

## **Perspectives on the UN's Potential in Operations that Entail Protection**

Summary:

### **Anthony Craig, Office of the Military Advisor, UN DPKO**

Mr. Craig briefly explained that the UN is capable of protecting civilians from harm against groups of thugs, but that protection is dependent on the number of belligerents, as well as their level of sophistication. Much also depends on the capacity of the resources provided by the member states.

At this time, no formal process exists within the UN mission planning process that allows for discussion of civilian protection. A number of Departments such as DPKO and DPA share an interest in protection of civilians and the lead agency is the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Summary:

### **Colonel Jussi Saressalo, International Peace Academy**

Colonel Saressalo cautioned that the political and military meaning of the term 'protection of civilians' must be fleshed out before a satisfactory debate on this issue can be held. The primary responsibility of governments is to protect their citizens, however, we have seen all too often over the past decade that governments are not always capable or inclined to perform this duty. In such situations, the international community is obligated to take action.

Colonel Saressalo raised the issues of impartiality and consent. He explained that UN troops with a strict peacekeeping mandate cannot protect civilians. There was a risk that if the UN crossed the line toward taking action against belligerents, it would have difficulty remaining impartial and might be drawn into further fighting. In such a situation, the operation might also lose the consent of the parties.

He stated that it is essential for UN missions mandated to protect civilians to be well equipped and significantly stronger than the belligerent force. A credible deterrent capacity was necessary. SHIRBRIG is capable of performing this mission, but only if there is a serious commitment on the part of member states.