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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT THE CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC
AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES:
“BUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE:
THE UN ROLE IN POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS”
Washington, D.C., 7 May 2012**

Dr. Brzezinski,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this very warm welcome. It is a great pleasure to be with you this morning.

And it is a special pleasure to share this occasion with you, Dr. Brzezinski. You have been at, or at least near, the center of global affairs for many decades now. And you have always been a good friend of the United Nations. For that we thank you.

And our thanks, as well, to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. We have long been partners. We have shared information and ideas — and people, too.

I am glad that we can continue the exchange today, and I look forward to seeing my good friend and your president, John Hamre, when he returns.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are here to talk about peacebuilding. That topic could not be more timely or important.

Peacebuilding and prevention figure prominently in the action agenda I have set out for my second term as Secretary-General.

And throughout the world, the United Nations is helping fragile countries through delicate post-conflict transitions.

We are there at the crucial period immediately following the end of hostilities... helping to build institutions and address root causes... helping societies torn by war from sliding back into conflict.

We have 16 peacekeeping operations, many carrying out vital peacebuilding work and enabling others to do so.

We also fielded another 15 political missions, some with explicit peacebuilding mandates.

Our record of achievement in nurturing recovery from conflict is long.

Of course, there have been setbacks.

But the bottom-line is clear: the UN is there where we are most needed. And just as clearly, our engagement has helped many societies make a new start.

Peacebuilding saves lives.

It protects human rights and promotes the rule of law.

It saves money, with costs that are a fraction of military operations and of the economic damage caused by conflict.

So it is quite natural that peacebuilding is taking on a greater profile in the work of the United Nations for peace.

And so, it is good to be here, today, to mark six years since the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and its support office.

These institutions were created to provide sustained political support to post-conflict countries, and to provide fast and catalytic funding to peacebuilding efforts.

Last year, the Fund allocated \$100 million for activities in 14 countries.

Our challenge is to sharpen this tool. That is what we are here to talk about today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin our discussion by taking a cue from the headlines.

Twelve days ago, the former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was convicted of crimes against humanity for his role in the conflict in Sierra Leone.

The verdict is yet another landmark in the advance of international criminal justice and our fight against impunity. This is the first conviction of a Head of State for international crimes since the Nuremberg trials. I am certain, as the age of accountability takes hold, that it will not be the last.

But the verdict also provides a window onto UN peacebuilding.

Sierra Leone, where the crimes for which Taylor was convicted were committed, at one time hosted one of our largest UN peacekeeping operations — more than 17,000 personnel.

With its robust mandate, that operation helped to stabilize the country. Today, our peacekeepers are gone. In their place, we have a small political mission — with less than 100 full-time staff.

When violence between political parties erupted in Freetown in 2009, the mission leadership on the ground and the Peacebuilding Commission in New York worked in tandem to forge an agreement.

The Peacebuilding Fund, meanwhile, has supported steps to help young people and others participate in the country's political life.

Such efforts recognize the explicitly political nature of peacebuilding. And they helped to prevent a renewed escalation of political violence.

I visited Sierra Leone two years ago. A number of Sierra Leone's amputees -- the most striking reminder of the war's brutality -- organized a soccer match in my honour. Their determination and dignity show the value of the investment the international community has made in Sierra Leone.

In Liberia, there has been a similar mix of remarkable progress amid continued fragility – and a similar interplay of peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

The country has restructured the army and police, with the help of UNMIL, the UN peacekeeping operation. When I visited in 2008, I saw the initial fruits of collaboration between the United Nations, ECOWAS, the African Union and others, including the United States.

UNMIL, too, has been able to reduce the size of its force, from some 15,000 to less than 10,000 today.

But some of the conditions that led to 14 years of civil war still exist, and the fractures in society could be exploited, again, to incite violence.

That is one of the reasons why the Government of Liberia asked to be placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Peacebuilding Fund, for its part, is helping to finance the construction of five regional justice and security hubs so that these vital institutions can serve all the country's people. The Fund was also instrumental in establishing the Land Commission, which is finding practical ways to resolve land disputes – a major trigger of conflict.

We hope these initiatives can serve as a tangible symbol of our efforts to restore the country's institutions of state — and a concrete expression of hope for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Violent conflict has declined significantly in the past two decades. This is a remarkable story, insufficiently told.

Yet one and a half billion people still live in fragile or conflict-affected countries. For them, the world does not feel safer. For them, insecurity, injustice and inequality define their days.

We see rebels, gangs and organized crime syndicates undermining and overwhelming the institutions of state. We see violence driven by political exclusion, conflict over natural resources, a lack of jobs, grievances over corruption, and human rights abuses.

Over the past 20 years, too many countries that thought they had put an end to violent conflict, saw it erupt again. Their political institutions were not yet effective enough to resolve differences peacefully.

These high rates of relapse led the international community to give fresh impetus to our work in post-conflict settings through the new peacebuilding bodies set up in 2006.

Our goal is to focus not only on negative peace – the absence of violence – but also on the foundations of long-term stability -- positive peace.

We aim to give confidence to the people... and political support over the long-term, especially when the media and others shift their attention to other crises.

Experience has brought many lessons.

The first: there is no fixed sequencing among preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

We need not wait for the end of military or peacekeeping operations to get peacebuilding under way.

Our peacekeeping missions are often important early peacebuilders, as we saw in Sierra Leone, still see in Liberia, and hope to see in South Sudan, where our peacekeeping mission probably has the most ambitious peacebuilding mandate ever adopted by the Security Council.

Second: peacebuilding is a task for many actors.

Governments, civil society, business, local communities, the long-term UN development presence -- all have a role. This is also reflected in the diverse membership of the Peacebuilding Commission. Our challenge is to align them behind a coherent strategy.

Third: national ownership and leadership are critical.

Peacebuilding success stories such as Timor-Leste have been associated with strong national leadership and genuine societal engagement.

At times, however, limited local capacity is an obstacle. So is the tendency of some donors to support projects that might satisfy constituencies back home but that do not reflect local priorities.

We have also seen some governments reluctant to focus on the key peacebuilding priorities of their people.

Myanmar, from which I have just returned, offers an example of a transition in which a stated programme of change has been backed up by concrete reforms. The international business community is now eager to invest, and we are committed to ensure that the impact is positive for the country's peacebuilding efforts.

A fourth lesson is that even certain staples of post-conflict activity can go wrong.

Elections can be divisive. Even the building of a school or a clinic can exacerbate tensions if communities are not consulted or local construction firms are excluded. Inclusiveness is essential.

Fifth: peacebuilding needs to be incorporated more fully into development cooperation.

Aid must go beyond traditional projects to support peacebuilding and statebuilding goals such as justice, security, job creation, social services and credible political processes.

This is a key element in the so-called "new deal" reached at last year's Busan conference on aid effectiveness. The new deal is being piloted in seven countries, all of which have UN peacekeeping or political missions.

We must also consider whether and how to incorporate such goals into the development agenda after 2015, the target date for achieving the MDGs.

Especially in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, it is clear that issues such as political participation, human rights and security are integral to satisfying the breadth of people's aspirations. Tunisia, for example, was making rapid progress toward the MDGs, but was lagging on issues such as political voice.

Sixth: it is crucial that resources can be provided quickly in response to fleeting windows of opportunity.

Not long ago in Burundi, a holdout rebel movement expressed a willingness to join the peace process. The UN mission identified the opportunity, the Peacebuilding Fund provided emergency funding, and the UN Development Programme and the mission supported the cantonment and disarmament of combatants.

We have seen similarly quick and effective joint efforts with security sector reform in Guinea, supporting reconciliation in Kyrgyzstan and electoral support in Yemen.

Resources means people, too. Civilian capacities are crucially important, and we are taking steps to be able to deploy the right experts to the right place at the right time.

Seventh: the inclusion of women in peace processes and post-conflict planning is fundamental for their legitimacy – and for the results to take hold.

Organized sexual violence is often a tactic of war, yet just 17 of 585 post-1990 peace accords mention it. And less than 6 per cent of post-conflict spending is budgeted specially to empower women or promote gender equality.

I am pressing to do more than double such spending – and to ensure that 40 per cent of UN-sponsored post-conflict temporary employment opportunities are made available to women. We are also working to increase the percentage of women in UN Police, and achieving good momentum in that effort.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations is the only organization that can bring all the necessary elements of peacebuilding to bear: political, security, human rights, humanitarian, rule of law and development.

In our missions and country teams on the ground in our planning at headquarters in New York ... peacebuilding has become a focus as never before.

Yet clearly, the needs are great. The demands on the UN keep growing. Too many people live in fear and insecurity.

The work of peace is complex. This audience knows that as well as any.

Peacebuilding is a work in progress. We are learning by doing. It is rarely linear. It requires great flexibility, and approaches tailored to a given situation.

The violence within us, and within our societies, and among countries, is not going to vanish any time soon. But we are firmly committed to countering it at every turn, with every tool.

We are determined to do everything we can to seize the post-conflict moment, and help societies find a safer, more prosperous path.

Thank you. Now I am eager to hear the thoughts and ideas of your institution, a close partner in this important work in these difficult times.

Thank you.