

Meeting of the PBC Working Group on Lessons Learned
“Institution Building Efforts in Afghanistan
- Experiences and Challenges to be shared with PBC”

New York, 7 July 2015

Chair’s Summary

The PBC Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) held a meeting at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN on Tuesday, 7 July 2015, from 3.30pm to 5pm, under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Motohide Yoshikawa (Japan). The guest speaker of the meeting was Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). About 50 participants exchanged views on the theme of “Institution building efforts in Afghanistan- experiences and challenges to be shared with PBC”.

I. Introduction

In his introductory remarks, **the Chair** recalled that the WGLL dedicated its work this year to the question of “Institution Building: the Challenges for the UN system”. In this context, he explained the objective of today’s meeting by noting that, although Afghanistan was not a PBC agenda country, it had faced the similar challenges as the PBC agenda countries: thus, its experiences, current challenges and perspective could give the WGLL useful insights to deepen its considerations on the theme.

II. Presentation by DSRSG/UNAMA

DSRSG Yamamoto, who is in charge of political affairs in UNAMA including electoral issues, briefed the meeting on major political developments in Afghanistan since its historical democratic transition was realized through the presidential elections held last year. He underscored the following two points: First, this year marks the beginning of the Afghan “Transformation Decade”. Afghanistan is working towards more self-reliance. Second, the Afghan leaders, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, are strongly committed to the Government of National Unity (GNU); but the exercise of making the GNU function through compromise representing their respective

political camps is by no means an easy affair, as shown by the time-consuming process of nominating Cabinet Ministers. According to Mr. Yamamoto, however, these two leaders are clearly conscious of the importance of maintaining the Government of National Unity, which, they understand, is the best practicable framework available to rebuild the country.

Furthermore, the **DSRSG** shared with the meeting perspectives on nation-building in Afghanistan. He explained that the Afghan Government underscored the importance of national ownership. To this end, the challenges are how to reflect national ownership in nation-building efforts into the current political reality. The **DSRSG** also noted that the institutional and administrative issues relating to the electoral process, such as revision of the constitution and composition of the Electoral Reform Commission, were rather more political than purely administrative, which might create some tension among stakeholders.

Finally, **DSRSG Yamamoto** mentioned that despite its efforts, the GNU faces the following major challenges in their nation-building efforts in addition to the security issues which are fundamental:

- A) Strengthening capacity-building: the international community has invested billions of dollars in capacity-building, but had not yet created enough cadre of expertise within the country. International Community will need to continue its assistance with a longer term perspective in partnership with the GNU always maintaining dialogue.
- B) Strengthening administrative institutions: Nurturing of the middle level management as well as clearly defined policy vision or strategic Guidance would be highly helpful. Social acceptance: Particularly valid regarding the justice system.
- C) Consideration should be given to tradition and religion: but at the same time, safeguard the dignity and human rights required of a modern state.
- D) Fight against corruption and impunity: Awareness of the need for reform in these areas exists; but will require time as well as decisive actions. Some premature actions led to dis-functioning of the government.
- E) Transparency: Necessary to gain confidence of the people and of the international community, particularly the donors.

III. Discussions

Following the presentation, **Sierra Leone** (Permanent Representative), **Germany**, **DPKO** (Policy and Best Practices Section), **Nigeria** and **U.K.** took the floor. Responding to their questions, **DSRSG Yamamoto** provided further information with regard to UNAMA's role in relations between the UN and Afghanistan; perspective of peace talks between the Government and Taliban; inclusivity and gender issues; concrete outcome of capacity-building assistance. Furthermore, the **DPKO** representative shared some lessons learned based on her experiences working on Afghanistan: for example, assistance for capacity-building in post-conflict countries needs to be done on a solid foundation; importance of partnership with those actors who share the same culture and language; importance of inclusivity; and importance of national ownership especially at the exit phase.

The **PBSO** representative pointed out that institution building was not simply a technical exercise, but a political one in post-conflict countries. He recalled that, though training and financing aspects were the focus when addressing institution building, reconciliation inclusivity and ownership were also important elements for building resilient institutions.

With regard to the question of the extension of state authority, which was the main subject of the last WGLL expert-level meeting held on 19 May 2015, **DSRSG Yamamoto** mentioned that confidence of people in the Government depends on provision of service and safety. In this regard, he added that Afghan leaders recognized the necessity to take steps to extend authority of the state and there are considerable efforts made by the government in this area.

Before concluding the meeting, **the Chair** noted that the outcome of today's meeting would be incorporated into the WGLL annual report.
