



## Humanitarian Agenda 2015 Burundi and Liberia Country Studies

By **Xavier Zeebroek**

**July 2006**

### I. Burundi

#### Overview

Within the four topics addressed by the Humanitarian Agenda 2015 research, three seem pertinent in the case of Burundi—coherence, security and, to a lesser extent, terrorism. Many comparisons can be made with Liberia, in terms of the length and cruelty of the war and the type of involvement of the international community. The integrated structure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) strongly influenced the design of the UN mission in Burundi (ONUB), even if the role and functions of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) were eventually different. Parallels with Afghanistan and Sudan are also relevant regarding the integrated character of the missions and issues of security.

Universality issues do not seem to apply as much in Burundi as in Afghanistan, Sudan or even Colombia. Three quarters of the population are Christian; most Burundians share the ethics of humanitarian organizations and have few complaints with Western values. When a perception gap concerning the foreign presence was identified by the

*Humanitarian Agenda 2015 (HA2015)* is a policy research project aimed at equipping the humanitarian enterprise to more effectively address emerging challenges around four major themes: universality, terrorism and counter terrorism, coherence, and security.

*The Feinstein International Center (FIC)* develops and promotes operational and policy responses to protect and strengthen the lives and livelihoods of people living in crisis-affected and -marginalized communities. FIC works globally in partnership with national and international organizations to bring about institutional changes that enhance effective policy reform and promote best practice.

Full report and other country studies available at [fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu)



**Tufts**  
UNIVERSITY

Friedman School  
of Nutrition  
Science and Policy

Feinstein International Center

200 Boston Avenue  
Suite 4800  
Medford, MA 02155  
USA

tel: +1 617.627.3423  
fax: +1 617.627.3428  
[fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu)

The author would like to warmly thank Médecins Sans Frontières-Belgium for allowing him to benefit from their logistics in Burundi and Liberia. Thanks are also extended to the persons below, who have helped him prepare, complete his study trips, or facilitated, by sharing their extensive knowledge, the writing of this report: Christopher Stokes, Brice de le Vingne, Stéphane Goetghebuer, Beppe, Ivan Godfroid, Marie-Paule Duquesnoy, Bénédicte Frankinet, Madeleine Moulin, Jean-Luc Onckelinx, Fabio Pompetti, Danielle Lustig, Suzanne Martin, Inge, Jean-François Sangsue, Patrick Brugger, Johanna Grombach-Wagner, Lorenzo Caraffi, Charline Burton, Charles A. Royce. Interviewees in Burundi and Liberia are too many to be listed here, but the author greatly appreciated their availability and frankness.

author, it had more to do with a clash of personalities between local and UN leaders or with a suspicion that INGOs might be diverting international funding away from the Burundian government or local NGOs. Although mentioned in the historical background, these issues are not considered in this case study as part of the discussions on universality.



Terrorism seems at first glance to be completely alien to the Burundian case study. But there are indications that the war conducted by the newly-elected President against the FNL (*Front national de Libération*) rebels is using some of the methods classically used in anti-terrorist warfare, including the systematic use of intelligence, torture and regional military cooperation, which have resulted in indiscriminate and repeated human rights violations.

Questions of coherence are mainly addressed in the context of the UN system and its very large presence in Burundi. On the positive side, the high level of internal UN coordination is highlighted. On the negative side, the temporary absorption of OCHA into ONUB has left a bitter taste among many in the INGO community.

Regarding security, the end of the civil war and the return to democracy have drawn attention to the imbalance between massive force deployment and the actual achievements of the transition. The highly protected environment in which humanitarian organizations exist contrasts sharply with the large improvement of security in most parts of the country.

### Methods

This case study is the result of two study visits to Burundi—in December 2003 and February 2006—and ongoing monitoring of the political, military, and humanitarian situation in the country since the signing of the Arusha Comprehensive Peace Agreement (August 2000) and the first peacekeeping mission deployed by the African Union (June 2003).

The sources used are of four kinds:

1. The rich written literature—both in English and French—on the Burundian conflict and peace process, including Belgian, French, South African, and international media and press agencies.
2. Ongoing dialogue with officials in charge of drafting and implementing the policy towards Burundi within the European Union.
3. Frequent visits to OCHA, humanitarian NGOs and other international organizational headquarters in Brussels and Geneva.
4. Some 30 in-country interviews with senior staff of ONUB (including the SRSG and the Force Commander), international donor agencies or country representatives, OCHA, NGO heads of mission, Burundian administrators, and local human rights groups and NGOs.

Interviews focused on the structure, the achievements and the perception of ONUB (*Opération des Nations Unies au Burundi*) as a semi-integrated UN mission, although pertinent questions were also raised on issues of universality and security.

### Historical Background

The conflict in Burundi is deeply rooted in a history of tension and violence between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority. In October 1993, the President of Burundi, Nestor Ndadaye, was murdered by Tutsi military elements. This was followed by several weeks of massacres committed both by Frodebu (a Hutu political party) or the army (dominated by the Tutsi). President Cyprien Ntaryamira, who succeeded Ndadaye, was killed in April 1994 with Rwandan President

Juvénal Habyarimana when the plane they were travelling in was shot down.

After renewed fighting and massacres, Major Pierre Buyoya, a Tutsi, came to power on 25 July 1996 through a non-violent coup. Hutu rebels continued fighting the government and the country became very insecure. Three years later, two international staff from UNICEF and WFP, together with seven other aid workers, were murdered during a visit to an IDP camp.

On December 1, 1999, Nelson Mandela was designated as mediator for the conflict, and a peace and reconciliation agreement was signed in Arusha on 28 August 2000. Two rebel groups did not participate in the peace process, the FDD (*Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie*) and the FNL (*Forces Nationales de Libération*). A three-year transition government was established in which Hutus received 60% of the positions. Buyoya continued as president for 18 months before stepping down in favor of a Hutu. During this period, Buyoya survived several coup attempts. Insecurity was so high, in fact, that a South African protection force had to be deployed in order to protect Burundian politicians.

A cease-fire was signed between the transitional government and all rebel movements late in 2002. Three months later, the African Union deployed the "AU Mission in Burundi" (AMIB). Then, on November 16, 2003, a comprehensive peace agreement was signed between the transitional government and the CNDD-FDD (*Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie*), the political branch of the major rebel group in Burundi. As of mid 2006, the FNL remained the last fighting rebel organization. On June 1, 2004, the mandate of AMIB was taken over by ONUB.

Following a year of AU deployment (AMIB from June 2003 to June 2004), and a year of UN peacekeeping, democratic elections were successfully conducted in August 2005, bringing Pierre Nkurunziza, the former CNDD-FDD rebel leader, to the presidency.

Having helped the country to stabilize and conduct democratic elections, ONUB (including its humanitarian component) was asked to leave by the new government, revealing a huge gap in perceptions of both accomplishment and need between the international community on the one side and the new leadership on the other. Following this request, ONUB started downsizing its military and civilian staff, and as of mid 2006 the mission was expected to close on December 31, 2006.

The new Burundian government saw ONUB as an occupation force, one that should leave the country as soon as possible. This perception was aggravated by two unfortunate choices made by leaders of the UN mission: to support Frodebu and former President Ndayizeye during the electoral campaign and proposing to coordinate the transition from humanitarian aid to development through a “Partners Council” deliberating without the government.

A further issue related to the image of the SRSG, who had been able to impose her views on the transitional government until the elections. Many within the UN, donor and INGO community recognize that her strong role was helpful in keeping to the peace process—against the will of most major actors at the time. She however lost much of her influence and credibility once there was an elected president and parliament and once the CSA (the follow-up Committee to the Arusha Peace Agreement) that she had chaired was terminated.

With the departure of the SRSG in March 2006, Burundi faced a period of uncertainty. The new government had asked ONUB to leave by the end of the year, while the donors were not convinced that peace had been sufficiently consolidated. The government presented its own humanitarian and rehabilitation plan on February 28, 2006 (*Programme d’urgence 2006*), competing with the UN consolidated appeal (CAP), although both requested \$160 million. Donors were critical of the lack of experience of the new administration and underlined the risk of popular disappointment if the very ambitious promises made by Nkurunziza during the electoral campaign were not followed by some results within the year.

In Burundi, international humanitarian NGOs were openly suspected by the new leadership of diverting rehabilitation and development donor funding away from the Burundian government and local NGOs. The apparent easy access of INGOs to international donors has always been a source of dissatisfaction among local actors. Only a handful of local NGOs manage to obtain funding from foreign donors; consequently, most of the others resent the limitations on their ability to participate in the rehabilitation of their country. The government also perceives INGOs more as competitors for foreign aid than as partners for rebuilding the country. As a result of this suspicion, a group of INGOs have created a network called RESO.<sup>1</sup> One of its main goals is to engage in regular dialogue with the government to correct misperceptions about the diversion of aid money and to demonstrate their complementarity to government.



## Terrorism

Partly because of the inability of ONUB to disarm the FNL, the new government has embarked in a dirty war against the last active rebel group in Burundi. The methods used are clearly inspired by counter insurgency and anti-terrorist action.

A dirty war between the government and rebels of the FNL began after an ultimatum issued by the Head of State in October 2005.<sup>2</sup> According to a February 2006 report released by Human Rights Watch<sup>3</sup>, “While much of the country is now at peace, armed conflict continues sporadically between Burundi’s armed forces (*Forces de la Defense Nationale*, FDN) and the last remaining rebel group, the National Liberation Forces (*Forces Nationales pour la Libération*, FNL) in the provinces of Bujumbura-rural, Cibitoke and Bubanza. Throughout this armed conflict, FNL combatants and government soldiers and police have willfully killed civilians and committed other atrocities with little or no sanction for their misconduct.”

FNL combatants are very often peasants by day and combatants by night. They move in small armed groups wearing civilian clothes, and their actions are very limited in time and space. HRW says that

Government security forces continue to commit extrajudicial executions of suspected FNL combatants and supporters with impunity. Human rights monitors of ONUB reported that FDN soldiers (*Forces de Défense Nationale*, the regular armed force) were suspected of having summarily executed ten alleged FNL members outside of military confrontations in December 2005. There have been no investigations or prosecutions in these cases.” HRW concludes: “In their drive to defeat the FNL, government soldiers, police and intelligence agents use tactics that violate both Burundian and international law.

The Human Rights Unit (HRU) of ONUB facilitates a special coordination process on human rights violations regarding FNL suspects. Regular meetings gather HRU, Human Rights Watch Burundi and local NGOs together with Burundian ministries, police, and military forces. But obstacles are put in their way:

ONUB human rights monitors, who had been allowed to visit the detention facilities of the National Defence Ministry (D.N.) in Bujumbura in late 2005, have not been permitted to do so since the beginning of 2006. Lt. Col. Léonidas Kiziba, Deputy Director of the D.N., conceded that there had been “isolated cases” of torture and mistreatment in the D.N. and said those guilty of such

misconduct would be administratively sanctioned, but offered no further information on the sanctions or whether any had been meted out.

Although the rebels are not described as terrorists by the authorities, the use of terror by both sides puts the civilians of the Bujumbura Rural District in a difficult situation. They are under increasing attack by the FNL, and yet many are arrested by the country's defense forces, suspected of collaborating with the rebels. Despite ongoing peace talks in Tanzania after May 2006, FNL attacks intensified against civilians.

### Preliminary Conclusions

Because the remnants of rebel groups were not dealt with by the UN mission, the government has turned to anti-terrorist methods, without regard to human rights. The termination of ONUB may lead to increased humanitarian problems by virtue of continued violence in the countryside.

### Coherence

Since the start, ONUB adopted only a semi-integrated structure: OCHA remained physically and logistically separated from the mission. Nevertheless, most of the power of the international community was concentrated in the hands of the SRSG. ONUB is composed of three major pillars directly involved in the implementation of the peace process (see Charts 2 and 3 at end): a political and diplomatic pillar, a military pillar, and a humanitarian pillar. Each pillar maintains relations, of varying degrees and depth, with the other two. Some of these relations are structural and subordinate, such as the pre-eminence of civil and political control over peacekeeping troops. Others are circumstantial and not imposed, such as the exchange of information and the coordination of action between humanitarian and the military operations, as well as within the humanitarian community itself.

The structure in Burundi is quite original in comparison with past operations. For example, many observers confirm that AMIB was almost an anti-integrated approach with three separate pillars reporting to separate bodies (see Chart 1 at end): the AMIB military force headed by a AU Special Representative, the UN Office in Burundi (UNOB), a Political Affairs Bureau headed by a UNSRSG, and the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator (HC/RC). OCHA had very limited relations with the AU and more regular ones with UNOB. OCHA's reporting line was clearly to the HC and then directly to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) in New York.

Later, with ONUB, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) became the head of the peacekeeping mission, the primary diplomatic interlocutor of the government and the rebels, and also remained the highest authority of the entire United Nations system in the country. The first two pillars of the mission were therefore concentrated into his/her hands. The main objective of these pillars is to implement or facilitate the completion of all the elements of the peace agreement, within a secure environment.

On the other side of the chart, the humanitarian pillar of ONUB is headed by a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) wearing two additional hats: he is not only one of the two deputies of the SRSG but also is the Resident Coordinator (RC), heading the UN country team. The HC/RC is tasked with bringing together various humanitarian-related units of the mission with OCHA and the main specialized humanitarian agencies (UNHCR, UNDP, WFP and UNICEF), coordinating and adjusting their action to the main political and military objectives of the mission.

### Positive Features

The level of cooperation within the UN system has significantly increased.

The SRSG of ONUB was very proud of the high level of cooperation between the mission and the UN agencies, and gave the following examples:

- The creation of an Electoral Unit and the involvement of UNDP in the preparation of elections.
- The Child protection Unit and the involvement of UNICEF during the demobilization of child soldiers.
- The Human Rights Unit and the involvement of the High Commissioner for Human Rights throughout the entire period.

According to the SRSG, integration is not only a question of vertical supervision (between the SRSG and deputies); it should be implemented laterally throughout the mission. Real integration should be a two-way process: humanitarian action needs to be coordinated with the political and military agenda and vice-versa. According to other UN senior staff, however, integration between ONUB and UN agencies did not really work before the elections. Now that ONUB has lost most of its influence, real integrated work is starting.



Seen from the UN, ONUB is a success story, but it is often stressed that the mission arrived at a good moment, with sufficient resources and a good mandate. The peace process was already well advanced in June 2004 (when ONUB started), with major rebel leaders back in the country (Nkurunziza, the leader of CNDD-FDD, had returned in early December 2003). In other words, ONUB helped to shorten the transition period by preparing the elections.

Several units of ONUB would seem to compete with UN agencies. In fact, they mainly help to mainstream specific issues of the mission's mandate with the UN country team.

ONUB employs 714 expatriate staff among whom more than 200 are purely administrative. All administrative and mission support staff are directly recruited and paid by DPKO. A fair amount of the others work in specialized divisions, sections, and units. Because of their particular skills and experience, they are not recruited by DPKO. They are selected by the corresponding UN agency or department (e.g., UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO, OHCHR), but they are paid by DPKO.

Most of ONUB's thematic units are very small, and their work is oriented inside the mission. This is the case for the child protection, gender, and AIDS units. Others have a broader mandate. For example, the very ambitious mandate of the Human Rights Unit (HRU) is to protect human rights in Burundi. The staff of the HRU is hired by the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) in Geneva, and seconded to the mission. In Burundi, 65 people worked for the unit in mid 2006 which, relative to the small size of the country, was much larger than in other missions in Africa (for example there were 90-110 staff in DRC and 50 in Sudan). In the case of Burundi, the head of the unit is also appointed as Representative of the HCHR, heading the Office of the HCHR, an organism technically outside ONUB.

In terms of recruitment, there is an MOU between DPKO and OHCHR. Applications for the HRU are sent to the Office in Geneva and the selection process is conducted by both parties. HR officers report both to the Office and DPKO. They generally have a DPKO contract but sometimes keep a second contract with the Office.

There is no competition between the two structures; rather there is a high level of cooperation through a Joint Plan of Action elaborated at the beginning of the mission. The Office provides training and maintains contact with the authorities; the Unit monitors cases of violation and facilitates the coordination of information with the actors concerned (international and local NGOs, government and local

authorities, military, police). The Unit has no budget for implementing projects in the field but is clearly in the lead through its direct access to the SRSG and the logistics of the mission. As of mid 2006, however, the budget of the Office in Burundi had been dramatically downsized.

### Negative Features

OCHA was temporarily absorbed by ONUB but in 2006 recovered a certain autonomy.

When ONUB was established (June 2004), it was first located in the OCHA building and it soon considered OCHA as the humanitarian section of its mission (“absorbed” was the word used by INGOs). It was a long struggle to obtain a certain degree of autonomy, first by organizing a weekly humanitarian coordination meeting with NGOs (*Groupe de contact*) in another building, and later, in September 2005, by physically separating the two entities.

In the beginning, OCHA had to respond to enormous demands for contextual information from ONUB senior management. Eventually, OCHA had to refuse some of the requests in order to focus on its own core business. OCHA management later estimated this extra workload at 20–30% of its time. This had a negative impact on OCHA’s performance, a problem that remained a year later, according to some NGOs.

On the other hand, this quasi-absorption had a good side. The ONUB triad (SRSG + two DSRSGs) and the Force Commander were easily accessible, facilitating an efficient information flow. Seen from ONUB, the picture was even smoother: OCHA was very helpful to the mission because of its excellent capacity for contextual analysis and its information network in the field.

In Burundi, the first priority of ONUB was always political: to organize the elections. ONUB and especially the SRSG were very effective in this regard, especially countering those who wanted to extend the transition. In contrast, however, when Rwandan refugees unexpectedly began to arrive in the north of Burundi, ONUB kept a very low profile and was accused of being unwilling to divert energy from its political priorities in order to save lives. The first wave of refugees was sent back in Rwanda without serious examination of their case. As of mid 2006, there were 20,000 refugees remaining, but their motivation for entering Burundi remains unclear. It was only in December 2005 (six months after the elections) that ONUB, at the request of INGOs, decided to provide assistance by bringing water, renovating roads and extending the main camp, Mussassa I, from a capacity of 3,000 to 8,000.

**In Burundi like in many other transition situations, the UN staff and humanitarian organizations live in a highly protected environment and work within strict and omnipresent security guidelines. However, by mid 2006 when this study was researched, the security threat had decreased significantly in most parts of the country without a corresponding review of procedures.**

Exceptionally, through the RESO, INGOs also requested a military presence around the refugee camps against possible Rwandan government intrusions.

The Quick Impact Projects Unit (QIPs) has improved the image of the mission by providing funds for small humanitarian projects to the Force Commander and his units.

Military commanders and other ONUB unit often present requests for humanitarian projects to the QIPs Unit. This constitutes obvious duplication with the work of humanitarian organizations, although the financial scale is small. As in many other missions, the QIPs unit fulfills a large part of the visibility objectives of ONUB and is generally considered an important asset for maintaining good relations with local communities. These projects are often criticized by INGOs as the instrumentalization of humanitarian action for political and military purposes. For many humanitarians, two of their basic principles are not met: independence and impartiality. In addition, they feel these actions are mostly not based on proper needs assessments and are not sustainable.

#### Preliminary Conclusions

- ONUB, as a semi-integrated mission, has improved coordination within the UN system, especially between the political and military pillars;
- The proximity of OCHA to the political objectives of the mission has compromised coordination functions, particularly vis-à-vis NGOs;
- QIPs were developed by the mission to improve its image, to the perceived detriment of humanitarian principles.

#### Security

Many Burundians note a strong disproportion between the limited UN achievements and the massive deployment of UN military and civilian personnel. This is seen as very expensive and socially disruptive. Among the oft-cited examples of the operation's ineffectiveness is the fact that 5,000 troops were not able to disarm the relatively modest and isolated FNL rebel group.

When ONUB was first deployed, many Burundians and INGOs were shocked by shining white four wheel drive land-cruisers, foreign troops, and armored vehicles. The first shock was soon followed by inflation, large rent increases, and prostitution. Many poor and middle class Bujumburans had to move to the outskirts of the capital, and even

some INGOs were forced to seek offices at a distance from the center of the city where ONUB was located.

Questioned on ONUB achievements, many Burundians and INGOs said that the major security improvements in the country came with the peace agreement, not with ONUB. According to them, peace really started to produce its effect when rebel leaders came back in Bujumbura (end of 2003). Therefore the ONUB Force was often perceived as disproportionate to the objectives of the mission, although it was felt within the UN that the high deterrence effect of its sizeable force was important in fulfilling the mission. For DPKO planners, if ONUB was to be successful in implementing the peace agreements and in conducting elections, it was through the deployment of large military and logistical resources allowing it to face worse case scenarios.

Concerning the lack of military action against FNL, the common explanation given by the military is that no robust operation was possible against FNL because they are small groups operating at night with civilian clothes and supported by the population. To fight them, the Force would have required a counter-insurgency capacity and mandate.

In Burundi like in many other transition situations, the UN staff and humanitarian organizations live in a highly protected environment and work within strict and omnipresent security guidelines. However, by mid 2006 when this study was researched, the security threat had decreased significantly in most parts of the country without a corresponding review of procedures.

In Burundi, all major NGOs and UN agencies complied with similar security rules<sup>4</sup>:

1. Expatriate residences as well as offices are generally protected by a security perimeter which consists of a wall or a metal gate.
2. These buildings are under surveillance day and night.
3. Many of these buildings have an underground safe room.
4. Any travel, even if only for a short distance, must always take place in a vehicle marked with the sign/logo of the organization. Unless specific authorization has been requested, no person other than staff is allowed in the vehicle.
5. When reaching a certain level of seniority within the organization, staff members are automatically provided with a radio handset to communicate official and even private movements.

6. Several security perimeters are established in the town and surrounding areas. A curfew is often in place.
7. One of the very first things that a head of mission discusses with a new member of staff is the security regulations related to their work.
8. Like the UN, some organizations such as Save the Children or the ICRC establish different stages of alert, corresponding to the level of danger of the situation.
9. A satellite phone and fax are available in the main buildings in order to ensure communications in case of any disruption to the normal telephone lines.

UN agencies apply the same rules but in general delegate the responsibility of security to a Field Security Advisor (FSA) who ensures that norms are respected, provides necessary authorizations and trains new recruits. This is particularly the case for UNHCR and UNICEF.

The Field Security Officer (FSO) of UNDSS (United Nations Department for Security and Safety) tries to coordinate the different practices relating to evacuation plans and relationships with peacekeeping forces, particularly in relation to security phases. Since 2003, no UN staff can work in the field without having successfully passed the mandatory UNDSS security exam. In many respects, these regulations are directly inspired by the military way of life. Thus the military and the humanitarians lead a more similar life in the field than they may have previously imagined.

The fact that expatriates live and work in a relatively cloistered manner has a series of indirect consequences. First of all, security procedures constitute a major handicap to contacts with the local population, especially in the larger cities. This may appear paradoxical because the proximity with war victims is very real, regular, and detailed. But the population in need is not necessarily representative of the population as a whole.

Local personnel, who are most often in the majority, have to submit to the same kind of rules—at least within the boundaries of their work—although they remain well integrated within their families, their neighborhood, and religious community. This gives them a key role in humanitarian organizations because of their language skills and their knowledge of local customs. They also become a major source of information, allowing expatriates to better contextualize their work, an indispensable element for the long-term security of the mission.



Local NGOs, however, generally experience these security measures differently, as their access to foreign humanitarian organizations is rather restricted. Whilst local civil society representatives often admire the competence and rigor of humanitarians, their highly protective environment represents an obstacle to collaboration and access.

However, the organizations that are most active in the field also frequently provide first-hand and sometimes exclusive information. Large INGOs employ several hundred local contractors who are located throughout the rural areas. They represent an invaluable source of information in distant areas where UN agencies and peacekeeping personnel do not venture. Several INGO field managers state that they actually know more about the local political-military context than FSOs or military liaison officers. NGO heads of mission therefore worry that they could be used as intelligence sources for peacekeeping forces, creating confusion in the eyes of the population.

Finally, within the United Nations system, there exists a security coordination body called the “Security Management Team” which links the FSO and the Area Security Coordinator, and coordinates the heads of UN agencies, their Field Security Advisers (FSA) and the Regional Security Officer (RSO) of MONUC (Mission des Nations Unies au Congo) where security issues involving DRC are concerned. Due to the UN’s natural tendency to collaborate with peacekeeping forces, it is not rare for these meetings to discuss the issue of armed escorts for evaluation missions or food distribution. Military escorts have been regularly provided to WFP and UNHCR but not to NGOs (there have been no requests). Sometimes, cooperation between humanitarians and the military is initiated at the request of INGOs: for example, on one occasion, ONUB provided 16 trucks for transporting humanitarian assistance to Rwandan refugees in the north and helped build an extension to the camp. Depending on interpretation, these situations may be criticized as clear violation of the humanitarian ethics<sup>5</sup> or accepted as last resort cases that are justified by the exceptional environment.

#### Preliminary Conclusions

- The number of international peace support troops are perceived by some as outweighing the security situation.
- Security sometimes becomes an obstacle to humanitarian activities.
- There is an overemphasis on security for expatriate staff, especially in the post-conflict setting.
- Common security rules create and maintain an artificial distance between foreign agencies and the local population.

## II. Liberia

### Overview

Within the four topics addressed by the Humanitarian Agenda 2015 report, only two seem pertinent in the case of Liberia—coherence and security. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has become a model for the fully-integrated mission, and is likely to be followed by other UN missions in Africa, such as Burundi or Sudan. Parallels with Afghanistan can also be made regarding the absorption of OCHA within the integrated mission.



Universality issues do not seem to apply in Liberia as they do in Afghanistan, Sudan, or even Colombia. In a country where the UN presence is generally praised by the new leadership and the population, western values are not a source of contention. However, in the past, authoritarian implementation of the peace agreement threatened relations between Liberian authorities and UNMIL. And differing perspectives on capacity issues have led to resentment by local NGOs, made worse in Liberia by unmet expectations. Although mentioned in

the historical background, these issues do not really fit into discussions on universality.

The threat of terrorism is apparently not an issue in Liberia. Nevertheless, there are indications that a major security restructuring within UNMIL has been a consequence of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Since this was an indirect response to the bombing of the UN office in Baghdad, it is more appropriate here as a security issue.

Questions of coherence are addressed within the UN system, which has a large presence in Liberia in UNMIL and various UN agencies. On the positive side, the growing role of the human rights section of UNMIL and the success of its environment unit are given as helpful examples of integration. On the negative side, the termination of OCHA and the easy access to military assets by UN agencies and INGOs have led to confusion within the humanitarian community about the role and objectives of the UN mission. Despite high levels of integration, the performance of the UN system did not seem to improve accordingly. The so-called cluster approach is generally interpreted by INGOs as a new attempt by the UN to control their work.

Regarding security, the large size of the UNMIL force and the centralization of security within the UN system are the two main legacies of the transition.

## Methods

This case study follows a visit to Liberia in April 2006 and a background review of the political, military and humanitarian situation since the outbreak of the civil war in December 1989. Particular attention has been given to the period following the Accra cease-fire agreement of 17 June 2003, and the launching of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in October of the same year.

The sources used are of three kinds:

1. The vast written literature on the Liberian conflict and peace process, including American, UN, and International media and press agencies.
2. Visits to OCHA, humanitarian NGOs, and other international organizations in Brussels and Geneva.
3. Some 30 in-country interviews with senior staff of UNMIL, UN agencies, the Liberian government, INGOs, and local NGOs.

The interviews focused on the structure, the achievements, and perceptions of UNMIL as a fully integrated UN mission, although pertinent questions were also raised on universality and security issues.

### Historical Background

On April 12, 1980, when Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe staged a bloody coup d'état, murdering civilian president William R. Tolbert, most of the educated elite, including the then-Minister of Finance Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, fled the country.

Civil war began on December 24, 1989, with Charles Taylor mounting an insurgency from neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire into the north-eastern Liberian border town of Butuo in Nimba County, helped by a group of guerrilla fighters trained in Libya. Seven months later, the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee established a Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), with the express aim of resolving internal conflict in West Africa and in particular in Liberia. The first batch of 4,000 West African ECOMOG peacekeepers led by Ghana and Nigeria and comprising soldiers from Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia landed in Monrovia on August 24, 1990. Taylor's rebels, who opposed their intervention, greeted them with gunfire and attacks.

After many splits among rebels and many broken peace agreements, Charles Taylor won the July 1997 ECOWAS-supervised elections in which two other warlords Alhaji Kromah and George Boley also ran. On August 4, 1997, Taylor was sworn in as President of Liberia for a six-year term. He asked ECOMOG to leave the country. Only two months later, Taylor's government security forces clashed with rebel factions. The war would continue for another five years.

In June 2003, the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone indicted Charles Taylor on 17 counts of war crimes committed in support of rebels in Sierra Leone, while at the same time peace talks opened in Accra, Ghana. A month later, a ceasefire was signed and ECOWAS military chiefs agreed to send 3,000 regional peacekeepers to Liberia to restore peace. Liberia's three warring parties and civilian representatives signed a comprehensive peace agreement on August 18, 2003. On August 11, 2003, under mounting international pressure, Charles Taylor buckled and agreed to leave Liberia to take up asylum in Nigeria.

On September 19, 2003, the UN Security Council authorised 15,000 blue-helmet peacekeepers for Liberia, and in February 2004, a conference on reconstructing Liberia was held in New York, where \$520

million was pledged to help rebuild the country. In October 2004, the power-sharing transitional government announced the official end of disarmament with close to 100,000 men women and child fighters disarmed.

Two years after UNMIL's arrival, democratic elections were successfully conducted in October and November 2005, bringing Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a Harvard-educated economist and former World Bank senior officer, to the presidency. The UN Security Council extended the mandate of UNMIL until September 2006, but it is commonly accepted that the mission will stay, at least until the end of 2007.

The situation has not always been smooth for the UN. The first SRSG left at the beginning of 2005 under pressure from ECOWAS leaders and others because of his widely acknowledged autocratic and undiplomatic behavior. According to a member of the government, "the appreciation of [the] SRSG had steadily declined because of his authoritarianism and his autocratic manner."<sup>6</sup> His successor, bringing long and successful experience with him from Sierra Leone, is more low-key, and observers say he is tough but flexible. Liberian leaders feel he is really there to help.

This perception is confirmed by an independent public opinion survey<sup>7</sup> conducted in Liberia early in 2006, in which 88% of respondents stated that they would like UNMIL to stay longer. 94% of respondents said the security situation had improved under UNMIL; 91% said UNMIL had done a good, or very good job at making them feel safe, and 91% said that the professional conduct of UNMIL had been good or very good.

There are several reasons given by the new president and government justifying UNMIL's continued presence. According to one member of the government, "The example of Charles Taylor, who terminated ECOMOG just after being elected president, is still present in all memories, because he was later unable to prevent the return of civil war."<sup>8</sup> Today, in Monrovia, close to the presidential office, there is a billboard with a picture of the new President that reads: "God bless Liberia. Thank God for UNMIL." The new President openly expects UNMIL to stay another two or three years in Liberia.<sup>9</sup>

The new administration also explains that in the absence of national security structures, the country needs external support. Hopefully, within two years, Liberians will be able to take over. After greatly improving the security situation and helping to organize democratic elections, UNMIL has begun to assist the new government in planning the transition to rehabilitation and development.



## Coherence

From the start, UNMIL presented a fully-integrated structure because it had absorbed the office of the humanitarian coordinator, concentrating the power of the international community in the hands of the SRSG. UNMIL was and is composed of three major pillars directly involved in the implementation of the peace process (see Charts 2 and 3): a political and diplomatic pillar, a military pillar, and a humanitarian pillar. Each pillar maintains relations, of varying degrees and depth, with the two others. Some of these relations are structural and subordinate, such as the pre-eminence of civil and political control over peacekeeping troops. Others are circumstantial and not imposed—such as the exchange of information and the coordination of action between humanitarians and the military.

As in ONUB, the SRSG in Liberia is both the first diplomatic interlocutor of the government and dissenting factions and the highest authority of the entire United Nations system in the country. The first two pillars of the mission are concentrated into his hands. The DSRSG/HC/RC is also the UNDP Resident Representative. His four hats make him the cornerstone among the relief, rehabilitation, and development functions. In both countries, the director of administration controls personnel and the overall budget of the mission (including military expenses).

## Positive Features

Human rights became a major cross-cutting issue in UNMIL, not only because of Liberia's poor record but also to help legislators comply with international standards. The work methodology is a good example of integration.

The Human Rights and Protection Section (HRPS) of UNMIL was created by UN Security Council resolution 1509 in September 2003. Its mandate is to assist the government of Liberia to monitor the human rights situation in the country, to help ensure the protection of populations at risk, and promote human rights awareness. The section covers 14 of Liberia's 15 counties, with 22 field monitors. They send daily situation reports from which, after cross-checking with the reports of other UNMIL units, weekly, monthly and bi-monthly reports are produced. Draft bi-monthly reports are sent to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Justice for their comment prior to release.<sup>10</sup> Thematic reports are also produced if needed (e.g., on orphanages or plantations). The section has 47 staff.

Human rights are a cross-cutting issue, so the section participates in various cluster meetings with UN agencies and NGOs:

1. The Core Protection Group
2. The Human Rights Coalition Group
3. The truth and reconciliation cluster
4. The child protection cluster

The HRPS participates heavily in the Legal Review Project by organizing a legal audit of Liberian legislation in order to help harmonize the laws of the country with international standards. Task forces are organized bringing together the Ministry of Justice, professional groups and various UNMIL units. This intensive cooperation between various actors is also a sign of integration in UN activities.

From the beginning, the HRPS has been placed under the DSRSG for both operations and rule of law because it was seen to be more complementary to other units like the Legal and Judicial System Support Division, the Corrections and Prison Advisory Service, or the Office of UN Police Commissioner.

As in Burundi, human rights officers feel that rights have indeed improved, mainly because of improved conditions (peace, elections, DDR, SSR) and through the monitoring and facilitation activities of the human rights units. Because of this success, DPKO has decided to create human rights units in all UN peacekeeping missions.

The Environment Unit (ENRU) which reports to the UNMIL DSRSG/HC is a unique example of a mission extending its mandate in order to assist a government in recovering its natural resources. The methodology of work is also an example of integration.

This unit, which reports to the HC, was created by UNSC resolution 1503. Its mandate is to assist the Liberian government to restore the proper administration of natural resources. The unit assists ministries such as the Ministry of Mines, Land, and Energy; the Ministry of Planning; the Forestry Development Authority; and the Protection Agency with various policy issues. The unit also ensures that all mission-related activities with an environmental aspect respect pertinent international environmental norms, such as correct hospital waste management and the use of incinerators.

One of the main achievements of the unit is the Sapo National Park evacuation. Liberia's only national park was being threatened by illegal settlers who were carrying out prohibited activities inside the park, such as hunting and mining. Following six months of coordination and

planning among national and international actors—including civil society organizations, various sectors of UNMIL—more than 500 illegal settlers officially left the park peacefully. In a new format of instrumentalization of humanitarian action, Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) were developed in order to encourage the population around the park to cooperate with the operation. As of mid 2006, the park remained free of settlers. This experience has been highlighted by the World Bank and other international organizations as a best practice case for park resource management.<sup>11</sup>

The same kind of operations has been planned for rubber plantations that are still occupied by armed combatants. The initiative comes from the government, but the financial assistance, the technical expertise and the security deployments come from UNMIL.

The Environment Unit was created in consultation with UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme), which has established its first country office in Liberia. The experience is so successful that DPKO is considering creating an environment and natural resources section in its New York office and decentralized units in all UN missions.

### Negative Features

After a long dispute involving Geneva and New York, OCHA closed its office in Liberia. For the first time in Africa, a Humanitarian Coordination Section (HCS) was integrated into the UN mission with an OCHA-like mandate but reporting directly to the DSRSG.

According to senior officers of UNMIL, the design of the Liberia mission was negotiated before it began operations between DPKO, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), and the SRSG. Establishing the responsibilities of the first SRSG before the launch of the mission created an important advantage for ensuring an integrated approach in Liberia. However, OCHA was not immediately integrated, simply because it was active in the field well before UNMIL's establishment. Although there was a clear intention from the start to build up a fully integrated mission, the absorption of OCHA came only a few months later, as the result of interpersonal problems between the HC (who was in favor of integration) and the head of OCHA (who was reluctant). In May 2004, there was a discussion in New York at the highest level (DPKO-ERC-HC) where it was decided to remove the OCHA head and integrate the staff within UNMIL. This resulted in the departure of most of the expatriate staff of OCHA by October 2004. The Humanitarian Coordination Section (HCS) was created under the umbrella of the DSRSG/HC and a new head arrived in February 2005.

**In Liberia, integration did not improve UNMIL's performance. The result is a growing complexity in the mission, slower coordination and low preparedness.**

Because of this difficult period, the UN system lost considerable credibility in terms of coordination between UN agencies and INGOs. Although criticism of the new setup came mainly from MSF, SCF, and ICRC, it is generally acknowledged that INGOs are naturally more confident with an independent OCHA. Taking this into consideration, UNMIL has located the HCS in a separate building in Monrovia, providing the HC with two offices: one with UNMIL and the other in the HCS, mainly for meetings.

According to other INGOs, the coordination work of HCS is good and useful in the counties but that is less true in Monrovia. Rather than helping coordinating humanitarian activities, HCS staff are generally good at problem solving for NGOs because of their knowledge of the UN system and their easy access to the right person.

Because of the exceptional size of the mission and the peace support operation, military assets and logistics are seen by some to be overdeveloped, allowing many INGOs to rely on UNMIL for their transportation. This creates confusion between humanitarian and military activities.<sup>12</sup>

One of the main differences between ECOMOG and UNMIL is that the West African peace force had a much smaller budget and fewer troops. Its mandate was only to secure the capital city, whereas UNMIL is deployed nation-wide and is one of the largest UN missions in the world.

The INGO Merlin relies completely on UNMIL for air and sea transportation. Its budget does not allow it to cover the real costs of transportation. Its management argues that in this case the use of military assets is a question of last resort.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, it took quite a time to make UNMIL officers understand that Merlin medical shipments should not remain last in the UN priority line. Other INGOs like Solidarités (France) and IBIS (Denmark) are in the same situation.

Even larger organizations are not fully independent. ICRC operations in Liberia have an annual budget of \$20 million. ICRC employs 50 expatriates and 350 local staff under ICRC contract (and many local staff with incentives, or complements to salaries paid by the state). It has 50 ICRC trucks and one aircraft, also used for Guinea and Sierra Leone. However, ICRC accepts UNMIL logistical support for shipments by boat from Monrovia to Harper (South of Liberia).

In October 2003, Equip Liberia, a mid-size INGO, requested the help of an UNMIL helicopter to carry aid to Nimba County, and a military patrol to open the road back to Monrovia.

Although these organizations often claim to respect humanitarian ethics concerning the use of military assets, it is seen as indispensable in order to reach populations in need. Of course, this collaboration between humanitarians and the military has no visible consequences in peacetime but the confusion of roles might have a negative impact if violence resumes.

In Liberia, integration did not improve UNMIL's performance. The result is a growing complexity in the mission, slower coordination and low preparedness.

UNMIL is generally accepted and praised for keeping security in the country. On the other hand, non-military components of UNMIL have not performed accordingly: this is the case in the implementation of several policies during the transition period.

One example is the Results Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF), prepared by the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), World Bank and UNMIL, and adopted in February 2004 by the Liberian Reconstruction Conference in New York. After a revision in September 2004, it was brought to an end on March 31, 2006. It comprised ten clusters and sectors whose implementation "should secure an environment that would sustain the commitment to peace, leading to democratic elections, recovery and reconstruction."<sup>14</sup>

During the review meeting, achievements during the first year of RFTF were depicted as "generally modest, uneven and patchy."<sup>15</sup> Problems identified included:

1. Inadequate skills available in key administrative and management areas.
2. Insufficient and delayed release of pledged funds.
3. Widespread problems of coordination and accountability.
4. Government's inability to institute prudent and transparent mechanisms for managing public resources.

Finally, the "RFTF has been more effective in addressing short-term stabilization priorities," especially basic and humanitarian services. Although the responsibility of the program was also shared by the



transitional government and the World Bank, its negative evaluation has affected the image of efficiency of UNMIL.

Many INGOs feel that the UN system tries to control and orient their work through a new UN-driven coordination system: the cluster approach. The perception is that the cluster approach undermines the UN-NGO relationship and therefore could have negative consequences on the overall effectiveness of humanitarian response.

For the UN, the rationale for clusters is to enhance predictability in humanitarian response by defining responsibilities and accountabilities. Officially, the cluster approach is meant to be “a structure for coordinating and managing the humanitarian planning and response.”<sup>16</sup> The list of clusters is as follows: Protection, Emergency Shelter, Early Recovery, Health, Water and Sanitation, Nutrition, Camp Management, and Food Security. Every cluster has a lead UN agency that bears the ultimate responsibility for providing aid when no other actor is in charge (for example UNHCR and IDPs).

It is often presented by INGOs as “a tool for the HC to ensure the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian response in Liberia”<sup>17</sup> but also as “a more robust form of sector coordination” and as a “partnership with NGOs and international organizations in strategy formulation and implementation.”

But for many humanitarian actors, the cluster approach is nothing but the latest UN obsession. It is basically the existing coordination by sector, with the addition of a designated lead agency. HCS is also participating in the cluster approach by trying to involve NGOs as UN partners in strategic thinking and implementation.

For some large INGOs like Oxfam GB and SCF, the cluster approach is clearly a UN-led process and does not work well in Liberia. For example, SCF was a member of the pre-existing Protection Core Group (together with Oxfam GB, IRC, CCF, UNICEF, UNHCR and UNMIL HRPS) whose mandate was to coordinate on protection issues. The NGOs made it clear that the protection group worked well and that there was no need for an additional protection cluster. But they had to bend, and were forced to give up the rotating chair. Since January 2006, UNHCR is in the lead for protection. Mid-sized NGOs are even more eager than the larger ones to make sure they do not get “bulldozed” by UNMIL or the government.

A local Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC-Country Team) has been created to “provide oversight and direction for humanitarian

action, thus acting as the main coordination and accountability forum.”<sup>18</sup> Cluster leads will present progress reports to the IASC-CT. It is composed of UN agencies, the ICRC, the IFRC, INGOs and the World Bank.

Various examples of the subordination by UNMIL of humanitarian action to political objectives are presented by INGOs as typical of the confusion of interests caused by integrated UN mission structures.

A common impression among humanitarian actors is that many UNMIL decisions were slow in coming, but when something was decided at the highest level, it had to be carried out as fast as possible. For example, once President Charles Taylor left the country, Liberians wanted to get rid of their weapons, but the DDR program took a year to be established. This was ample time for every combat-ready weapon to fly away to Côte d’Ivoire. What remained were mainly old weapons to be collected by UNMIL.

The return of IDPs, which was to be organized by the UN system, was slow and regularly delayed until the moment it became the political priority of UNMIL—because everybody had to go home in time for the elections. Suddenly the question became so urgent that it had to be done in the middle of the rainy season, when shelters at destinations were not ready and when it was already too late for farmers to plant. This is an example of the instrumentalization of humanitarian action in support of a political agenda.

In UNMIL, as in ONUB, there are two major coordination meetings. Every week, a senior staff meeting is held with the SRSG, his two deputies, the Force Commander and the director of administration. These five individuals represent the top management of any integrated mission. Although not restricted to integrated missions, a weekly general staff meeting gathers the senior staff and all the heads of divisions/sections/units (around 30 people, see Chart 3).

One of the most symbolic characteristics of the UNMIL structure is the title given to the two deputy SRSGs. One deals with “Operations and Rule of Law” and the other “Recovery and Good Governance” (see Chart 3). These titles indicate that the objectives of the mission go far beyond peacekeeping and humanitarian coordination. This expanding nature of UN missions is typical to integrated missions.

The Relief, Recovery, and Rehabilitation section (Triple R) was mandated to participate in the implementation of the Results-Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) for Liberia. Although this two year

program terminated in 2005, the Triple R was tasked with ensuring an effective link between humanitarian relief and post-conflict development and reconstruction. Although RFTF projects were implemented by UN agencies, the Triple R section had a major role in coordinating the process.

One other specificity of UNMIL is that DDDR was implemented through the assessed budget of the mission and not through voluntary contributions (as in other missions). This gave more room for manoeuvre and flexibility to the program. Although apparently technical, this is also an indicator of integration of a mission and is likely to become an example for others.

### Preliminary Conclusions

- As a fully-integrated mission, UNMIL has improved coordination within the UN system, especially between the political and military pillars of the mission. Therefore, it allows for a better implementation of the peace process but also improves human rights, the fight against corruption and even environmental issues.
- The subordination of the HC/RC to the SRSR compromises the perception of impartiality and neutrality of UN humanitarian operations.
- The termination of OCHA created mistrust and suspicion within the humanitarian community, especially NGOs, to the detriment of effective programming.
- During multifunctional operations, QIPs are used by the mission to reinforce the work of its units in an opportunistic way, to the detriment of humanitarian principles.
- INGOs are concerned that the cluster approach simply integrates their work into the political objectives of the mission.

### Security

Although they support the extension of UNMIL, many Liberians are convinced that its military capacity could be considerably and quickly downsized without threatening security.

It is frequently said that if it had access to the \$800 million a year devoted to UNMIL, the government would solve many problems in Liberia. Many local NGOs and even INGOs were also convinced (in April 2006) that there was no need to maintain 15,000 troops under current conditions. But, seen from the UN, these resources are justified because Liberia has a war on one border, unstable situations on two others, and a fragile government considering the fact that many of

Taylor's people are still walking free in the streets. However, as newly trained Liberian police are increasingly deployed to the counties, downsizing will occur during 2006 according to the last resolution of the UNSC.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the level of the UN "security phase" was perceived as being too high. UN security phases indicate the security readiness of the UN system and determines the level of UN activities authorized in a given region.

In April 2006, there were two different UN phases in Liberia:

1. Phase 3 for most of the country (restricting activities to essential staff and curfew).
2. Phase 4 in the border areas (major programs stopped, reinforced military protection, and curfew).

These phases were less and less respected in the field because they no longer corresponded to the greatly improved security situation. It was expected that the SMT would soon propose Phase 2 for the whole country.

Although the centralization of UN security resulted from terrorist attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, it applies to all missions, even when the level of security has significantly increased, as in Liberia.

After the bombing of the UN compound in Baghdad, there was a major review of UN security, which led to the establishment of the United Nations Department for Security and Safety (UNDSS). It remains a department of the UN secretariat reporting directly to the SG, but its structure in the field was reinforced worldwide in order to fit with potential violent threats against UN system staff.

As in many other areas, UNMIL is at the forefront of security procedures reform. The mission's Security Section now centralizes security coordination mechanisms for the entire UN system in Liberia. It is also a good indicator of the integrated approach.

In April 2006, it was anticipated that a soon-to-be appointed chief security advisor (CSA) would direct all the field security officers (FSO) of UNMIL and all the field security advisers (FSA) of UN agencies. He would report directly to the SRSG, although the Security Section is formally under the DSRSG for Operations and Rule of Law (see Chart 3). The SRSG is the designated officer (DO) for security, whereas the tradition was to designate the UN HC/RC. Field officers address daily reports on security to the CSA. There is also an exchange of

information between the UNMIL Security Section, Civpol and UNMIL military. All these changes considerably upgrade security considerations in the mission and allow for direct access to the head of mission on security matters.

However, the regular mandate of the security officers has not changed. They look after the security of UN staff (all organizations have a signed MOU with UNMIL) and coordinate the collection of security information. The security section also suggests and implements security phases. Concretely, this means that all UN personnel travelling inside the country are required to obtain clearance from the security section. In April 2006, 221 persons were working for the security section, which makes it one of the largest sections of UNMIL.

In April 2006, World Vision International was the only INGO that had signed a MOU with UNMIL. Consequently, WVI staff were entitled to receive the same protection as UN staff, and WVI attended SMT meetings. On the other hand, WVI has an obligation to share its security information with the mission, and to respect UN security phase prescriptions. These were two important reasons for other INGOs refusing to sign an MOU with UNMIL.

#### Preliminary Conclusions

- The peacekeeping force was, in April 2006, seen as over-sized in relation to the security situation;
- The integration and centralization of UNMIL has tremendously increased the political attention provided by the SRSG to the security of staff and operations;

### III. Coherence Compared: Burundi and Liberia

Coherence can be presented as a global effort by donors, governments, and the UN system to optimize and coordinate their interventions, ranging from restoring peace to relief, rehabilitation, and development in countries in crisis. In the case of Liberia and Burundi, because these tasks have until now been undertaken under the aegis of UN peacekeeping missions, coherence has been mostly visible through the coordination of all UN activities within so called “integrated missions” which are given more and more clearly defined roles and reporting lines.

#### The Definitions of Integrated Missions<sup>20</sup>

It is surprising that although there has been extensive and sometimes harsh debate around the concept, there is no official definition of an



integrated UN mission. The only recent effort was made by a panel of independent experts tasked by the UN to report on integrated missions in the field. They suggested the following “working definition”:

An integrated mission is “an instrument with which the UN seeks to help countries in the transition from war to lasting peace, or address a similarly complex situation that requires a system-wide UN response, through subsuming various actors and approaches within an overall political-strategic crisis management framework.”<sup>21</sup>

There are three major concepts in this definition. An integrated mission is:

- An instrument
- Requiring a system-wide UN response.
- Within a crisis management framework.

In the same document, the authors give another kind of definition, focusing on the objectives:

“The UN, broadly speaking, approaches the issue of integrated missions from three perspectives:

- Restoration of stability, law and order.
- Protection of civilians.
- Providing the foundations for long-term recovery, development and democratic governance.”<sup>22</sup>

Although the document is a valuable attempt to tackle the phenomenon, the definitions do not help very much in identifying who is who in the new integrated UN world. Therefore, a more practical typology is proposed in a footnote of the same document:

“Using the role of the Humanitarian Coordinator as an indicator of perceived integration,

- The humanitarian coordinator and his or her structure remain separate from the peacekeeping element in situations where traditional mandates [prevail] (i.e., UNIFIL, UNMEE, UNDOF, UNTSO, MINURSO and UNMOGIP).
- Partial integration is perceived as situations in which the Humanitarian Coordinator is included in the mission structure in the function of a plural-hatted DSRSG, usually a mix of

HC/RC/Resident Representative and DRSG, while the OCHA office remains a separate entity and the day-to-day work of the UNDP is done by a Country Director (i.e., UNAMSIL, MINUSTAH, MONUC, ONUB, MINUCI and UNMIS).

- Full integration proposes that all UN components are merged into one structure. Its proponents, including some in the Liberia mission, argue that the UN can only realise its full impact when the system's structure as well as functions are harmonised (i.e., UNMIK, UNMIL, UNAMA, UNAMI, and UNTAET).<sup>23</sup>

A more direct UN source, although still not yet an official one, provides the following definition of "integration": "[It] is the guiding principle for the design and implementation of complex UN operations in post-conflict situations and for linking the different dimensions of peacebuilding (political, development, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, social and security aspects) into a coherent strategy."<sup>24</sup>

In this framework, it is important to underline that integration seems to be the institutional translation of the huge evolution from classical peacekeeping to multi-disciplinary peace support operations, of which peacekeeping is often only one of the components.

Finally, a useful unofficial and tentative definition is provided by an internal OCHA source: "Integration is a term used to denote the merging or unifying of UN agency goals and resources in a given context, usually peacekeeping operations, but also in times of conflict prevention or post-conflict recovery."<sup>25</sup>

More generally, integration is only one aspect of a larger donor-driven reflection on coherence of all aid policies, from emergency assistance to development. Two recent initiatives indicate the scope of the exercise:

- The High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment. The panel will produce a study to be submitted to the UNGA in September 2006, examining "how best to strengthen the coordination of UN operational activities" and "lay the groundwork for a fundamental restructuring of the UN's operational work";
- The 12 Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States recently developed by OECD and to be tested in nine third world countries.<sup>26</sup>

**On the side of the pluses of integration, there are a number of positives in the increased capacity of UN missions in Burundi and Liberia to implement the many provisions of a comprehensive peace agreement.**

## Evaluating the Integrated Approach

The findings presented in the case studies above identify, among other things, major indicators of the level of integration of a UN mission. Four seem applicable to all present and future missions:

- The structure of the mission (SRSG + 2 DSRSG; OCHA integrated or not).
- The methodology of work (cluster approach, task forces, cross-cutting units).
- The tendency to reduce UN agencies and humanitarian actors to instruments of the objectives of the mission.
- The centralization of the security coordination mechanisms of the whole UN system in a country, and the key role of the SRSG in security management.

### The Pluses and Minuses of Integration

Until now, it seems obvious that, on the side of the pluses of integration, there are a number of positives in the increased capacity of UN missions in Burundi and Liberia to implement the many provisions of a comprehensive peace agreement. For example, officials in charge of DDR, elections, or even human rights generally appreciate being directly connected to the whole UN system, although they might also complain when their work is impeded by a changing political agenda.

As for humanitarian action, the pluses are more difficult to identify. An OCHA official in Bujumbura, when complaining about the temporary absorption of his office into ONUB, had to recognize that his personal access to ONUB senior management was greatly improved and that this provided a unique opportunity to influence political decisions in the making. Another example was given by an official of the Environment unit of UNMIL. The planning of the Sapo National Park evacuation required a high level of coordination between his unit, UNHCR, the DDRR unit, the QIPs unit, and the UNMIL military. Although not purely humanitarian, this could not have happened without integration. A final example was given by a ONUB human rights official. A Congolese journalist living in Bujumbura was threatened by the police for his opinions and even briefly jailed. Through a coordinated intervention of human rights NGOs, UNHCR, the HR unit, and the ONUB military, he was freed, put under the protection of the blue helmets, and sent to Europe as a political refugee. Although spectacular, these stories remain quite exceptional.

**On the minus side, the dramatic OCHA experience in Liberia will certainly remain in many UN and non UN actors' memory as a huge waste of time, energy, and trust in UN institutions. As an OCHA staffer put it in her lessons learned report, it was "a failure for nearly everybody involved."**

On the minus side, the dramatic OCHA experience in Liberia will certainly remain in many UN and non UN actors' memory as a huge waste of time, energy, and trust in UN institutions. As an OCHA staffer put it in her lessons learned report, it was "a failure for nearly everybody involved."<sup>27</sup> Here we have to bear in mind that many NGO officials and heads of mission stress that for reasons of principle, they are more comfortable dealing with an independent OCHA office. This is not only a question of principles. A large proportion of OCHA staff come from an NGO background. At least this was the case for OCHA Bujumbura and OCHA Monrovia before its termination. OCHA's institutional culture is therefore quite comparable to that of the humanitarian actors it has to coordinate. This explains OCHA's reluctance (even in Geneva) towards integration, and the mistrust between INGOs and the integrated humanitarian coordination section in Liberia.

In Burundi, where OCHA-Bujumbura eventually survived, the first consequence of integration was a decline in effective coordination, along with a decrease in the confidence of INGOs vis-à-vis ONUB that two years later had not yet been fully overcome. Clear instrumentalization of humanitarian action for short term political objectives was criticized by INGOs in both countries as resulting from integration (see the issues of Rwandese refugee camps in Burundi and IDPs in Liberia).

Finally, the cost of integration seems to be very high, directly for OCHA and indirectly for INGOs. For OCHA, it is simply a question of institutional survival, at least in complex crises<sup>28</sup>: what is the use of maintaining such an organization if its staff is systematically absorbed by UN missions? Consequently, the role of honest humanitarian broker played by OCHA between UN and NGOs is in jeopardy. Should it disappear, this would have negative consequences at many levels: degradation of humanitarian coordination of course but also a decrease in information-sharing and eventually a loss of confidence by NGOs in the UN system. This conclusion has to be nuanced by the level of dependence of NGOs on the UN. Only large and powerful organizations (like ICRC, MSF, Oxfam GB, SCF, IRC) are able to resist the negative consequences of integration, whereas many small and mid-size NGOs are more or less heavily dependent on their government and/or on the UN system as implementing partners.

#### At the Cost of Humanitarian Principles

The ECHA report seems to take these arguments into consideration by recognizing that a certain room for manoeuvre should be left for OCHA and therefore implicitly arguing the case for semi-integrated missions.

**Integration is being implemented at considerable cost to basic humanitarian principles. OCHA's situation in UN missions is certainly important, but in the final analysis this is peripheral to the main contradiction: including the HC/RC in the mission as DSRSG makes humanitarian affairs an instrument on the road to peace and recovery.**

But the Burundian experience does not seem very conclusive in this regard. Although OCHA survived as an institution, there have been constant tensions between the head of the OCHA office and the HC, who is perceived as too close to the SRSG and the political agenda of the mission.<sup>29</sup>

The cluster approach is often perceived as the next step towards the integration of assistance and protection activities. Because it is a UN-driven initiative, many INGOs are suspicious, even if they recognize that they do not yet grasp all the implications of the new system. For many humanitarian workers, the cluster approach is nothing less than a way of attracting NGOs into the UN agenda through a new design of sectoral coordination. For them, it is even more preoccupying to realize that this negative evolution is taking place regardless of the presence of a UN mission (for example, the cluster approach is also being tested in Somalia and Pakistan).

In a sense, the QIPs developed by all UN missions (although others, including UNHCR, have used them for years) become a microcosm of what humanitarian action could become under the integrated approach. Although small in budget, the QIPs are openly used to improve the image of the mission vis-à-vis the local population but also increasingly to facilitate various multifaceted UN interventions (i.e., the Sapu Park evacuation in Liberia, small projects facilitating arms collection among civilians, or renovating buildings before elections). These humanitarian projects have a political objective: they are efficient when producing a return on investment in terms of UN acceptance by the local population. Any satisfaction of the population's needs is collateral. With the deepening of integration, these kinds of "politically correct" humanitarian projects have a bright future.

All this leads to the conclusion that integration is being implemented at considerable cost to basic humanitarian principles. OCHA's situation in UN missions is certainly important, but in the final analysis this is peripheral to the main contradiction: including the HC/RC in the mission as DSRSG makes humanitarian affairs an instrument on the road to peace and recovery. This sort of hidden conditionality is not only implemented in spectacular cases like Afghanistan but also, in a more rampant way, in African peace-building processes. The shift is confirmed by the last official instructions given by the UNSG to SRSGs and their deputies. The document, called "Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions"<sup>30</sup> clearly states:

- "The principal reporting line of the DSRSG/RC/HC is to the SRSG who provides direct supervision and overall strategic direction."

- “The DSRSG/RC/HC retains a secondary reporting line to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). (...) [This reporting line] does not constitute a day-to-day supervisory relationship.”
- “While recognizing that UN agencies are responsible for the implementation of their mandated activities, the SRSR may request a given agency to re-orient its planned interventions in the line of the broad strategic objectives of the mission, subject to the agency's mandate and available resources.”

In other words, in the name of coherence and efficiency in the implementation of a transition process, the UN seems ready to jeopardize the credibility of its humanitarian role, finally and negatively affecting the beneficiaries by its lack of independence and impartiality.

#### A Question of Authority, Structure, and Comfort

In both the Burundi and Liberia cases, authoritative SRSRs had to leave their positions under pressure from national or regional leaders. It would be too simple to restrict this phenomenon to the individual level. Of course, it is often stressed that SRSRs are acting like the “proconsuls” or “viceroys” of colonial times, but it is, in the first instance, the ever larger mandate and the disproportionate resources of the missions that can give them greater power than the local president. The level of integration of the mission completes the picture by concentrating in one hand the power of the whole UN system. These non-elected foreign technocrats are also under pressure from the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council in order to deliver spectacular results (security, disarmament, protection, return of refugees and IDPs, human rights and gender balance, elections). In order to achieve these ambitious goals, often with reluctant transitional governments, a lot of decisions must be imposed from outside.

Such use of UN power requires diplomacy and caution in order to avoid creating resentment among local elites. Some SRSRs seem to possess these qualities, qualities that are lacking in others. In Liberia, the Special Representative is helped by the World Bank background of President Johnson-Sirleaf, as opposed to the former rebel President Nkurunziza in Burundi.

In comparing the organizational charts of ONUB and UNMIL, one may conclude that integrated missions have a flexible design that allows them to adapt to different circumstances and objectives. For example, in the lead up to elections, the mission will work hard to accomplish DDR and the return of IDPs and refugees. The corresponding divisions and sections of the mission will then concentrate staff and political



attention on the electoral process. After elections, these branches will quickly shrink or even disappear, to the profit of rule of law, human rights, and RRR units. According to needs, and depending on the internal balance of power, units and sections may report to one deputy or another (i.e., the Human Rights Unit or Civil Affairs Unit). Thus, there seems to be an integrated mission for all seasons (all mandates, all countries, all SRSB personalities . . .). Kofi Annan himself confirmed this flexibility by stating: “It is acknowledged that integrated missions is an evolving concept and that further guidance will be required.”<sup>31</sup> This is not only an advantage but a strength for the UN peacebuilding approach.

A senior ONUB military officer offered a telling comment on the disproportionate number of blue helmets in Burundi: far from trying to justify it militarily, he simply stressed that “it gives enormous comfort to the Force commander and therefore to the whole mission.” This was an honest assessment that is also valid for Liberia, both for the size of the military and civilian staffs. Of course, this has also an influence on the number of people in charge of coordination at all levels, and in particular for humanitarian coordination. The more Humanitarian Affairs Officers (HAO) you have, the more you can influence humanitarian activities. In that regard, the cluster approach might require more and more staff to be efficiently implemented, multiplying the UN capacity to attract NGOs and to follow the agenda of the mission.

### General Conclusions on Coherence

- In their current form, integrated missions have been top-down processes that create tension and have yet to prove the increased effectiveness they are said to afford to humanitarian action.
- The ability to address humanitarian need is constrained by the space available. Humanitarian action is always under pressure from other priorities and “imperatives”. The issue is how to optimize humanitarian response in relation to other priorities.
- Humanitarians cannot dominate the coherence debate nor dictate how it should be framed, but need to protect the humanitarian component within integrated missions.
- Humanitarian agencies, and NGOs in particular, are traditionally suspicious of any form of coordinating efforts that limit their freedom of operation.

### Recommendations on Coherence

Although many analysts agree on the lack of common understanding of the terms “coherence” and “integration,” most senior actors in the field

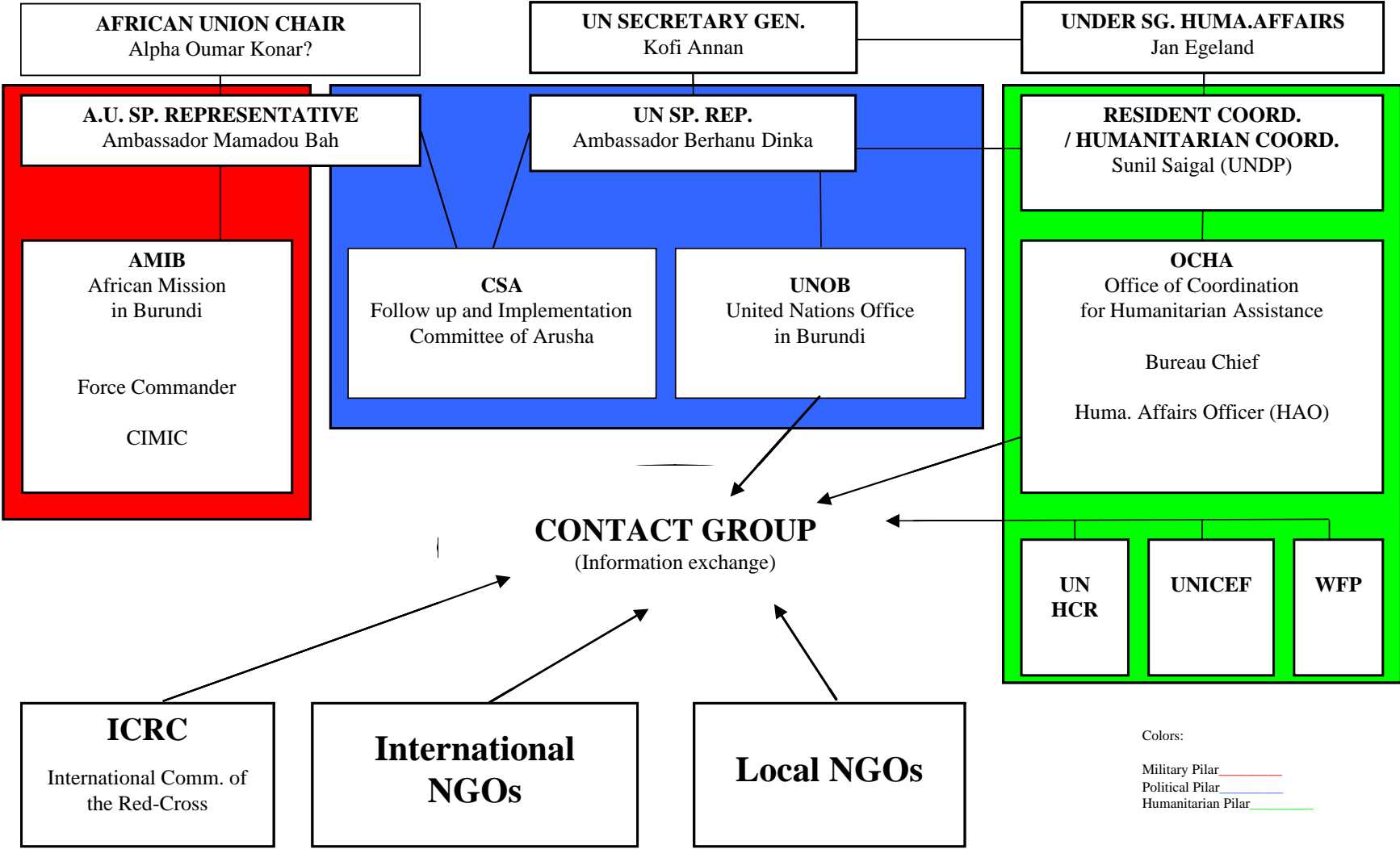
acknowledge that both “are here to stay”. This sort of *fait accompli* is not based on a particular UN resolution or a special report of the UNSG or a group of donor countries, but it is nevertheless a spreading and deepening phenomenon that touches most of the countries in crisis where the international community is active.

Although positive features about integrated missions in Burundi and Liberia have been highlighted, the negative aspects need to be addressed through an open and transparent dialogue involving all the parties concerned.

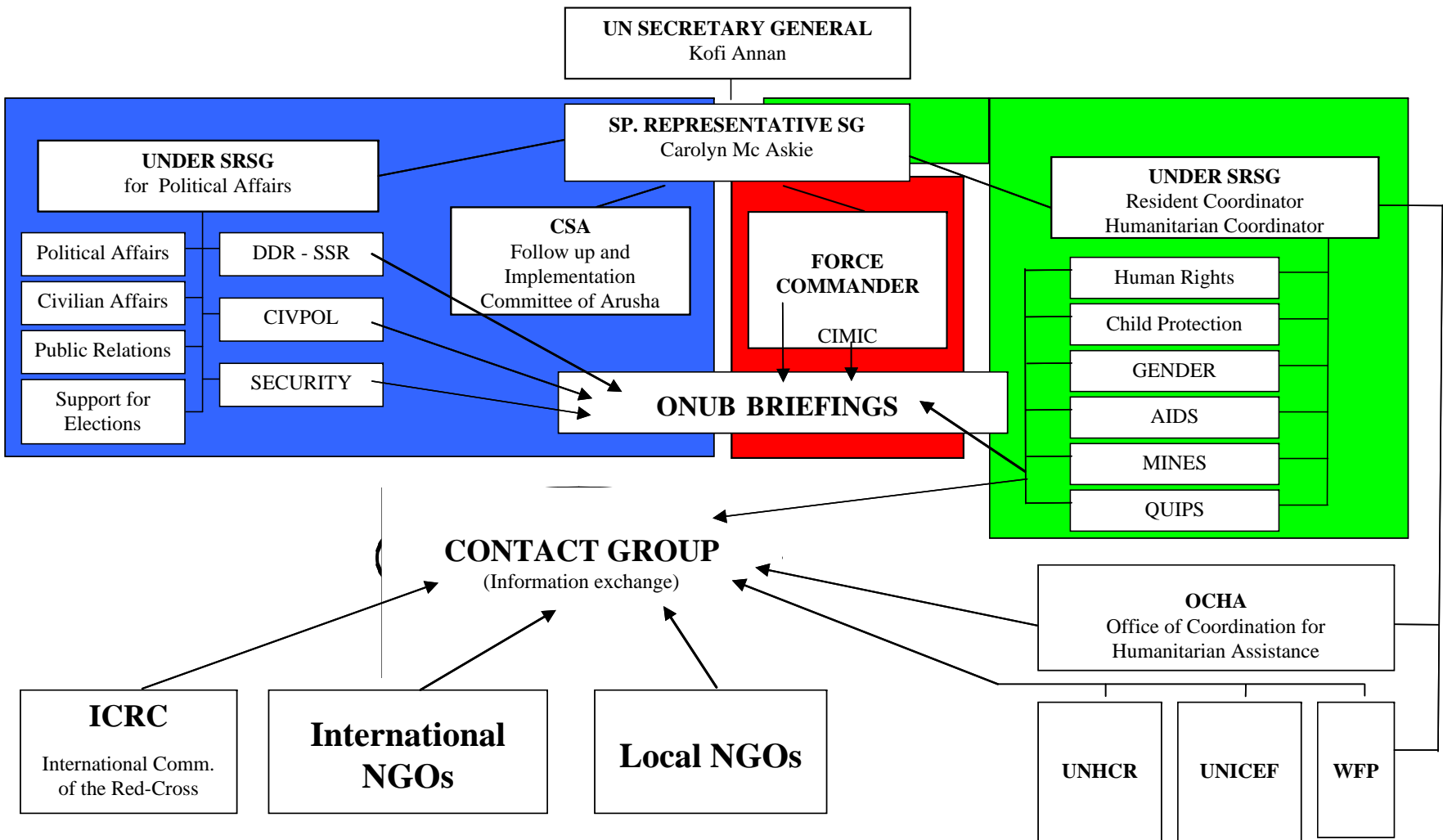
- The way coherence issues are addressed in the field should be submitted to a shared process where all the actors (including humanitarians) and beneficiaries are systematically taken into consideration, respected, consulted and involved. This task should be handled by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), at HQs where general guidance and principles are concerned, and by IASC Country Teams so that local realities can be addressed. Evaluations of the impact of coherence on beneficiaries should be regularly conducted by independent consultants.
- If the move to greater coherence is to be effective, there has to be room for full and appropriate discussion of the best way to avoid or minimize the instrumentalization of humanitarian action. Guidelines on the issue should be produced by a large representative panel of actors, on the basis of what has been done for the use of military assets or armed escorts.
- In that regard, the role and functions of OCHA have to be reinterpreted and/or redefined within the new situation created by coherence efforts. In particular, the status of OCHA vis-à-vis integrated UN missions has to be clarified through a permanent dialogue between the ERC and DPKO, taking into account positions expressed by INGOs and UN agencies.
- Through a revision in their Terms of Reference or through a new Note of Guidance, SRSGs should be held more accountable to beneficiaries for the respect of humanitarian and human rights principles.

# AMIB : AN ISOLATED OPERATION

(between June 2003 and June 2004)

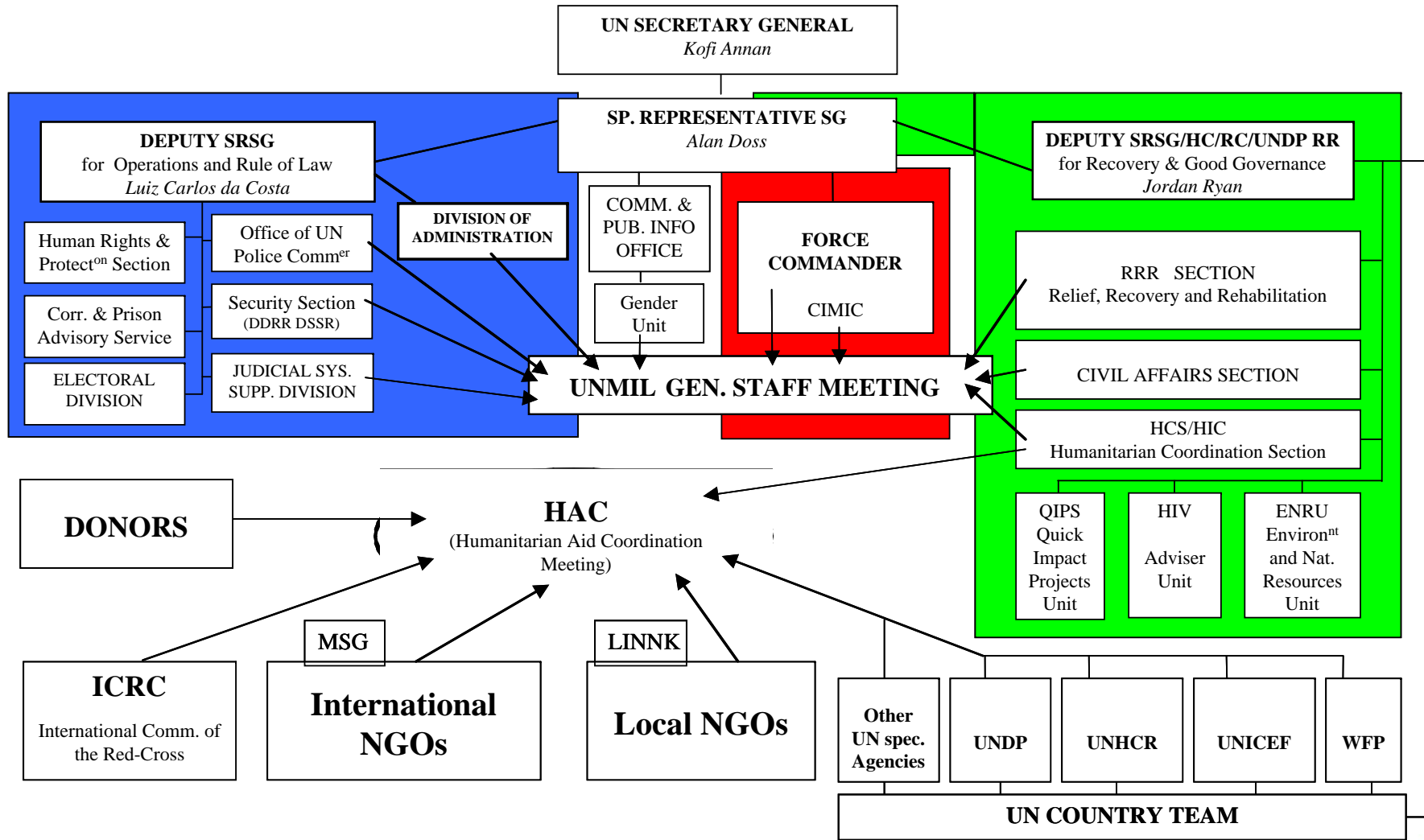


**ONUB : A SEMI-INTEGRATED MISSION**  
(since June 2004)



# UNMIL : AN INTEGRATED MISSION

(April 2006)



6 April 2006 DDraft version from Xavier Zeebroek





## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Rassemblement, Echanges et Solutions entre ONG (RESO) is a neutral and non political INGO network in Burundi. It gathers 33 members and 5 observer organizations. See “Le guide de organisations internationales membres et observateurs du Reso”, Reso, Bujumbura, 2005, 63 pages.
- <sup>2</sup> “Burundi: Gov’t to neutralise rebel group in 2 months, President says,” IRIN, 1 November 2005.
- <sup>3</sup> “Warning Signs: Continuing Abuses in Burundi,” Human Rights Watch Report, 27 February 2006, see <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/burundi0206/>
- <sup>4</sup> For more on the issue, see Zeebroek, Xavier “Je t’aide, moi non plus” in *Les humanitaires en guerre : sécurité des travailleurs humanitaires en mission en RDC et au Burundi*, GRIP/ Éditions Complexe, Brussels, October 2004, pp. 121-148.
- <sup>5</sup> In particular “Use of military or armed escorts for humanitarian convoys,” Discussion paper and non-binding guidelines, IASC, 14/9/2001, 15 p.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview with the author.
- <sup>7</sup> Krasno, Jean, “Public Opinion Survey of UNMIL’s Work in Liberia.” Peacekeeping Best Practice Section, DPKO, United Nations, March 2006, 31 pages.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview with the author.
- <sup>9</sup> See “The task is awesome....” interview of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, UNMIL Focus, vol 2 N°1, Sept-Nov 2005, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>10</sup> For more information on methodology, see “Bi-monthly Report, December 2005–January 2006”, Human Rights and Protection Section, UNMIL, April 2006, pp. 1-2.
- <sup>11</sup> For a comprehensive description of the action, see “Sapo National Park Evacuation .” After Action Report by UNMIL, UNMIL internal report, 12 pages.
- <sup>12</sup> More on the relations between humanitarians and the military with Zeebroek, Xavier *Militaires–Humanitaires : à chacun son rôle*, GRIP/Éditions Complexe, Brussels, May 2002, 278 pages.
- <sup>13</sup> The “last resort” concept is crucial in various humanitarian guidelines. See “The use of civil/military assets in complex crisis.” IASC, New York, March 2003; see also “Use of military or armed escort for humanitarian convoys.” IASC, 14 Sept. 2001, 15 pages.
- <sup>14</sup> “Results Focused Transitional Government of Liberia.” NTGL/UN/World Bank, Revision, April 2005, 166 pages.
- <sup>15</sup> Idem p. 10.
- <sup>16</sup> “IASC Country Team Discussion Paper for Implementing the Cluster Approach.” Revised draft document, 17 March 2006, IASC CT, Monrovia, 13 pages.
- <sup>17</sup> Other pilot countries for the cluster approach are DRC and Uganda.
- <sup>18</sup> “IASC Country Team ....” op. cit. p. 11.
- <sup>19</sup> Resolution 1667 of the UNSC, 31 March 2006, S/RES/1667(2006), United Nations, <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/858999.html> .
- <sup>20</sup> For deeper analysis, see Zeebroek, Xavier “La difficile mise en oeuvre de l’intégration au sein des missions de paix” in *Guide du maintien de la paix 2006*, CEPES, Athéna Éditions, Montréal, September 2005.
- <sup>21</sup> Espen Barth Eide et alii, *Report on Integrated Missions : Practical Perspectives and Recommendations*, Independent Study for the Expanded UN ECHA Core Group, May 2005, p. 14.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 12.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibidem p. 9. The text has been reformatted for more clarity.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations, “Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP).” Policy guidelines to be endorsed by the UNSG in 2006, Working draft 8 February 2006, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Anne Davies, “Integration in Liberia, from OCHA to UNMIL.” December 2004, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> See “Principles for good international engagement in fragile states.” Development co-operation directorate, OCDE, DCD(2005)8/REV2, 7 April 2005, 4 pages. Also “Piloting the principle for good international engagement in fragile states.” Development co-operation directorate, OCDE, DCD(2005)11/REV2, 17 August 2005, 13 pages.

<sup>27</sup> Anne Davies, *op cit* p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, OCHA’s role in natural disasters seems to grow considerably.

<sup>29</sup> Significantly enough, the main office of the DSRSG/HC/RC is located at the UN mission, either in Burundi and Liberia. He comes in OCHA or HCS building only for meetings.

<sup>30</sup> UNSG document, 9 December 2005.

<sup>31</sup> “Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions.” *op cit*. p. 1.