1. In his 11 June speech to the Security Council, the Secretary-General noted several trends affecting UN peacekeeping operations and called for broader review of these trends and their implications. He argued that, as the 15-year anniversary of the Brahimi report approached, “it may be necessary to again take stock of evolving expectations of UN peacekeeping and how the Organization can work toward a shared view of the way forward.” In addition, “We must also ask what are the limits of UN peacekeeping, and whether it is always the right tool.”

2. As changes in the nature of conflict and the global operating environment present challenges for all UN peace operations, the Secretary-General subsequently decided that the scope of such a review should encompass both UN peacekeeping operations as well as special political missions (SPMs) which, in these TORs, are referred to collectively as “UN peace operations.” The Review is therefore an opportunity to look across these two vital tools – which confront some common challenges but are complementary and distinct – and to ask whether they are fit for purpose in today’s environment and how they can be made more effective, efficient and responsive. While the UN peace operations review, the Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325, and the review of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture are distinct in nature and scope, we should ensure that there will be positive synergy between these three processes, that they inform one another, and that their outcomes will be mutually reinforcing.

3. Both peacekeeping operations and SPMs are impacted by the changing global context for peace and security. More often than not, the United Nations today is confronted with cycles of repeated violence, weak governance and recurring instability. Even in countries that have successfully implemented peace agreements, political and criminal violence coupled with state fragility may still pose threats to long-term transitions and continue to affect the security of civilians, especially women and girls, disproportionately. Furthermore, intrastate conflicts often take on a regionalized or internationalized character, which may make them more deadly – given the ease of access to arms and resources to conflict parties – and harder to solve. Conflicts are increasingly concentrated in weak or failed states, where state capacity and authority are limited. Conflict parties are increasingly amorphous and transnational, have loosely defined command structures and growing military capabilities, and are motivated by combinations of political, exclusionist, economic, criminal and in some cases, extremist aims.

4. UN peace operations are being deployed by the Security Council and, in some cases the General Assembly, in changing ways as well. Peacekeeping operations, as the Secretary-General noted in his remarks on 11 June, were once deployed primarily into post-conflict situations with peace agreements in place. Today, they are increasingly mandated to operate where there is no peace to keep. The majority of field personnel work in countries where fighting is ongoing, and are increasingly the target of attacks. In the middle of ongoing conflict, UN peacekeepers are called on to protect civilians and in some cases have also been provided with robust mandates and capabilities to counter threats, including asymmetric and unconventional attacks.

5. SPMs have often been deployed to similar contexts, trying to broker agreements with parties that are frequently fragmented and unwilling to engage in a meaningful negotiation. In
some situations, these missions have been deployed to work where regionally-mandated enforcement operations were in place. SPMs – which comprise special and personal envoys or advisers of the Secretary-General, sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, and field-based missions, including regional offices – work in a wide array of contexts, from conflict prevention and resolution to crisis management and post-conflict peacebuilding. In some instances, peacekeeping operations and SPMs work sequentially to accompany a peace consolidation process, or in tandem to address the regional dimensions of specific conflicts. The range of tasks carried out both peacekeeping operations and SPMs today is unprecedented.

6. Both the changing nature of conflict and the changing role of peace operations have required the UN to adapt and respond. In recent years DPKO, DPA and DFS have undertaken a wide variety of reforms aimed at professionalizing and modernizing peacekeeping operations and SPMs. DFS has worked to develop global and regional platforms to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of field support to all UN field missions. Substantively, field missions have worked to develop more sophisticated approaches to the implementation of mandated tasks, such as post-conflict stabilization, support to political processes and peacebuilding, including the restoration and extension of state authority and the rule of law. There have been some gains in efforts to increase the role of women in UN peacemaking and electoral engagements as well as in peacekeeping, but much remains to be done.

7. At the political level, peace operations continue to face a number of key challenges that affect their ability to perform effectively in the field and require creative thinking and dialogue to overcome. There is a lack of consensus among the key political stakeholders of peace operations, including those Member States that mandate, finance, and supply uniformed personnel and equipment to operations, on key issues of policy and doctrine. These questions include the necessary conditions for the deployment of missions, outer boundaries of peace operations and issues surrounding the use of force by peacekeepers, performance and accountability, peacebuilding and stabilization efforts, mission planning and management as well as funding and backstopping arrangements for SPMs. Consistency and unity of resolve in the partnership of stakeholders to peace operations is critical to ensuring that missions are given realistic mandates, supplied with the capabilities necessary to execute their tasks, and are willing to implement their mandates to the fullest extent possible.

8. Today, peace operations as instruments of the Security Council and, at times, the General Assembly, more closely resemble a spectrum of mission models than a simple binary between peacekeeping and special political missions. It is therefore timely that the review will focus on both types of missions and their collective contributions to peace and security.

9. The review will consist of two parallel but interrelated efforts on the part of the Panel and the UN Secretariat. The Panel will explore the role and functions of UN peace operations in the changing global context. The UN Secretariat will be developing inputs to the Panel work streams related to the core business of peace operations.

10. In reviewing potential areas critical to the success of UN peace operations, the Secretariat has identified several key areas that reflect the foremost challenges facing peace operations for the Panel’s considered attention. Gender/women, peace and security issues should be considered as a matter of priority in each of these areas, which include:
Mandates, doctrine and tailoring missions to country context and the role of mandating bodies;
Political frameworks, inclusive processes, including women’s participation in peace processes, and Good Offices;
Operating in volatile security environments;
Peacebuilding, stabilization and the restoration and extension of state authority, including the role of women in post-conflict peacebuilding;
Authority/accountability/responsibility;
Mission and contingency planning, start-up, transitions and exit strategies;
Partnerships;
SPM resource and managerial requirements;
Promotion and protection of human rights and protection of civilians;
Required uniformed capabilities to meet operational demands for peacekeeping; and
Troop and police performance, accountability, rules of engagement and caveats.

11. The high-level panel will be composed of 14 members with considerable knowledge of peace operations appointed by and reporting to the Secretary-General, including a chair. The Review will be facilitated by a small secretariat of UN staff members, who will provide support to the Panel.

12. The Panel will define its working methods, in consultation with a Reference Group composed of EOSG and the Under-Secretaries-General of DPKO, DPA and DFS. It is expected to meet with representatives of the Secretariat from headquarters and missions, Member States, civil society, academic institutions, and think tanks. The Panel is encouraged to consult with Member States through regional consultations with capitals as well as consultations with Permanent Missions in New York. It is anticipated that the Panel would submit its report to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General would share the report with Member States and, subsequently, submit an implementation report to the General Assembly and Security Council for consideration at the 70th Session.