Lessons Learned
Partnership for the Effective Protection of Civilians:
The ONUCI FORCE-FRCI-FFCI Tripartite dialogue initiative for mandate implementation.

1.   **Introduction**. The Security Council authorized ONUCI Force since its establishment to liaise with the National Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI) and the military elements of the Forces Nouvelles in order to promote, in coordination with the French forces, the re-establishment of trust between all the Ivorian forces. The Council further authorized the French Forces to support UNOCI, within the limits of their deployment and their capabilities. After the post-electoral crisis of 2011, the tripartite dialogue initiative was established to strengthen the cooperation between the different forces and to enable an effective protection of civilians. The mechanism was essential to (i) improve the quality of the situational analysis, (ii) mutualize the efforts for design interventions that are tailored to the requirements of each component, (iii) avoid gaps and overlaps between the different activities and (iv) identify opportunities for closer cooperation.

The purpose of the current lessons learned review process of the tripartite dialogue initiative is to ascertain the efficiency of the mechanism and identify the best practices for future cooperation in other peacekeeping operations with similar mandate.

2.   **The Tripartite**.

a.   **The Tripartite meeting**. It is a forum for dialogue between United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) Force, the Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) and the Forces Françaises en Côte d'Ivoire (FFCI). The three (3) parties discuss operational matters with a view to share a common analysis and agree on a set of objectives in their respective mandate implementation. The operational focus of the meetings helps to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach from the three (3) separate entities in the provision of security including the protection of civilians and for peace consolidation in Côte d'Ivoire. Each force gives its evaluation of the operational environment, shares information on current operations and discusses common security challenges as well as the areas of cooperation.

The first tripartite meeting was held on 05 November 2012; it was attended by the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Mining, Energy and Petrol, Commander Gendarmerie Superior (Ivoirian representative), the Force Commander of ONUCI Force, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) of the FRCI, Licorne Commander, and their respective Chiefs of Operations (COOs) and Liaison Officers (LOs). The French Forces (Licorne) were replaced on 01 January 2015 by the Forces Françaises en Côte d'Ivoire, however the close cooperation continued as before. Including the Tripartite held on 31 May 2016, there have been 66 tripartite meetings. The meetings are hosted

fortnightly by each force at its headquarters HQs mainly, but occasionally some meetings are held in geographical areas of operational interest. The agreed agenda of the meetings includes the following matters: the security situation, current operations, future operations, areas for cooperation and miscellaneous items which provides an opportunity for the members to discuss any matter of concern. The forum is used as a platform to exchange ideas on responses to emerging security threats, for example the increasing terrorist threat in West Africa or humanitarian issues. Detailed notes are made regarding each tripartite meeting, which serves to inform relevant stakeholders within Côte d'Ivoire and UNHQ in New York.

b.   **Political and security background.** The "Tripartite System" came into existence in late 2012 during a period marked by attacks against defense and security forces (August in Grand Bassam, 20 September in Port Bouet and Vidri in Abidjan), and by criminality targeting travelers in some parts of the country and private homes. FRCI elements were reported to have engaged in excessive use of force and violations of international human rights law. ONUCI documents from late 2012 highlight attacks against the FRCI and Gendarmerie and episodes of insecurity in various regions of the country. Such human rights abuses by FRCI and dozos (traditional hunters in Côte d'Ivoire) would include illegal arrests and detention, acts of torture, ill-treatment and racketeering against civilians. Few cases led to legal proceedings against the FRCI and *dozos* accused of human rights violations. It was in this context that the SRSG met with the Minister of Defence and agreed on modalities for ONUCI support to the FRCI within the limitations of the UN's Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP). The Tripartite structure was created shortly after that of the Ivorian National Security Council (NSC), established by Presidential Decree on 08 August 2012. The urgent character of the NSC's first meeting on 28 August 2012 was indicative of the degree of concern among the leadership of Côte d'Ivoire with the regard to the security situation in the country. The validation of the national strategy on SSR in September 2012 (adopted by presidential decree on 31 December 2012) also provided some impetus for the creation of the mechanism.

c.   **Regional Tripartite Meetings.** The success of the tripartite meeting has resulted in its decentralization from the national level to a regional level, where the meetings are nested within the overall scope and context of the national level meeting. ONUCI Sector Commanders meet with commanders of the FRCI Military Regions, senior members of the Gendarmerie, Police and the FFCI (when the FFCI are operating in that Region). The first decentralized regional tripartite meeting was held on 03 June 2014. One of the primary objectives of this regional tripartite was to ensure that subordinate elements from all Forces understood the level of cooperation and coordination that was expected of them based on agreements at the military strategic level.

d.   **United Nations Supporting Framework**. The United Nations implementing guidelines for Military Components on the Protection of Civilians outlines three (3) specific tiers as part of a strategic approach to the Protection of Civilians: Tier 1 - Protection through dialogue and engagement, Tier 2 - Provision of physical security and Tier 3: Establishing a protective environment.

(1) Tier 1: Protection through Dialogue and Engagement. The Tripartite dialogue initiative certainly addresses the Tier 1 activity. The Host Nation is represented by a relevant and authoritative leadership of the FRCI (CDS or his deputy and the COO). All pertinent security factors that may impact on the protection of civilians are discussed very transparently. Items on the agenda can range from external issues such as security issues in border areas with neighboring States, to internal banditry, to more sensitive matters such as misconduct and illegal activities of members of the FRCI.

(2) Tier 2: The Provision of Physical Security. The success of the dialogue initiative and the resulting positive working environment, allows for areas of cooperation to be identified. The primary responsibility for the protection of civilians remains with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. The FRCI shares information with the Tripartite regarding their planned operational activities to mitigate identified risks to the civilian population. The Tripartite, for instance, closely coordinated activities in the face of security threats in border regions, particularly in the Grabo area in April 2015, during the attacks against FRCI posts that left seven (7) FRCI personnel dead in Olodio in December 2015, and during inter-communal violence in Bouna in March 2016. It is also likely that the work of the Tripartite mechanism contributed to the discovery of weapons and ammunition in Bouaké and Duékoué in March 2015. ONUCI Force, supported by FFCI, supports FRCI operational efforts by actively encouraging the FRCI to execute operations as intended, and supports the FCRI with complementary patrol plans, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) support (mapping assistance), the provision of an air medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) facility, air reconnaissance, and any other activity deemed appropriate, on a case by case basis, which is in line with the UN's HRDDP.

 (3) Tier 3: Establishing a Protective Environment. Environment building activities are frequently programmatic in nature and require a '*hands-on*' systematic approach with committed resources to medium and long term peacebuilding objectives. The Tripartite addresses longer term issues such as the promotion and protection of human rights, contributes to durable solutions for the return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and more recently served as the forum by which ONUCI Force and the FFCI and FCRI could explore options of how best to respond to the emerging terrorist threat in the sub-region. The Tripartite's effectiveness in this tier will have the longest and most profound effect on the protection of civilians in Côte d'Ivoire, far beyond the remaining lifecycle of ONUCI.

There is a positive cyclical relationship between the three (3) tiers which has been well executed in the ONUCI Tripartite system. It appears that the three (3) partners effectively undertook integrated contingency planning for preventing the spread of the Ebola virus to Côte d'Ivoire and for security during the 2015 presidential election. The Tripartite system may have contributed to thwarting planned terrorist attacks from both inside and outside Côte d'Ivoire. The continued work and cooperation of the tripartite partners will further assist the FRCI to increasingly gain the confidence of local populations.

e.   **Crosscutting Issues**.   While the Tripartite primarily deals with operational matters involving military personnel; it has the potential to address a number of broader Mission objectives which support wider peace building efforts. The Armed Forces of any nation in a post-conflict situation will be a key influencer in nearly all substantive areas, be it from Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) to Security Sector Reform (SSR) to social cohesion. Other divisions of the Mission have use the military dialogue forum as a means of progressing matters within their own primary area of responsibility. One of the best examples of the Tripartite was the contentious issue of the occupation of public and private sites by supporters of the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR) whose leader was declared President following the 2010 presidential election and subsequent crisis. This issue of illegal occupation was proving to be a major barrier in improving social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. The SRSG was actively engaged with the highest levels of Government in attempting to find a political solution. There were widespread rumors that the FRCI, were for the most part the culpable party; it subsequently transpired that this was the case in a very small number of instances. The SRSG tasked the Tripartite to progress the matter. The resulting action, which was typical of the tripartite activity, was the formation of a government-led Committee for the Restitution of Illegally Occupied Public or Private Sites. This committee made significant tangible progress, reporting that as of 01 December 2015, 740 properties were vacated out of the 1,315 claims received.

3.   **Case study**. This case study illustrates the tripartite response to security issues.

> **Case Study: Operation 'Border Protection'**
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> On 10 June 2015 a Malian police base was attacked by dozens of suspected Islamist militants in Misseni, near Mali's southern border with Côte d'Ivoire. A gendarme was killed in the attack. Previous terrorist attacks had taken place further north in Mali. The unwelcome development of attacks so far south was concerning for both Malian and Ivorian authorities. Ivorian security forces commenced an operation on the 27 June 2015 in order to secure the Ivorian-Malian border against terrorist infiltration. The operation had a number of goals: firstly, at the political level, maintain the stability of the national institutions and maintain social cohesion; and secondly, the operational objectives included the protection of civilians, the protection of strategic sites, and above all, to preserve a climate conducive to continued peace and security.
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> At the Tripartite, ONUCI and the FFCI shared their thoughts with the FRCI on this emerging security threat. Possible FRCI actions were discussed and supporting elements to the successful execution of such an operation were identified. As part of their own planning process, although informed by the Tripartite information sharing forum, the FRCI made a number of requests for support from ONCUI Force and the FFCI. Directly supporting the Ivorian effort to protect civilians, ONUCI and the FFCI provided mapping support, increased aerial surveillance, conducted independent long range patrols along the border with Mali and exchanged information regarding the operational situation in the border area.
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> This operation, and the positive engagement of the Tripartite, initiated a series of activities which developed the Ivorian capability and capacity to deter, prevent and respond to terrorist attacks. In 2015 and early 2016, the FRCI ran four (4) increasingly complex counter terrorism exercises which were evaluated and assessed by ONUCI Force and the FFCI. The relationship between the Tripartite members was strengthened and the ability of the national security forces to protect civilians within Côte d'Ivoire was enhanced. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of this capacity building effort was tested during the terror attack in Grand Bassam near Abidjan in the south of Côte d'Ivoire on 13 March 2016; the swift and coordinated response of the Ivorian security forces was widely commended.
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> This example of initial dialogue relating to a security challenge, resulting in concrete measures to address the substantive issues was repeated time and again, including: the 2015 presidential election, DDR matters, SSR within the FRCI, road banditry, embargo monitoring, FRCI misconduct, border related issues, illegal mining, illegal Dozo checkpoints, illegal occupation of public and private properties, the return of refugees and supporting security efforts for journeys conducted by the President of Côte d'Ivoire.

important issues such as SSR, Human Rights, and the national response to an emerging terrorist threat can be discussed in an environment conducive to open dialogue, knowledge sharing and road mapping. The continued support at the political level is a key factor giving explicit authority to the Tripartite and also authority to explore a variety of options which may result in longer term policies to manage and ultimately resolve security challenges.

b.   **Common Objective**.   Respective UNSCRs have reiterated that the Government of Government of Côte d'Ivoire bears primary responsibility for ensuring peace, stability and the protection of civilians in Côte d'Ivoire. The same resolutions mandated ONUCI, supported by FFCI, to support the efforts of the Government. The Tripartite serves as one of the means by which the Government of Côte d'Ivoire can meets this responsibility and the protection of civilians is a commonly shared internationally mandated goal for each participant in the Tripartite.

c.   **Strong relationships**.   The relationships developed over time are assessed as a key factor in giving the forum credibility and resilience. The various actors involved got to know each other.   While each member of the Tripartite brings with them their own particular positional authority owing to their official appointment; it is the personal power, or in other words, their established personal integrity, trustworthiness and reliability, which imbues confidence in the other members of the Tripartite. This confidence and trust gives the Tripartite a robustness that can sustain the relationship in challenging circumstances.

d.   **Frank, clear and open discussions**.   Matters of concern are dealt with in an open and frank manner.   This direct approach to issues of concern to the Tripartite ensures that substantive issues are meaningfully and systematically addressed.   The trusting and robust relationship which has been developed facilitates this forthright approach which ensures that matters of concern – even though they may be sensitive issues – can be dealt with directly, effectively and in as timely a manner as possible. It should be noted that when matters of a sensitive or somewhat critical nature were being expressed from the ONUCI side, it was always the FC who directly addressed these matters, not a representative or member of his staff. While matters were dealt with openly and frankly, the FC was still required to address these sensitive matters using diplomacy and by affording his counterparts the courtesy of private, informal communication before the matter would be formally and openly addressed at the Tripartite.

e.   **Systematic approach**.   The Tripartite is managed carefully by the various operational components of the Members: there is a systematic approach to the preparation, presentation and follow up of matters on the agenda.   This management and effective pursuit of the substantive issues avoids the potential pitfall of the Tripartite becoming a '*talking shop'*, but instead is a forum where progress is assessed, evaluated and monitored. While the meetings are scheduled on a bi-weekly basis, there is significant interaction between the actors in the intervening period to progress the matters discussed in the meetings. Indeed the intervening period requires constantly open lines of communication: be it between the ONUCI FC and the Minister for Defence or CDS FRCI, or the ONCUI COO and FRCI COO.

5.   **Good Practices**.

a.   **Co-ordination and Support**. The Tripartite focused its efforts on ensuring that it served as a forum for co-ordination between all three (3) partners and as a means of providing support to the other partners; it did not just identify support to the FRCI, but also identified how each party could support each other. In the military tripartite forum, it was suggested that a human rights mechanism be set up with the FRCI where allegations of human rights violations are openly discussed with the command structure in order to address such allegations and ensure that adequate steps are taken to sanction abusive behavior. The human rights mechanism also serves as a coordination platform to develop training and policy initiatives that can help support the FRCI's efforts to put an end to abuse. The National Human Rights Commission is now a full partner in the mechanism and will secure its ongoing existence beyond ONUCI.

b.   **Increases National Ownership**. Over the course of the Tripartite, the FRCI became more aware or their responsibilities and functions regarding the protection of civilians that was not apparent to them at the outset of the process.

c.   **Addresses Institutional Capacity Building**. The focused and system driven management of the Tripartite allowed for specific capacity measures to be pursued in line with identified deficiencies. Capacity was built by the conduct of seminars, exercises and specific training programs conducted by the FFCI.   The presidential election of 2015 presented such an opportunity for the FRCI to increase their capacity in terms of planning for major security events.   The process of providing adequate security for the election was initiated in the Tripartite and a joint planning and preparation phase began with the respective operations staff. The process resulted in a joint layout for all Forces and exercises war-gaming potential scenarios revealed to the FRCI the importance of the local préfet to internal security operations within the Ivorian chain of command.

d.   **Generates Mitigation Measures**. As the forum became adept at identifying security challenges, the forum became a spring board from which action was taken to address risks to the civilian population. A case in point is that of the occupiers of property following the crisis: while there was not an imminent threat to the protection of civilians, the Tripartite took a long term view of the logical progression of the issue, and its action to create a committee to address this risk averted potential violence and reduced a barrier to social cohesion.

e.   **Adopts a Broad Perspective and Flexible Approach**.   The Tripartite addressed matters of immediate security concern, but also took a broader view of the overall situation in the country and addressed situations, through the FRCI, that had the potential to become a security issue. The Tripartite was the forum in which the FRCI were actively encouraged to address the matter of illegally occupied forests before the situation escalated to violence.

f.   **Addresses the Professionalism of the FRCI**. Due to the frank and direct conversations that could take place in this forum, the professionalism of the FRCI was developed across three (3) areas: SSR, DDR and the delineation between the FRCI and Police. Under the SSR pillar, the FRCI were actively encouraged to engage fully with programs that educated their personnel such as in human rights and humanitarian law. Relating to DDR, there was a significant number of people who dressed in FRCI uniforms and were known as 'associate FRCI' personnel; they were in fact not members of the FRCI and had no lawful authority. Dozos had also started to get involved in vigilante type activities in response to security issues; this was actively addressed by the Tripartite and the situation subsequently improved. The delineation of the roles of the FRCI, the Police and the Gendarmerie has also being progressed as a result of Tripartite intervention. The withdrawal of the FRCI from routine policing tasks - although not yet fully complete - is well underway.

6.   **Lessons Learned.**   The following 14 points are lessons which this review has identified:

a.   **Archiving**. All written material associated with a dialogue initiative should be archived in a methodological and chronological manner. Material such as concept documents, Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), agreements for the provision of support and detailed minutes should be retained and accessible for the purpose of informing the participating Mission, or, to serve as a source of information to other dialogue initiatives.

b.   **Adopt a non-siloed approach across the Mission**. While the dialogue initiative is attended by military personnel, the synergies and opportunity for progress in other Mission mandated areas is extensive. The Tripartite should retain a flexibility to coopt non-routine participants to the forum to discuss matters of particular concern to them, such as, for example, a member from the Human Rights Division or Security Sector Reform Division. It was of concern that a number of senior members of ONUCI Divisions were either completely unaware of the ONUCI Force-FRCI-FFCI process or erroneously viewed it as a process completely independent from their own activities and program objectives. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of UN Police, National Police, Gendarmerie, UN security personnel and intelligence services so that a comprehensive understanding of the security situation can be made and shared.

c.   **Ensure Political Support at the Highest Levels**. The attendees at the dialogue exchange must have the legal, moral and substantive backing of their political masters in order to move issues forward with confidence.

d.   **Partnership Approach**. All members of the dialogue must be viewed by each other as equal partners in the process. While there will be inherent differences between the Parties, a common objective – that of protecting civilians – and a positive professional regard will

encourage strong working relationships, built not just on the basis of positional power, but on a personal level, that yields significant dividends for the overall process.

e.   **Clearly Identify the Common Goal**. It should be clearly identified that the commonly shared goal of the participants of the Tripartite is the protection of civilians.   The legal imperative for this will normally be contained in a UNSCR.

f.   **Time and patience**. Acknowledge that it will take time for any dialogue initiative to develop confidence and develop a modus operandi that will produce tangible results. While the Tripartite in Côte d'Ivoire was held every two (2) weeks, if the operational situation permits, the period of time between meetings could be extended to one (1) month.

g.   **Frankness and Transparency.** Addressing matters in a sincere and open way avoids the initiative from ignoring factors which could be a significant underlying factor which is exacerbating progress in a number of other areas.   When the Parties in this Tripartite understood that there were no hidden agendas or areas where one was trying to seek an advantage over the other, the commitment of all the Parties increased. This frankness must always be balanced with empathy for the Party who is the subject of criticism. In the case of ONUCI, only the ONUCI Force FC raised any such sensitive issues with his counterparts.

h.   **Systematic Approach**. There should be a systematic approach in two (2) ways, firstly regarding the conduct of the meeting and the items discussed, in the case of the ONUCI Tripartite it was clear each time: the security situation, current operations, future operations, areas for cooperation and miscellaneous items. Secondly, and more importantly, a model of assessment, evaluation and monitoring should be adopted in connection with the ongoing work resulting from the meetings. All parties should be held to account for commitments that they make and their resulting action or lack of.

i.   **Link to National Forces Capacity Building Programme**. National Forces should use their repeated requests for operational support from their partners in the Tripartite to inform their capability and capacity building programs. Identifying a pattern of operational requirements will identify capability and capacity gaps in the National Forces. Over the duration of the Tripartite, ONUCI Force and FFCI, at the request of the FRCI, have repeatedly supported FRCI operations with GIS support, air recce and medevac contingency support; these factors should feature at the top of the FRCI capability and capacity priority list.

j.   **Strategic Tiered Approach**.   Using the UN strategic approach to the protection of civilians will provide the framework for a progressive plan for the participants at a dialogue initiative in terms of identifying objectives across the full spectrum of ways and means to create a protective environment.   Again, emphasis is placed on a progressive and patient approach; it

may take some in order for a dialogue initiative to reach its full potential of addressing longer term issues.

k.   **Decentralize the Process**. When the central process has been fully established, consider decentralizing the process of dialogue to lower levels of operational command. An inclusive and coordinated approach, involving peacekeeping forces, national military and police forces, and civilian authorities, will enhance efforts to create a protective environment for civilians, based on a localized and tailored approach given the prevailing security situation in that geographic area.

l.   **Encourage Interaction with Humanitarian Agencies**. It could be of benefit to have the UNHCR attend a dedicated specific military tripartite meeting or; suggest to UNOCI Force and FRCI to attend a dedicated 'UNHCR Tripartite Meeting' on this subject matter. The advantage of this is that it will trigger discussions about the tasks to be undertaken by the FRCI. How this will be done, according to which timeline that needs to be done in a phased and orderly manner. In addition, this might also be a useful platform to further enhance collaboration and cooperation on voluntary repatriation operations requiring escorts by the military.

m.   **Formal and Informal approach**. The honest and frank nature of the formal tripartite meeting yielded significant progress.   However, it should be noted that informal communication about sensitive issues allowed partners time to prepare and apprise themselves of certain facts prior to the formal presentation of issue before a Tripartite. This courtesy based approach, built on strong relationships and trust, allowed for progress on a number of sensitive issues.

n.   **Set the Example**. The military leadership engaged in a Tripartite dialogue initiative should ensure that all subordinate elements are aware and understand the logic supporting interaction, coordination and cooperation with other security actors - and indeed the civilian population - in optimizing the effects of the combined efforts to provide protection to the civilian population. The example set by military leadership should form the basis for increased coordination and communication at the lower levels of command so that a more accurate operational picture can be formulated which informs the activities of those responsible for the protection of civilians.

1. **Documentation**

   a. UNSCR 2000 (2011), 2062 (2012), 2112 (2013), 2162(2014), 2226 (2015) and 2284 (2016).

   b. Progress reports of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

   c. Protection of Civilians: Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions dated 13 February 2015.

   d. United Nations Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning dated 09 April 2013.

   e. Various Code Cables (CONFIDENTIAL) relating to Tripartite.

   f. Human Rights Watch, World Report 2013, 2014, 2015: Côte d'Ivoire.

   g. UNHCR Côte d'Ivoire, consolidated report No. 8, Voluntary repatriation of Ivorian Refugees, dated May 2016.

   h. Operational Order – 14/2015, 31 March 2015.

2. **Consultation**

   a. Force Commander, ONUCI.

   b. Deputy Force Commander, ONUCI.

   c. Force Commander, FFCI.

   d. Special Advisor - Office of SRSG.

   e. Office of DRSG - Humanitarian Division.

   f. Civil Affairs Division, ONUCI.

   g. Political Affairs Division, ONUCI.

   h. Human Rights Division, ONUCI.

   i. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Division, ONUCI.

   j. Deputy Chief of Defense Staff in charge of Operations, FRCI.

   k. Military Assistant to Force Commander ONUCI.

l.   Military Assistant to Force Commander ONUCI.

m.   Military Assistant to Force Chief of Staff ONUCI.

n.   Chief Operations Officer, ONUCI.

o.   Chief Military Operations Centre, ONUCI.

p.   Military Personnel Office, ONCUI Force.

q.   ONUCI Liaison Officers to FFCI and FRCI.