

CAROLYN McASKIE, June 23, 2008
CLOSING REMARKS TO THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

Ambassador Takasu, Secretary-General, friends and colleagues
Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today

First of all, let me say what a privilege it has been for me to be associated with this wonderful and timely experiment. Working for so long in development, then in humanitarian response and in peacekeeping, I was always convinced that there was something missing. When I worked in development, I worried that our emphasis on rewarding performance was leaving out too many countries struggling to deal with so many obstacles. When I dealt with humanitarian issues, I believed that the most important form of humanitarian response was to solve the conflict. And when I was a peacekeeper I questioned how we were going to address the need for economic stimulation at a time of post conflict stabilization.

Peacebuilding was a natural progression. Finally, we are coming to grips with the challenge of bringing all these elements together and the efforts made by many of you here on the Commission are bringing us closer to a solution. It is one of the most important challenges facing the UN today, especially as it is not yet fully recognized as such by all the players.

I have more often seen the “soft” side of the ledger – being involved in development and humanitarian objectives, while those in charge of political and security matters were seen as the serious business, whether at the national level or the international level. We have not yet fully succeeded in convincing all those who deal with the challenges of finding political or security solutions that the economic, humanitarian and human rights solutions must be found at the same time. We repeat the mantra that we can’t have peace without development and we can’t have development without peace. But more needs to be done to ensure that the building blocks of peace are well defined and delivered early on, even during a crisis, and certainly during peace negotiations and peace stabilization stages.

I will be sorry to leave the UN, but I came down for one assignment, and now it is nine years and three assignments later, and I have been extremely energized by working with the PBC for the past two years. I wanted today to take the opportunity to congratulate all of you for your sincere dedication to making this a working successful body. It has been clear from the start that member states wanted the PBC to be a substantive mechanism that delivers on its mandate of accompanying post conflict countries. You were never just another talk shop and as a result you can look at what you have accomplished with satisfaction. This was obvious from last week’s adoption of the review of the Sierra Leone strategy, today’s adoption of the Burundi strategic review, and the fact that we will soon adopt the strategy for Guinea Bissau.

We have a long way to go and I know that the new leadership will want to take a strategic view of what needs to be accomplished in the next phase. We have had two dynamic leaders in our first two years, Angola and Japan, both from different ends of the earth, but

both determined to put the PBC on the map. We have had dedicated members shepherding the country exercises, Norway for Burundi, Netherlands for Sierra Leone, Brazil for Guinea-Bissau, and now Belgium for Central African Republic. El Salvador has led the way on our lessons learned exercise. The success of the PBC has depended on their example of strategic vision and deep commitment. I think we have the hardest working chairs in the UN system.

The PBC is a unique partnership. I believe it is in the PBC that you can begin to solve the so-called North South debate, showing that development attention and peace and security go hand in hand, and by addressing those countries which would otherwise be the forgotten crises. It is in the PBC that we can find a new mechanism for predictable funding for countries recovering from conflict. It is in the PBC that we can find a way to bring the security, political, development, humanitarian and human rights agendas together in the cause of lasting peace, truly bringing all the relevant actors to the table.

Under the leadership of the UN Secretary General, it is up to all of us in the Secretariat to recognize your accomplishments and ensure that we can keep up with you, both in the advice we can give you and in the way we can organize better to do our work. The movement towards greater integration, especially in the field is one that serves peacebuilding well. But if I may be allowed to encourage you as I leave, please do accept that support to the work of the Commission in particular and to peacebuilding in general will require the provision of real professional resources, to strengthen the process at all levels, whether in the PBF, in developing best practices, in advising and supporting the field, or in providing the PBC with full support.

The PBSO team has worked tirelessly and I have been privileged to have such a great group of dedicated professionals. We have all felt we were participating in the start of something new and exciting. Thank you so much to all of you.

I would like to pay tribute to our energetic chairperson, Ambassador Takasu, who has always taken the strategic view and who has had the interests of the PBC at heart throughout his term. His statement today is ample evidence of this. Unfortunately we are not yet in a position to welcome the new chair, but I know this will be settled shortly. Let me, in closing, wish you all well as you continue this vital work. I will follow the developments on the Peacebuilding Architecture closely and from my heart.