
Foreword

The increasing deployment of political missions by the United Nations and other organizations represents an important evolution in the world's response to crisis and conflict. As their numbers grow along with the complexity of their mandates, so does the importance of studying these missions and the unique role they play in promoting peace and security.

One year ago, CIC broke new ground in this regard with its *Review of Political Missions 2010* – the first independent and comprehensive review of the work of political missions in the field. That report's assessments and recommendations were greatly appreciated by those at the United Nations working to support and oversee political missions. This year's follow-up volume makes another timely contribution.

As the report once again demonstrates, political missions of many shapes and sizes are making wide-ranging contributions to peace and security.

During the first half of 2011 alone, United Nations missions were active on many fronts. A non-exhaustive list of their contributions would include their work in accompanying Guinea's post-coup transition to democracy; brokering new political agreements to help stabilize Somalia; encouraging calm in-and-around Gaza and the formation of a new government in Lebanon; in shaping agreements on the peaceful sharing

of natural resources in Central Asia; and in brokering dialogue over tense boundary disputes inside Iraq.

The past year at the UN also witnessed the appointment of a Special Envoy for Libya, tasked with brokering a political solution, and the initiation of a process of post-conflict planning. Scenarios could include a UN political mission tasked with assisting a political transition in the country. During 2011, the United Nations also expanded its network of regional political missions through the establishment of a new office in Gabon, with a mandate for peace consolidation and conflict prevention in Central Africa.

Hopefully, 2011 will also prove to be a milestone year for the United Nations in improving the support and financing of its political missions. A report by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon due to be published this fall will make the case for overdue changes in how these missions are budgeted and backstopped. The objective of the reforms is to ensure that operations requiring fast deployment and flexibility to adapt to changing realities on the ground are no longer hamstrung by operating under the same budget procedures and support arrangements created for UN meetings and conferences in New York. This year's CIC report bolsters the arguments for such a reform by stressing the importance of providing political missions

with adequate resources, including staffing, and oversight in order to carry out their mandates.

There are several other important ways in which this year's report builds on our collective understanding of the subject. First, it increases its coverage of non-UN political missions, especially those overseen by the African Union such as the organization's twelve liaison offices across the continent. It is important to study these operations across the full gamut and share lessons learned across organizations. The report also underscores the contributions of Special Envoys trying to resolve political impasses. It highlights the role that political missions play in combating organized crime and transnational

threats, while also underscoring their work in preventing and responding to electoral violence and unconstitutional changes of government.

Clearly, political missions are here to stay. Their relatively low cost, discreet profile and adaptability to circumstances will continue to make them an attractive option for Member States and the international community. All who are concerned about the international management of crises and conflict have a stake in their success. CIC's ongoing research in this area is making an invaluable contribution.

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