The challenge of protecting civilians is central to the work and purpose of the UN. Since 1999, the UN Security Council has increasingly tasked UN peacekeepers with the protection of civilians (PoC) as a core tenet of peacekeeping mandates, but in recent years, UN peace operations across the spectrum have been grappling with the question of how best to protect civilians in increasingly complex settings. Peace operations have undertaken PoC through several methods including: physical protection; the establishment of a protective environment; and dialogue and engagement (in which the promotion and monitoring of human rights can play an essential role). As the UN seeks to optimize PoC through the affirmation of the primacy of politics and the adoption of a strategic, flexible posture on the ground, protection activities are being undertaken in diverse UN mission contexts.

On 24 May 2022, the Permanent Missions of Australia, Rwanda, and the United States of America to the United Nations, in partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), PAX and the Stimson Center, will convene an expert-level roundtable event, entitled “PoC in UN Peace Operations: Lessons from Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions”. A diverse group of experts from the UN, Member States, including host-states and T/PCCs, and civil society will examine the nature of UN contributions to PoC across a range of UN peace operations, including peacekeeping missions with a smaller footprint and special political missions (SPMs).

This event intends to inform evolving thought and practice on how to effectively contribute to PoC objectives across diverse mission settings. The discussion will also add to ongoing discussions about the future of peacekeeping as well as efforts to formulate a new agenda for peace as part of the Secretary-General’s Our Common Agenda and implementation of his Call to Action for Human Rights, including an agenda for protection. This event will take place under the Chatham House rule of non-attribution. The roundtable will be organized in a hybrid format as part of the “PoC Week” on the margins of the annual UN Security Council Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

As part of the discussion, the Stimson Center will preview research and preliminary findings from their forthcoming report on “Host-Country Consent in UN Peacekeeping”. They will provide an overview of how peacekeeping missions undertake PoC in contexts like Abyei and Lebanon and outline practical strategies for promoting host-country consent in support of mandate implementation.

This discussion will also inform PAX's forthcoming report on the “Protection of Civilians in UN Special Political Missions”, which aims to explore different approaches to PoC, and provide an assessment of the
mandate and resourcing challenges facing SPMs. The discussion will explore recommendations to improve immediate and longer-term capacities for protecting civilians in these contexts.

**Guiding Questions:**

- **PoC in context:** In the reality of these diverse mission contexts, what do PoC mandates and protection activities look like?

- **Clarifying the definition:** How can we move toward a more comprehensive understanding of protection, and improve systemic operationalization across different mission settings, particularly in response to calls from HQ and ever-changing situations on the ground?

- **Lessons learned and overcoming challenges:** What existing best practices and lessons learned can be identified from peace operations in varying contexts? What are the ongoing PoC-related challenges facing these missions, and how can UN stakeholders be more responsive to them?

**Speakers List:**

**Opening Remarks:**

- Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations
- Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

**Panel One: PoC in peacekeeping missions with a smaller footprint**

- The Stimson Center
- UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)
- UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)

**Panel Two: Contributions of SPMs to the protection of civilians**

- UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)
- UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)
- Nonviolent Peaceforce

**Joint Discussion:**

- Moderation by PAX

**Closing Remarks:**

- Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations
- Representative of Australia to the United Nations

**Further Information:**

For more information, please contact Ms. Christina Vetter at c.vetter@paxforpeace.nl.