

New York, 19th of September 2005

H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the General Assembly

Last week, our Heads of States or Governments agreed on how to strengthen the United Nations to the benefit of all people – women and men, girls and boys.

The outcome document is a roadmap, a call for swift action in a number of areas, including the establishing of a Peacebuilding Commission. It is also a compass, a set of principles that should guide all actions and efforts. One is gender equality and the full and equal participation and involvement of women in promoting peace and security.

When meeting yesterday, we – the Foreign Ministers of 14 countries and the EU Commissioner for External Relations - discussed concrete ideas on how to merge these two central decisions to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated in the design and work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The details of the composition and working methods are now to be developed by the 60th session of the General Assembly. As a guide for this work, we agreed that:

- Representation is essential. The Organizational Committee must include a good balance of Member States, including countries with experience of conflict as well as donor countries and troop-contributing countries. However, a well balanced Peacebuilding Commission also demands a fair representation of both women and men. We urge Member States, the UN system, regional and sub-regional organisations, and international financial institutions to nominate women as representatives in the Organizational Committee and to Country-specific meetings. Women and representatives of women's organisations in countries under considerations must be heard and participate. The goal must be to form a Peacebuilding Commission that in all its aspects has an equal representation of women and men.

- Knowledge is key. The Commission must have an in-depth knowledge of the roles, experiences and needs of women in post-conflict situations. When deciding on details of the design and working methods of the Commission and its support office, particular attention must be paid to including knowledge and understanding of the participation, empowerment and special needs of women in post-conflict and peace-building.

- Funding is crucial and mainstreaming a must. The needs and roles of women and girls must be taken into consideration when designing and developing activities funded by the standing Peacebuilding Fund. Furthermore, a gender perspective must be thoroughly integrated in all recommendations, activities, reports, strategies and best practices analyses from the Commission, the Fund and the Support Office.

By deciding to establish a Peacebuilding Commission, we have shown our determination to prevent old conflicts from relapsing, and to promote reconstruction, institution-building and sustainable development. The challenge ahead is to make sure that these efforts embrace, and improve, the daily life of both women and men. The ideas above are one contribution to that process.

Sincerely Yours.

H.E. Ms. Ursula Plassnik, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria
H.E. Dame Billie Miller, Senior Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados
H.E. Ms. Antionette Batumubwire, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burundi
H.E. Ms. Carolina Barco Isakson, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia
H.E. Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia
H.E. Ms. Salomé Zourabichvili, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
H.E. Ms. Fatoumata Kaba-Sidibe, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guinea
H.E. Ms. Rita Kieber-Beck, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein
H.E. Ms. Ilinka Mitreva, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Macedonia
H.E. Ms. Alcinda Abreu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mozambique
H.E. Ms. Leila Rachid de Cowles, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay
H.E. Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland
H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa
H.E. Ms. Laila Freivalds, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden
Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner of the European Commission