



Executive Summary

Since the end of the Cold War, the peace operations of the UN have vastly increased in size, scope and number. Even at a time of fiscal crisis for the Organization, there are high expectations that the UN should play a pivotal role in the emerging global security system. Yet the UN in recent years has not been able to mobilize its peace operations quickly and respond effectively to crisis situations. Rwanda was a notable example. The critical lesson of the Rwandan experience is that modest but timely measures can make the difference between a situation which is stable or contained and one which spirals out of control. This study's central objective is to recommend changes at all levels of the UN system which would give the UN an enhanced capability to respond rapidly to crisis situations.

Several principles are identified in the Report as crucial to creating a UN rapid-reaction capability. The principle of **reliability** emphasizes decreasing response time while increasing effectiveness in parallel. The principle of **quality** aims at doing the job well rather than on mounting a large and unwieldy multinational force. A related principle is that of **effectiveness**. A hasty response, poorly executed, could be worse medicine than not acting at all. And the principle of **cost-effectiveness** is based on the presumption that it is often better to act early when a situation remains relatively fluid and is more susceptible to outside influence — and when the costs of intervention are fairly low.

The Report examines the need for rapid reaction and reviews the capabilities of rapid reaction forces in France, the USA and NATO. It arrives at the conclusion that there are several generic components of rapid reaction which must be included in a UN capability if it is to be effective:

- an early warning mechanism to alert the system to an impending conflict or crisis;
- an effective decision-making process to facilitate contingency planning and mounting of an operation, including clearly defined command and control arrangements;
- readily-available transportation and infrastructure;
- logistics support;
- adequate finance to sustain and underwrite an operation; and
- well-trained personnel.

The Report then examines the UN system in order to assess where the UN stands with respect to all of these elements. After identifying deficiencies in the UN system, it goes on to make 26 recommendations for the short, medium and long terms which would give the UN the rapid-reaction capabilities it needs to respond quickly and effectively to crisis situations.

An overarching theme of the Report is to ensure that there is “unity of purpose” among UN Member States and the Secretary-General in deciding upon peace operations, leading to “unity of effort” on the ground among all of the constituent