

## A United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) is long overdue

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If we are ever to begin the shift from competitive national security models to [sustainable peace and common security](#), then we must focus on enhancing the UN's capacity for conflict prevention and peaceful conflict resolution.

One mechanism that could make a real difference is a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS). In the words of one of its leading architects and advocates, [Peter Langille](#):

*Does it seem odd that countries could put a man on the moon fifty years back, but have yet to equip the UN to meet its primary objective – “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”?*

The objective is to develop a standing UN capacity that can respond rapidly and reliably to address four or more of the UN's long-standing challenges. A UNEPS is designed to:

- help prevent armed conflict and genocide/atrocity crimes;
- protect civilians at risk;
- ensure prompt start-up of demanding peace operations; and
- address human needs in areas where others either cannot or will not.

### What's different?

First and foremost, UNEPS would give the UN a rapid response capacity that it sorely lacks: *From Rwanda and Srebrenica to Myanmar and Syria, the pattern of ‘too little, too late’ — incurring vast suffering, higher costs and wider consequences — has simply gone on for far too long. Instead of UN rapid deployment to prevent worse, routine delays allow worse. — Peter Langille*

A UNEPS would be a permanent, standing, integrated UN formation — a highly professional, multidisciplinary and multifunctional formation, ready to serve in diverse UN operations, immediately available upon authorization of the UN Security Council.

### **What about the cost?**

Developing a UNEPS undoubtedly will entail significant costs – approximately \$3 billion in start-up costs and annual recurring costs of \$1.5 billion, shared proportionally among 193 UN member states. There would also be additional expenses related to deployment. Langille argues:

*With such additional costs, the advantages must be substantive. A UNEPS should help to prevent the escalation of volatile conflicts; deter groups from violence; and cut the size, length, and frequency of UN operations. Even with success in just one of those areas, it would provide a substantive return on the investment.*

### **Next Steps**

With pivotal elections ahead in Canada, the United States and elsewhere, progressive policy options, including UNEPS, are beginning to emerge.

Here are some of the actions needed to build broader support for UNEPS:

- **First**, civil society must press political leaders to think big, bold and outward, encouraging multilateral cooperation, innovation and unprecedented shifts.
- **Second**, educational outreach must include political outreach, particularly among progressive parties world-wide. And indeed, some leaders are now encouraging a renewal of [progressive internationalism](#).
- **Third**, links should be created between UNEPS support and the NGO communities that address climate change, social justice, and sustainable development. Clearly, there is a need to build bridges and partnerships. The [umbrella of sustainable common security](#) encourages such support and solidarity, as well as other substantive shifts urgently needed to address global challenges.

Peter Langille:

*A UNEPS is no panacea, but just one step toward a global peace system. With modest support, this option could make a world of difference. As William R. Frye noted, “that which is radical one year can become conservative and accepted the next.”*

For a more detailed discussion of UNEPS, see: [A UNEPS: one step toward a global peace system](#) (Dr. H. Peter Langille, May 2019).

### **Whither Canada?**

**We call on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to support and advocate for a United Nations Emergency Peace Service, as one indispensable element in a new peacebuilding architecture. This would be one further step towards substantive re-engagement in UN peacekeeping.**

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