

Time for a UN Emergency Capacity

What is the United Emergency Peace Service?

The United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) was proposed as a permanent emergency response service designed to complement, *not replace* existing peace operations. UNEPS would have first in – first out capabilities that would supplement the UN's capacity to provide stability, peace, and relief in deadly emergencies.

UNEPS would individually recruit and train 10,000-15,000 personnel with a wide range of skills, including civilian police, military, judicial experts, and relief professionals. This ensures that missions would not fail due to a lack of skills, equipment, cohesiveness, experience in resolving conflicts, or gender, national, or religious imbalance. The Service would have special expertise in conflict resolution, environmental crisis response, and emergency medical relief. Its military component would have two complete mission headquarters, each with military, police, and civilian staff, technical reconnaissance units, light armored reconnaissance squadrons, motorized light infantry, armored infantry, a helicopter squadron, an engineer battalion, and a logistics battalion.

The recent tsunami in Asia has demonstrated that the United Nations has a key role to play in coordinating the international response to large-scale disasters. While the UN and the rest of the international community responded admirably in the aftermath of the tsunami, too often, the UN cannot muster the political support from member states to act in time to prevent them from spiraling into regional crises.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan compares his job of building support and raising funds for each new UN peace operation to that of a volunteer fire chief who is forced to raise funds, find volunteers, and secure a fire truck for each new fire. "The core challenge to the Security Council and to the United Nations as a whole in the next century," he declared, is "to forge unity behind the principle that massive and systematic violations of human rights – wherever they may take place – should not be allowed to stand."

UNEPS would help prevent early stage crises (caused by violent conflict or natural phenomenon) from escalating into national or regional disasters. It is a timely and important step in providing the world community with the international emergency service it desperately needs. The creation of UNEPS is supported in principle by organizations such as Citizens for Global Solutions and Human Rights Watch. Representatives Albert Wynn (D-MD) and James Leach's (R-IA) recently introduced legislation in Congress (H. RES. 180) in support of UNEPS.

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Talking Points

- **The need for rapid response**

UNEPS will be immediately available to respond to a crisis as personnel will be individually recruited from many countries. Currently, even when the Security Council agrees to deploy a peace support operation, a 3-6 month delay in deployment is inevitable. The uncertainty on how to proceed swiftly and effectively can be resolved by UNEPS, which will also allow UN member states to avoid thorny debates over deploying their own national units.

- **A better tool for the international community**

The United Nations Emergency Peace Service will be equipped:

- To take action in face of serious threats to human security and human rights;
- To offer secure emergency services to meet critical human needs;
- To assist in the establishment of institutions to maintain law and order;
- To initiate peacebuilding processes with focused incentives; and
- To restore hope for local people in the future of their society and economy.

- **Rapid response to crises is cost-effective**

The amount of money saved on post-conflict reconstruction will far exceed the startup and operational costs of UNEPS. According to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, the international community could have saved nearly \$130 billion of the \$200 billion it spent on managing conflicts in the 1990s by focusing on conflict prevention rather than post conflict reconstruction.

- **Supporting UNEPS enhances security of the United States**

Failed and failing states provide breeding grounds for terrorism and international crime. Thus, preventing destabilizing events is in the interests of the United States. Like all institutions, the United Nations needs retooling to meet new challenges. Congress is currently examining ways to make the UN more accountable and transparent. While these efforts should be applauded, no attempt to reform the United Nations can be complete unless the UN's ability to effectively prevent and respond to natural disasters, violent conflict, and humanitarian emergencies is enhanced. Sharing innovative solutions and inspiring international teamwork is the American way.

What We Do

Citizens for Global Solutions envisions a future in which nations work together to abolish war, protect our rights and freedoms, and solve the problems facing humanity that no nation can solve alone. This vision requires effective democratic global institutions that will apply the rule of law while respecting the diversity and autonomy of national and local communities. We work to build political will for our vision in the United States by educating Americans about our global interdependence, communicating global concerns to public officials, and developing proposals to create, reform, and strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations. We support the creation of UNEPS through research, advocacy and grassroots action.