

Statement by

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Mr. President,

Today's debate represents an annual opportunity for the wider membership of the United Nations to reflect on an increasingly significant aspect of the United Nations response to post-conflict challenges.

The plight of millions of people living in countries emerging from conflict continues long after the guns have been silenced and semblance of peace prevails. The path to healing the scars caused by war, and to rebuilding the institutions that deliver security, justice, basic services and economic opportunities, and protect fundamental rights, is long and fraught with enormous challenges.

The international community struggled to help the countries emerging from conflict meet these challenges. This was partly caused by our inability to sustain attention and focus on the needs and priorities of these countries for as long as they deserved in order to prevent relapse into conflict and to avoid protracted instability. This can also be partly due to a fundamental difficulty in addressing or providing an adequate response to the deep sociological and psychological divides that tend to survive or even grow beneath the surface of peace agreements, power-sharing arrangements, or institutional reform processes, if left unattended. As we witness in various situations, the importance of conflict prevention, long-term engagement, and due consideration of the root causes of conflicts cannot be overemphasized.

In a briefing to the Security Council on post-conflict peacebuilding last week, I noted that the recent crises in the Central African Republic and South Sudan remind us that the nature of peacebuilding requires careful examination of strategies which tend to see stabilization as a sequence of different stages or priorities, rather than an integrated, multidimensional process. Post-conflict response is often best served by strategies that approach security, political and socio-economic dimensions simultaneously.

Through the work undertaken by the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in the countries concerned, the synergy and complementarity between the political and programmatic dimensions of peacebuilding is a distinct feature of the UN peacebuilding architecture. This key interaction has been demonstrated by the recent activities of the CAR Configuration, after the Chair's visit to the country earlier this month, and the contribution of

the PBF to a spectrum of important stabilization activities - which is commendable for showing that peacebuilding efforts can begin at the very outset of the search for peace and stability. Another distinct feature of this architecture is its continuous outreach on behalf of the UN to key and relevant regional and international partners whose engagement and commitment is critical.

The Commission and the Fund can keep us focused on and committed to ensuring that opportunities for building and sustaining peace are seized and nurtured, and that risks and bottlenecks that undermine peace are addressed and overcome, in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Mr. President,

As reflected in the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its seventh session, the Commission has increasingly demonstrated added value in certain contexts and in specific areas of its core functions. However, the process of fine-tuning and sharpening the PBC's approach and tools, and of adapting them to changing circumstances and specific needs is very much a work in progress.

The composition and intergovernmental character of the PBC provide it with the authority and legitimacy to articulate strategic guidance, forge greater coherence, and strengthen national and regional ownership of peacebuilding efforts. As a diplomatic platform that is mandated to advise the General Assembly and the Security Council, and that brings together key regional and global actors, the PBC is uniquely placed to promote greater harmony between the sub-regional, regional and international dimensions of post-conflict response.

Therefore, one of the Commission's key priority areas this year is to make the most of the engagement of its African members and to establish deep and dynamic partnerships with Africa's regional and sub-regional organizations. African regional and sub-regional organizations are displaying an unprecedented level of coordination, political will and ability to promote regional solutions. We need to work with the African Group and the members of the newly established African caucus to define how regional and sub-regional perspectives can be further integrated into the work of the PBC, and the UN more broadly.

Mr. President,

The PBC launched its thematic and normative work in 2013 by focusing on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding and gender-responsive national reconciliation. The PBC has placed emphasis on the transformative role of women in post-conflict societies, and on the need to continue to accord the requisite attention and priority to women's role and participation in building and sustaining peace.

As noted by my predecessor in his presentation of the PBC's report on its seventh session, the Commission will be convening its first ever annual substantive session on 23 June 2014. The annual session will become a standing occasion for examining peacebuilding-related themes and areas where inter-governmental policy and commitment could contribute to more timely, sustained and effective responses to the needs of people in countries emerging from conflict.

The first annual session will particularly address the national and international aspects of sustainable resources and capacities for peacebuilding. As a core function of the PBC, the discussion of the financial and human capacity dimensions of resource mobilization assumes particular significance. It will relate to efforts aimed at strengthening national ownership and ensuring sustainable support to improve the lives of affected populations, not least in the context of the transition of UN missions. The PBC is keen to engage a wide segment of stakeholders and actors, from within and outside the UN, in the substantive discussions of this theme. In keeping with its advisory function to this body, the PBC is looking forward to sharing the key findings and recommendations of the annual session with the General Assembly.

Finally, Mr. President

The upcoming 10-year review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture offers an excellent opportunity for the wider membership to renew its commitments to the original vision and purpose of the PBC. We need to make the most of the opportunity offered by the review to identify areas and approaches where the PBC can practically demonstrate its continuing relevance to the UN and global efforts aimed at sustaining peace and development.

As I underscored before the Security Council last week, the Commission can further evolve into a valuable intergovernmental instrument for building and sustaining peace, and for confronting the threats that undermine peace in a timely and comprehensive manner. I am convinced that, to this effect, our efforts in the UN should remain people-centred - not only in terms of supporting programmes and projects that seek to promote concrete improvements in the lives of the people facing the daunting challenges of emergency and instability, but also of actively hearing their voices, learning from their narratives, and allowing their experience to become the very material for sustainable recovery. I believe in 2014 the Peacebuilding Commission can be the locus to strengthen such a learning exercise, and embark on an enriched dialogue among partners, rather than between providers and beneficiaries.

Thank you, Mr. President