, primarily due to political sensitivities that have manifested as resistance to this aspect of the department's work and an attendant lack of resources. In 1995 the Policy Analysis Team was established within DPA with a mandate including the improvement of the department's ability to carry out early warning. In 1998 the Prevention Team was created to identify situations at risk of escalating into violent conflict and to plan a system for early warning and prevention.¹³⁹ The department continues to have responsibilities related to early warning in support of conflict prevention and is the lead for political analysis within the U.N.¹⁴⁰ One of the core functions of DPA's regional divisions is "[i]dentifying potential crisis areas and providing early warning to the Secretary-General on developments and situations affecting international peace and security".¹⁴¹

The department does not have a dedicated situational awareness capacity. Instead, the function is incorporated into the broader work of its desk officers. Nor does it have an early warning system, but relies on the judgment of its staff and a mix of regular and ad hoc products and briefings. DPA produces weekly briefing notes that are provided to the Secretary-General and the Security Council, and analytical reports for the Secretary-General when necessary. In 2010 the United Kingdom (U.K.) instituted "Horizon Scanning" briefings to the Council, which were provided by the Under-Secretary-General of DPA. In 2014 they were succeeded by more operationally focused "DPA briefings."¹⁴² The department is home to the Security Council Affairs Division, which has close relationships with Council members. These have at times been viewed to influence the analysis provided by DPA to the Council.¹⁴³

The department faces a number of challenges in its situational awareness role. Where there is a DPA presence in a country (a Special Political Mission, U.N. envoy, or special advisor), information flows from the field to headquarters, but in areas in which there is no such presence, information can be harder to come by. The inclusion of Peace and Development Advisers (PDAs) in several U.N. country teams has gone some way toward addressing that gap. The analysis produced by PDAs is highly valued, with a 2014 review finding that "in some cases up to 90% of [DPA's] decision-making is based upon the information they receive from the PDAs."¹⁴⁴ However, PDAs are not in all country teams, and such heavy reliance on a single individual comes with attendant risks.

Another issue faced by DPA is that the desk officers, upon whom much of the situational awareness burden falls, are so busy with other tasks that they find it difficult to devote sufficient time to their analysis and early warning role. While

many desk officers indicated a desire to be able to dedicate more time to analysis, they felt it difficult to disengage themselves from the “daily churn” and immediate requirements. Many DPA political affairs officers have no formal analytical training, although this is something that DPA is seeking to address both through education and the production of guidance.

Department of Peacekeeping Operations – Office of Military Affairs, Assessments Team

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Office of Military Affairs (OMA) Assessments Team was created in 2008 following the 2007 restructure of DPKO and the review of the Strategic Military Cell established for UNIFIL.¹⁴⁵ Led at the Colonel (P5) level, the Assessments Team comprises 12 military officers seconded from national militaries. The team is mandated to gather, analyze, and assess information on the military situation in the areas where peacekeeping operations are deployed and on military threats to current and potential operations.¹⁴⁶ The Secretary-General initially requested posts for a full Military Information and Analysis Service. But the General Assembly did not approve the addition of a new service, allowing instead a smaller number of posts to be established within the existing structure. The Team therefore is organizationally situated within the Office of the Military Advisor.

The Assessments Team has had mixed success. It initially suffered from a lack of experienced and qualified intelligence personnel being nominated to fill the positions. While that issue has been overcome, it still faces the problem of being staffed by personnel who, unlike U.N. staff members, remain in the employ of their nation and retain strong links to national institutions. The Assessment Team’s products have often not been shared beyond OMA, including more widely within DPKO, which has resulted in limited utilization of their services. This lack of broader impact has also led some, including in OMA, to question whether the analysis posts would be better employed elsewhere.

Department of Field Support – Geospatial Information Section

The Geospatial Information Section of the Information and Communications Technology Division within the Department of Field Support (DFS), initially the Cartographic Section, took over from the Cartographic Unit. Established in the Department of Conference Services in 1951, the Cartographic Unit grew from the 1946 arrangement of a single cartographer in the Bureau of Documents of the Conference and General Services.¹⁴⁷ Today, the Geospatial Information Section comprises ten staff. It works closely with the Geospatial Information Systems Section of the Service for Geospatial, Information and Telecommunication Technologies (SGITT) at the U.N. Global Service Centre in Brindisi, comprising 18 staff (plus consultants) and with Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) teams/officers in missions. The Geospatial Information Section at headquarters is mandated to (1) support field missions

through the production of geographic information, terrain analysis, planning and operational maps; (2) provide cartographic and geographic information services to the Security Council and U.N. senior management; (3) oversee and coordinate the activities of geographic information units in field missions; (4) provide research, analysis and technical assistance to international boundary demarcation processes; and (5) clear maps to be printed in official U.N. publications.¹⁴⁸

In general, geospatial information is not being used as well as it could in support of U.N. situational awareness. Some missions, such as MONUSCO and UNIFIL, make good use of their GIS capacities, while others do not. At headquarters, there is significant potential for GIS to be better harnessed in support of integrated analysis and for providing technical applications to support written products and oral briefings. Many of the headquarters situational awareness entities are not fully aware of the support that the Geospatial Information Section could provide and therefore do not always successfully articulate their requirements. The Geospatial Information Section has an officer that works within the UNOCC at times. The UNOCC briefing facilities (the U.N. Crisis Room) do not have sufficiently up-to-date information technology to make full use of GIS products. The utility of the Sage database being introduced in peacekeeping missions could be broadened if it was adjusted to also function as a visualization platform to capture data from a range of sources. Following the Mission Common Operational Picture (MCOP) workshop in late 2016, there are efforts afoot to improve the use of GIS in mission situational awareness.

Department of Safety and Security – Threat and Risk Assessment Service

The Department of Safety and Security (DSS) Threat and Risk Unit was established with the creation of the department in 2004¹⁴⁹ and following a specific recommendation in the Report of the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of U.N. Personnel in Iraq (Ahtisaari Report).¹⁵⁰ Since its initial capacity of six staff, it has grown to a headquarters capacity of 16 staff led at the D1 level and has become the Threat and Risk Assessment Service (TRAS). It also includes 20 regional and country specific analysts based in the field. TRAS is mandated to (1) identify threats to U.N. entities; (2) develop strategic, regional and country-specific threat assessments; (3) provide analytical and assessment support to DSS and field duty stations; (4) develop methodologies for security analysis and training security analysts in the field; (5) distribute security threat information to all actors of the U.N. Security Management System at headquarters and in the field; and (6) develop security risk assessments for senior U.N. officials.¹⁵¹ In line with the Security Management System, the DSS TRAS does not have any responsibilities vis-à-vis military and police contingents deployed to U.N. peacekeeping missions; its mandate is limited to civilian staff and military and police experts on mission.¹⁵² Its primary customers are the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for DSS.

Historically, member states have been more supportive of situational analysis focused on the safety and security of U.N. personnel. The DSS TRS is well resourced

at headquarters and has good reach into security elements in the field. Developed in-house, the Security Analysis Process and Practice (SAPP) course has trained many U.N. personnel in security information and analysis. The TRAS is perhaps the most successful of the dedicated analysis entities. Its products are generally well regarded. However, their distribution is very limited, including among the other situational awareness entities.

Department of Public Information – News Monitoring Unit

The Department of Public Information was established in 1946. In 1999, it included a Media Monitoring and Analysis Section, mandated to monitor news agency and press coverage about the U.N. and major international events and produce three daily news bulletins, clippings of newspaper articles, and analysis of press coverage for distribution to senior officials.¹⁵³ That entity was succeeded by the News Monitoring Unit, which holds the same function and delivers two daily bulletins for senior officials at U.N. headquarters comprising clippings from print and electronic media. Although collocated with the UNOCC, there is room for improvement on substantive cooperation. The Unit has, however, assisted other situational awareness entities, such as the DSS TRS, with research upon request.

Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Global Economic Monitoring Unit

The Global Economic Monitoring Unit (GEMU) is situated within the Development Policy and Analysis Division (DPAD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The GEMU monitors global macroeconomic trends and emerging policy challenges. Working with large databases and using various econometric modelling and forecasting tools, it produces analytical reports, policy briefs, and background notes on current economic trends, challenges, and opportunities at the global, regional, and national levels. The GEMU leads the production and dissemination of the World Economic Situation and Prospects. It also provides policy advice and capacity development support to developing countries on macroeconomic modelling and economic policy development.¹⁵⁴

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human rights violations are often a pre-cursor to broader conflict. Human rights analysis has long been a key part of instability early warning, as by its nature it considers systemic and structural issues (including laws, policies, and practices) that may act as a trigger for a deterioration or crisis. OHCHR does not have a dedicated situational awareness capacity at headquarters, but undertakes much analysis of national and global human rights trends in the context of servicing human rights mechanisms (i.e., 10 Treaty Bodies, 43 thematic mandates and 13 country mandates). Although these tend to be carefully researched, in-depth, retrospective pieces. OHCHR is a relatively small U.N. body, and both human rights officers in the field and at headquarters are usually too stretched to produce

systematic, analysis on a regular, ongoing basis. OHCHR has approximately 700 officers deployed in approximately 60 U.N. field presences. While some have a monitoring function, often their work focuses on integrating human rights into programming and operational strategies and national government capacity building. OHCHR also deploys staff to rapidly developing humanitarian or other crises to support international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions.

Following the Petrie Report and the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative, OHCHR has been a strong advocate for improved U.N. situational awareness. It led an interagency working group that provided recommendations on the establishment of a common information management system (CIMS)¹⁵⁵ to gather and analyze information on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Several of the recommendations of the working group are progressing, including the implementation of analytical discussions in country teams and the development of policy on information sharing. The review also recommended the establishment of a small interagency analysis team to be collocated with the UNOCC, a proposal that has not yet received General Assembly budgetary approval.

*Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs –
Information Services Branch*

OCHA is unique within the U.N. system, having humanitarian information management — collection, collation, analysis, and dissemination — as one of its core functions. When the Department of Humanitarian Affairs became the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in 1998, its information management role was strengthened with the inclusion of an Information Management Services Branch within the Policy, Advocacy and Information Division. One of the core functions of this branch was “enhancing the early warning capability of [OCHA], the United Nations and the humanitarian community.”¹⁵⁶ The Information Services Branch as it currently operates came into existence in 2013. Information management has remained one of OCHA's five core functions. Supporting humanitarian decision making through common situational awareness is one of its foremost strategic objectives.¹⁵⁷ To this end, OCHA produces a series of high quality products (maps, graphics, situation reports, humanitarian bulletins)¹⁵⁸ and maintains/contributes to a number of websites and information technology tools.¹⁵⁹ The Information Services Branch at headquarters comprises 70 staff.

OCHA dedicates significant resources to situational awareness and its products are very well regarded. They are an important source of information for humanitarian partners, as well as for the broader U.N. family and international community. However, OCHA has recognized that there is often a gap in the provision of qualitative analysis, with its products focusing on numerical data and past activities and providing little contextual or predictive analysis. OCHA was a proponent of the establishment of the UNOCC, standing to benefit both from the 24/7 monitoring function and from the intended integrated analysis. Like human

rights, the humanitarian voice tends to get lost in the political and security focus of analysis provided to the Secretary-General and the Council.

U.N. Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

Situational awareness, particularly early warning, is a core function of the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide. The Special Advisor is mandated to (1) collect information on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which might lead to genocide; (2) act as a mechanism of early warning to the Secretary-General, and through that office the Security Council, of potential situations that could result in genocide; and (3) work to enhance the U.N.'s capacity to analyze and manage information pertaining to genocide and related crimes.¹⁶⁰ Following the establishment of the Special Advisor for the Responsibility to Protect, the situational awareness functions of the office that supports both special advisors were expanded to cover all atrocity crimes — genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity — as well as ethnic cleansing. The Office has developed a Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, which sets out risk factors and indicators to be monitored and analyzed.¹⁶¹ The Office collects and assesses information on situations of concern from U.N. and other sources and undertakes analysis. The Special Advisor provides advice to the Secretary-General and the Security Council and conducts public and private advocacy based on that analysis and assessment.

While the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect has developed a robust analytical framework, and consults widely when gathering information, its early warning system and product is not well integrated into other situational awareness entities and processes within the U.N. Additionally, some entities are cautious about being associated with the politically sensitive mandate of the Office and so keep their distance. Although the Office's analysis and assessment focus on the prevention of a limited set of events (atrocity crimes), assessing risk factors associated with these events is a critical part of the broader picture.

Security Council Sanctions Committees – Panels of Experts

There are currently 15 sanctions regimes created by the Security Council, focusing on a range of issues including supporting political settlement of conflicts, nuclear non-proliferation, and counter-terrorism. Each regime is administered by a committee, comprising representatives of Council members. Sanctions committees are mandated to monitor developments related to the sanctions regime and make recommendations to the Council on countering sanctions violations or on listing or delisting specific people or commodities.¹⁶² The work of the committee is sometimes supported by a monitoring group or panel, of which there are currently 11.¹⁶³ Panels of experts are formally independent from the Secretariat, but they do rely on DPA for many aspects of support and budgeting. They conduct in-depth investigations into sanctions violations and propose measures to address them. The reports produced by the panels then inform the committees' reports to the Council.

The performance of the panels varies. Some panels, such as those dealing with the Al Qaida, ISIL, and Taliban sanctions regimes, are staffed by professional analysts and receive high quality intelligence from member states. Others, such as those dealing with sanctions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, undertake extensive field research, visits, and discussions with governments. Their reports are viewed as valuable and insightful.¹⁶⁴ While some panels collaborate with U.N. missions when deployed in a common area, information is not always shared with situational awareness entities at headquarters. Sometimes this is due to a desire to protect sources, particularly where member states have provided information.

Human Rights Council – Special Procedures

The “Special Procedures” of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts (a “Special Rapporteur,” “Independent Expert,” or working group) with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. With the support of OHCHR, they undertake country visits, send communications to states, conduct thematic studies and convene expert consultations, engage in advocacy, and provide advice for technical cooperation. Special Procedures report annually to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. In fulfilling their mandate, they often gather information and undertake analysis that is critical to the broader U.N. situational awareness picture. Special Rapporteurs have acted as “early warners” of deteriorating situations in the past.

Agencies, Funds, and Programs

U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime – Research and Trend Analysis Branch

The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was established in 1997 through a merger between the U.N. Drug Control Program and the Centre for International Crime Prevention. The three pillars of its work are (1) technical cooperation projects to enhance the capacity of member states to counteract illicit drugs, crime, and terrorism; (2) research and analysis to increase knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues; and (3) normative work to assist States in the ratification and implementation of the relevant international treaties.¹⁶⁵ UNODC is mandated to monitor and analyze global drug and crime trends and related issues and to serve as a repository of analytical and scientific expertise in drug control and crime prevention.¹⁶⁶ At the headquarters level, this function is undertaken by the Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB). Comprising approximately 50 staff, it produces major thematic reports on issues including drug production, trafficking and use, trafficking in persons, wildlife crime, corruption, transnational organized crime, and criminal justice.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, it manages global and regional data collections and supports member states to strengthen their data collection, research, and forensics capacity. The branch’s information sources include data provided by member states, information and analysis provided by project field officers¹⁶⁸ and UNODC field offices,

and academic and other research institutions. UNODC also has research capacity in some of its field offices. In country offices in Afghanistan, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Myanmar, there are teams that regularly monitor drug markets, while in regional offices, such as for South East Asia, West Africa, and East Africa, there are analysts dedicated to organized crime or drug trafficking analysis.

The UNODC RAB comprises professional analysts with various specialties. They employ professional analytical methodologies, and the products they deliver are high quality and well regarded. The RAB is transparent and unbiased in their research, ensuring that they treat member states equally in the analysis of data and dissemination of results. To ensure analytical objectivity, UNODC makes a clear distinction between research findings and policy conclusions. UNODC is somewhat dependent on member states for information, but some are unwilling to share it, while others lack capacity. In addition, the RAB is challenged by a high demand for their products with limited capacity to produce.¹⁶⁹

U.N. Development Programme – Crisis Response Unit

Situational awareness has not traditionally been a focus of UNDP. The programs it runs and supports tend to be longer term, slower burn enterprises, and constant monitoring and analysis of the situation in a country was not seen as a priority to which discrete resources needed to be allocated. However, the importance of situational awareness has increasingly been realized as the mandate of UNDP has expanded to include crisis prevention and recovery and the concept of development has come to include early recovery and resilience building.¹⁷⁰ In addition, as was highlighted by the Petrie Report, given that UNDP is responsible for leading U.N. country teams all over the world, they have a situational awareness obligation to the broader U.N. family. UNDP regional bureaus undertake analysis of the situation in corresponding countries to inform programmatic planning, and the introduction of PDAs has gone some way toward addressing the gap on the ground, although their capacity is limited and they are not deployed in all countries. At headquarters in 2001 the Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery was established within UNDP and included a two-person early warning team. However, during the 2014 UNDP restructure, the team was reduced to one person within the Rapid Response and Preparedness Team of the Crisis Response Unit.

UNDP has no common product suite for situational reporting, analysis, or early warning. Much in-depth analysis is done, including for publications such as the Human Development Reports and for Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). However, this occurs at the regional and country level and is often retrospective. The Crisis Response Unit at headquarters is currently piloting an experimental mechanism whereby the Executive Team that covers protracted and complex crises meets to conduct a regional scan with the intent of ensuring preparedness and making efforts at crisis prevention. They are provided analysis in advance, which is generated by the regional bureaus together with regional hubs and country offices, and includes scenarios. The team has established a global

dashboard including information on crisis indicators, dynamic information for certain situations, and information on UNDP programs. They are also developing country-specific dashboards in pilot countries. UNDP was one of the founders and a key contributor to the UNOCC.

U.N. International Children's Emergency Fund – Emergency Operations Center (OPSCEN)

The Emergency Operations Center (OPSCEN) is based in the Security Team of the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) in UNICEF Headquarters, New York. Established in 1996 and initially staffed by two volunteers, it now comprises 12 staff. Operating 24/7, the OPSCEN provides information and communications services to UNICEF staff globally. It serves three core functions: (1) safety and security, (2) telecommunications support, and (3) information support. The OPSCEN provides situational awareness of security and humanitarian emergencies through situation monitoring and dissemination of daily situation reports, as well as thematic/geographic information products, maps, and other emergency-related information. It also acts as the UNICEF Crisis Coordination Center.¹⁷¹ To maintain continuity of operations, the OPSCEN is supported by two volunteer EMOPS members in Geneva, who take over the OPSCEN functions once a month through live handover and also take over the functions in the case of an emergency in New York.

The OPSCEN situational awareness product has wide distribution among UNICEF staff and is appreciated. It does not have a particular focus on UNICEF's mandate, but covers humanitarian and security situations more generally. Given that a very small number of staff are monitoring and reporting on the whole world, the coverage tends to be broad but shallow, containing limited (if any) analysis and instead including links to open sources providing further information for those interested. UNICEF is the only humanitarian agency to have its own 24/7 situational awareness capacity and did not join the UNOCC when it was established in 2013. The interaction between the OPSCEN and other situational awareness capacities is minimal. They share daily situational awareness reports, and the OPSCEN feeds into the UNOCC information on an ad hoc basis.

World Food Programme – Analysis and Early Warning Unit

The World Food Programme (WFP) Analysis and Early Warning Unit (AEWU) sits within the Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division. Other elements of the Division are responsible for monitoring and reporting on current events, e.g., through a Daily Executive Director's Operational Brief. The AEWU provides situation understanding and anticipation to support the approach contained in the WFP Emergency Preparedness and Response Package (EPRP), resource allocation, and other business processes. The Unit is led at the P4 level and comprises seven staff or consultants. AEWU analysts carry out wide information gathering from U.N. internal and external sources to produce a monthly Early

Warning Report. The Unit also provides enabling and Secretariat support to production of the IASC Early Warning, Early Action, and Readiness Report.¹⁷²

The WFP AEWU is the largest analytical capacity within the international humanitarian community and possibly within the U.N., devoted full-time to early warning. The Unit has a dual focus: regular analytical products for WFP that are, understandably, focused on issues that impact food security, and support to the IASC early warning processes. Its analytical products developed for WFP are valued by the humanitarian community, although sometimes viewed as limited in their usefulness due to the food security focus. Efforts have been made to develop early warning as a professional discipline within WFP. The AEWU team includes a number of conflict analysts who are required to provide anticipatory warning of conflicts, draft specialized conflict analysis briefs, etc.¹⁷³ While the AEWU analysts have extensive interaction with the humanitarian and development communities through the IASC early warning process, collaboration with the UNOCC and other peace and security focused situational awareness entities remains limited.

Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees – Analysis Team

Until recently, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) did not have a dedicated situational awareness capacity at headquarters. In its absence, the security team had been asked to go well beyond operational security and produce broader conflict analysis, mapping etc., despite not having any analyst posts and being reliant on external sources such as IntelCenter and BMI Research. Recognizing the need for broader situational awareness, UNHCR is in the process of establishing a small (three- to four-person) dedicated analytical capacity at headquarters. Still at the developmental stage, UNHCR is in the process of assessing product needs and priorities and creating a culture of use.

UNHCR and partners conduct many protection interviews, which reveal knowledge and understanding of the conflicts from which people are fleeing and where the U.N. may not have a significant presence. But that information is not harnessed for any conflict analysis or predictive assessment, which could support ongoing planning. In fact, the information often doesn't make it out of the field, primarily because of a lack of systems and processes. While UNHCR finds the information provided by OCHA and the analysis provided by WFP useful, it is not always suited to the agency's purpose, given its specific needs centered around understanding conflicts, political turmoil, and displacement.

U.N. Institute for Training and Research – Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT)

The U.N. Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) provides coordinated geo-spatial analysis to U.N. operational agencies and member states. It is a knowledge center entirely devoted to satellite imagery analysis and geographic information solutions.

Operational since 2001, UNOSAT supports (1) humanitarian and relief coordination (crisis management and situation mapping, damage and impact assessment); (2) human security and humanitarian law (application of international humanitarian law, safety and security, human rights); and (3) territorial planning and monitoring (capacity development and technical assistance, in-country project development and implementation).¹⁷⁴ It does this through acquisition of geospatial information, advanced imagery analysis and the production of geospatial products.¹⁷⁵ This occurs either as rapid mapping, during emergency or crisis situations,¹⁷⁶ or over longer timeframes under contracts and agreements. In partnership with the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the University of Geneva, UNOSAT is undertaking a crowd-sourcing project in support of its mapping activities.¹⁷⁷ It collaborates with a wide array of U.N., governmental and NGO partners,¹⁷⁸ and in line with the UNITAR mandate, also undertakes capacity development and training.¹⁷⁹

UNOSAT supports evidence-based decision making, and in recent years has collaborated with most U.N. agencies, including UNOCC, the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria, OHCHR, OCHA, UNDP, UNHCR, UNESCO, WFP, and the International Criminal Court. UNOSAT also works with various U.N. mandated fact-finding missions, commissions of inquiry, and sanction regimes. It has access to excellent sources of information, is well resourced with a professional staff, and produces high quality products that are well received. Its applied research approach aims at developing the most appropriate solutions to answer partners' needs. However, closer collaboration and further integration in an integrated analysis system would render benefit to both UNOSAT and its partners.

World Health Organization – Health Emergencies Programme (WHE)

The mission of the World Health Organization (WHO) Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) is to assist countries and coordinate international action to prevent, prepare for, detect, rapidly respond to, and recover from outbreaks and emergencies. It monitors global public health events and facilitates international collaboration during public health emergencies. The program has a dedicated emergency operations department and hosts several streams of information collection and management. Other parts of WHO also have an information collection, analysis, and sharing role, including the International Health Regulations Secretariat, the Infectious Hazards Management department, the Health Emergency Information and Risk Assessment department and the interagency coordination service. The Strategic Health Operations Center is a facility located at WHO headquarters in Geneva, which is activated during an emergency. The SHOC monitors informal (media) and formal (WHO and other public health agencies) information sources to gather and map real-time information on the emergency (disease outbreaks, natural disasters, conflicts, or chemical emergencies), supports WHO response, and assists WHO regional offices and member states to develop their own emergency operations centers.¹⁸⁰

WHO was strongly criticized for its response to the 2014 Ebola crisis.¹⁸¹ One of the criticisms levelled against the organization was the lack of awareness of the extent of spread of the Ebola virus, feeding into a delayed activation of crisis measures. Given the nature of its work, WHO collaborates more closely with its member states than other agencies and is heavily dependent upon them for the provision of information. The need for ongoing monitoring, rapid assessment, and reporting on global health risks led to the creation of WHE and the strengthening of its situational awareness role, by expanding its capacity to assist WHO country and regional offices. WHE has also strengthened the role of WHO to assist member states to better detect risks and confidently and confidentially share information.

In the current setting, the various streams of work within WHO undertaking information collection, analysis, and coordination are organized around an internal objective focused on the mandate given by WHO Member States. They could, however, effectively contribute to broader U.N. situational awareness efforts if linked to other U.N. situational awareness entities and processes.

Interagency Standing Committee – Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning, and Preparedness

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning, and Preparedness (RG REWP)¹⁸² was established in 2016, assuming a number of tasks from the former IASC Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience. It was created to implement elements of the IASC Work Plan 2016-7 relating to IASC system and national preparedness, and in response to the call for better risk analysis, preparedness, and early action articulated in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity and the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit. The Reference Group's work falls into three pillars: (1) understanding risk and anticipation, (2) readiness, and (3) awareness and investment. The core task of the Group related to situational awareness is the preparation of Early Warning, Early Action and Readiness Analysis (discussed in more detail below), but it is also mandated to produce ad hoc analysis as issues arise.¹⁸³ The IASC RG REWP is not a standing body. Its members meet bi-monthly, while analysts working on the production of reports meet more frequently.

Headquarters Processes

Security Council Situational Awareness Briefing

During its time as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, New Zealand, in partnership with the Deputy Secretary-General, instigated Security Council Situational Awareness briefings during its presidency in September 2016. The briefings have been held monthly since, and are not dependent on a request from the Council president. They are informal, held away from the Council chambers, in the UNOCC briefing room. They are orally presented, supported by graphics (such as maps), and no written document is produced. To date, briefings have been

country specific, event specific, and thematic. The topics are decided by EOSG, the choice of lead briefer depends on the subject, and the UNOCC provides support. The briefing is followed by interactive dialogue between Council members and Secretariat staff. All relevant offices (DPKO, DPA, OCHA, OHCHR, etc.) attend the briefing and are involved in the question and answer portion, at which point individual departments/agencies can add detail on certain aspects as needed. The briefing is strictly situational awareness (facts, analysis, assessment). Policy advice, advocacy, and administrative matters are specifically excluded.¹⁸⁴

Security Council members have very different levels of information on any subject, which depends partly on their involvement in a situation, their relationship with Secretariat officials, and their national intelligence systems. As a result, decision making in the Council is often centered around a core few. In addition to alerting the Council to emerging and evolving situations, the purpose of the situational awareness briefing is to ensure that Council members have a more equal level of information to inform their decision making. The briefing is also intended to provide an informal forum for open and robust discussion between Council members and the Secretariat.

Although it is yet to be realized, the original intention of having an integrated briefing from the Secretariat was to ensure that the political, security, humanitarian, human rights, and development voices were all heard, with the Secretariat coming to a common view. The briefings have had the effect of requiring the Secretariat to pull together, but they have not yet resulted in production of integrated analysis. The quality of the briefings has improved over time as the Secretariat has become accustomed to the forum. The briefings have been generally well received by Council members and have allowed the opportunity for frank discussion.¹⁸⁵

DPA Security Council Informal Briefing

Horizon scanning briefings to the Security Council were instigated by the U.K. in 2010. This came following a debate on preventive diplomacy, in which almost every Council member highlighted the importance of early warning.¹⁸⁶ During its Council presidency in November 2010, the U.K. invited the DPA Under-Secretary-General to provide a briefing to the Security Council on emerging security issues, including in countries not on the Council's agenda.¹⁸⁷ The briefing took place in consultations rather than open session. Subsequent briefings were held at the invitation of the monthly Council president, and with the exception of the December 2010 presidency of the U.S., were held every month until the next U.S. presidency in April 2012.¹⁸⁸ They were held five times in 2012, three times in 2013, and not since. The briefings covered one or several country situations, senior-level visits, and on occasion administrative issues, such as the financing of special political missions and difficulties appointing sanctions experts.¹⁸⁹ Members were informed of the topics to be covered a few days in advance, and the format moved from informal and interactive to more formal, with members reading written statements. In 2014 the horizon scanning briefings were replaced by the informal "DPA briefing."¹⁹⁰

While Council members recognize the need for early warning to support conflict prevention activities, in practice the provision of early warning to the Council is very sensitive and highly political. The horizon scanning briefings were abandoned for several reasons. Some Council members became concerned that the discussion of certain situations, which was subsequently recorded in the summary of the work of each monthly presidency, may give the erroneous impression that they were on the Council's agenda. Others thought that situations that were on the Council's agenda should not be addressed in this additional forum.¹⁹¹ Some questioned the value of the briefings, which in their view lacked analysis and assessment, providing little more than could be read in open sources, and strayed into policy and administrative issues.¹⁹² Although perhaps the main reason for their demise was the perception that some member states were influencing the selection of topics.¹⁹³ The DPA briefings with which they were replaced have had a different focus. Held at a lower level, they have tended to be more focused on the activities of the department in non-controversial situations rather than analysis and assessment of emerging or evolving situations.¹⁹⁴

Executive Committee, Deputies Committee, and Regional Monthly Review meetings

The Executive Committee (principal level), Deputies Committee (Assistant Secretary-General level), Regional Monthly Review (director level), and Interagency/Integrated Task Forces (working level) are the main U.N. integrated decision-making and coordination mechanisms.

Upon assuming office, Secretary-General Guterres established the Executive Committee and Deputies Committee in early 2017 in an effort to employ a cabinet-like decision-making approach.¹⁹⁵ Meeting weekly, the Executive Committee is intended to assist the Secretary-General make decisions on issues of strategic consequence requiring principal-level attention across all pillars of the U.N.'s work, informed by deliberations of intergovernmental bodies. The Deputies Committee is intended to cover the same scope, resolving as many issues as possible at the slightly less senior level, leaving the Executive Committee free to address only those issues requiring principal-level attention. The Deputies Committee is also supposed to follow up, monitor and report progress on implementation of decisions made by the Executive Committee.¹⁹⁶

The regional quarterly review process was a mechanism introduced in 2014 as part of the Human Rights Up Front initiative, which has recently become a monthly undertaking. It brings together representatives of regional divisions of U.N. departments and agencies each month to scan countries in their area of responsibility, to undertake a joint analysis of a situation, and to coordinate response activities. The meetings are co-chaired by DPA and UNDP, and the senior-most U.N. official in each country is consulted prior to the meeting.¹⁹⁷

The regional monthly review meetings have had a positive impact on situational awareness. The very holding of the meetings has had the effect of requiring

divisions to regularly consider possible early warning signs of human rights and international humanitarian law violations, and analytical discussion in the meeting format is beneficial. While it is a very valuable forum, it lacks robustness as an analytical process, as it is not underpinned by any systematic process that tracks indicators and analyses trends. The meetings tend to focus on coordinating U.N. positions and activities, and there are many countries/situations to be covered in a short period of time.

Daily situational awareness reporting

In order for the UNOCC to produce the daily briefing note, as well as crisis alerts and reports, all stakeholders (DPKO, DFS, DSS, DPA, DPI, OCHA, OHCHR and UNDP) are required to provide regular reporting to the UNOCC. The UNOCC Operational Reporting Directive sets out the timing, content and format of the regular contributions, as well as clearly articulating what the information will be used for.

At the time of the establishment of the UNOCC, only DPKO and DSS had in place arrangements that required peacekeeping missions and security sections respectively to provide daily reports to headquarters. Other stakeholders had to institute mechanisms to extract regular situational reports from their field presences to meet the UNOCC reporting requirements. Although not all stakeholders report daily, and while the quality of reporting differs, the process has significantly improved since the establishment of the UNOCC in 2013. Although the reports do still draw heavily from DPKO and DSS reporting, progress is being made to proactively include greater humanitarian, human rights and development input. The outcome from this process — the UNOCC daily briefing note, crisis reports, and alerts — are valued by their consumers and have served the purpose of ensuring that senior leaders at headquarters share a common operational picture.

IASC Early Warning, Early Action, and Readiness Report

The Early Warning, Early Action, and Readiness Analysis is prepared twice annually by the IASC RG REWP.¹⁹⁸ The purpose of the product is to “provide relevant decision makers, particularly those accountable at the global level with a consolidated global source of forward-looking analysis to support preparedness, early response, advocacy, resource mobilization and, ideally, prevention efforts that seek to mitigate and manage risks.”¹⁹⁹ While the group is open to any IASC member, the primary participants are ACAPS, FAO, OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. The WFP Analysis and Early Warning Unit provides the core of the analytical team, compiles the text, and facilitates the process. OCHA provides the assessment of readiness levels. Situations are assessed as very high, high, or moderate level of concern based on analysis of the gap between the seriousness of the risk and the level of readiness. Risk types analyzed include conflict, drought, flood, epidemic, and economic, which are all evaluated against humanitarian impact, government capacity, humanitarian capacity, and integrated response.

The IASC Early Warning, Early Action, and Readiness Analysis employs the most consistent and robust analytical early warning and assessment methodology within the U.N. The analytical exercise is genuinely collaborative and often has the impact of requiring contributing agencies to do their own analysis. The resulting report is high quality and strongly valued across the humanitarian agencies, although it does have its challenges. Being produced only biannually, the report has a six-month horizon and is fairly strategic and therefore of limited utility at the operational level. The distribution of the report has varied over time. It was previously a sanitized and public document, but this has changed relatively recently. The product is now primarily targeted at the IASC Emergency Directors Group; copies have a limited distribution outside this body, including the Emergency Relief Coordinator (USG OCHA), Chair UNDG, UNOCC, PBSO, and the Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Even with this more limited distribution, Resident Coordinators on occasion have tried to influence the inclusion of a particular country or the assessment of that country, due to government sensitivities and the difficulties it might create for their work. The product of the analysis is not an official U.N. report. The co-chairs are examining ways to support enhanced integrated analysis sought by the Secretary-General, including through follow-on work from the World Humanitarian Summit, while maintaining the independent humanitarian nature of the analysis.²⁰⁰

Analysis in support of planning processes

Comprehensive assessments are carried out in support of a number of U.N. planning processes. For example, the U.N. Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning and the accompanying Handbook set out the requirement for the conduct of a joint strategic assessment ahead of mission start up, transition, draw-down, or when there is a significant change in the environment. The assessment process includes political, security, humanitarian, human rights, and development actors from headquarters and, where present, the field. The purpose of the assessment is to reach a common U.N. understanding of the situation, the role of stakeholders, and core peace consolidation priorities in order to propose to the Secretary-General, and eventually the Security Council, options for U.N. engagement.²⁰¹ The assessment can be a fairly heavy process involving many actors over a significant period of time, particularly because it is geared toward developing a report focused on planning options, on which there is often disagreement.

Field Entities

Regional Level

The U.N. has five regional commissions,²⁰² several political missions with a regional mandate,²⁰³ three regional humanitarian coordinators,²⁰⁴ and a number of departments and agencies — DSS, UNDP, OCHA, OHCHR, and UNODC, for

example — with substantial regional offices. Most of these U.N. presences have regional situation analysis as part of their broader mandate. However, there is very little dedicated situational awareness capacity at the regional level and few mechanisms that bring the system together to share information and conduct joint analysis.

Some special political missions with regional mandates have very small research and analysis units. Regional humanitarian coordinators have dedicated information management teams within their offices. The DSS Threat and Risk Service makes the most concerted effort at regional situational awareness analysis, though it has very modest dedicated situational awareness capacity at this level. Regional Security Information Teams (each comprising two analysts) work in the Sahel, Central Africa, and the Middle East, while stand-alone analysts work in Asia, the Pacific, North Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.²⁰⁵ Those analysts are mandated to undertake analysis and assessment drawing on information from across the region, but their ability to produce in-depth, robust product is minimal due to this limited capacity.²⁰⁶

Country Level

Peacekeeping Operations

Peacekeeping operations vary significantly in their mandate and composition. UNIFIL, for instance, has a very narrow mandate and heavy military composition,²⁰⁷ while MONUSCO has a broad mandate and multidimensional composition.²⁰⁸ Yet, every U.N. peacekeeping operation has dedicated situational awareness entities and a base level of common processes. Some mission components actively collect information, while others passively receive it in the course of their daily work. The broad base of information existing within a mission is processed (collated and analyzed) to support decision making, operational planning, and protect U.N. staff and assets.

DPKO policy prescribes that all peacekeeping missions have a Joint Operations Center (JOC) and a Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC). Missions also have an intelligence function within the force. The military headquarters has an intelligence component (U₂), and the force may have a specialized military reconnaissance unit. Even when it doesn't, situational awareness is considered a "primary task" of military mission personnel,²⁰⁹ and individual infantry battalions and companies often have embedded intelligence officers.

Missions also have a security entity, usually a Security Operations Center (SOC) or Security Information and Operations Center (SIOC), which carries out a situational awareness function. They have a GIS unit or officer. And some missions, depending on their mandate, have a Criminal Intelligence Unit (CIU) within the police component. The mission's situational awareness capacities are supposed to be physically collocated. That is not always the case, but where it is, has had a significantly positive impact.

While DPKO-DFS has imposed a level of commonality of structure and governance upon peacekeeping missions, because the peacekeeping instrument is flexible and over the years missions have been deployed to address a range of circumstances, each mission is unique. The situational awareness capacities and processes work better in some missions than others. In some cases that is a result of resourcing, management, and professionalism. Sometimes the environment and permissive/obstructionist behavior of the host state plays a large part. Some missions have experimented with altered arrangements. MINUSMA, for example, has an All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) and ISR companies, while UNMISS is the only mission with a specific early warning mandate that also has dedicated situational awareness capacities at the subnational level.

Joint capacities – JOCs, JMACs, and GIS

Both JOCs and JMACs are supposed to be integrated entities, drawing personnel from the military and police components of the mission around a civilian core. The JOC is the mission's information hub. It provides a 24/7 monitoring and reporting function, collating inputs from across the mission to produce a daily situational report and distributing alerts and special incident reports as necessary. JOCs are also mandated to provide crisis management support. Additionally, some JOCs play an operations coordination role, facilitating coordination among mission and country team components to ensure that their activities are complementary and coherent and that shared assets are effectively and efficiently utilized.²¹⁰

JMACs gather information from all sources to produce integrated analysis and assessments in support of mission leadership decision making, strategic, operational and contingency planning, crisis management, and identifying threats and challenges to the mission mandate. They are also responsible for determining the leadership's information requirements and on that basis developing and managing the mission's collection plan. JMACs are mandated to engage with mission staff, country team staff, and non-U.N. entities. They are supposed to “incorporate political, civil affairs, protection, military, security, rule of law, DDR, electoral, gender, humanitarian, development, human rights, natural resources and any other mandate related perspectives in mission-wide information collection and analysis.”²¹¹

While core GIS functions have been centralized to the GIS section of the Service for Geospatial, Information and Telecommunication Technologies (SGITT) at the U.N. Global Service Centre in Brindisi, the field GIS segment is mandated to support the mission's situational awareness and planning through the production of maps and the provision of other geospatial and satellite-derived information. A more distanced relationship between the mission and the GIS function at the Global Service Center in Brindisi means that working relationships and tasking processes need to be better developed to improve responsiveness to dynamic requirements.²¹²

Since their establishment in 2005, JOCs and JMACs have undergone significant evolution, becoming increasingly professional over time. Although the composition

and performance of both JOCs and JMACs differ significantly, they have become highly valued mission entities and broadly accepted and supported by member states. One of the main challenges faced by the JOC is attracting staff with sufficient language skills to produce reports. JMACs also face staffing issues, particularly ensuring that the military and police personnel seconded into the entity have relevant skills. Those JMACs that are well resourced can employ specialist analysts, while others are reliant on U.N. Volunteers. Particularly for JMACs, administrative and GIS support are critical, as is access to U.N. vehicles and travel funds, given that JMAC analysts are responsible for much of their own information collection. Both JOCs and JMACs are reliant on receiving information from mission components and the Country Team. Some missions have excellent systems and processes in place and information sharing works well; in others, information is siloed and not well shared. Both JOCs and JMACs are led at the P4/P5 level by a civilian. Having direct access to the SRSG is critical for them to convey information and analysis in a timely fashion. However, the heads of both bodies have less seniority than most heads of equivalent sections, which can make direct access difficult.

Military capacities

Every mission's force headquarters includes a Military Information Staff Branch (U2). The functions of this branch include (1) providing the Head of the Military Component/Force Commander with intelligence for accomplishing the military objectives of the mission; (2) supporting the headquarters' operations (U3) and



planning (U5) branches with military intelligence; (3) coordinating the mission's ground and aerial reconnaissance and surveillance operations; (4) collecting and disseminating information acquired through space, satellite, aerial, maritime and ground based surveillance and monitoring assets; (5) providing inputs into the Military Operations Center; (6) sharing information with the JOC, JMAC, and other mission components; (7) providing weekly information summaries to the OMA Assessments Team; and (8) providing early warning through targeted information analysis.²¹³

The U.N. Infantry Battalion Manual lists "situational awareness" as one of the military's primary tasks. Battalions are required to "proactively acquire" and analyze information about conditions in the mission's AO, and ensure that such information is disseminated within the battalion, to the force headquarters, and to other relevant stakeholders. Both technical and human resources are to be dedicated to maintaining situational awareness. Some battalions have embedded intelligence officers, but information collection is considered part of the role of all soldiers. At the battalion level, the focus of the activity is supporting operational planning and decision making, identifying challenges to the conduct of operations, threats to civilians, possible spoilers, likely triggers for violence, and threats to mission personnel and assets. Battalions are instructed to undertake the ongoing process of intelligence preparation of the battlefield. In practice, information collection takes place through daily activities, such as (1) patrols; (2) specific reconnaissance missions; (3) formal and informal interactions with the community, including through Community Liaison Assistants and Community Alert Networks; and (4) information sharing with other U.N., government, and NGO entities working in the area.²¹⁴ While the force often has access to a wealth of information, sometimes it is not well captured. This may be due to inadequate training of troops on how to gather, record, and share information; contingents unwilling to share information with other nationalities or outside the military component; an absence of local language skills; a lack of cultural understanding; or inadequate and slow reporting.²¹⁵

U.N. special forces may be required to undertake special reconnaissance, collecting or verifying information through employing capabilities not normally found in conventional forces. They may be able to overcome constraints imposed by weather, terrain masking, and hostile countermeasures, such as by undertaking sustained, targeted observation in hostile, denied, or sensitive territory. Special reconnaissance can provide specific, well-defined, and time-sensitive information, and special forces units usually have their own internal analysis capability.²¹⁶

Military aviation units, which are separate from U.N.-owned air assets, may be tasked with gathering intelligence.²¹⁷ A mission structure may include a specialized military reconnaissance unit, the purpose of which is to collect and report detailed information on terrain, population, potential threats, and battle damage to support command decision making. To be effective, such units must

be highly mobile (using both ground and air assets) and self-sufficient (able to undertake long-range patrols). In addition to being a large capacity dedicated to situational awareness, military reconnaissance units have the added benefit of using advanced surveillance technologies such as UAVs, and are able to operate over large and remote areas that the U.N. may not otherwise be able to cover.²¹⁸ Such units are, however, not easily generated for U.N. peacekeeping missions. Several European nations contributed capabilities to a dedicated intelligence function in MINUSMA, which included two ISR companies with advanced capabilities, two helicopters, and analysis staff. However, difficulties sharing information outside of NATO countries, unclear tasking and information requirements, and overlap with existing mission capabilities posed challenges for fully using the capability.²¹⁹

Police capacities

One of the foundational principles of U.N. Police (UNPOL) is that they are an “intelligence-led service.”²²⁰ They use criminal intelligence, described as “processed information on crimes and criminality” to plan and resource to prevent and disrupt criminal activity, developing strategies that focus on peace spoilers and serious offenders.²²¹ Along with “community-oriented policing,” intelligence-led policing is one of two overarching approaches that guide all UNPOL operational activities.²²² The CIU is the dedicated situational awareness entity that resides within UNPOL components. It is mandated to gather, analyze, and disseminate information, including to mission JOCs and JMACs, through Police Liaison Officers.²²³ DPKO-DFS policy indicates that criminal intelligence is vital to executing mandated tasks of protecting civilians, preventing crime, and addressing other security related issues. The policy sets out parameters for UNPOL information collection and handling, including dealing with “confidential informants” and collection targeted at specific individuals or organizations.²²⁴ In addition to CIU staff, some police might be assigned specific criminal intelligence roles, but the policy stresses that it is the role of all U.N. police officers to collect and report such information. Training for CIU officers is based on UNODC’s Criminal Intelligence Manuals.²²⁵ Overarching management of the component’s criminal intelligence activities, including ensuring the legality and integrity of collection, is placed in the Head of the Police Component.

U.N. Formed Police Units (FPUs) are cohesive, mobile police contingents within a mission’s UNPOL component. Their main functions are (1) public order management; (2) protection of U.N. personnel and facilities; and (3) police operations that may involve a higher risk, greater robustness or a specialized capacity.²²⁶ DPKO-DFS Policy prescribes that information analysis personnel must be included within the minimal operational capacity.²²⁷ All FPU operations are supposed to be carried out on the basis of reliable intelligence and a threat assessment. FPU personnel are mandated to collect information to analyze security trends and prepare contingencies.²²⁸

Security capacities

Every mission has within its security section a Security Operations Center (SOC), Security Information and Operations Center (SIOC), or Security Information Coordination Unit (SICU). All of the entities have a situational awareness function. The security section of a mission is responsible for the safety and security of U.N. personnel, premises, and assets, with the exception of military and police contingents, which are responsible for their own security.²²⁹ Accordingly, the units monitor and report on the security situation, with particular focus on threats to U.N. personnel, equipment, and infrastructure.²³⁰ Security sections provide security briefings and produce daily reports, alerts, and more in-depth analytical threat assessments. These are disseminated to the mission leadership and, depending on the product, other mission components. The SOC/SIOC/SICU also provides security information to the JMAC and other mission and country team members. The situational awareness performance of security sections differs across missions. They have a reputation for having some of the best sources of information on the ground while not always being as strong on the analytical and presentation aspects.

Special Political Missions

There is a wide spectrum of special political missions. Some, like the Office of the U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL) and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), are small teams supporting a key individual with a discrete diplomatic mandate. Others, such as the U.N. missions in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Iraq (UNAMI), Somalia (UNSOM), Libya (UNSMIL), and Colombia, have a much larger operational presence to deliver on broader mandates.

DPA policy does not prescribe that special political missions must have a dedicated situational awareness entity.²³¹ However, the more operational missions have drawn upon the JOC and JMAC concepts to create small integrated entities. In the lighter SPMs there is usually no dedicated situational awareness capacity, but a general expectation that the political affairs officers, who form the core of the staff, will provide the mission situational awareness through their daily work. In reality, such missions are usually tightly staffed and the political affairs officers are too busy with their daily tasks (e.g., organizing and reporting on their principal's diplomatic calls), that they have little time to conduct in-depth political analysis, let alone a broader or more ongoing effort. In some missions, a daily media summary is prepared by a public information officer or a member of the administrative staff.

Integrated entities

Integrated situational awareness entities in SPMs tend to follow the spirit of the DPKO-DFS JMAC policy and produce medium to long term analysis and assessment, drawing on all sources of information, with a focus on anything that might present a threat to implementation of the mission mandate. In the absence of

policy, there is less consistency on where the entities sit organizationally and on the products generated. For example, UNAMA, which was initially led by DPKO, has a Joint Analysis and Policy Unit, which has moved between the political pillar and the office of the SRSG. The UNSMIL JMAC has also moved — from the political section to the office of the Chief of Staff to the office of the military advisor — as its role has evolved within the mission. When the U.N. Political Office in Somalia (UNPOS) was replaced with the U.N. Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the latter with a much more comprehensive mandate and larger operational presence, the mission structure included both an Integrated Information Hub, intended to operate like a JOC, and an Integrated Analysis Hub, intended to be a JMAC equivalent. Although it took a long time to staff the two functions, they are considered valuable mission elements.

Drawing good practices from other SPMs, the recently established U.N. Mission in Colombia includes an Integrated Information Hub (IIH), intended to function akin to a JMAC. The team is located in the Office of the Chief of Staff and has been staffed by fluent Spanish speakers who have been undertaking analysis and assessment of the situation in Colombia for some time. The IIH product is shared across the mission, with the J2 of the Joint Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, and the U.N. country team. The IIH is given scope to do wide-ranging (including regional) analysis. However, even employing good practices, the IIH still faces challenges. It is a very small capacity (approximately three people), so it is unable to produce early warning or scenario products. Because the IIH was being deployed, the PDA that was part of the U.N. country team in Colombia was cut, so the country team is now also reliant upon the IIH for political and conflict analysis.

Security entities

Every special political mission has a security section that differs significantly in size depending on the mission mandate. The security section always has a situational awareness function. In smaller/lighter/less operational missions, that function may be limited to monitoring the security environment and providing alerts and weekly information updates. In the heavier, more operational missions, the security section is likely to be larger and to include an analytical capacity responsible for providing analysis and assessment on security threats to mission personnel property and assets.

In those missions that have an integrated situational awareness entity, the security section should feed in information, and the two bodies should work closely together. In missions without a dedicated situational awareness entity, there is often reliance upon the security section to perform a broader role, despite their limited security-focused mandate.

U.N. Country Teams

U.N. country teams are established in 131 countries (covering 161). They bring together all of the U.N. agencies undertaking operational activities in

development, emergency, recovery, and transition to plan and work together.²³² Each country team is led by a Resident Coordinator, who may also be appointed the Humanitarian Coordinator.

U.N. country teams do not have a dedicated situational awareness entity, although that function is sometimes fulfilled by someone within the Resident Coordinator's office. Given OCHA's information management role, it is not surprising that there is a significant difference in the U.N.'s situational awareness from country to country depending on whether OCHA is present.²³³ PDAs, where they exist, can play a critical situational awareness role. However their scope for doing so is largely at the discretion of the Resident Coordinator, and it is not their only role. The Petrie Report, the Human Rights Up Front initiative, and the subsequent OHCHR-led Common Information Management Systems task force all highlighted the need for integrated analysis at the country level.

Multidisciplinary entities – PDAs

The Joint UNDP/DPA Program on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention was established in 2004. One of the core initiatives of the Program was the deployment of Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs). PDAs are deployed into Resident Coordinator's offices, where their primary functions are supporting Resident Coordinators and U.N. country teams adapt and respond to complex political situations and developing and implementing strategic conflict prevention initiatives and programs.²³⁴ Although their work differs between country teams, PDA's activities are focused on (1) strategic guidance and implementation of conflict prevention initiatives, and (2) providing political and conflict analysis to the Resident Coordinator and country team to support design and implementation of conflict-sensitive programming.²³⁵ There are 40 PDAs currently deployed into U.N. country teams. They are considered an invaluable resource, and are a small and elite cadre.²³⁶

Although political and conflict analysis is only a part of the PDA's role, through that they end up executing a critical situational awareness function for the country team, often generating the kind of product delivered by a JMAC in a mission setting. Drawing on all sources of information, PDAs may deliver (1) regular oral briefings to the UNCT; (2) regular written analysis reports; (3) ad hoc analytical products, such as scenarios, targeted analysis in anticipation of a key event, or early warning assessments; and (4) specific analysis in support of a particular agency or program. They tend to have very good networks, and the production and sharing of analysis product renders them highly valuable to and appreciated by the wider UNCT. PDAs also provide analysis to DPA and UNDP at the headquarters level, which is highly valued.

An independent review of PDAs carried out in 2014 found:

At the country-level, where this analysis is insightful, comprehensive and is utilized effectively, it is difficult to imagine how the U.N. functions

in many countries without similar inputs. RCs have said that they find it critical for informing their meetings and their positioning of the U.N. on certain topics. [...] As many international UNCT staff only read the mainstream media, the in-depth multi-disciplinary analysis that a PDA provides can be extremely useful in informing them about issues affecting the mood of the country, as well as giving them a more strategic perspective on areas of risk or controversial issues.²³⁷

PDAs tend to be highly valued in country teams where they are deployed and sought after in countries where they are absent. However, there is no requirement to generate common analytical products, and despite their popularity and the critical role they play, PDAs are deployed individually in less than one third of country teams and subject to a complex cost sharing agreement that makes individual posts precarious and ensuring sustainability difficult.

Humanitarian entities

As detailed above, “information management” is one of OCHA’s core functions and one of the ways in which it fulfils its mandate. In its information management role, OCHA produces a range of products. All OCHA country and regional offices have an information management capacity. Some, but not all, Humanitarian Advisor Teams (small field offices which report to regional offices) have information capacity, depending on need. In addition, each of the “clusters” has an information management capacity. Prior to 2008, OCHA sometimes deployed stand-alone Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs),²³⁸ but these were abandoned (arguably prematurely) when the cluster approach was adopted. OCHA information management units are responsible for collecting information, analyzing it, and producing a range of products for the humanitarian community. They produce a number of situational awareness products, including situation reports,²³⁹ situational analysis,²⁴⁰ humanitarian bulletins and updates,²⁴¹ and different kinds of maps.²⁴² There is no requirement or policy for OCHA country offices to produce early warning products, although some (for example, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan) have instituted early warning type mechanisms.

OCHA situational awareness products are an important source of information for the humanitarian community and for the broader U.N. family in country. Although they may not be particularly nuanced in some of the specialized areas, they provide the humanitarian community with a common picture across the humanitarian sectors. They support critical operational planning through, for example, access, incident, armed group and besieged location mapping, and they provide cross-verified facts and figures for advocacy purposes.

Often the products focus on statistics, figures, and past activities and do not provide contextual or predictive analysis. Recognizing that there is a gap in the provision

of qualitative analysis and that the skills required for needs assessments are very different from those for conflict analysis, OCHA is prioritizing the professionalization of its information analyst stream. In the interim, offices sometimes rely on external information, such as the INGO Safety Advisory Office and ad hoc initiatives. For example, the OCHA Libya Office, facing the difficulties of being outside the country, convened a two-day workshop of 110 people, 55 of whom were Libyans, to conduct a conflict analysis and consider possible scenarios.

Often OCHA will have access to a lot of information, and its partners may be the only ones working in remote or highly volatile locations. Like other agencies, OCHA can be wary of sharing its information both within the U.N. and externally, due to fears that partners may be seen as undertaking an information-gathering rather than a relief role, which could compromise operations and put individuals at risk.

Security entities

As with missions, every country team has a security section. Because of the absence of a dedicated situational awareness entity, often country team members are reliant upon regular security briefings and reports, including for broader analysis of the situation in the country. Security Management Team meetings are held at least monthly, often immediately following the country team meeting, and the briefing provided at the outset of the SMT is, in many environments, highly valued and the only regular situational awareness product that the country team receives.



Other initiatives

The need for integrated situational awareness is felt in a number of country teams, particularly those with Resident Coordinators who have previously served in peacekeeping or special political missions with situational awareness capacities. In the absence of a dedicated situational awareness capacity, several ad hoc initiatives have developed.

In Lebanon, the Resident Coordinator's office is leading a process to pull together U.N. information and analysis, not just from across the country team, but also the peacekeeping and political missions resident in Lebanon, to generate regular integrated situational awareness products. In line with the U.N. Strategic Framework (2017-20), which calls for holistic U.N. analysis and response in addressing challenges to Lebanon's ongoing stability, the country team is leading the implementation of an early warning information-sharing system. After undertaking a mapping exercise of the analytical products produced by the U.N., a mechanism is being implemented to draw together information from across the system, including from existing products, as well as convening representatives from the various entities to produce regular situational awareness products. Those are likely to include (1) monthly briefs for the Resident Coordinator and heads of agencies; (2) ad hoc reports on specific incidents and events; and (3) the development of scenarios to be used for operational and programmatic planning. The products will cover the political and security situation, with a view to identifying and analyzing trends across key humanitarian/development/political/security issues; examining "hot spots" and the likely trajectory of those situations; and possibly analyzing developments at the subregional or regional level. The intention of providing more systematic information and analysis to U.N. senior management is to enable the U.N. to engage in a proactive and preventive manner in addressing pre-existing and emerging drivers of insecurity.

The U.N. presence in Colombia is going through a transition with the political mission deploying and OCHA drawing down. With the departure of OCHA and its information management output, there was concern that the country team would suffer from the absence of such situational awareness support. In order to avoid that gap, the U.N. in Colombia embarked upon the establishment of an interagency Information Management and Analysis Unit (known as UMAIC – Unidad de Manejo y Análisis de Información Colombia). Currently a joint venture between OCHA, UNDP, and the Resident Coordinator's office, the UMAIC grew out of the original Humanitarian Situation Room, which later became the Humanitarian Information Management Unit.²⁴³ During consultations for the concept development, three main information needs were identified: (1) mapping U.N. humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities; (2) measuring the impact of UNDAF activities; and (3) analysis of conflict dynamics and trends.²⁴⁴ The UMAIC is expanding OCHA products beyond their traditional humanitarian focus to cover early recovery, peacebuilding, and development issues, intending eventually to hand over to UNDP. The unit has a core staff of approximately five people, but it brings together people

from the relevant agencies to undertake joint analysis. Linked to both the Common Humanitarian Framework and the U.N. Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), products created by the UMAIC are dominated by geospatial imagery and analysis focusing heavily on dashboards, statistics, and mapping. Visualization and tracking both humanitarian and development indicators has proved very valuable for U.N. leadership. However, it has been noted that the work of the UMAIC needs to be complemented with qualitative integrated analysis, including on the likely trajectory of the situation in the country.²⁴⁵

One of the situational awareness products that is conspicuously absent in many country teams is a comprehensive, robust conflict analysis. In need of such analysis and assessment but without the in-house capacity to produce it, the forum country teams for Libya and Syria each engaged a consultant to prepare the product. The consultant spent several weeks in country, meeting with various actors and facilitated analytical workshops among staff from U.N. agencies, and in the case of Libya, the political mission. At the time of writing the Syria analysis was ongoing, but the Libya product had been finalized and was widely praised and valued. It was a comprehensive product, which will need frequent updating, but provided country team members with an excellent basis and deeper understanding of the conflict. U.N. staff from not only country teams, but also missions, expressed the desire for such a document, which was generally expected to be very valuable.

Field Processes

Peacekeeping missions' integrated daily situational awareness reports

DPKO policy requires all peacekeeping missions to produce daily situation reports that integrate information from across the mission. Some missions have issued a directive requiring each component to provide information to the JOC daily. Information from country teams can also be incorporated, but there is no system in place and no policy requirement for country teams to regularly share information with the JOC. The integrated daily situation reports produced by the JOC are disseminated to mission leaders and shared with the UNOCC at headquarters.

DPKO policy also requires JMACs to produce integrated analysis and assessment, but does not prescribe particular products. Again, there is no requirement for the inclusion of information and analysis from country teams, and practice varies across missions. With its specific early warning mandate, the JMAC in UNMISS produces a regular early warning matrix based on information gained through a weekly meeting that includes mission and country team personnel, as well as key NGO representatives. A valued product, the matrix is presented at the weekly Senior Management Team meeting. Some JMACs (or equivalents) in other missions, such as UNIFIL and UNAMA, do something similar. The Information Coordination Board structure, which DPKO-DFS is proposing in the peacekeeping intelligence framework, is intended to play a role facilitating the integration of information from across a mission.

Analysis in support of planning processes

Mission and country team personnel are part of more comprehensive, integrated situational analysis processes when feeding into some headquarters-driven mechanisms, such as the Strategic Assessments outlined above and the production of budgets. However, these processes are long term and focused toward mandate, structural organization, and staffing, and therefore of limited utility for ongoing situational awareness.

In country teams, the U.N. Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), a document that sets out the U.N.'s strategy and actions to support national development of a particular country,²⁴⁶ is based upon a common country analysis, prepared using input from a range of stakeholders and a robust methodology.²⁴⁷ Similarly, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), a document that sets out how the humanitarian community intends to respond to the needs of the affected population in a particular country,²⁴⁸ is based on a Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and other analytical products, such as a situational analysis.²⁴⁹ While the analysis processes that underpin these core documents in the development and humanitarian planning programs are integrated and robust, they are focused on only one sector (humanitarian or development) and not carried out often (annually for the HRP, longer for the UNDAF).



ANNEX B: INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS CENTERS

		Headquarters level IACs	
		Central IAC	Departmental and agency IACs
Structure	Ideal composition	Sufficient staff for 24/7 watch + 12 analysts (min) + news media team + social media team + GIS + management and admin support	3-4 analysts + admin and GIS support
	Location	EOSG	Office of departmental/agency principals
	Governance	Reporting to SASA	Reporting to head of department/ agency
	Customers	SG, and through them the Security Council + senior leaders at headquarters	Departmental/agency leaders
	Decision-making fora	Security Council SA brief, Executive Committee, Deputies Committee, RMR, IATF/ITF	Departmental/agency decision-making fora and departmental/agency planning fora
Processes	Foundational info		
	Quarterly indicator monitoring	Common indicators Quarterly and annual global assessments	
	Analysis and assessment	Weekly analysis report Fortnightly integrated assessment	
	Monitoring and reporting	Daily situation report	
	Crisis reporting	Warning notes, alerts, crisis reporting, and analysis	

Improving U.N. Situational Awareness

Regional level IACs	Country level IACs	
Regional IACs	Country IACs (large) (PKO, operational SPM, OCHA present)	Country IACs (small) (no PKO or OCHA present)
4-5 analysts + admin and GIS support	10+ analysts + management, admin and GIS support	1-2 analysts + admin and GIS support
Organizational part of the central IAC, reporting to SASA. Physically housed in Regional Commissions	Office of senior-most U.N. official in country (SRSG/HOM)	Office of senior-most U.N. official in country (RC)
	Dual reporting lines: to senior-most official in country and SASA	Dual reporting lines: to senior-most official in country and SASA
U.N. leaders at the regional level	U.N. mission and country team leaders	U.N. country team leaders
As requested at the regional level, and through country and central IACs to processes at the country and headquarters level	U.N. mission and UNCT weekly meetings, crisis management meetings	UNCT weekly meetings and crisis management meetings
Prepared and maintained by regional IAC	Prepared and maintained by country IAC	Prepared and maintained by country IAC
Regional scenarios and indicators Quarterly matrix Quarterly and annual regional assessments	Local scenarios and indicators Weekly matrix Quarterly and annual country assessments	Local scenarios and indicators Quarterly and annual country assessments
Monthly integrated assessment	Weekly analysis report Monthly integrated assessment	Weekly analysis report Integrated assessment every two months
	Daily situation report	
	Warning notes, alerts, crisis reporting, and analysis	Warning notes, alerts, crisis reporting, and analysis

Central IAC

The central IAC should incorporate the existing UNOCC, DPI News Monitoring Team, and Global Pulse. It must also have an internal GIS capacity, which may be embedded from DFS and UNOSAT. DPA, DPKO, DSS, DESA, OCHA, and OHCHR should each be required to provide one-two posts at the P4 level or above. Relevant agencies, funds, and programs (including UNDP, WFP, UNHCR, UNODC, U.N. Habitat, WHO, and UNOSAT) should be invited and strongly encouraged to second an officer at the P4 level or above. UNICEF should be invited to merge its OPSCEN into the IAC. While the majority of posts should be New York-based, there should be a Geneva-based liaison capacity and arrangements in place for redundancy operation, should the central IAC in New York be unable to function. Liaison relationships should be developed with relevant agencies, funds, and programs who do not second an officer.

Structure: Organizationally situated within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The regional IACs are also structurally part of the central IAC.

Governance: Led by the Deputy Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness (D2). Guided by UNHQ leaders through the Executive Committee. Accountable to the Secretary-General through the Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness (ASG).

Customers: Primary customers: Secretary-General, through him the Security Council, and the U.N. leadership at headquarters. Secondary customers: through the Secretary-General, TCC/PCCs and on occasion the General Assembly.

Core functions:

- Maintain the situational awareness of U.N. leaders at headquarters.
- 24/7 situation monitoring.
- Provide situational awareness support to integrated strategic planning efforts.
- Provide situational awareness support to integrated crisis management efforts.
- Interact with and provide support to country, regional, and headquarters IACs.

These are the central IAC's situational awareness functions. It may also serve other functions, such as broader crisis management support.

Composition: Management team (led by a D2). Watch room team (led by a P5, sufficient staff to maintain 24/7 operations). Analysis team (led by a P5, min of 12 staff). News media team. Social media team. Big data team. GIS team. ICT team. Admin support team. + Regional IACs (see further ahead).

Products:

- Crisis warnings, alerts, and reporting (written).

- Warning notes are issued when a situation is deteriorating or becoming volatile, alerts are issued following a significant event.
- Crisis reporting is for UNHQ leadership, also used to inform weekly Security Council briefing. During crises, integrated situational awareness reports prepared in collaboration with country and regional IAC, focusing on the particular crisis situation, and issued daily. Analytical products focused on the crisis situation and trajectory should also be produced.
- Daily situational awareness reports (written).
 - For UNHQ senior leadership, also used to inform weekly Security Council briefing.
 - A series of short factual summaries focusing on the situation in various countries. Based on information from country and regional IACs, news media and other open sources. Covers the past 24-48 hours. No longer than two pages. The head of the watch room determines situations for inclusion.
- Weekly analysis report (written).
 - For UNHQ senior leadership, also used to inform weekly Security Council briefing.
 - A series of short analytical pieces on evolving situations, events that are scheduled to occur the following week and those that occurred during the previous week. Contextualizes information, considers trends, forecasts the trajectory of situations. Based on information from country and regional IACs, open sources, and inputs from headquarters department and agency IACs. The head of the analysis team determines situations for inclusion.
- Fortnightly integrated analytical and assessment pieces (written).
 - For UNHQ senior leadership, also used to inform weekly Security Council briefing.
 - In-depth analytical and assessment pieces. Produced in accordance with a program set by the Senior Advisor in consultation with the Executive Committee. Collaboratively produced analysis, prepared by central IAC in conjunction with relevant country, regional and headquarters IACs. Also draws on open source information, engagement with U.N. policy and operational personnel, national analysts, academics, journalists, and other relevant specialists. Ultimate authority and sign off lies with the Senior Advisor.
- Analysis of global quarterly indicator monitoring matrix (written).
 - For UNHQ leadership, also briefed at Regional Monthly Review meetings.
 - Prepared collaboratively with relevant country, regional, and headquarters IACs.

- Weekly Executive Committee/Deputies Committee situational awareness briefing (oral supported by presentation graphics).
 - Subjects decided by Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness.
 - Draws upon reporting and analysis prepared throughout the week and specifically prepared analytical product.
 - Orally presented by the Senior Advisor.
- Weekly Security Council situational awareness briefing (oral supported by presentation graphics).
 - Subjects decided by Secretary-General.
 - Draws upon reporting and analysis prepared throughout the week and specifically prepared analytical product.
 - Orally presented by the Senior Advisor.
- Input to integrated strategic planning processes.
 - Collaboratively produced analysis, prepared by IAC in conjunction with relevant country, regional, and headquarters IACs.
 - May include in-depth conflict analysis, scenarios, stakeholder profiling and analysis, social media analysis, mapping, practical foundational information (depth of water ports, loads of airports, etc.).
- Ad hoc products.
 - As requested by the Secretary-General, a UNHQ senior leader, the Security Council, or as determined by the Senior Advisor.

Department and Agency IACs

Dedicated situational awareness entities that exist in some department and agencies may be fashioned as IACs and linked into the IAC network. Working closely with other IACs, they provide the specific, tailored support required by their individual department/agency beyond the integrated situational awareness provided by the central IAC. The DSS TRS and the OMA Assessments Team, for example, could transform into departmental IACs. Departments and agencies that elect to retain situational awareness functions mainstreamed throughout the work of their desk officers should appoint an UNSAS focal point.

Structure: Organizationally situated within the office of the principal (e.g., Office of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director).

Governance: Led by someone at the P4/P5 level. Accountable to departmental/agency principal.

Primary customers: Department/agency principal (e.g., Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director)

Function:

- 24/7 information contact for their department/agency (duty officer).
- Contribute to the situational awareness of their principal (e.g., Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director).
- Provide situational awareness support to departmental contributions to Regional Monthly Review meetings.
- Provide situational awareness support to departmental strategic planning efforts.
- Provide situational awareness support to departmental crisis management efforts.
- Work with other IAC on integrated analysis and assessment products.

Composition: Minimum of two staff (led at the P4/P5 level) + admin support. GIS support provided by the central IAC.

Products:

- Departmental/agency current situational reports (written).
 - For departmental/agency leadership.
 - If required.
 - Focusing on locations or situations of departmental interest (e.g., theatres in which peacekeeping missions are deployed).
- Departmental/agency analysis and assessment reports (written).
 - For departmental/agency leadership.
 - If required
 - Focusing on issues, locations, or situations of particular departmental interest (e.g., the movement of refugees from Country X to Country Y).
- Input to departmental/agency strategic planning processes.
 - May include in-depth analysis of military capabilities, humanitarian needs, development indicators, etc.
- Contributions to integrated outputs led by the central IAC.

Regional IACs

The five regional IACs provide situational awareness support to U.N. leaders at the regional level as required and generate products in support of country and central IACs. They focus on analysis and assessment of regional/cross border issues.

They are also responsible for providing surge staffing support to country IACs and organizing and hosting regular analytical exchanges in their respective regions. The regional IACs should initially be built on existing regional situational awareness capacity and drawing together staff from regional offices. Over time, sustainable staffing should be provided through the budget of the Regional Commission.

Structure: Organizationally part of the central IAC, housed within the five Regional Commissions.

Governance: Led at the D1 level. Accountable to the Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness.

Primary customers: U.N. leaders at the regional level and U.N. leaders at the country and headquarters level, through country and central IACs.

Core functions:

- 24/7 information contact (duty officer).
- Develop and maintain foundational information.
- Support the situational awareness of U.N. leaders at the regional level.
- Contribute to the provision of situational awareness support to U.N. mission and country team leaders (through country IACs).
- Contribute to the provision of situational awareness support to Secretary-General, UNHQ leadership (through the central IAC).
- Support and supplement the capacity of country IACs if necessary.
- Interact with other IACs.
- Link to regional early warning mechanisms.
- Organize regional analytical exchanges/fora.

Composition: Minimum of four staff (led at the D1 level) plus admin support. GIS support provided by the central IAC.

Products:

- Foundation information (written).
 - In-depth regional analysis, regional conflict analysis, stakeholder analysis.
- Monthly integrated analytical and assessment pieces (written).
 - In-depth analytical and assessment pieces. Subjects determined in consultation with regional leadership, country and central IACs. Draws on information gathered by the regional IAC analysts, information provided

by relevant country IACs, open source information, and engagement with other analysts and specialists.

- Analysis of quarterly indicator monitoring (written).
 - Production of regional scenarios and determination of regional indicators.
- Support to country IACs:
 - Assistance developing and maintaining foundational information.
 - Assistance developing scenarios and developing country level indicators.
 - Short term capacity support when needed, including in crisis situations.
- Contributions to integrated outputs led by the central IAC.
- Link with regional early warning mechanisms:
 - Share information and conduct analysis exchanges with regional early warning mechanisms.
- Biannual regional analytical fora:
 - Bring together analysts and specialists from across the region to discuss key regional issues.

Country IACs

The structure and functioning of country-level IACs should be flexible to enable them to be tailored to the specific environment and U.N. deployment configuration. They should build on and draw from existing situational awareness entities. Ideally, existing situational awareness entities would be collocated in the same physical space. However, where this is not possible or desirable, the IAC mantle may be assumed by a single entity, small group, or individual empowered to regularly bring elements of the U.N. system together to create common products.

Structure: Organizationally situated within the office of the senior-most U.N. official in country (usually the Head of Mission or Resident Coordinator).

Governance: IACs of 20+ staff led by a D1, IACs of 5-20 staff led by a P5, IACs of less than 5 staff led by a P4. Head of the IAC has dual reporting lines. Accountable to the senior-most U.N. official in country and the Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness.

Primary customers: U.N. mission and country team leadership.

Core functions:

- 24/7 information contact (duty officer).
- Maintain the integrated situational awareness of the U.N. mission and country team leadership.

- Provide situational awareness support to integrated operational planning efforts.
- Provide situational awareness support to integrated crisis management efforts.
- Interact with regional and central IACs.
- In addition to these situational awareness functions, country IACs may also serve other functions such as broader crisis management support.

Composition: The size and composition will depend on need, existing situational awareness capacities, and size of the U.N. presence.

Products:

- Foundation information (written).
 - For country and UNHQ leadership.
 - In-depth country analysis, conflict analysis, stakeholder analysis, mapping, etc.
- Crisis warnings, alerts, and reporting (written).
 - Warning notes and alerts are for U.N. leadership in the country and should also be shared with the regional and central IACs. Warning notes are issued when a situation is deteriorating or becoming volatile, alerts are issued following a significant event.
 - Crisis reporting is for U.N. leadership in the country, may also be used to inform central IAC crisis reporting. During crises, integrated situational awareness reports, focusing on the particular crisis situation, and issued daily or twice daily. Analytical products focused on the crisis situation and trajectory should also be produced.
- Daily situational awareness reports (written). **Not for small IACs.**
 - For U.N. leadership in country, also used to inform central IAC daily situational awareness reports.
 - A series of short factual summaries focusing on the situation in countries (not U.N. activities). Based on information from U.N. sources in country and open sources. Covers the past 24-48 hours for daily reports. No longer than two pages. Signed off by the head of the IAC.
- Weekly analysis report (written).
 - For U.N. leadership in country, also used to inform weekly IAC analysis reports and Security Council briefing.
 - A series of short analytical pieces on evolving situations, events that are scheduled to occur the following week and those that occurred during the previous week. Contextualizes information, considers trends, forecasts the trajectory of situations. Based on information from U.N. and other sources in country, news media, social media, and other open sources.

- Monthly integrated analytical and assessment pieces (written). **Only every other month for small IACs.**
 - For U.N. leadership in country, also used to inform IAC analysis and assessment pieces and Security Council briefings.
 - In-depth analytical and assessment pieces. Subjects chosen in consultation with U.N. leadership in country. Collaboratively produced analysis. Draws on open source information, engagement with U.N. policy and operational personnel, national analysts, academics, journalists, and other relevant specialists. Signed off by the head of the IAC.
- Analysis of quarterly indicator monitoring (written).
 - Production of national scenarios and determination of national indicators.
 - For U.N. mission/country team and UNHQ leadership.
- Input to integrated operational planning processes.
 - Collaboratively produced analysis prepared by IAC, may include in-depth conflict analysis, scenarios, stakeholder profiling and analysis, social media analysis, mapping (political affiliation of villages, access routes, mined areas), practical foundational information (depth of water ports, loads of airports), etc.
- Ad hoc products
 - As requested by the Head of Mission, Resident Coordinator, or Secretary-General's Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness.
- Contributions to integrated outputs led by the corresponding regional and central IACs.

ANNEX C: OFFICE OF THE SENIOR ADVISOR FOR SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

The Office of the Senior Advisor for Situational Awareness should incorporate the existing training posts from the DSS TRS, as well as the posts in the EOSG Analysis and Planning Unit.

Function:

- Ensuring the situational awareness of the Secretary-General, the Security Council, and the U.N. leadership at headquarters.
- Overseeing and ensuring the effective implementation of the UNSAS.
- Developing and maintaining a U.N. situational awareness strategy.
- Developing and reviewing U.N. situational awareness policy.
- Cultivating the U.N. situational awareness community, including through training and professional standards.

Composition: Senior Advisor (ASG) and Deputy Senior-Advisor (D2) (also head of the central IAC). UNSAS implementation team (two people). Strategy, policy, training, and technology team (three people). Information security officer (one person). Admin support team (two people).

Responsibilities:

- Determine the situational awareness requirements of the Secretary-General, the Security Council, and the U.N. leadership at headquarters.
- Direct the central IAC to generate products to meet those requirements.
- Monitor and support implementation of the UNSAS.
- Lead the development and review of the U.N.'s situational awareness strategy, policy, training programs, professional standards, and technology.
- Investigate information mishandling and support disciplinary procedures.

Outputs:

- Regular situational awareness briefings to the Secretary-General (daily or as required).
- Weekly situational awareness briefings to the Security Council on behalf of the Secretary-General.



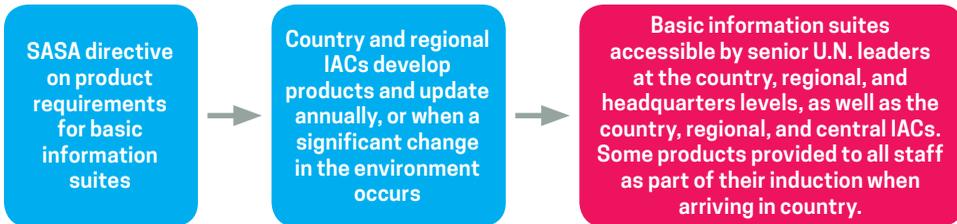
- Situational awareness briefing at the weekly meetings of the Executive Committee and the Deputies Committee.
- U.N. situational awareness strategy.
- U.N. situational awareness policy.
- U.N. situational awareness training strategy, standards, and curriculum.
- Professional standards for U.N. analysts.

ANNEX D: PROCESSES AND PRODUCTS

Basic Information Suites

Serving as orientation and basic reference material, the basic information suites should be developed and updated at least annually and when there is a significant change in the environment. To the extent possible, information should be drawn from open sources, and efforts should be made to avoid the majority of the products being sensitive, so that they can be widely used.

Products comprising the suite should include (1) a comprehensive country analysis; (2) an in-depth conflict analysis; (3) profiles of key actors and organizations; (4) mapping; and (5) technical information. In addition to the base of cartographic mapping, qualitative mapping — identifying the political affiliation of villages, past conflicts, etc. — may be included. Technical information, which might be needed to support emergency and security planning, should include information on viability of key roads, runway load bearing capacity, sea port depth and loading locations, etc.



Quarterly Indicator Monitoring

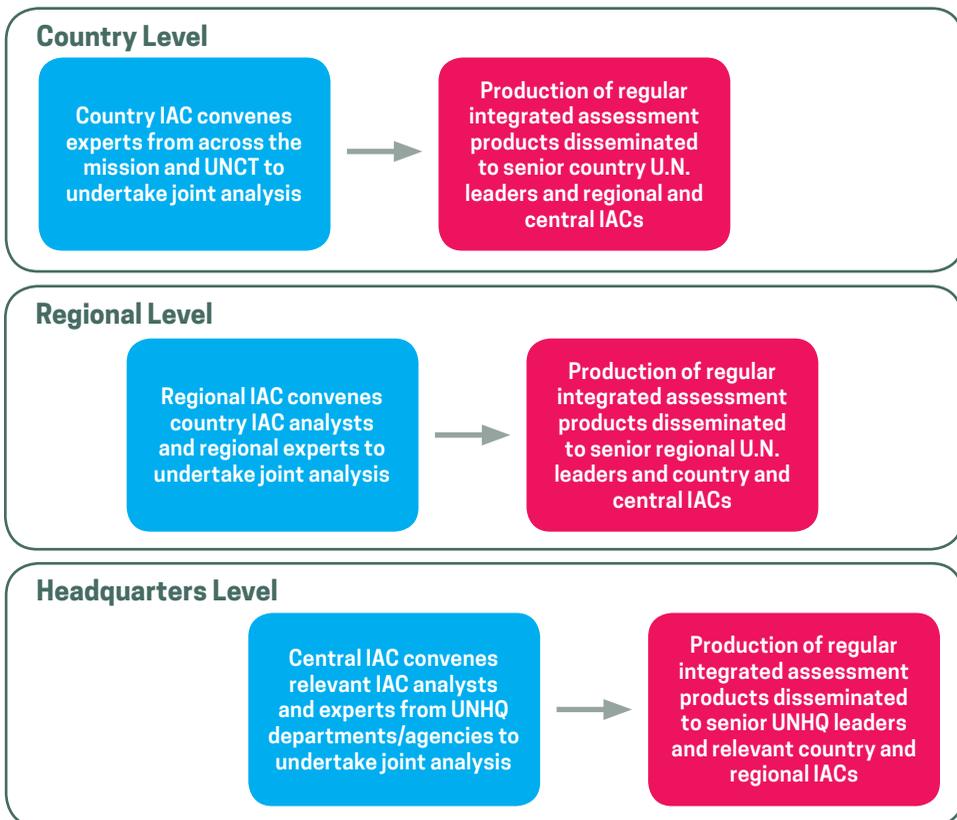
Requiring the development and monitoring of a common set of indicators of growing instability and vulnerability to natural disasters would systemize and bring objectivity to the process and enable early U.N. action and preparedness. Complementing the global indicators with a more specific set, drawn from scenarios developed at the regional and country levels, would allow the process to be tailored. Depending on the environment, one-year, three-month, and one-month horizons may be employed. The purpose should be to identify broad trends and enable forecasting, not to delve into specific situations. As such, it should not be a heavy or time-consuming process. Products should include (1) scenarios, (2) weekly/monthly monitoring matrices, and (3) quarterly and annual trend analysis and assessment. Products prepared at the country level should feed those prepared at the regional and global levels.



Integrated Analysis and Assessment

Integrated analysis and assessment is of particular value because customers know that the resulting products have been jointly prepared and bring together political, security, human rights, humanitarian, and development perspectives. This saves senior leaders time and promotes a level of confidence in the judgments. The products feed into ongoing situational awareness, particularly the *understanding* and *anticipation* elements, and are also the key vehicles for actionable analysis, which can be fed into the policy cycle at key points. Products prepared at the country level should feed those prepared at the regional and global levels.

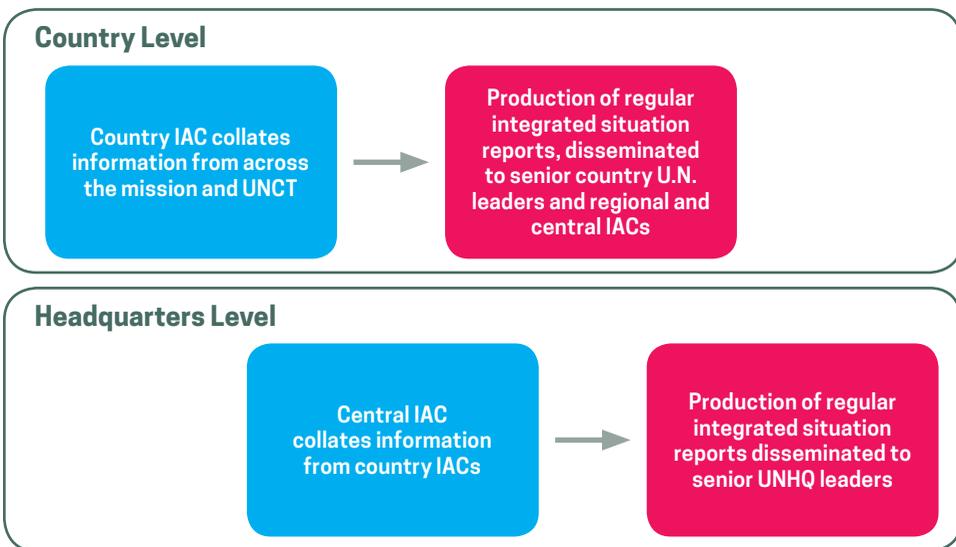
Such products should be generated through a process of the IAC convening experts to analyze the situation jointly and agree on a common assessment. Efforts should be made to reach agreement while maintaining clarity and strength of judgments. The focus and the frequency of products will differ depending on context and policy rhythms of the primary customers, but the format should be consistent. Topic selection should be made by the head of the IAC in consultation with the primary customers. The focus may be a special event (e.g., an election), thematic (e.g., cattle rustling), specialized (e.g., the impact of foreign direct investment in the local mining industry) or relate to a specific crisis situation. Due to sensitivity, distribution should be limited.



Integrated Situational Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting on the current situation is the most crucial aspect of maintaining the *knowledge* portion of ongoing situational awareness. The central IAC and country IACs in conflict/post-conflict settings should monitor the situation on a 24/7 basis and deliver daily situational awareness reports. Products prepared at the country level should feed those prepared at the global level.

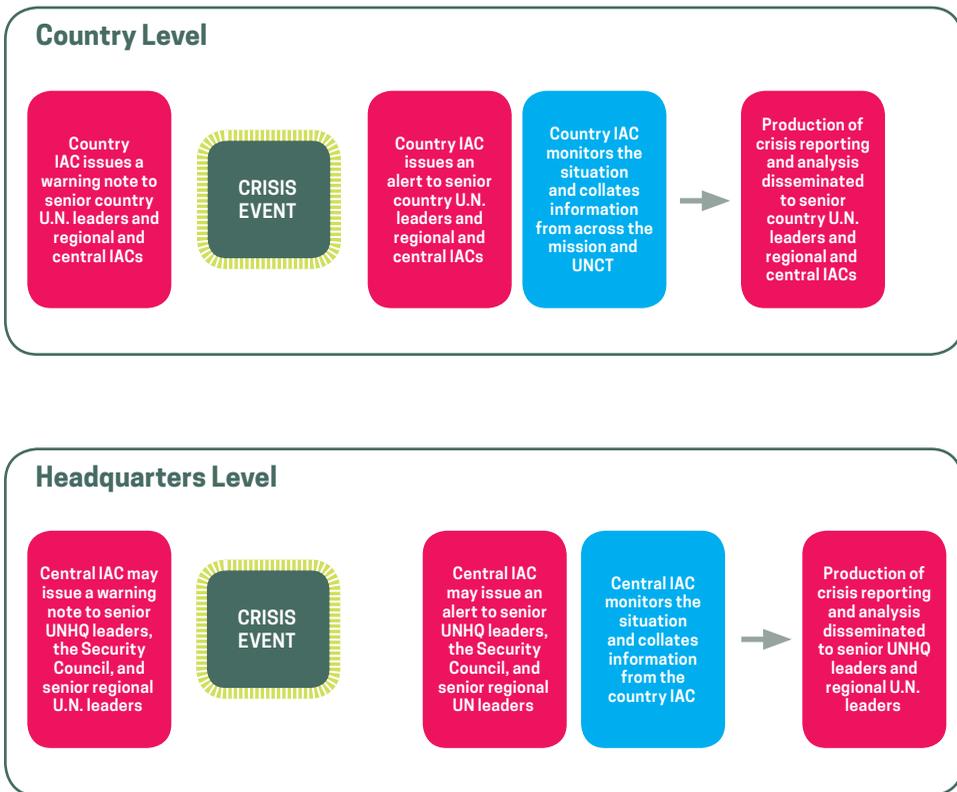
Daily situational reports should be short, succinctly covering significant events and developments in the country relevant to the work of the U.N. during the preceding 24-48 hours. They should be integrated and use graphics where possible. The daily situational awareness report may be complemented by operational summaries prepared by specific components for their own leaders, but all efforts should be made to avoid duplication; for example, daily media summaries should no longer be necessary.



Integrated Crisis Reporting, Warnings, and Alerts

When a situation is escalating and likely to become volatile, when a significant event occurs, and throughout crises, U.N. leaders need more targeted and timely information. The reporting burden will fall heavily upon the country IAC, which should be reinforced, *in situ* or remotely, by the corresponding regional IAC if necessary. Products prepared at the country level should feed those prepared at the global level.

Products should include warning notes, alerts, situation reports, and situational analysis. Warning notes and alerts should be short, sharp products that simply state the facts. A warning note should be issued when an escalating situation is judged likely to become volatile, and an alert should be issued as soon as possible following a significant event or outbreak of violence. Crisis reports should be similar to daily situational reports but with a tighter focus (i.e., the crisis situation) and greater frequency (e.g., twice daily). Factual reporting should be occasionally supplemented by short analytical pieces, forecasting the likely trajectory of the situation and providing possible scenarios.



Endnotes

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IMPROVING U.N. SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

The United Nations is mandated and resourced to prevent and respond to mass human suffering caused by conflict, natural disaster, and disease. Yet it is often criticized for failing to act in a timely way. There are many structural, political, and practical reasons for these failures, and the solutions are not easy. One important remedy lies in improving the U.N.'s situational awareness - that is, its knowledge, understanding, and anticipation of a situation or event. Improved situational awareness cannot force U.N. decision makers to take more potent action, but it can enable earlier and more informed decision making and remove one important cause of late and inadequate response. In addition to promoting more timely and effective U.N. actions, better situational awareness is also critical for ensuring the safety and security of U.N. personnel.

This report offers pragmatic recommendations to improve U.N. situational awareness. It defines key concepts, examines the U.N. system's needs, and maps existing situational awareness entities and processes within the U.N. The report analyzes the opportunities and challenges involved in improving U.N. situational awareness and proposes clear steps for the establishment of a U.N. situational awareness system.