

Peacebuilding Commission – Working Group on Lessons Learned

Comparative Experiences in Developing National Capacities after Conflict

Monday, 15 December 2008
UN Trusteeship Council Chamber

Chair's Summary

Introduction

1. On 15 December 2008, the Peacebuilding Commission's Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) convened a panel discussion on "**Comparative Experiences in Developing National Capacities after Conflict**".
2. The WGLL invited the Permanent Representatives of Guatemala (Ambassador Gert Rosenthal) and Mozambique (Ambassador Filipe Chidumo) to present their countries' perspectives and insights and share lessons from their respective experiences in the area of national capacity development in post-conflict situations.
3. In her opening remarks, the chair of the WGLL, Ambassador Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez, Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations, underlined that the development of national capacities is an integral part of post-conflict peacebuilding and of sustainable peace. She also emphasized that in states weakened by conflict, timely and carefully targeted capacity development programs can make a difference between sliding back into turmoil or moving towards strengthening the foundations of the state. To this end, the Chair underlined that the key objectives of the meetings were to:
 - a) extract key lessons from national capacity development for countries and sub-regions that confront similar problems and capacity building challenges;
 - b) contribute to the Peacebuilding Commission's ability to offer advice to countries on its agenda in certain key areas of national capacity development (e.g. state capacities to provide basic services and security; public administration reform and management of aid and donor relations... etc).

Lessons concluded from presentations and discussions

- **National ownership** is fundamental for all peace and capacity building processes. Properly functioning institutions and other critical capacities can not be "imposed" from outside.
- In many post-conflict situations, states may have not completely failed, but rather face specific elements of failure. Consequently, it is essential to identify existing national institutions and capacities and **focus on their rehabilitation rather than substitution** with externally-designed solutions and models.

- It is essential to **differentiate between structural / pre-existing weaknesses in national capacities and those directly resulting from the conflict.**
- The importance of a **holistic** approach to capacity development combined with the identification of critical **priorities**. It is established that the main challenges in post-conflict situations **change over time** and, therefore, **priorities for national human and institutional capacities development are likely to change.** **Flexibility** and willingness to adapt to changing circumstances **by all national and international stakeholders** is required in order to sustain the peace process.
- **Key areas requiring immediate attention and capacity-development include:**
 - electoral process management;
 - management of the economy;
 - strengthening of the judiciary;
 - De-mining;
 - local governance;
 - media and civil society participation;
 - strengthening of the private sector's contribution to national development.
- **Inclusiveness of capacity development:** The involvement and participation of all stakeholders such as civil society organizations, economic associations, the private sector and local communities, is crucial for successful capacity development transition from humanitarian and emergency assistance to recovery and development.
- **The assessment and identification of existing national capacities, potential leaders and partners must not be confined to the Capitals** and should encompass all national territories.
- Strengthening national capacities should prioritize **the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations** (e.g. indigenous people in Guatemala; populations of rural areas in Mozambique).

Prepared by PBSO
19 December 2008