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UN PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION: LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE CHALLENGES
Taking Stock & Looking at the Future Role of Germany and the European Union
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Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

Es ist mir eine Ehre zu diesem Anlass in Berlin sein zu dürfen und eine noch viel grössere dieses besondere Forum mit einer Anfangsrede einzuleiten.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to be in Berlin on this occasion, and an honour to sound the keynote address at this distinguished forum.

Let me start by extending my appreciation to the German Foreign Office for inviting me today and for the warm hospitality.

My topic today is an examination of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC): Lessons Learned and Future Challenges.

I. Introduction

Fifteen years after UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali's groundbreaking 1992 Agenda for Peace which introduced the concept of peacebuilding within the UN, the international community has put together new peacebuilding architecture to support countries in transition from conflict to peace and development.

The Peacebuilding Commission is a new tool, born of the realization that the international community was not succeeding in its engagements in post-conflict countries.

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has grappled with the challenges of identifying diagnostics, and developing policy instruments and new practices. In each of the traditional disciplines --- peacekeeping, humanitarian relief or development --- mandates, roles and responsibilities evolved to overcome the shortcomings of existing tools and approaches.

By 2000, traditional peacekeeping operations had extended their mandates through the addition of a wide range of activities that fall under the banner of peacebuilding, including the monitoring and organization of elections and the reform, or even the creation, of governmental institutions.

Humanitarian actors and development agencies also shifted their *modus operandi* in reaction to the nature of intra-state conflicts that came to preoccupy the international community at the end of the Cold War. Following the first Gulf War, the humanitarian business mushroomed, giving rise to calls for better international management of humanitarian response. This led to the creation of what is now OCHA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Likewise, Development actors were increasingly called upon to provide assistance to countries that were at various phases of the transition from conflict even though their tool kit was not designed to deal with the challenges facing conflict or post-conflict countries trying to maintain the basic functions of the state.

The International Financial Institutions, particularly the World Bank, and the UN agencies, particularly UNDP, began developing instruments to deal with fragile states and conflict prone countries. The Post Conflict Needs Assessment is a broad based analytical tool being applied by members of the UN Development Group in cooperation other

multilateral actors. The IFIs are developing more tools and increasing their assistance to fragile states.

Concepts and practices of peacebuilding, therefore, were moving ahead, informing peacekeeping, humanitarian and development approaches. For policy makers, peacebuilders and academics alike, it was obvious that war termination was the beginning of the next set of challenges, requiring major financial and continued military resources along with political commitments.

There were a number of attempts to address this within the UN system. The Security Council in 1998 encouraged the Secretary-General to find ways to establish a peacebuilding capability and two years later, the Brahimi Report recommended the creation of a focal point for peacebuilding within the United Nations Secretariat to coordinate the many different activities that peace entails.

It was within this context that in 2004, the *Report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats Challenges and Change* suggested the creation of a new intergovernmental body to provide the sustained attention that had been lacking. In his report, *In Larger Freedom*, prepared for the World Summit in September 2005, the Secretary-General proposed that this body advise on and promote integrated strategies for peacebuilding, with a primary focus on country specific activities in support of effective country-level planning. In his words, “no part of the UN system effectively addresses the challenge of helping countries transition from war to lasting peace.”

The UN General Assembly's Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit laid down as one of its most important reform proposals, a Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory committee, a subsidiary of both the Security Council and the General Assembly, to address the critical gap in the international community's ability to meet the needs of countries emerging from violent conflict.

The Commission is forum in which the UN, major bilateral donors, troop contributors, relevant regional actors and organizations, IFIs, civil

society and national governments can come together to share information about post-conflict recovery strategies; to engage in coherent decision-making around agreed priorities; and to ensure predictable financing and sustained political and financial attention. In other words, to “accompany” countries and people emerging from conflict on their road to recovery.

Through the Commission, we are identifying policy and institutional reform responses to overcome the North (security) - South (development/justice) divergence in priorities and by addressing security, development, and human rights concerns together—we are strengthening the major pillars of the UN’s agenda.

Just 18 months old, the Commission is in its early days. It is still experiencing ‘procedural growth,’ as it settles into the UN machinery. In this regard, and more broadly, there remain serious challenges to overcome, some of which I will highlight today, but there are some important successes to acknowledge, particularly in the Commission’s core mandated areas of marshaling support and resources and improving coordination within the United Nations system and more broadly, the international community.

In Burundi and Sierra Leone, the PBC has helped keep peacebuilding processes on track and has provided critical support, both political and financial where needed. We witnessed this last fall during Burundi’s Parliamentary deadlock, and ahead of Sierra Leone’s historical elections. By encouraging inclusive approaches and ensuring that national governments remain in the drivers seat; the PBC has marshaled sources of funding, by attracting new donors, as in the case of Guinea-Bissau, when earlier this week, PBC Member Brazil announced €2m in aid and budgetary support. Similarly, PBC Member Norway has recently increased the level of its bilateral assistance to Burundi.

In engaging with these countries, the Commission has taken seriously its mandate “to bring together all the relevant actors”. If peacebuilding is going to work, it must do so on a shared understanding of the problems and a shared commitment to work together to address them effectively. It is in this way that we can address the gap identified

and bring all the sectors including bilateral and multilateral, national and international actors together in the search for strategic and meaningful solutions.

This approach is manifested in each of the PBC's configurations. The PBC's Organizational Committee brings together 31 Member States, to establish the work agenda for the PBC, including the establishment of the medium-term calendar for the Commission's wide-ranging activities, development of Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies (IPBS), and related policy dialogue.

Country Specific Meetings look at issues particular to individual focus countries and bring in all the political, financial and development actors, including, as an essential element, the country itself. The concept of local ownership is paramount. A country must decide to engage with the PBC, and its own priorities are at the heart of the work of the commission.

Within the country committees, the PBC engages with the country to develop a clear strategy based on priorities and commitments from the country and its partners to address the priorities. The PBC recognizes that after a devastating civil conflict, everything legitimately can be a priority. However, it is essential for all 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 test for the Commission's effectiveness is ultimately the impact it has on sustaining international attention and affecting positively the lives of people in the countries it assists. Allow me to highlight some examples of tangible progress to date in Burundi, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau.

II. Overview of Tangible Progress

In the midst of its second session, the PBC country-specific meetings on Burundi and Sierra Leone, are now implementing their

respective Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies (IPBS) after the considerable undertaking of conceptualizing and adopting the plans throughout 2007.

In Burundi, the Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism, adopted on December 5th 2007, is guiding the Commission's work in the areas of good governance, rule of law, security sector reform, community recovery and youth empowerment and employment. The PBC has also worked to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement, one of the main peacebuilding benchmarks in the PBC's engagement with the Government of Burundi. In this regard, I traveled with the CSM Chair, Ambassador Johan Løvald (Norway) to attend a meeting of Special Envoys convened in Cape Town by the South African Government in their capacity as the Facilitation of the Burundi Peace Process. We are all encouraged by the progress in Burundi, and we are very pleased that Germany has recently indicated its intentions to increase support to this developing Central African country.

In Sierra Leone, the PBC adopted a Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework on December 12th of last year. The focus of work is now on implementation, including efforts to diversify the donor base, support upcoming local council elections, and implement the Country's energy sector emergency plan. A CSM meeting held on February 14th on the subject of local elections and energy sector resulted in a strong appeal to contribute to the UNDP Basket Fund for Local Council Elections to meet the funding gap of almost \$13 million. Positive indications of support have already been received from the UK and the US to provide additional funding for elections.

Guinea-Bissau joined the Commission's agenda in December 2007. Since then, the Guinea-Bissau country-specific meeting has met on several occasions, and it Chair, the Permanent Representative of Brazil, traveled to Bissau in January to meet with national partners and begin the identification of peacebuilding priorities. On the 20th of February, a high-level Government delegation from Guinea-Bissau came to New York to present its priorities for peacebuilding in the country. The following day, the PBC requested the Secretary-General to declare

Guinea-Bissau eligible for support from the Peacebuilding Fund. We anticipate an announcement shortly. To support the Commission, the PBSO recently brought together all of the UN system partners to stand-up a *de facto* integrated office to boost our field capabilities and improve UN delivery.

In other areas of work, the Commission's *Working Group on Lessons Learned*, created to "provide advice, develop peacebuilding strategies, and to accumulate best practices..." has held 8 special sessions during the past year. Subjects have included strategic frameworks, budget support, local governance, gender, and transitional justice. The informal and frank nature of the discussion, coupled with broad membership, has been generally appreciated by participants and efforts are underway to ensure greater impact on planning and programming, particularly by capturing and applying the lessons learned.

There is further considerable progress to report on allocations from the *Peacebuilding Fund*. Established as the second pillar of the architecture, the PBF responds to the reality that, all too often, peacebuilding is hindered by a scarcity of financing for critical elements which could not be covered by traditional development funding mechanisms. Into its second year of operation, the PBF has attracted pledges totaling \$256 million (exceeding the initial target of \$250 million). A total of 42 donors have deposited almost \$198,000,000 against these pledges.

The core of the fund will go to countries on the agenda of the PBC, but the UN Secretary General can declare other countries eligible, as in the case of Liberia, Nepal, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Conakry. The Secretary-General has appointed an independent advisory group to provide advice and oversight of the speed and appropriateness of fund allocations and to examine performance and financial reports. That Group met earlier this week in New York to review the workings of the Fund.

III. Lessons Learned During the First 18 Months

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

While it is a bit early in the Commission's life to draw conclusions and lessons learned, there are a number of practices and issues one might flag on the workings of the Commission:

- First, I believe it is important to keep the PBC focused, at least initially, on those countries that would otherwise be the forgotten crises. If the PBC is drawn into the major crises which are already the subject of massive international effort it will risk having little value added at this stage. It is in Haiti and Liberia, Burundi and Sierra Leone, that the PBC can make a difference, not in Afghanistan or Iraq which already have access to sustained international attention.
- Two, in coordinating the efforts of all the players, the Commission must involve active and operational participation of the whole range of national and international partners. As well as the IFIs, donors and UN actors, this means bringing in critical neighbors and regional actors in support of such processes and civil society on the ground.
- Three, the strategic approaches of the Commission must be funded, and we must not confuse the Peacebuilding Fund (\$250m) with Funding for Peacebuilding. If peacekeeping can rightly draw on up to \$8 billion to fund its operations through assessed budgets, how can we ensure that the PBC can develop the capacity to generate predictable resources for peacebuilding?
- Four, each member of the PBC will need to determine what contribution it can make individually to the PBC's success on the ground. The PBC success will be the sum of its parts and we must avoid the tendency to hide behind the collective nature of an inter-governmental body. Here too, are seeing some movements from emerging donors, but we also need to see

consistent Member State positions in the various UN organs and board where they participate.

- Finally, how can we have a proper discussion on the future agenda of the PBC so that the PBC, the Security Council and the UN Secretariat and the countries themselves can prepare?

On the broader peacebuilding agenda, I believe we can also draw a number of conclusions from the past 18 months.

- The Commission will not be able to address all the world's post conflict situations. We must use the process to learn lessons to apply more broadly to ensure the widest possible multiplier effect. The Commission can direct this effort.
- The PB architecture will need to enhance the study of root causes to help assess how we can make a real difference in understanding why countries fall back into conflict as a basis for keeping them on track. How can we ensure that our actions and investments are as effective as possible and aimed at the right targets?
- We need to invest more in understanding the history of neglect and devise means to triangulate our expenditure as donors with the aid orphans/forgotten crises and identify potential crisis countries.
- On a more strategic level, this means that the Commission can become the place in the international structure where we can address state failure as an issue of a level of neglect which has strategic global implications. Modern society can not afford to see a large segment of the world's population slip further and further back from the growth pattern which increasingly characterizes the rest of the world.
- This means that the PBC can become the place to overcome the ongoing tension in the UN on the North-South divide. Can

success in peacebuilding help us to bring the Peace and Security agenda closer to the Development agenda and help us find ways of working together on these issues, which we now realize are often two sides of the same coin?

IV. Challenges for the Peacebuilding Commission

Clearly there are challenges inherent in the preceding items; however, I do want to raise a few other challenges for the PBC.

The first is the issue of capacity. Can the PBC operate on more than 2-3 countries per year? Expanding the agenda now, would be very difficult for the Member States and for my modestly-staffed office. While we thought initially that the Commission's involvement with countries would wane into the second year, that hasn't been the case, and in some cases engagements have intensified.

A second related concern is the length of time the Commission should remain engaged with a country. What happens after 3-4 years? Will Sierra Leone and Burundi be ready to depart from the Commission's agenda? How do we determine success?

A third issue is the forward agenda. Can the Commission handle continent-sized countries like Sudan (North/South issue) and DRC? And what about possible pressure to engage in Afghanistan and the Middle East?

These are all issues that eventually will come to the fore, and that will require our collective efforts to address as an international community in the weeks and months to come.

V. Conclusion

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the first-ever PBC retreat last January, the Secretary-General remarked that "dealing with the aftermath of war is costly, and

strengthening the UN's capacity to resolve conflicts earlier rather than later is among the smartest investments we can make. The Commission will be critical to ensuring that our investment in peace is protected for the benefit of the people.”

The tools being developed in the UN are strategic and potentially effective to change the manner in which we work as an international community to assist post-conflict countries. But we mustn't leave the UN out there alone. Without all the players inside the tent and an agreement on where we are going – even the best structures collapse and tools fail.

We must recognize that the move from open conflict to peace is a move from violent conflict to managing the remaining parts of the conflict, plus the normal conflict inherent in any society. Peace is a long-hard slog, and we must be sure to give the Commission enough time to prove its worth. The final test of its effectiveness will not be how many meetings it holds, or how much attention it generates for a country, but rather it's impact on the lives of people.

I know that you will be addressing many of these questions and issues today in your deliberations. In this regard, I am looking forward to discussing the peacebuilding architecture with you in frank and constructive manner, and exploring a future role for Germany.

Thank you.

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