
Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions 2023

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Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions 2023

Clarifying the Role, Responsibility and Authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator

1. This revised Note of Guidance is intended to clarify institutional relations and to facilitate communication, coordination, and integration between the mission and the UN system already present in the country.
2. This updated Note of Guidance applies to all integrated presences in which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) is supported by a Resident Coordinator (RC) serving as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), and as Humanitarian Coordinator, where designated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/(HC)).¹ While this note clarifies the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of the SRSG and DSRSG/RC/(HC), it does not specify the roles and responsibilities of DSRSG-Political (in those contexts where one may be appointed), which are outlined in prevailing Terms of Reference. Notwithstanding, integration as outlined in this Note remains a shared responsibility of the full UN leadership team in country.
3. The 2006 Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions provided directions on the relations between Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG), representatives of the Secretary-General (RSG), resident coordinators (RC) and humanitarian coordinators (HC) and, specifically, called for the RC/HC to serve as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) in multidimensional peacekeeping operations or integrated special political missions. United Nations peace operations have further increased in complexity and scale since that time, and a major reform of the UN Development System has taken place, in line with General Assembly Resolution 72/279. In light of these changes, an updated understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the different actors is required in order to ensure effective coordination and coherence between UN peace operations, UN entities² and external partners.
4. This revised Note of Guidance should be read concurrently with the revised Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) Policy (2023) that guides the minimum requirements for the integrated conduct of assessments and planning in conflict and post-conflict settings where an integrated United Nations presence is in place or is being considered, and outlines responsibilities of United Nations actors in this process. It is also guided by the spirit of the IAP

¹ This Note of Guidance also applies to Special Coordinators and their Deputies.

² In this note, the term "entities" includes all UN departments, programmes, funds, and specialized agencies.

policy, where *Integration is the bringing together of United Nations Entities across pillars to enhance the individual and collective impact of the United Nations response, concentrating on those activities required for sustaining peace*,³ shifting the common understanding of integration away from one focused on structure towards one focused on ensuring cross-pillar collaboration and complementarity.

5. This Note of Guidance is led by the same principles as the IAP policy, namely: flexibility to context and *form follows function*; recognition of the diversity of UN mandates and principles; continuous planning and transitions; collectivity; mainstreaming of human rights, gender and disability; engagement with other actors; and national and local ownership.
6. Human rights are a cross-cutting responsibility for both the mission and the UN Country Team. The SRSG and the DSRSG/RC/(HC) will uphold and promote human rights law in the implementation of the mission's mandate and the work of the UN Country Team, and where applicable the Humanitarian Country Team, respectively.
7. The SRSG and the DSRSG/RC/(HC) provide important leadership in supporting the protection of all people under international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law⁴ - including those of women, children and other groups at risk - and ensuring appropriate coordination and complementarity across the UN system in addressing protection threats and fostering protection outcomes in line with respective mandates and responsibilities of the mission and members of the UNCT, and in line with relevant United Nations policies.⁵

Role, responsibility, and authority of the SRSG in integrated missions

8. The SRSG is appointed by the Secretary-General and serves as the senior UN representative in a given country. They represent the Secretary-General and speak on behalf of the United Nations in the country. They have overall authority over the activities of the United Nations and are responsible for implementing Security Council mandates and providing good offices on behalf of the Secretary-General in peace processes. The SRSG, together with the USGs of the respective lead department (DPPA or DPO), is responsible for determining a political strategy or framework of engagement for the UN in the country. In line with the mandate, the SRSG establishes the overall framework that guides the activities of the mission and ensures that all pillars of the UN system in the country pursue a coordinated and coherent approach. The SRSG is also responsible for ensuring that responsibilities agreed in the common strategic framework

³ IAP Policy, para 11.

⁴ This is notwithstanding the mandate provided to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of providing international protection to refugees as stipulated in the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and subsequent resolutions by the UN General Assembly, as well as to prevent and reduce statelessness and protect the rights of stateless persons, as endorsed by the UN General Assembly.

⁵ This includes in the implementation of protection mandates related to children and armed conflict (CAAC), conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), women, peace and security (WPS) and youth, peace and security (YPS) and mandates to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, as well as efforts under the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights.

are reflected in mission plans and budgets, while the DSRSG/RC/(HC) ensures alignment by UNCT entities. The SRSG reports to the Secretary-General through the Under-Secretary-General of the lead department (DPPA or DPO) on all matters related to the discharge of the mandate. The SRSG is responsible for the management of the mission, including the exercise of the delegated authority from the Secretary-General for matters related to the administration of Staff and Financial Regulations and Rules.

9. The SRSG enters into an annual compact with the Secretary-General, highlighting their personal contribution and commitments to delivering on the mission's strategic objectives and managerial responsibilities over the reporting period, including overall responsibility for multi-dimensional, integrated, cross-pillar delivery of the United Nations.⁶
10. The SRSG is generally supported by one or two deputies. In integrated settings, one of these deputies may perform the function of DSRSG/RC/(HC). The substantive areas overseen by the two DSRSGs are context specific and will be spelled out in tailored terms of reference. Where applicable, the SRSG will enter into an annual compact with their deputy(ies), based on the SRSG's compact and highlighting their specific strategic objectives and responsibilities.
11. The SRSG will devise effective coordination mechanisms among the security, political, human rights, gender, rule of law, sustainable development and support components of the mission, in close consultation with the DSRSG/RC/(HC) who leads and coordinates the UN Country Team and, where applicable the Humanitarian Country Team. In close consultation with the SRSG, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) will ensure appropriate coordination with existing humanitarian and development coordination mechanisms and the expertise of the UN Country Team. The SRSG will also establish appropriate coordination mechanisms between mission-run support services and humanitarian common services. Where practicable and appropriate, the SRSG should make full use of opportunities for common services by the UN common presence.
12. The SRSG, in close coordination with their deputies, will put in place mechanisms for joint information-sharing, analysis, planning, decision-making, coordination, monitoring and evaluation. These mechanisms should be tailored to each context and guided by the IAP Policy.⁷
13. Those parts of the UN Country Team that need to retain a public advocacy role should ensure that such advocacy is conducted in full coordination with the SRSG, through the DSRSG/RC/(HC), in line with their development, human rights or humanitarian programming imperatives, while ensuring UN coherence and integrity of the UN's mandates. Likewise mission public communications should be coordinated closely with relevant parts of the UN Country

⁶ Chief Executive Board for Coordination, 18 April 2017, The United Nations System Leadership Framework, para 12.

⁷ IAP Policy, para 48.

Team through the DSRSG/RC/(HC) or delegated officials to ensure due regard for humanitarian principles and to mitigate any consequences for UN programming.

14. The SRSG will uphold humanitarian principles as outlined in GA resolutions 46/182 and 58/114 in the implementation of the mission's mandate and support the creation of an effective humanitarian operating environment.
15. The SRSG will engage with the UN Country Team, through the DSRSG/RC/(HC), to ensure that mission planning and operations management enable long-term national development goals, as articulated in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The SRSG, in close consultation with the DSRSG/RC/(HC), is responsible for ensuring that integrated planning between the mission and the UN Country Team takes place throughout the lifespan of the mission's presence and mandate, and that mission transition and exit strategies clearly articulate the reconfiguration requirements of UN activities.⁸
16. Where mission activities have a close bearing on the humanitarian or development response, such as quick impact projects or programmatic activities, the SRSG, through the DSRSG/RC/(HC), and in respect of UN agency mandates, will establish effective approval and coordination mechanisms to ensure maximum coherence and prevent any adverse impact on humanitarian operations and ensure complementarities with development programming.
17. While recognizing that UN agencies are responsible for the implementation of their mandated activities, the SRSG, through the DSRSG RC/(HC), may request a given agency to re-orient its planned interventions in line with the broad strategic objectives of the United Nations in country, without prejudice to the agency's mandate and available resources, and in line with the 2023 IAP policy.
18. The SRSG will ensure that optimal use is made of existing capacities in the implementation of the different elements of the mission's mandate. Where such elements are best implemented through the combined capacities of the UN Country Team and the mission, the SRSG will provide overall guidance and encourage the design and implementation of joint programmes and operational partnerships between UN agencies and the mission, through the DSRSG/RC/(HC). Where several agencies could conceivably implement a given programming component the selection of the appropriate agencies will be made under the leadership of the DSRSG/RC/(HC) through existing coordination mechanisms based on their comparative advantage, in line with existing guidance.⁹
19. Human rights are a cross-cutting responsibility for both the mission and the UN Country Team and to be fully integrated into peace operations.¹⁰ The SRSG will uphold and promote human

⁸ General Assembly Resolution 72/279 and UNSDG Management Accountability Framework (MAF, 15 September 2021).

⁹ UNSDG guidance on New Generation Joint Programmes, 2023.

¹⁰ Given its overriding importance as a cross-cutting concern, the role of human rights in integrated missions was reviewed at a special session of the Secretary-General's Policy Committee (see decision 2005/24).

rights law in the implementation of the mission's mandate. The head of the human rights component acts as the human rights adviser to the SRSG in the mission and as the representative in country of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹¹ The head of the human rights component has dual reporting obligations vis-à-vis the SRSG, directly or through one of the two DSRSGs, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The head of the human rights component should keep the SRSG informed of any communication with OHCHR that could have an impact on the mission. As representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the head of the human rights component should be a full member of the UN Country Team and the Humanitarian Country Team. Separate public reporting by the mission and/or the High Commissioner on issues of human rights should be routine.¹²

20. The Secretary-General normally appoints the SRSG, as the most senior United Nations official in the designated area, as the Designated Official for Security (DO) and informs the host Government of this designation. When appointed as the DO, the SRSG has the roles and responsibilities as outlined in the Framework of Accountability of the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS)¹³ and is accountable to the Secretary-General through the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security. The DO has the authority to make security decisions under the framework of UNSMS policies in the designated area(s) for which they are responsible, subject to the authority and review of the USG UNDSS. As the DO, the SRSG will ensure that the goals of the United Nations Security Management System are met, namely to enable the activities of UNSMS organizations within acceptable levels of security risk. During absences from the designated area, the DO must appoint the Designated Official ad interim who is normally the DSRSG/RC/(HC).

Role, responsibility, and authority of the DSRSG/RC/(HC)

21. Working under the strategic direction of the SRSG, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) serves as the principal interface between the mission and the UN Country Team, thus inter alia leading the coordination effort for humanitarian, development and recovery activities, and ensuring that concerns raised by the UN Country Team are brought to the attention of the SRSG and vice versa.
22. The DSRSG/RC/(HC) in their capacity as DSRSG, reports to the SRSG who provides direct supervision and overall strategic direction as the senior UN representative in the country. The DSRSG/RC/(HC) retains reporting lines to the Secretary-General on Resident Coordinator

¹¹ See Joint Policy on Human Rights in UN Peace Operations and Political Missions, para. 41.

¹² See Joint Policy on Human Rights in UN Peace Operations and Political Missions, para. 63 ss., and the OHCHR/DPKO/DPA Policy on Public Reporting by Human Rights Components of United Nations Peace Operations.

¹³ Please refer to the UN-system wide policy, Security Policy Manual Chapter II on the UNSMS Framework of Accountability of the UNSMS.

issues, and to the Emergency Relief Coordinator on Humanitarian Coordinator issues, respectively.¹⁴

23. The SRSG may delegate to the DSRSG/RC/(HC), in their DSRSG capacity, oversight of various mission components and functions. Any authority for the administration of the Staff and Financial Regulations and Rules to be exercised by the DSRSG/RC/(HC) for mission-related matters may be sub-delegated by the SRSG.
24. In addition to supervising any other functions delegated to the DSRSG/RC(HC) by the SRSG, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) shall, in their RC capacity, oversee the five core functions common to all resident coordinators' offices, namely: (1) strategic planning for UNCT matters, (2) economic affairs, (3) data management and results monitoring/reporting, (4) partnerships and (5) programme communications and advocacy. In their capacity as RC, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) is the highest-ranking representative of the United Nations development system (UNDS) at the country level, with the responsibility to lead the United Nations Country Team and ensure system-wide accountability on the ground – including through a dual reporting model - for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and coordinating UN support to countries in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In their capacity as RC, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) also receives delegation of authority for decisions over the use of RC office resources directly from the Secretary-General to allow for effective delivery of their specific mandate and activities.
25. In their capacity as HC, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) is responsible for the planning and coordination of humanitarian operations, including facilitation of humanitarian access, humanitarian negotiations and advocacy with parties to conflict and other stakeholders, and will maintain links with host governments (and other state and non-state parties), donors and the broader humanitarian community for this purpose.¹⁵ The HC is supported by OCHA, which is responsible for humanitarian coordination. The OCHA office may be located separately from the mission to facilitate access by the broader humanitarian community.
26. The SRSG and DSRSG/RC/(HC) will inform each other of all relevant substantive communications with the Headquarters, in particular, EOSG, DCO, DPPA, DPO, and OCHA, respectively.
27. In the context of UN transitions, under the strategic direction of the SRSG, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) is responsible for ensuring that the peace operation, in the earliest possible stage, engages the United Nations Country Team, other UN agencies, funds and programmes and other actors in integrated planning and coordination on transitions.¹⁶

¹⁴ In contexts where there is no HC designated, the DSRSG/RC in his/her RC function is accountable to the ERC on his/her coordination of emergency preparedness and response of the UNCT and relevant humanitarian partners.

¹⁵ For mixed situations involving refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) reference is made to the Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations Coordination in Practice.

¹⁶ UNSCR 2594 (2021).

28. In mission settings, the office of the DSRSG/RC/(HC) contributes to the mission's planning and integration efforts led by the Mission Chief of Staff, thereby ensuring coherence between the different pillars within the mission, and between the mission, UNCT, and other stakeholders and partners.¹⁷

Resolution of Differences

29. The SRSG will resolve any issues related to the coordination of different mission components represented by the two DSRSGs, in their capacity as their immediate supervisor. Where differences related to the role of RC and/or HC have not been resolved effectively, the ERC or the relevant USGs/ASG of the custodian departments of the relevant functions will be requested to assist in resolving the issue (DPPA, DPO, OCHA, DCO, and as needed UNDSS).

30. All policy differences related to the interpretation of mandates between the mission and UN agencies should be resolved in a timely manner at field level. Should the issue involve a UN entity member of the country team, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) is expected to assume a leading role in the mediation effort. Where disputes cannot be resolved in country, the DSRSG/RC/(HC) is required to jointly review the matter with the regional director of the agency to seek a formal agreement. Should this effort fail, the SRSG may engage with the executive head of the UN entity, while keeping the DSRSG/RC/(HC), the Under-Secretary-General of the lead Department, DCO and OCHA informed, where relevant. In the event that good faith efforts to resolve disagreements do not produce results, the SRSG and/or the executive head of the agency concerned may approach the Under-Secretary-General of the lead Department.

31. Where agreement cannot be reached at the department level, the matter may be referred to the Secretary-General [or the Executive Committee/Deputies Committee] through the Integration Steering Group, as appropriate.

¹⁷ This is without prejudice to the humanitarian coordination mandate of OCHA in support of the HC outlined in para 25.