

## The UN Secretariat's mandate and roles

It is necessary to clarify the mandate and the roles of the UN Secretariat – and the way these are governed. The Four Nations Initiative will look specifically at the mandate and roles of the UN Secretariat in view of the profound changes that have taken place over the last decade, not least in terms of the increasing number of field operations. What are the governance implications of these changes? How are the Member States to govern the different types of activities?

The UN was formed in the wake of the Second World War. The global challenges and the tasks of the United Nations have changed since then. In spite of this, there has apparently not been any formal revision of the mandate of the Secretariat, and the word "role" does not appear in any of the steering documents that established the organisation.

The 2005 World Summit emphasised that there is a need to strengthen and update the programme of work so that it responds to the contemporary requirements of Member States. The General Assembly continuously reviews the programme of work of the United Nations; a never-ending task. The challenge is to develop the analytical tools that allow for a general discussion of mandate and roles so as to set priorities and focus on the needs of Member States.

The relation between the two concepts – mandate and roles - is that the mandate provides the juridical foundation of the organisation but the roles are a practical abstraction, often not explicit, of the strategic choices made in the course of organisational life. The UN Secretariat has been given, and has taken, roles that do not necessarily emanate from its original mandate. It is not always clear whether all the tasks presently done by the UN Secretariat should be carried out as present. There could be roles that the UN Secretariat needs to play and that relate to its original, or reformed, mandate. In such cases the UN Secretariat needs to be strengthened and equipped to play the roles well.

As the character of the UN Secretariat has changed, a complicated architecture has turned even more complicated. The balance between the three traditional roles of the Secretariat; the normative role, the operational role and the role of being a meeting place, has changed dramatically. How do these changes affect governance? What are the implications of a large-scale operational field role of the Secretariat? The task is not to shape a new agenda for the UN secretariat but to look into the governance options of what is done and planned.