

22 March 2010

To: ICPRA Executive Committee

From: Greg O'Connor, Chairman

UN involvement in Copenhagen meeting

Overview

1. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have confirmed their involvement in this year's ICPRA meeting, to be held in Copenhagen in May. United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations – Police Division (UNDPKO – UNPOL) expressed interest but are unable to attend due to personnel and resource constraints. Dialogue with UNPOL is ongoing and there is likely to be an opportunity to meet with them in New York prior to the May conference.
2. UN attendance at Copenhagen represents a key opportunity to advance ICPRA's strategic organisational goals. The opportunity exists to lay the foundations for ongoing and fruitful engagement. Conversely, if the opportunity is not taken, there is the risk that it may become increasingly difficult to re-engage the UN in any meaningful way.
3. I recommend therefore that all attendees take the time to turn their organisation's focus to international policing issues well ahead of Copenhagen, and produce a brief paper outlining the key issues from their perspective, for distribution ahead of the conference. This will ensure the conference is well prepared to engage in meaningful and enlightening discussion with the UN representatives.
4. I also recommend that in doing so, ICPRA members have regard to the interests being represented by the UNDP participants and tailor their issues and comments accordingly. In particular, a focus on the areas of mutually shared priority (including Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Haiti and Timor Leste) would help establish common ground.

Background

5. As you know, the increasing internationalisation of policing is having a significant and increasing influence on many police associations and unions. This includes:
 - Large numbers of officers being drawn from domestic duties for international deployment, creating frontline pressures.
 - Pay, conditions and welfare concerns for members on deployment, pre-deployment and post-deployment: including training, health and safety in theatre, rules of engagement, personal relationship policies, rights in code of conduct/disciplinary proceedings, allowances, leave, medical follow-up, etc.
 - Potentially significant complications flowing from serving alongside or in joint operations with personnel drawn from police services in developing nations, who may operate to different standards of professionalism and where expectations and standards of discipline and chain of command may vary widely.

- Organisational change in domestic police services flowing from a greater normalisation of international policing as 'core business': restructuring, career path impacts such as development of international specialisations, operational/HR policy impacts.
6. International policing may be undertaken through bilateral/regional arrangements (such as in the Solomon Islands) or under the auspices of a multinational body such as the EU or UN. As multinational bodies come to view policing as a critical part of any stabilisation or peace-keeping mission, rather than an adjunct or follow-up to military operations, there is now considerable focus on development of policing doctrine in bodies such as UNPOL.
 7. The ICPRA conference in Wellington in 2008 canvassed these issues, and agreed that it was important that ICPRA engage with the UN in particular to ensure that the issues affecting members were properly recognised and addressed, not only in development of policy and doctrine, but also in planning and conducting operations.
 8. Since the Wellington meeting, I have been able on behalf of ICPRA to meet with UN representatives from both UNDP and UNPOL. For UNDP, I met the head, Helen Clark, and senior official Djordje Djordjevic. Those early discussions were very positive about the potential mutual benefits in engagement, and that is reflected in UNDP's confirmation of involvement in Copenhagen.
 9. For UNPOL, I met with the then-UNPOL Commissioner, Andrew Hughes. Since then Mr Hughes has left the post. I have had some engagement with his deputy, Ann-Marie Orlor and have sought to open discussions with Andrew Carpenter, head of UNPOL's policy division. So far those approaches have not led to substantive discussions.

UNDP perspective

10. UNDP and UNPOL are both involved in international policing. However, while there is close cooperation and some overlap, their core interests are different.
11. Essentially, UNPOL is mostly concerned with deploying police from contributor countries, under UN mandate, into post-conflict zones or areas of high international tension such as disputed territories. Usually police will be deployed alongside military personnel, though there is an increasing trend for police to adopt the more visible role in order to promote calm and normalise the situation as far as possible, to defuse tension.
12. UNDP is mostly concerned with development of civil institutions in post-conflict states, states where a civil society is only beginning to emerge – for example, after the collapse of a repressive regime or long-standing dictatorship, or weak/at-risk states, where civil institutions have become compromised by internal conflict (such as secular division) or corruption, and are at risk of collapse into civil war or dictatorship.
13. UNDP's interest in policing is therefore in its role as a key contributor to development of rule of law. Rule of law, through professional and transparent policing (along with an effective and independent judiciary) is a pre-requisite to building trust and confidence in political institutions and a functioning and stable society. Policing deployments in such cases are more likely to be contributions of small teams of experts to assist in training and development (or rebuilding/reforming) of local police across a range of fields, or to strengthen legal and/or technical capabilities of local

police services, rather than deployment of personnel to conduct a primary frontline policing function. UNDP does have a key stakeholder interest in 'peace keeping'-type deployments, and will be interested in perspectives on the issues faced by members of police associations and unions, but such issues are not primarily their responsibility.

14. The development of strong, effective police unions alongside civil police forces in such cases is key to ensuring the proper checks and balances are in place to ensure primacy of rule of law, and guard against the various abuses of power that would threaten development of effective civil police. To that end, UNDP will be particularly interested in the potential of ICPRA and/or member organisations to work in parallel to develop local police unions. ICPRA's recent work in southern Africa is an example of the sort of role they may be particularly interested in. The New Zealand Police Association has also provided development assistance to the Cook Islands Police Association in recent years, and other member organisations will have similar relevant experience.
15. While much of UNDP's work is currently focussed in francophone Africa, priority countries also include Iraq, Kosovo, Haiti, Afghanistan and Timor Leste. These are all countries where ICPRA members have or may have direct experience. This immediately establishes common ground for discussion.

Engaging with UNDP

16. While many ICPRA members are likely to have a more direct interest in the deployment-related issues arising from UNPOL work, I believe it is important that we recognise the opportunities afforded by engagement with UNDP.
17. This is for two key reasons. Firstly, as demonstrated by our experience in southern Africa, ICPRA can play an altruistic role in assisting emerging police labour movements around the world. Our motivations are primarily in order to ensure the rights of police officers worldwide are upheld, and promote the development (over time) of the sorts of work conditions that ICPRA members believe police officers ought to be entitled to in exchange for the vital role they perform. The fact that our interests in this regard coincide with UNDP provides a clear opportunity to build a consultative and cooperative relationship, albeit that it may require ICPRA to devote more time and energy (over time) to such a role and have the contribution recognised and recompensed by others, such as domestic government's foreign affairs departments or international development assistance agencies (such as AusAID, NZAID).
18. Secondly, and more importantly, if we are able to convince UNDP that ICPRA has the potential, and the willingness, to contribute in such a way over the long term, then the legitimacy and credibility of ICPRA in the eyes of the UN bureaucracy will have been established. UNDP and UNPOL communicate and cooperate constantly, both in theatre and at a policy and planning level, such as through the UN's Integrated Mission Planning Process which precedes any peacekeeping deployment. This includes a direct UNDP priority interest in deployments in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo and Timor Leste. UNDP's formal and official engagement with ICPRA will make it very difficult for UNPOL to exclude ICPRA from similar engagement within its sphere of interest. This will be particularly so if ICPRA is seen to be 'giving', through UNDP, and cannot therefore be marginalised as a purely self-interested lobby group, whose influence needs to be minimised.

Recommendations

19. I believe it is critically important that ICPRA engage with UNDP at Copenhagen in a high-quality discussion. We need to demonstrate to UNDP that ICPRA is a credible organisation which is willing and able to contribute, even if in a small way, to achieving its goals. UNDP must be convinced there is mutual benefit in continuing to develop a relationship. If we do so, I believe meaningful long-term engagement with both UNDP and UNPOL will follow. Conversely, if UNDP conclude ICPRA is not ready to engage at UN level, we may find it very difficult to re-open the doors in either UN body in the medium term.

20. For those reasons, I recommend as follows:

- a) That all attendees at the ICPRA meeting in Copenhagen produce a brief paper outlining the key issues in international policing from their perspective, for distribution ahead of the conference. This will ensure the conference is well prepared to engage in meaningful and enlightening discussion with the UN representatives.
- b) That in preparing such papers, ICPRA members have regard to the interests being represented by the UNDP participants and tailor their issues and comments accordingly. In particular, a focus on shared priority countries where ICPRA members have experience, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Timor Leste, will allow us immediately to establish common ground for discussion.