

PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

First Annual Session

Opening Statement by

H.E. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota

Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations
Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission

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Mr. Jan Eliasson, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General,

His Excellency Jose Ramos-Horta, Nobel Laureate and Former President of Timor Leste

Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support

Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

On 23 June 2006, the Peacebuilding Commission convened its first meeting as the new UN intergovernmental organ dedicated to addressing the complex challenges of post-conflict situations. At its first ever High Level meeting in 2012, the Commission decided to mark that date as the “Peacebuilding Day”. Today, we commemorate the Peacebuilding Day by convening the first annual session of the Commission.

At the very first meeting of the Commission in 2006, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted the weaknesses of international responses to post-conflict situations. Gaps in critical funding, lack of coordination and the short-attention span of many international actors left countries emerging

from conflict without the political, technical and financial support they needed to secure hard-won peace and stability.

These gaps had serious consequences as people who were hoping to enjoy the fruits of peace were again confronted with violence and displacement. The international community was frequently called upon to redeploy, at great cost to all, where they had only recently withdrew.

Kofi Annan specifically referred to Timor-Leste where, at that time, the closure of the UN mission was followed by another bout of violent conflict.

Eight years later, the picture is considerably brighter. There is undoubtedly progress in responding to the type of weaknesses described by the former Secretary-General. Today, we can also derive encouragement as we contemplate the distance traveled by Timor-Leste on the path towards sustainable peace and development.

No one can speak better to this success story in the making than our Keynote speaker. Similar achievements are being made by Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

But you would also agree that there continue to be gaps in the international community's support. The recent events in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, not to mention the debacle in Iraq, serve as painful reminders that building and sustaining peace is an arduous, continuous and complex process. In order to ensure continuous, timely, effective and sustained support to peacebuilding understood as a multidimensional process, we need to explore where inter-governmental policy and commitment could be further strengthened, so that the needs of the populations in countries emerging from conflict can be addressed.

We also need to learn from mistaken strategies and policies that led to exacerbation rather than a reduction of tensions and hostility.

Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This annual session, a result of discussions initiated last year in the PBC's Organizational Committee under the leadership of Indonesia, represents an important step in the continuing evolution of the Commission's engagement. In addition to the Commission's country-specific support, the annual session should contribute to the development of policy directions relevant to countries emerging from conflict.

The annual sessions will become a standing occasion for reflection on the role of international frameworks, policies and Member States' commitments in helping countries avoid relapse into conflict.

To this end, the Commission decided to select "the national and international aspects of sustainable resources and capacities for peacebuilding" as the main theme for this first session. As you know, the main theme will be articulated in two sub-themes, to be addressed at two working sessions: one, on "mobilization of international and domestic resources and revenue generation"; and the other on "Lessons learned on the development of national capacities and sustainability of resources in the context of UN Missions' transitions".

On the first topic, we hope the discussions will shed light on the policy gaps and opportunities in intergovernmental action to ensure timely, targeted and sustained support for countries emerging from conflict in the area of domestic resource mobilization. At the same time, the Commission recognizes the urgent need for an effective global policy framework and action to help curb and mitigate the impact of illicit financial flows out of these countries. We need to explore effective mechanisms of international cooperation, coordination and information-sharing to ensure that national revenues are used for inclusive socio-economic development and the strengthening of domestic institutions needed for stability and progress, in accordance with the fundamental principle of national ownership.

On the second topic, we hope to highlight the importance of continued international commitment to countries undergoing post-conflict transitions beyond the draw down and exit of Security Council mandated missions. While the draw down and exit of UN missions often reflects the progress made by these countries in the security and political dimensions of post-conflict transitions, the sustainable generation of domestic resources and capacities is crucial to ensure sustainability of such progress and to deepen national ownership of peacebuilding strategies.

The opening remarks by the Deputy Secretary-General and the keynote address by His Excellency Jose Ramos-Horta will help place the main theme of our discussions today in a broad strategic context.

At the same time, the two working sessions represent the main venue for further reflection on intergovernmental policy development through frank and open interaction and exchange of views amongst delegations, capital-based policy makers, relevant UN officials, representatives of International Financial Institutions and civil society experts. During the two working sessions, we

will be hearing national perspectives by honourable Ministers from Guinea and Sierra Leone, as well as international perspectives from the Commission's key partners in the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I believe the theme selected for our annual session highlights how central to peacebuilding it is to integrate peace and development in a mutually-reinforcing relationship.

The issue of mobilization of domestic resources speaks about concrete strategies to ensure that countries emerging from conflict can increasingly take control of their own policies. Such strategies cannot be viewed, however, solely from a development point of view. It is critical to shed light on the specific political challenges which need to be surpassed in order for increased revenue generation to translate into inclusive peace dividends.

It is important to examine, in that regard, what are the crucial tasks and commitments of national governments, and what are the roles and responsibilities of the international community.

Likewise, the absence of a strong development support, specially in areas such as job creation and provision of public services, is likely to increase the political tensions around post-conflict Governance structures and political agreements. As suggested by Paul Collier, "a post-conflict society has to give overriding priority to the reduction in the risk of renewed conflict".

Therefore, sound post-conflict development strategies become a crucial part of a successful political strategy for ensuring lasting peace.

A people-centered approach, which favors both inclusiveness and national ownership, is therefore essential.

Political leadership and resourcefulness will be required from our peacebuilding practitioners - some of whom are here with us today - in order to support the people struggling in their daily life to embroider the very fragile tapestry of peace.

I would like to conclude with a quote from the opening statement made by the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly at the first meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on 23 June 2006:

“The Peacebuilding Commission was an important contribution to the reform agenda of the United Nations and would help it to achieve what must become one of its top priorities: [that is] to prevent States from sliding back into conflict or developing into failed States”.

These words describe the vision of the man who once led the political and intergovernmental negotiations leading to the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. Today, this man is here as the Deputy Secretary-General. As we open the first ever annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission and as we approach the ten-year Review of the Architecture in 2015, we look to him, in his current capacity, for leadership and a renewed commitment to the original vision that brought us here today.

Thank you.