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*Our Common Peacebuilding Challenge*  
– *The Contribution of “International Geneva”* –

**Session 1: The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: One Year On**

**Palais des Nations – Room XXI, Tuesday, 6 November 2007**

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Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and Colleagues,

Ambassador Takasu’s opening remarks have provided a comprehensive overview of the Commission’s first year of operation. He has shared both his vision and the priorities he has established to mark his Chairmanship.

My intervention is complementary, and provides the view from the Secretariat. I intend to identify some of the peacebuilding lessons we have learned over the past year or more; and highlight those areas where the Secretary-General attaches particular importance for the work of peacebuilding architecture.

Before I begin, I would like to pay a special tribute to our host, “International Geneva” for there is perhaps no better venue than Geneva – home to some three dozen international organizations, 250 NGOs and more than 150 foreign missions – to come together with the purpose of integrating our capacities and expertise to strengthen the global peacebuilding response through the Peacebuilding Commission.

The sheer interest and indeed passion for our subject matter within this forum is a reminder that our success depends upon the work of a critical mass of peacebuilding actors. And while the UN can provide the institutional and legal framework for peacebuilding, it is the multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, regional institutions, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and civil-society actors that will complement and fill in the substance.

The challenge for the Peacebuilding Commission in this regard – and one of its founding principles – is “to bring together all the relevant actors” – to gather all of this expertise and put forward a coherent effort focused on agreed priorities. If peacebuilding is going to work, it must do so on a shared understanding of the problems, a shared commitment to work together to address them effectively, and a shared acknowledgment of the responsibility to remain engaged until the job is done.

So, what else have we learned about peacebuilding efforts during these past few years?

### ***1. Lessons Learned***

**For one, there's growing recognition that the Peacebuilding Commission and its supporting architecture exists because we have not been getting post-conflict interventions right.** In the past, international efforts tended to be diffuse, uncoordinated and not necessarily aligned effectively with national peacebuilding needs. Moreover, these fragmented approaches often reflected multiple and competing priorities on the one hand, and the lack of sustained attention and sufficient resources on the other. Moving off the agenda of the Security Council should be a welcome event, not an excuse for international support and attention to dry up. The Commission is an important step forward.

**Two, we have learned the importance of strategic planning and setting the priorities at the outset.** We know that piecemeal initiatives seldom add up to sustainable peace. The scale of the commitment, the actors involved, and the sequencing of events are critical for success. The PBC recognizes that after a devastating civil conflict, everything legitimately can be called a priority. The trick, however, is for all the actors to agree on a short list of key priorities, which need to be addressed to keep the country on track politically, enable it to meet the urgent needs of its citizens, and begin the process of economic recovery. (The integrated peacebuilding strategy, or IPBS, is a plan that clearly lays out the objectives, bringing everyone together behind one set of priorities. So far, the approach is working well in Burundi and we anticipate similar results in Sierra Leone. Peacebuilding in any given country is *sui generis*, and the IPBS is flexible enough to change according to the partners, priorities, and parameters of assistance.)

**Three, we have learned that 'national ownership,' including an active role for civil society is the cornerstone of long-term recovery.** A country must decide to engage with the PBC, and its own priorities are at the heart of the work of the commission. The PBC has placed a premium on this principle during its dealings with Sierra Leone and Burundi, which have led to innovative approaches with refreshing results, which I'm certain Ambassadors Lovald and Majoor will share with you in a moment.

I'll add a caveat, however, that while we must always respect political responsibility on the ground, it is important for the PBC to address the political fragilities inherent in post-conflict situations, and have the ability to advise newly

minted governments if they fall off track. In both Burundi and Sierra Leone there is evidence that this role for the Commission has had a positive effect.

**Four, we have learned that financing for post conflict recovery is essential, particularly as many of the affected countries are ones which were described as “aid orphans” by the World Bank, and had been the “forgotten crises”.** Serious long-term financial attention, including broadened donor bases, is fundamental to recovery. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is a useful instrument and is being applied strategically, but funding for peacebuilding will require massive amounts well beyond the capacity of the Fund. If member states are prepared to see the annual budget (from assessed budgets) for peacekeeping grow to \$8 billion a year, then where is the equivalent effort for ensuring that peacekeeping efforts are not wasted during the peacebuilding phase?

**A related lesson learned I will call four and a half, is the need for donors to move out of their comfort zones and tackle non-traditional areas of assistance.** SSR, DDR, governance and rule of law are not always every donor’s preference, but they are critical for preparing sustainable development. Each member of the PBC will need to determine what contribution it can make individually to the PBC’s success on the ground. Just as important, we need to invest more in understanding the history of neglect and devise means to ensure that donor decision-making on the allocation of aid funds does not leave some countries out in the cold with no friends. The PBC success will be the sum of its parts.

**A fifth lesson learned is the importance of defining terminology, before others do it for you.** There are few examples where post-conflict transitions have involved a linear progression from war to peace. Likewise, the corresponding responses – conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping – are never sequential, but rather staggered or simultaneous. Perhaps because of the PBC’s engagements in Burundi and Sierra Leone, countries on the Security Council’s agenda, and former hosts of peacekeeping missions, there’s a notion that peacebuilding is a follow-on set of activities. And while I suspect the establishment of integrated offices will be found to be a best practice, the Commission is not limited to countries before the Security Council, and nor should peacebuilding be regarded as a rung on a ladder. Rather, it the whole ladder, a broader concept, introduced at any phase of a transition process.

## ***II. Priorities for Performance in Year Two & the Role of “International Geneva”***

The Commission, the Fund and the Support Office remain ‘works in progress,’ but have shown real potential for real results on the ground. As the

architecture continues to take form, and build its base, there is considerable scope for the active engagement of “International Geneva” in New York, in the field, and virtually through enhanced web-based networks. In this regard, I will flag four key areas:

**One, is to support the further clarification of sequencing, or rather introduction, of post-conflict tools in the UN arsenal.** And here, I see the capacity review undertaken here in Geneva as a valuable complement to the previous UN wide peacebuilding inventory. A combination of these databases, and their upkeep, strike me as valuable for the Commission as it moves forward in its work plan.

**Two, is determining the indicators for peacebuilding success.** The Commission and indeed the Secretariat need a better understanding of why countries fall back into conflict as a basis for keeping them on track. How can we, UN departments and agencies, and the broader peacebuilding alliance, work together to ensure that our actions and investments are as effective as possible and aimed at the right targets?

**Three, is the need to explore thematic issues relevant to peacebuilding.** This is linked to the Commission’s desire to be a substantive knowledge based body whose influence on peacebuilding goes beyond the countries on its agenda. Geneva partners represented here today constitute an important contribution to the field of peacebuilding. What opportunities exist for your participation in NY-based processes, and involvement in the PBSO facilitated ‘Community of Practice,’ we anticipate launching later this month?

My final point is linked to one of the PBSO’s critical functions, which is to serve as a knowledge centre for lessons learned and good practices on peacebuilding. An important aspect of this will be the creation of web-based networks to bring together the growing number of civil society, academic and government efforts in peacebuilding.

### ***III. Conclusion:***

Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes my remarks. There is much knowledge and expertise assembled in this room and I am anxious to hear your views on how we can work together to put the lessons learned into practice, and address our common peacebuilding challenge.

Thank you very much.