



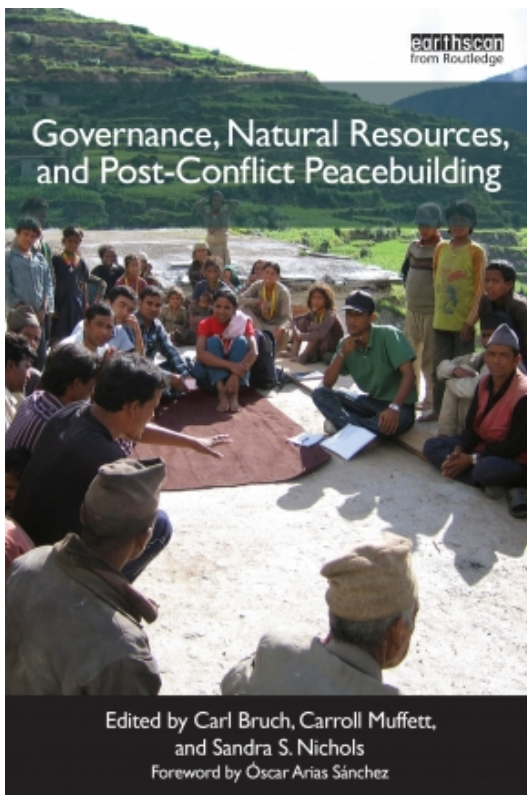
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### Environmental Experiences and Developments in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

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# **Environmental experiences and developments in United Nations peacekeeping operations**

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Only recently in the sixty-five-year history of UN peacekeeping operations has the UN recognized the relevance of environmental concerns in determining the success of peacekeeping operations. Over this period, some 40 percent of all intrastate conflicts have been linked to natural resources, with some of the most notable examples occurring since the end of the Cold War (UNEP 2009a).

Beginning in the early 2000s, the United Nations Security Council (Security Council) began recognizing specific threats to security associated with the exploitation of natural resources. In June 2000, the Security Council placed its first sanction on conflict resources: the embargo on diamonds from Sierra Leone (UNSC 2000), and it has since taken similar actions in other countries, including Liberia, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>1</sup> Addressing the link between natural resource exploitation and armed conflict on a regional level, in 2006, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1653, which articulates the connection between natural resource exploitation and arms trafficking in the Great Lakes region of Africa and urges governments in the region to take measures to prevent the illicit trade of natural resources in their territories (UNSC 2006). In 2013, the Security Council acknowledged, for the first time, the importance of examining environmental impacts of a peacekeeping mission with Resolution 2100, which established the mandate for a peacekeeping mission in Mali (UNSC 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> See Mark B. Taylor and Mike Davis, "Taking the Gun out of Extraction: UN Responses to the Role of Natural Resources in Conflicts," in this book.

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The increasing frequency of specific cases in which conflict resources threaten security has led to broader discussions of the topic in the Security Council.<sup>2</sup> A 2009 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report on conflict and peacebuilding pointed out that, since 2003, the Security Council had issued three resolutions and the Security Council President had issued two statements linking natural resource management and exploitation to ongoing armed conflicts (UNSC 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007a, 2007c).<sup>3</sup> A 2007 statement from the Security Council President “recognize[d] the role that natural resources can play in armed conflict and post-conflict situations” and noted that “exploitation, trafficking, and illicit trade of natural resources” play an important role in fueling conflict (UNSC 2007c, 1). In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly (General Assembly) acknowledged that diamonds have the potential to exacerbate conflicts beyond Sierra Leone and that they can be “directly linked to the fuelling of armed conflict” (UNGA 2007, 1).<sup>4</sup> Discussion of conflict resources has accompanied increased Security Council attention to the linkages between conflict, on the one hand, and natural resources and the environment, on the other.

In 2007 the United Kingdom, a permanent member of the Security Council, initiated a debate in the Security Council to discuss “the relationship between energy, security, and climate” (UNSC 2007b). The United Kingdom opened the debate by asserting that climate change “exacerbated many threats” to security. Those threats, as outlined in the initial letter to the President of the Security Council from the representative of the United Kingdom, included the potential of climate change to be a driver of future conflicts due to changes in access to essential resources such as “energy, water, [and] food,” and the potential for climate change to increase population movements and border disputes (UNSC 2007b). Some participants expressed resistance to discussing climate change in the forum of the Security Council. In defense of the discussion, others, including representatives from Slovakia and Germany, linked it to Security Council Resolution 1625, adopted in 2005, which reaffirms the role of the Security Council in conflict prevention (UNSC 2005, 2007b).

The General Assembly had recognized the link between armed conflict and the environment on previous occasions. In 1993, it passed the first of ten resolutions that highlight this connection (UNGA 1993). Following the 2007 Security Council debate on climate change, the General Assembly passed Resolution 63/281, mainly sponsored by the Pacific Small Island Developing States. Adopted in 2009, Resolution 63/281 acknowledges the impact of climate change on security and calls on bodies of the UN to “intensify their efforts” to address the

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<sup>2</sup>In this chapter, the term *conflict resources* refers to natural resources used to finance conflict.

<sup>3</sup>A more comprehensive list of Security Council actions taken to curtail the exploitation of natural resources can be found in Global Policy Forum (2005–2010).

<sup>4</sup>For more information on the broad discussion of conflict resources in the Security Council and General Assembly, see UNEP (2009a), annex 3.

threat of climate change and its implications for international security (UNGA 2009a, 2009b).

On this basis, in May 2010, the Pacific Small Island Developing States called on the Security Council to address the security threats of climate change and asked the member states to add the issue to the Security Council agenda at once (Moses 2010). In July 2011, Germany decided to organize a debate titled “Maintenance of International Peace and Security: The Impact of Climate Change.” Although the positions of member states had not changed much since the 2007 Security Council debate, a majority of the G77 states had been arguing against Security Council encroachment on the roles and responsibilities of other organs of the UN and against distortion of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. For the first time, a consensus was reached among the fifteen Security Council members, leading to a presidential statement recognizing the potential threats of climate change on international security (UN 2011; UNSC 2011).

In 2012, UNEP launched *Greening the Blue Helmets: Environment, Natural Resources and UN Peacekeeping Operations* (UNEP 2012). The result of a two-year collaboration with the UN departments of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Field Support (DFS), the report highlights good practice relating to environmental management of peacekeeping operations; considers how peacekeeping operations can stabilize countries where natural resources have contributed to the onset and financing of conflict; and examines how peacekeepers can capitalize on the peacebuilding potential of natural resources through employment, economic recovery, and reconciliation.

Both the specific actions and the broader discussions of the Security Council and the General Assembly reflect the growing international belief that environmental issues can no longer play only an ancillary role in peacekeeping and security. With the growing recognition of the linkages between environmental and security concerns, there have been a number of advancements in efforts to include environmental and natural resource considerations in the operational planning of peacekeeping and security operations.

This chapter presents the developments in the UN peacekeeping community with regard to environmental management. Because environmental needs and opportunities vary from country to country, the chapter reviews a number of measures that the DPKO and DFS have taken to address environmental issues in peacekeeping at both the headquarters and field levels. Many of these actions address efforts made by peacekeeping missions to mitigate environmental problems and prevent environmental concerns from arising that could threaten security or the achievement of mission mandates.

The chapter first examines the promulgation of environmental guidance for UN field missions. The environmental guidance consists of two documents: the Environmental Policy for UN Field Missions and draft Environmental Guidelines for UN Field Missions. The policy and draft guidelines, developed by DPKO in cooperation with UNEP, are the first of their kind among the UN bodies primarily

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concerned with peacekeeping and security.<sup>5</sup> The chapter then discusses pilot environmental assessments that have been conducted with UN field missions and closes with a brief exploration of some of the other environment-related activities that DPKO and DFS have undertaken.

### THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND DRAFT GUIDELINES

Although the Security Council and the General Assembly have begun to recognize the relationship between security concerns and the environment in a range of specific circumstances,<sup>6</sup> to date neither body has adopted an official, generally applicable policy on the issue. Despite the lack of an overarching policy framework for all UN bodies, DPKO and DFS have undertaken a variety of operational measures to address their own environmental footprint and to support their peacekeeping mandate.

To date, the most important of these measures is the development of environmental guidance for UN peacekeeping missions. (See figure 1 for current UN peacekeeping missions, as of March 2014.) This guidance has been developed in two parts. The DPKO-DFS Environmental Policy for UN Field Missions was adopted in June 2009. Building on this policy, draft DPKO-DFS Environmental Guidelines for UN Field Missions have also been developed, but as of March 2014 they had not yet been officially adopted (DPKO and DFS 2009a, 2009b). The policy and draft guidelines provide DPKO and DFS with a baseline for integrating environmental considerations into peacekeeping operations and offer support for future environmental and conservation activities within their operations. They do not directly address security concerns arising from environmental issues, but by assisting peacekeeping operations in ensuring that their activities do not exacerbate tenuous environmental situations, they promote security indirectly.

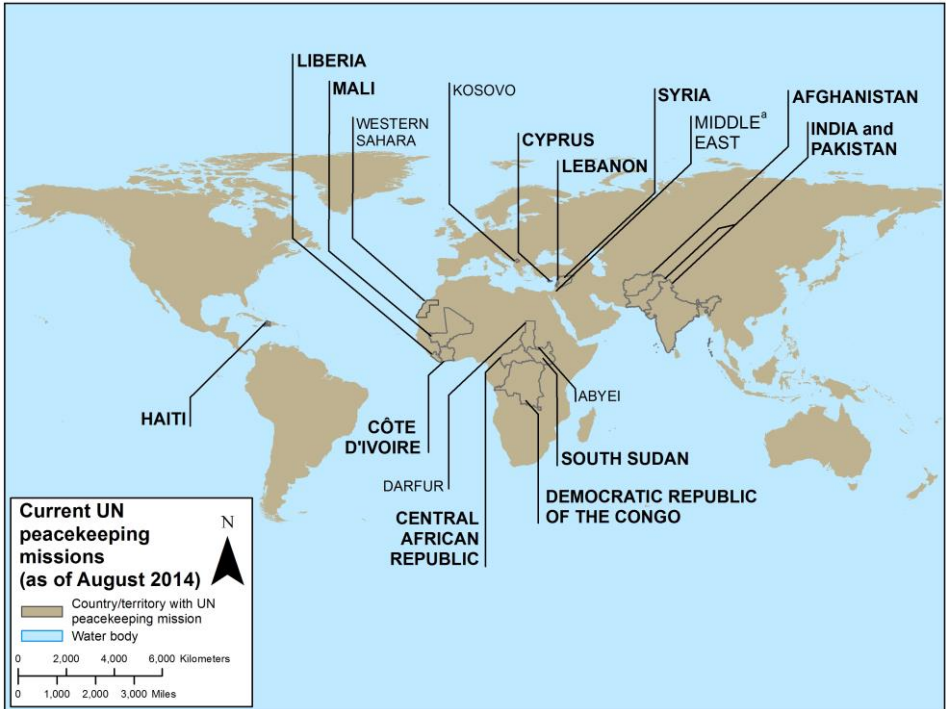
Part of the impetus for the creation of the DPKO-DFS environmental policy and draft guidelines was the need to deal with a wide range of environmental issues arising in the day-to-day operations of peacekeeping missions. Peacekeepers consistently face field challenges that can affect mission effectiveness, such as securing sufficient quantities of water and timber in areas where these resources are limited, generating power in remote areas, and managing and handling hazardous materials and waste in countries poorly equipped to deal with them.

Peacekeeping missions themselves may have unintended negative environmental consequences. In Darfur, for example, the UN humanitarian and peacekeeping community decided to purchase bricks made locally, in an attempt to stimulate the local economy. However, because trees were used as fuel in kilns

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<sup>5</sup> The drafts of the environmental policy and guidelines were developed before the creation of DFS in 2007.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, UNSC (2013) and UNGA (2012).



**Figure 1. Current United Nations peacekeeping missions, as of August 2014**

Notes: UN member states are set in bold.

<sup>a</sup>The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) is the current peacekeeping mission in the Middle East. Its origins date back to 1948, when UN military observers were called to the region to oversee the cessation of hostilities between Israel and neighboring Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Today, UNTSO activities continue to extend across territories in all five states in the region (UNTSO n.d.).

<sup>b</sup>The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is a political mission (not a peacekeeping mission) led by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

to fire the bricks, the creation of a new market for bricks led to increased deforestation in a region where trees were already scarce (UN Peacekeeping 2010). The negative impact on the local environment caused by peacekeepers' presence has the potential to go beyond localized environmental degradation and may indirectly contribute to local tensions, especially where the original conflict was linked to scarce or damaged natural resources. Despite such high stakes, negative environmental impacts of peacekeeping missions have traditionally been addressed in an ad hoc manner by individual missions.

After recognizing missions' negative environmental impacts and the potential implications of these impacts for security, DPKO sought UNEP's support to develop an environmental policy and supplemental environmental guidelines for UN field missions. Joint DPKO-UNEP fact-finding teams were sent to several field missions to identify environmental concerns at those missions' sites and in their operations. Their findings were then incorporated into the environmental policy (the primary directive on environmental issues for peacekeeping) and the

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guidelines (a handbook of specifics on how to carry out the directives set forth in the policy). Drafts of these documents were released to field missions in 2006. Following a comment and review period, the Environmental Policy for UN Field Missions was finalized and formally approved in June 2009.

The overarching goal expressed in the policy is for “each field mission [to] take actions to integrate environmental measures into its planning and operations in order to avoid and minimize the impact of activities carried out by the mission and its staff on the environment and to protect human health from such environmental impact” (DPKO and DFS 2009a, sec. D.1, no. 5). To satisfy this goal, every mission is required to establish “environmental policy, objectives, and control measures” that will be implemented throughout the lifetime of the operation (DPKO and DFS 2009a, sec. A). Additionally, the policy requires baseline studies and the recording of environmental impacts, activities that affect the environment, and actions taken to mitigate these impacts and activities. It also requires the development of emergency preparedness and contingency plans and the maintenance of basic levels of environmental conduct in compliance with relevant local and international standards, laws, and treaties.

Through the process of developing the policy and accompanying draft guidelines, DPKO and DFS recognized an internal lack of expertise on environmental issues. To address this, in 2007, DFS established an environmental officer position to provide a higher level of environmental knowledge and to increase competence in the department. Missions also noted the need for improved environmental expertise at the operational level. As a result, the environmental policy also calls for individual missions to hire an environmental officer whose responsibility is to manage all of the mission’s environmental issues.

As of July 2014, eight UN peacekeeping missions and one political mission (in Afghanistan) had filled the environmental officer position,<sup>7</sup> and every other mission had designated a person to serve as a focal point for environmental issues as an extension of that person’s regular duties. All missions should have environmental officers in the future. When the mission’s mandate refers to better management of natural resources, the mission can sometimes assign these duties to the environmental officer, as well as to the civil affairs section or the joint mission analysis center. Because environmental considerations are new in peacekeeping, missions are still resolving where to position environmental management in their organization and how best to include environmental considerations in their operations.

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<sup>7</sup> These missions are the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the African Union–United Nations Mission in Darfur, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Whereas the environmental policy provides the impetus and the general guide for what field missions should do, the draft guidelines provide options for how to do it. The guidelines look at most aspects of a mission's environmental impact and provide procedures for reducing the negative environmental effects of peacekeeping missions—or avoiding them altogether.

In twelve environmental management areas,<sup>8</sup> the draft guidelines set forth detailed information on key issues, a problem description, the objectives of the guidelines, recommended actions, applicable standards, and an assignment of responsibilities. They also include methods for managing mission-necessary resources such as water, fuel, and building materials; plans for responsible waste treatment and management; and procedures for environmental training and emergency preparation of personnel. The guidelines give specific instructions for a mission's environmental officer in each of the environmental management areas. These responsibilities encompass general record-keeping and auditing tasks, arranging for responsible waste disposal, recommending environmental specifications for natural resource acquisition processes, and implementing procedures to monitor the effectiveness of the environmental plan.

The DPKO-DFS environmental policy and draft guidelines are the first of their kind among UN bodies concerned with peacekeeping and security.<sup>9</sup> Their development marks the increasing importance of environmental objectives in peacekeeping operations, and the growing recognition thereof. Their impact is already being felt.

## **PILOT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS**

A number of environmental assessments from various missions and operations (for example, those in Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan), conducted in collaboration with UNEP, have provided further data that allow field missions to consider the resource efficiency and environmental impacts of their installations and operations. These assessments, undertaken since adoption of the environmental policy in 2009, have provided an opportunity to apply and test the policy.

Among the most common issues identified by the assessments are challenges related to sustainable water management and solid and liquid waste treatment. Improved water management is especially crucial when missions operate in countries where water is not readily available (for example, Chad and Sudan). Other issues identified include the need to segregate, treat, and dispose of solid

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<sup>8</sup> The twelve environmental management areas are waste management, hazardous substances management, natural resource management, pollution, energy conservation, cultural and historical areas, UN climate neutrality, implementation (through an environmental action plan), training for awareness, emergency preparation, environmental auditing, and procedures for mission liquidation.

<sup>9</sup> Some UN bodies outside the realms of security and peacekeeping have developed similar environmental guidance. See, for example, UNHCR (2005).



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waste, as well as to safely dispose of hazardous waste such as batteries, chemicals, and medical waste. Also of concern are a variety of issues involving pollution, such as oil spills at generator sites and fuel stations. The assessments have also revealed what is required for the preservation of wild animals and plants, as well as the protection of cultural and historical heritage sites to avoid repeating violations such as the 2007 incident in which peacekeepers damaged prehistoric engravings in Western Sahara (Alberge 2008). Negligence in the protection of the environment and cultural resources may undermine confidence in and the credibility of the peacekeeping operations.<sup>10</sup>

Assessments have enabled many missions to commence concerted efforts to implement sound environmental practices, drawing on the DPKO-DFS environmental policy. Some field missions are now assessing how to include the mission's environmental objectives in their contract requirements and then how to monitor the contractors' compliance (for example, regarding wastewater disposal). In addition, some mission staff now undergo environmental awareness training, which provides them with information on topics such as resource conservation practices and techniques for waste segregation and wastewater treatment.

### OTHER NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

In addition to the policy, draft guidelines, and environmental assessments, DPKO and DFS have undertaken environmental measures that go beyond addressing the environmental impacts of peacekeeping missions.

For example, the inclusion of dedicated environmental experts among the personnel of the United Nations Mission in Liberia enabled the mission to play an affirmative role in assisting the Liberian government and other organizations in the field of natural resources management. Among the responsibilities articulated in the mission's mandate was an unprecedented directive for it to help Liberia's transitional government to "restor[e] proper administration of natural resources," including those that had fueled and funded the violence there (UNSC 2003, 4). Pursuant to this mandate, the mission has provided guidance to the Liberian government on how to strengthen its role in the international environmental policy-making process, and it has helped Liberia to organize its Task Force on Environment, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Forestry Development Authority (UNMIL n.d.).

This and subsequent UN mandates highlight increasing acknowledgment of the importance of natural resources and the environment to peacekeeping and security. They demonstrate that natural resource management issues can play an important role in the peacekeeping process. As the policy and draft guidelines were being developed, DFS was separately working in cooperation with the Swedish Defence Research Agency to support environmental pilot projects in

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<sup>10</sup> See Annica Waleij, "Crime, Credibility, and Effective Peacekeeping: Lessons from the Field," in this book.

the United Nations Mission in Sudan. These projects involved the introduction of alternative technologies in wastewater treatment, water conservation, power generation, and the construction of more sustainable prefabricated buildings.<sup>11</sup> The project's goal was to demonstrate that natural resource usage in these areas can be greatly reduced, thereby increasing the sustainability and efficacy of the peacekeeping presence (UN Peacekeeping 2010).

On a larger scale, the UN conducted a greenhouse gas inventory in 2009 and found that of the 1.7 million tons of carbon dioxide emitted by the UN as a whole in 2008, 1 million tons were emitted by UN field missions (UN Peacekeeping 2010). In response to these findings, DPKO and DFS have expressed their commitment to developing strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Alain Le Roy, former Under-Secretary-General of DPKO, stated: "It is . . . important and our duty that when peacekeepers arrive in the countries where we operate, they lead by example in our overall environmental management" (UNEP 2009b, 49). Susana Malcorra, Under-Secretary-General of DFS, articulated her desire that DFS be "part of the UN endeavor to tackle climate change" (UNEP 2009b, 45). She reported that "its staff are also willing to lead by example in all the areas where they are working" (UNEP 2009b, 45).

In 2010, a report of the United Nations Secretary General on global field support strategy was submitted to the General Assembly. The report calls for "reduc[ing] the in-country environmental impact of peacekeeping and field-based special political missions" (UNSG 2010, 3). It also introduces a variety of measures to decrease a mission's environmental footprint and to mitigate security risks associated with natural resource consumption. These measures touch on black and gray water waste management systems, camp solid waste management systems, the use of pre-engineered steel buildings, and renewable energy, all of which would be proposed in a modular approach (UNSG 2010). Future camps will be designed in a way that reduces reliance on external parties when it comes to power generation and waste management. They will have the next generation of prefabricated buildings, which will be constructed with more resource-efficient materials and insulation to reduce the use of air conditioning, heating, and power. The results of the ongoing discussion in the General Assembly on sustainable procurement will have an impact on future activity in this area (UNGA 2008, 2009c, 2011).

DPKO and DFS have also identified the need to communicate more about their challenges and their efforts to decrease the environmental footprint of their missions in order to build more internal and external support. Many UN field missions now organize events with their host country on World Environment Day, every June 5, and most participate in further environmental outreach and consciousness building. For example, field missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Darfur, Western Sahara, and elsewhere pledged and

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<sup>11</sup> See Annica Waleij, Timothy Bosetti, Russ Doran, and Birgitta Liljedahl, "Environmental Stewardship in Peace Operations: The Role of the Military," in this book.

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planted over 117,000 trees as part of UNEP's Billion Tree Campaign, an effort to plant a tree for every person on the planet (UN Peacekeeping 2010; UNEP 2009c). The UN Peacekeeping web site has also offered pages dedicated to the environment and sustainability since January 2011.<sup>12</sup> DPKO, DFS, and field missions are also active members of the UN-wide Greening the Blue campaign initiated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.<sup>13</sup>

In April 2013, in a major step toward more effective environmental management, the Security Council included in the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) a requirement for the mission to consider its environmental impacts:

[T]he Secretary-General [is] to consider the environmental impacts of the operations of MINUSMA when fulfilling its mandated tasks and, in this context, encourages MINUSMA to manage them, as appropriate and in accordance with applicable and relevant General Assembly resolutions and United Nations rules and regulations, and to operate mindfully in the vicinity of cultural and historical sites (UNSC 2013, para. 32).<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, the mission is equipped with an environment and culture unit, which is tasked with implementing this part of the mandate. MINUSMA is the first peacekeeping mission charged with taking its potential environmental impacts into consideration when planning for and carrying out its mandate. As such, MINUSMA's mandate is reflective of the increasing importance member states are placing on the environmental sustainability of peacekeeping missions.

### CONCLUSION

The UN has begun to consider environmental concerns and to integrate them into peacekeeping. Through discussions, resolutions, and mandates, the highest levels within the UN have started to set a more sustainable and natural resource-sensitive course. DPKO and DFS have made substantial progress at the policy and operational levels to better manage and contain the inevitable environmental impacts of peacekeeping missions.

The DPKO-DFS environmental policy and draft guidelines provide a basis for missions to implement environmentally sound practices. The challenge now is to operationalize and implement these measures. Environmental assessments of field missions have gone a long way toward gathering the information needed to take specific actions appropriate to particular contexts. Actions such as employing dedicated environmental experts, supporting pilot projects, and implementing public relations initiatives have enhanced environmental performance at the mission level. As highlighted by the UN-wide greenhouse gas inventory,

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<sup>12</sup> [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/environment/](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/environment/).

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the campaign, see [www.greeningtheblue.org](http://www.greeningtheblue.org).

<sup>14</sup> The Security Council reiterated this request when it renewed MINUSMA's mandate in June 2014 (UNSC 2014).

much remains to be done to further improve the UN's environmental performance and reduce its footprint in vulnerable and often unstable post-conflict countries.

As experience with the environmental policy and the draft guidelines grows and takes root, peacekeeping missions will continue to work to eliminate the potential negative environmental impacts of their presence. When mandated to do so, UN field missions will also do their best to support national environmental governance structures. With a policy for reducing missions' environmental impacts and an increasing recognition of the environment's importance to security, the groundwork has been set for more environmentally conscious peacekeeping by the UN.

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