



TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

incremental steps in the short to medium terms. Moreover, extensive analysis of needs, costs and benefits will be essential, followed by the development of a carefully-prepared implementation strategy.

The challenge of mobilizing the long-term benefits of advanced technologies has been repeatedly addressed by many UN Member States. The techniques which could be used to improve peace operations are widely known and understood in many quarters. What is now required is a method to harness this knowledge for the long-term benefit of the UN's peace operations.

22. The Secretary-General, in cooperation with Member States, should establish a High-Level Group of Technological Experts to study the potential application of advanced technologies to strengthen the UN's effectiveness in peace operations and its capacity to react more rapidly to crisis situations.

Securing the Civilian Components of Rapid Reaction

One of the most important differences between the military and civilian units in peace operations is their relative abilities to launch operations quickly. Whereas most military forces are trained and equipped for relatively rapid deployment, and can even enhance their readiness standards over time, the civilian side suffers from a number of inherent problems. The most significant problem is that civilians are generally drawn from pools of individuals who occupy positions with domestic responsibilities. In order to take up positions in international operations, they generally have to secure their releases, and sometimes find others to take up their duties. In some cases, the process takes months. While this might seem to be a problem for which there are adequate short to medium term solutions, addressing the real deficiencies on the civilian side of peace operations will require long-term approaches.

Some UN Member States have responded to these difficulties by forming small rapid-reaction teams, particularly in the humanitarian assistance and natural disaster areas, composed of governmental or non-governmental personnel, which can be put at the service of the UN or its agencies within hours. These teams have been particularly useful in getting a UN presence on the ground quickly in the case of emergencies and providing first-hand information for the humanitarian assistance or disaster relief operations which are to follow. The availability of these teams from a number of national governments has also meant that the UN does not have to recreate this capability, at great cost to the UN or other agencies. But in other situations the UN has been less fortunate. In Rwanda, for example in 1994, almost none of the civilian units slated for UNAMIR showed up in Kigali within four months of the creation of the operation, virtually closing off work on the political, legal and human rights sides of the operation.

The UN has attempted to remedy some of these shortages. In the case of mission legal advisers, it has instituted an in-house training program in the UN's Legal Adviser's Office which will result over time in a roster of candidates who might be available on short notice for peace operations. As UN employees, they are releasable for duty upon a decision of the Secretary-General, thus avoiding the problem of national