

Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned

Informal/ informal follow-up: Lessons Learned from the Colombian DDR process and the “Contribution of Cartagena to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”

Chair’s Summary

1. On 2 October 2009, the Peacebuilding Commission’s Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) convened an informal follow-up to a previous meeting of the WGLL on “Lessons Learned on Sustainable Reintegration in Post-Conflict Situations”, which was held on 28 May 2009. The meeting was convened on the occasion of a visit to New York of the Colombian High Counselor for Reintegration, Mr. Frank Pearl, who briefed the Working Group on lessons from the Colombian disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and “The Contribution of Cartagena to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration”, the final report of the International Congress (CIDDR), held from 4 to 6 May, 2009 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.

2. In her opening remarks, the chair of the Working Group, Ambassador Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez, underlined that the work of the PBC to date has highlighted the importance of sustainable community-based reintegration of demobilized former combatants, refugees and internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups affected by the war in post-conflict countries. She emphasized that sustainable reintegration constitutes an essential component of peacebuilding strategies in countries on the agenda of the PBC, such as Burundi and the Central African Republic.

3. The briefing and the discussion address the broader efforts (“inclusive integration”) to rehabilitate the communities to which ex combatants return and highlighted the need to make the reintegration “fair” and “balanced” towards the victims of the earlier combat and other vulnerable groups.

4. Mr. Frank Pearl gave an overview of Colombia’s peace process, the country’s comprehensive DDR approach and key challenges encountered such as: demobilized combatants are silently threatened by their former commanders to return to combat; lack of trust in the government; the need for increased involvement of the private sector and civil society in the process; illegal drug trafficking and the difficulty to generate the support of the population at large for the DDR process. The sustainable social and economic reintegration process revolves around four key interventions:

- Justice is essential for sustainable peace. At present, 3900 ex-combatants are serving prison sentences.
- Education is vital to enable successful reintegration in the society. Ex-combatants need psycho-social counseling, basic education (literacy and speeded-up primary

and secondary education), as well as vocational training building on the existing skills to enhance job opportunities.

- Employment: Job creation in partnership with the private sector and civil society is an active part of the DDR approach, with financial incentives, business ventures for companies and intensive accompaniment of clients. Also, alliances have been forged with the banking sector to finance reintegration in the informal sector.
- Former combatants must not be seen as privileged groups when they return to their largely poor communities, their reintegration must therefore go hand-in-hand with other measures (e.g. training, involvement of social workers).

5. The briefing on the “Contribution of Cartagena to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration” and the subsequent discussion highlighted the following conclusions:

- Evolving Scope, Social and Political Nature of DDR: shift to a broader emphasis on improving governance and the rule of law, balancing the social and economic needs and aspirations of the individual with those of the community therefore, facilitating peace building and sustainable social and economic development.
- Definition of DDR as a “platform for longer-term peacebuilding processes” and as a “pivotal instrument in peacebuilding”
- The four main priorities for the International Community to harness DDR processes:
 1. improving employment opportunities and development programs in general;
 2. increasing financial assistance through external and local sources;
 3. involving women in the process to meet their needs and aspirations, and
 4. strengthening the monitoring and evaluation processes (concrete, measurable goals)
- The key challenges to national governments:
 1. Assuming a leading role in articulating local needs, perceptions, and capabilities to the international community;
 2. Assuming an active role in policy formation, drawing on local demographic participation and good governance, and
 3. Approaching peacebuilding and recovery with a desire to meaningfully address the root causes of conflict.

Prepared by PBSO
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