

Q & A

The UN80 Mandate Review Resolution - What was Agreed? And What's Next?

What was adopted and what is the resolution trying to achieve?

- The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution, with 168 votes in favor, on mandate creation, implementation, and review following six months of negotiations. The resolution is intended to improve how UN mandates are designed, managed, and evaluated across the system. It is structured around three core elements: guiding principles for mandate design, concrete operational changes throughout the mandate lifecycle, and a forward-looking process that recognizes reform is ongoing and requires continued negotiation.

Why did the Russian Federation attempt to delay the adoption of the mandate review resolution and continue the negotiation process?

- The Russian Federation opposed the resolution and its process, having initially introduced but then withdrawn its own draft decision, and argued that the negotiations were non-transparent, insufficiently inclusive, and lacked proper line-by-line consideration. They proposed a text that extended the mandate of the Informal Ad Hoc Working Group by a month until 30th April to continue negotiations on the resolution. They further maintained that the outcome did not reflect genuine consensus, requested a recorded vote, and ultimately voted against the resolution, alongside Belarus, DPRK, and Nicaragua, while stating that it would not consider itself bound by its provisions.

What are the main changes introduced by the resolution?

- The resolution introduces several practical reforms aimed at improving efficiency and transparency. These include the creation of a mandate registry to provide system-wide visibility, the requirement that all new mandates include review clauses, and a push for more user-friendly and accessible Secretariat reporting. It also emphasizes stronger coordination and coherence across different UN bodies, addressing long-standing fragmentation.



Is the objective to reduce the number of mandates?

- The resolution does not aim to reduce the number of mandates through a numerical target. The Co-Chairs explicitly rejected a “numbers game” approach, noting that past efforts of this kind have been ineffective. Instead, the focus is on improving the quality and effectiveness of mandates, reducing duplication, and ensuring relevance over time. Mechanisms such as lifecycle reviews, merging overlapping mandates, and phasing out completed ones are intended to achieve these outcomes in a more sustainable way.

Who is responsible for implementing these reforms?

- Responsibility is shared between Member States and the Secretariat. Member States retain full authority over mandates but are expected to exercise that authority with greater discipline and accountability. The Secretariat, in turn, is tasked with providing improved analytical tools, better data, and clearer reporting to support decision-making and ensure efficient use of resources. The resolution’s adoption, with 168 Member States voting in favor, reflects broad political support for this shared responsibility.

What practical improvements should be expected?

- The reforms are expected to produce tangible improvements in how the UN operates. These include fewer and more concise reports, a reduced meeting burden, and documentation that is easier to use and understand. There should also be better visibility across mandates, less duplication, and more targeted, impactful outcomes. Overall, the goal is to make mandates more effective while reducing unnecessary complexity and fragmentation.

What changes take effect immediately?

- Some measures came into force immediately as of April 1. These include the requirement for concept notes for new mandates, the inclusion of indicative financial implications at the outset, and the use of the mandate registry. Other reforms will take longer to implement and depend on continued negotiations within the working group.

What issues remain unresolved?

- Several important issues are still under discussion. These include how mandate reviews will be conducted, whether there should be system-wide review mechanisms across different UN bodies, and how thematic or clustered reviews might work. These questions are politically sensitive because they relate directly to Member State authority and the structure of intergovernmental oversight within the UN system.



Who decides when a mandate is no longer needed?

- Member States ultimately retain the authority to determine whether mandates remain relevant or should be discontinued. However, the reform aims to improve the quality of those decisions by providing better data, stronger analytical input from the Secretariat, and more structured review processes. This is intended to create a more informed and balanced decision-making environment.

How does the reform address concerns about politicization?

- The reform does not remove the inherently political nature of UN decision-making, but it seeks to improve the conditions under which those decisions are made. By enhancing transparency, strengthening the evidence base, and creating more structured processes, the reform aims to reduce arbitrary or poorly informed decisions. It also improves information access for smaller delegations, helping to level the playing field.

How is this different from previous reform efforts?

- Earlier attempts at mandate review often failed due to poor organization and limited scope, with only partial areas of the system being examined. This reform differs by taking a more comprehensive, system-wide approach grounded in clear principles and emphasizing continuous improvement rather than one-off reviews. It also prioritizes evidence-based decision-making and better coordination across UN bodies.

Is this meaningful reform or just another bureaucratic exercise?

- The reform is framed as a substantive effort to improve impact and effectiveness rather than simply reduce costs. By clarifying mandates, improving tracking and evaluation, and reducing duplication, it aims to strengthen the UN's ability to deliver real-world results. Demonstrating tangible impact will be essential to maintaining credibility and countering skepticism.

Can this reform make a difference in a challenging geopolitical environment?

- While the reform is not a comprehensive solution to geopolitical tensions or challenges to multilateralism, it is seen as an important step in strengthening the UN's credibility and relevance.

Will reporting quality improve?

- Yes, improving reporting quality is a key objective. The resolution emphasizes the need for evidence-based, impartial, and analytically rigorous reporting. It also encourages greater standardization, although reporting will remain influenced by political dynamics.

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Will Member States still use the UN for visibility and political messaging?

- The resolution does not restrict Member States’ ability to use the UN for political expression. Instead, it encourages a more disciplined and efficient use of mandates, balancing the need for political visibility with the goal of improving effectiveness and reducing unnecessary burdens.

What happens next?

- The resolution mandates the establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group on Mandate Implementation Review, open to all Member States and observers and co-chaired by two appointees of the President of the General Assembly, to operate from 1 May 2026 to 30 April 2027 with a structured programme of work that includes developing templates and review clauses, establishing criteria and modalities for mandate review and rationalization, considering Secretary-General analyses and recommendations, advancing the Mandate Registry and related tools, and reporting progress to the General Assembly, while operating on a consensus basis and supported substantively by the Secretariat.