10 Key Steps For Addressing Misinformation, Disinformation and Hate Speech During Mission Transitions

Alongside political and security challenges, **misinformation, disinformation and hate speech (MDH)** targeting Missions pose a growing operational and reputational risk, particularly during periods of transition. MDH can undermine Mission effectiveness, place pressure on Mission drawdown or exit, and threaten the safety of personnel, while also affecting the UN's broader credibility and legacy. As the UN system prepares for transitions to non-mission settings, Missions and UN Country Teams (UNCT) may consider the steps outlined in this report and allocate appropriate personnel, technical, and financial resources to support these efforts.

01	Plan ahead	**06**	Communicate Proactively
02	Document Impact of MDH	**07**	Work with Partners
03	Anticipate Key Moments	**08**	Help Build Resilience
04	Monitor and Analyse MDH	**09**	Plan Beyond Transition
05	Prepare an MDH Transition Plan	**10**	Keep Key Stakeholders Informed

Step 1: Plan Ahead

Missions should integrate MDH considerations into transition planning from the outset, including in the Transition Roadmap in early transition contexts, in line with the Secretary-General's Planning Directive (2019). Missions' Working Groups on MDH should provide an assessment of the information harms landscape and their impact on the transition period. Missions should plan for an in-depth assessment of the threat environment and outline **mitigation and anticipatory** actions to be taken.

Keeping the balance and monitor the wider environment

In addressing MDH, Missions should uphold democratic values, including **freedom of expression** and **access to information**, and promote **a culture that accepts fair criticism**. Missions should distinguish legitimate expression from malicious intent, noting that expression is protected under articles 19 and 20 of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, even when it is unfair or unfounded, and seek advice from Human Rights and Legal components when necessary. Missions should also continuously analyse the political, humanitarian, and security environment to identify potential threats, assess risk levels, and plan proactive and reactive measures in a coordinated manner, regularly evaluating their effectiveness.

Step 2: Document Impact

Well ahead of the transition end-date, and on an ongoing basis, Missions should deliberately **document and maintain content on examples of positive contributions and successes** to shape narratives on the Mission's legacy. MDH considerations should be explicitly integrated into the Transition Roadmap in early transition contexts, in line with the Secretary-General's Planning Directive (2019). This can include drawing on CPAS data to document trends in peace and security and the Mission's contribution thereof; specific testimonies, photos, videos or interviews, particularly of national and local actors, that can be used to generate strategic communication series.

Step 3: Anticipate Key Moments

MDH narratives routinely emerge ahead of and during critical points in a Mission's life cycle, including mandate renewals, troop rotations, elections—and increasingly, transition periods. Missions should identify the **specific moments within a transition that are most likely to trigger MDH**, such as announcements of revised timelines or milestones related to closure or handover of installations. In advance of these periods, Missions should develop strategies and actions to mitigate negative information harm, including preparing key messages, holding background briefings with journalists, and posting tailored content to prebunk potential claims.

Anticipate and prepare...

Missions should **anticipate potential crisis moments** by equipping staff to differentiate between malinformation, misinformation and disinformation while upholding fundamental rights. Preparatory actions may include **targeted training, strengthened media engagement**, and **advance roundtables or briefings on key issues**. Missions should also extend support on MDH to partners and relevant actors, including journalists and media, civil society, regulatory and electoral bodies, the judiciary, and law enforcement.

Step 4: Monitor and Analyse

Transition periods require a **heightened focus on monitoring and analysis** of previously identified and emerging mis/dis narratives, actors, and behaviours. This is a necessary step. It would inform any eventual responses and ground them in a good understanding of the most current trends and dynamics. Beyond the Missions' lifespans, **UNCTs should plan for and continue the practice** of monitoring and analysis after the mission withdraws, and consider pooling resources for this purpose, e.g. in the RCO. As the transition proceed, monitoring and analysing should track the evolution of MDH on a weekly basis.

Step 5: Prepare Counter-MDH Transition Plan

As the transition unfolds, MDH narratives are likely to emerge and crystalise around specific themes. Building on ongoing monitoring and analysis, Missions would need to articulate a dynamic plan for the transition period, integrated into broader transition planning. In active transition contexts, MDH analysis and mitigation should be reflected in the Integrated Transition Plan, consistent with the forthcoming revised Mission Transitions Policy (2025). This plan should articulate the posture to adopt regarding MDH narratives and include communications content and approach, political engagement, and community outreach aspects. It should also consider the need to manage expectations from host authorities and the population, and whether a clear agreement exists with the relevant authorities on the transition timeline and process.

Step 6: Communicate Proactively

MDH flourishes in an information vacuum. Mission communication during transitions must be robust and proactive. Ahead of each transition milestone, Missions should communicate across digital and traditional platforms to ensure others do not frame their posture in negative or harmful ways. Changes in plans should be communicated promptly, and information should be easily accessible, including in local languages. Communications on the Mission's long-term contribution should also be prioritised. Where possible, communication on the transition should be conducted jointly with national counterparts, including through regular press conferences, media engagements, and field visits.

Step 7: Work With Partners

While Missions can and must work actively to counter MDH narratives targeting them, their efforts are likely to be **more successful when supported by community figures**. Credible civil society actors (fact-checking organizations; credible media and editors' forums; and other organizations) and supportive public figures can help echo missions' key messages. Care should be taken to assess potential harms and risks to those organisations, including after the Mission leaves, ahead of partnering with them. Mobilizing these partners beforehand would prove helpful, with due consideration to mitigate any second-order negative consequences from communicating on behalf of the United Nations.

Step 8: **Help Build Societal Resilience**

Ensuring that the information ecosystem in host countries is built on accurate and reliable information, (i.e. information with integrity) is a long-term and critical process with significant implications for governance and the civic space. Building societal resilience against MDH requires UN action across various areas, including media/digital literacy, public information campaigns especially targeting youth, support to free and independent media, protection of journalists and other media workers. Missions contribute to some of these actions. As part of a transition, consideration should be given to **developing UN system joint programming** to continue work in this important area, through joint planning instruments such as the CCAs and UN Cooperation Frameworks, and financial facilities such as the Peacebuilding Fund. Mission may consider collaborating with local educational institutions to promote media literacy as part of the curriculum.

Step 9: **Plan Beyond the Transition**

MDH narratives targeting Missions often serve short-term political objectives and have long-term effects on UN peacekeeping. Missions should consider, in coordination with **UNCT and UNHQ**, how to establish systems and procedures, including remote monitoring from UNHQ, to address these challenges beyond withdrawal. As Missions often engage communities at the grassroots level and create mechanisms such as alert networks or peace committees, UNCTs should work to **maintain these contacts and networks** as key channels for two-way communication and for identifying and addressing MDH narratives. Where possible, UNCTs should maintain and support these networks through a designated AFP.

Step 10: **Keep Stakeholders Informed**

Ensure that the host authorities are appraised of any information risks and risk mitigation measures taken by the UN system. Endeavour to achieve host authority involvement, if possible, and support for efforts to strengthen information integrity during and after the transition period. Similarly, ensure that the diplomatic community in-country, as well as relevant UN legislative bodies are are aware of MDH risk mitigation efforts, and enlist their support, as relevant.

For further information

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