



Groups of Friends

The Security Council would be in a stronger position to take early, decisive action if its sources of corporate political and military advice were expanded beyond the relatively small circles of Council Member States. One potentially important source of building political support and consolidating consensus in favour of Security Council action are the groups of "friends" which have proliferated in recent years as ways of dealing with controversial issues behind the scenes, away from formal deliberative bodies and among Member States whose involvement is crucial to the successful resolution of the dispute or conflict in question. These groups generally include some Permanent Members of the Security Council, but must include those Member States which will make substantial contributions to the ultimate solution to the problem, mainly through the provision of personnel to peace operations.

This informal, unstructured approach has been tried recently with the creation of the "Friends of Haiti" group and the "Friends of Rwanda" group. Where there is strong evidence of an imminent crisis, the Secretary-General, in conjunction with leading UN Member States, should encourage the formation of a "friends" group and provide the informal assistance of the Secretariat for its work. These groups would provide an important bridge to both the Security Council and the Secretary-General in the formulation of political advice and in the more detailed work of drafting mandates and arriving at specific plans. Their work would benefit by access to professional military advice at an early stage, prior to formal discussion in Council, when informal soundings of military options would make formal consideration of a potential mission mandate much easier. In the event that an operation had to be mounted quickly, this advance, informal consideration of options would be highly useful to potential troop contributors.

Informal discussion of an issue in a "friends" group would also help ensure the Security Council of the political support necessary for formal passage of an appropriate resolution. The Secretary-General would benefit by having his plans, concept of operations and proposed force structure reviewed by those Member States most likely to be key players in the implementation of a mission. By greater recourse to "friends" groups, and ensuring the provision to such groups of sound military advice, the decision-making processes of the UN could be substantially enhanced, to the benefit of rapid reaction.

2. **Member States of the UN should build on the already established practices of convening informal groups of "friends" to address specific geographic situations and as one way of providing advice to the Security Council or the Secretary-General.**

Finances

The ability of the UN to finance a rapid-reaction capability is an issue of fundamental importance. The UN budgetary process is lengthy, confusing and often disappointing. Among the more compelling observations of current shortcomings in the UN was that of the ACABQ in a 1994 report on the financing of peace operations. The report commented that "the overwhelming impact of peacekeeping operations has

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