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Secretary-General

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SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS ENDORSEMENT OF PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

A TURNING POINT IN REMARKS FOLLOWING HISTORIC EVENT

Following is the text of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's remarks on the General Assembly's endorsement of the Peacebuilding Commission in New York today, 20 December:

I am delighted that the General Assembly and the Security Council have now agreed in detail on how to implement the World Summit decision to establish a Peacebuilding Commission.

This achievement marks a turning point in our efforts to help States and societies manage the difficult transition from war to peace. Following last week's creation of a revitalized Central Emergency Response Fund, today's measure marks another important step towards the renewed United Nations envisioned in my report, *In Larger Freedom*, and mandated by the World Summit Outcome Document.

The work of the United Nations to build peace has intensified in recent years as the complexity and scope of post-conflict challenges have increased. We have worked to provide humanitarian assistance and to better link emergency aid to longer-term reconstruction and recovery efforts. In East Timor and Kosovo, we have even had to assume responsibilities normally undertaken by Governments.

This work has not been easy. Indeed, our hard-won successes have been tempered by some sad failures. But we have learned from our mistakes, and improved our capacity.

Yet, till now, a critical institutional gap persisted. For while many parts of the United Nations have been involved in the peacebuilding process, the system has lacked a dedicated entity to oversee the process, ensure its coherence, or sustain it through the long haul. This resulted in fractured peacebuilding operations, with no single forum for all the relevant actors to come together, share information, and develop a common strategy. Too often, a fragile peace has been allowed to crumble into renewed conflict.

Today's General Assembly resolution goes a long way towards bridging this gap. The Peacebuilding Commission will help countries make the transition from war to peace. It will advise on recovery. It will focus attention on reconstruction and institution-building. It will improve coordination both within and beyond the UN system. It will develop best practices and ensure predictable funding. Perhaps most important of all, it will liaise with the international community to keep us all engaged in the long-term recovery effort.

The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission is a historic measure, but it must be a beginning, not an end. If we are to ensure that the Commission functions properly, if it is truly to make a difference, not in these halls but in the countries where its help is needed -- we must take the utmost care when establishing country-specific groups. We must make sure that, for every conflict, these groups reflect the views and voices of the main stakeholders. We must also see to it that the Commission is adequately supported by a new Peacebuilding Support Office. This Office, to be based within the Secretariat, will

provide the Commission with the information and analysis it needs to coordinate the UN's peacebuilding efforts.

In short, it is vital that the momentum of this reform is sustained. But right now, we have real reason to be satisfied.

Let me congratulate the General Assembly on today's historic vote. Let me thank especially President Eliasson and the co-chairs of the informal discussion -- the Permanent Representatives of Denmark and Tanzania -- as well as their staffs, for their hard work over these past weeks and months.

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