

Emerging Lessons and Practices in Peacebuilding, 2007-2009

Report of the Working Group on
Lessons Learned of the Peacebuilding Commission
May 2010

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Foreword

Peacebuilding is not a new topic of interest at the United Nations, but its concrete consideration in the Organization's agenda is relatively recent. In 1992, then Secretary-General Boutros Ghali addressed the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding in his report "An Agenda for Peace", defining it as the "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict".

The international breakthrough came about at the 2005 World Summit, during which Heads of State and Governments decided to establish the Peacebuilding Commission to deal with the challenge of sustainable peace. Leaders also agreed on the creation of the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office, laying the groundwork for a new architecture for peacebuilding.

The world leaders agreed that the Commission's main purpose would be "to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery".

In December 2005, the Security Council and the General Assembly adopted, in parallel, the Commission's founding resolutions, articulating its mandate around three main objectives: (a) to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integral strategies; (b) to focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery and support the development of strategies to lay the foundation for sustainable development; and (c) to provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors, develop best practices, help secure predictable financing for early recovery and expand the international community's attention period to post-conflict countries.

To achieve these ends, the Commission meets in various configurations. It has an Organizational Committee, mandated to develop the Commission's rules of procedure and working mechanisms. There are also country configurations for each of the countries currently on the Commission's agenda (Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone). The Commission has also a Working Group on Lessons Learned that seeks to identify lessons from previous national and international experiences in post-conflict situations.

These years of experience of the Commission have shown that self-sustaining peace means more than the cessation of hostilities. Peacebuilding must inculcate security, the rule of law and socio-economic development. We have learned that the early achievement of basic goals that allow people to benefit from the so-called "peace dividends" are of great value to the success of the longer-term peacebuilding process.

Peacebuilding must be based on the principle of "national ownership", which should be accompanied by high levels of coordination and coherence among national and international actors, including regional organizations. Capacity-building is essential for this key principle to become a reality and not remain just an abstract concept.

During all these years the Working Group of Lessons Learned has demonstrated its useful role in the peacebuilding architecture. It is learning through the valuable experience of others that the PBC can reach its goals in the most efficient ways. Among others, the Working Group has had the opportunity to exchange ideas with representative of regional groups, as well as governments, civil society, and the UN system.

As for the future, one element to be considered is the strengthening of the advisory role of the Peacebuilding Commission to the principal organs of the United Nations (Security Council, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council). The Commission has an important role to play in this sense, particularly regarding the Security Council. Peacekeepers are early peacebuilders, and peacebuilding should therefore come into play early on in the Security Council's consideration of post-conflict situations in order to assure the mainstreaming of peacebuilding into peacekeeping operations and the enhancement of their civilian components. The Commission's main contribution in this regard would be the emphasis it gives to the link between security and development and a long-term perspective to achieve sustainable peace.

Another element to be revisited relates to the Commission's working methods. In this area, lighter and more flexible engagements with countries that are emerging from conflict and that may seek the Commission's advice could be explored.

The role of the Organizational Committee could eventually be reconsidered in order to have it provide the general strategic vision that could serve as guidance for the Commission's global work. A better functioning of the country configurations should also be addressed, particularly since the success of the Commission will be ultimately defined by its performance on the ground. The question of human resources available for peacebuilding and the role and duration of the presidency are additional factors that could also be re-evaluated.

The visibility of the Commission's work should be improved. Public knowledge regarding that work is still scarce, even among those who are actively committed to peace efforts. A broader understanding of what the Commission is and does will contribute to accomplishing its mandate to mobilize resources and to maintain the international community's attention on the countries that have recently emerged from conflict and where peace is fragile.

Finally, we must never forget that, ultimately, peacebuilding aims to help survivors of conflict to enjoy the basic benefits of peace: an acceptable level of security, access to basic services, and functional and participatory political processes.



Ambassador Heraldo Muñoz
*Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations
(January 2009-December 2009) Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission*

Preface

Examining the successes and challenges to the international community's efforts in peacebuilding is vital to improving how the United Nations assists post-conflict countries in building sustainable peace. This report, which presents the summaries of the meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission's Working Group on Lessons Learned during the period 2007-2009, offers rich insights into major lessons learned in peacebuilding around the world.

The Working Group has its origin in the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and Security Council that created the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office. The Working Group was established in December 2006 as an informal platform to review best practices and lessons learned on critical peacebuilding issues, particularly with respect to the countries on the 'Commission's agenda, thus providing future direction based upon tried and tested experience.

At a total of 18 meetings, the Working Group explored a wide range of peacebuilding issues, including elections, local governance, transitional justice, the return of internally displaced people, the provision of budget support, the management of environmental and natural resources, providing rule-of-law assistance, developing national capacity, implementing a regional approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and coordinating with regional and subregional organizations. The Working Group also explored a number of cross-cutting themes, such as gender issues, regional approaches to peacebuilding, peacebuilding strategic frameworks and post-conflict compacts.

The experience of the Commission has shown that self-sustaining peace means more than the cessation of hostilities. It is also important to address issues of basic safety and security, the rule of law, socio-economic development and strengthening national Governments' ability to deliver services for citizens such as health care, education, roads and jobs. Progress in these areas will make the people see and feel "peace dividends" as essential requirements for building a long-term and strong peace.

We have also learned that peacebuilding must be based on national ownership, with high levels of coordination and coherence among national and international actors, including regional organizations. Capacity-building is essential to realizing the objective of national ownership, which must become a reality and not remain just an abstract concept.

Despite the progress to date, the potential of the Working Group on Lessons Learned has yet to be fully explored. The Working Group should forge deeper links with the broader peacebuilding community, extending to regional institutions, academia and research institutions and civil society.

This report is evidence that documenting the experience about peacebuilding can play a role in enhancing the knowledge of peacebuilding policies and practices. Last but not least, we hope this report will contribute to the evolution of the Peacebuilding Commission in fulfilling its mandate to develop best practices for the United Nations in providing peacebuilding assistance to post-conflict countries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C.M. Gallardo Hernandez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ambassador Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez
*Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations
(January 2007-December 2009) Chairperson of the Working Group on
Lessons Learned of the Peacebuilding Commission*

I. Introduction

1. Purpose

As part of its mandate “to develop best practices”, the Peacebuilding Commission established the Working Group on Lessons Learned as an informal platform to enhance dialogue on issues of particular relevance to countries on its agenda. Since its creation in January 2007, the Working Group has provided a platform open to all Member States, including countries that have experienced post-conflict recovery, United Nations operational entities, institutional donors, national experts, academics and representatives of civil society to share lessons learned from past and present peacebuilding experiences. Carmen María Gallardo Hernandez, Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations, chaired the Working Group from its inception in January 2007 until December 2009.

2. Guiding principles

The Working Group’s proceedings have been largely guided by the founding resolutions of the Peacebuilding Commission (General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005)¹. The founding resolutions affirmed, inter alia, the inter-linkages between development, peace, security and human rights; the need for a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to achieve sustainable peace; the primary responsibility of national and transitional Governments and authorities in identifying their peacebuilding priorities and strategies; the importance of supporting national efforts to establish, redevelop or reform their institutions; the role of regional and subregional organizations in post-conflict peacebuilding in their regions; the contributions of countries that have experienced recent post-conflict recovery to the work of the Commission; the contribution of civil society and non-governmental organizations, including women’s organizations, to peacebuilding efforts; and the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding.

In developing the integrated peacebuilding strategies for the countries on the Commission’s agenda, the Commission further refined its strategic approach to peacebuilding by endorsing several key principles, including:

- **National ownership:** the primary responsibility and ownership for peace consolidation and development lies with the Government and citizens.
- **Mutual accountability:** sustainable peacebuilding requires a strong partnership based on mutual respect and accountability between the Government and citizens and their international partners.
- **Sustained engagement:** peacebuilding is a long-term process requiring sustained and predictable engagement from all stakeholders.²

¹ The resolutions are available on the Peacebuilding Commission website at <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/>.

² The integrated peacebuilding strategies (strategic framework for peacebuilding) are available on the Peacebuilding Commission website (see footnote 1).

These general principles have guided the work of the Commission's configurations, including the Working Group on Lessons Learned. To this end, the 18 meetings of the Working Group addressed critical lessons learned from the various activities and strategies which largely define the peacebuilding approach in post-conflict situations. The meetings were designed around panel discussions. Increasingly, the topics were guided by the degree of relevance to issues addressed in the Commission's country configurations. In so doing, the Working Group is positioned to make a significant contribution to the Commission's overall work and provide a useful body of knowledge for enhancing peacebuilding policy and practice.

This report compiles key lessons and emerging practices in peacebuilding based on the work of the Working Group from January 2007 to December 2009. On 9 December 2009, the Working Group convened a special meeting on the theme "Taking stock and looking forward". The purpose of this special meeting was to reflect on the three-year work of the Working Group and how its potential could be further optimized in the future.

3. Midterm review: practical recommendations

The three-year review and reflection in December 2009 had been preceded by a midterm review on 12 June 2008, when the WGG convened a special meeting to examine emerging lessons during the initial 18 months of its work. A synthesis report³ was prepared by the Chair of the Working Group, with support from the Peacebuilding Support Office, and was made available to the members ahead of the meeting. At that special meeting, members made a number of recommendations in five specific areas: (a) working methods; (b) selection of topics; (c) links with the UN system; (d) links with the larger peacebuilding community; and (e) promoting synergies and utilization of lessons learned.

The midterm review of June 2008 guided the work of the Working Group during the following 18 months until December 2009, and efforts were made to build on the recommendations and considerable progress made since then, mainly as regards the first three of the above-mentioned areas.

In order to improve the methods of work it was decided that the Working Group should focus on "broader thematic themes" for each year, in line with strategic Peacebuilding Commission priorities. Longer planning periods for meetings allowed for a better identification of panellists and to focus on distilling and disseminating critical lessons to all the Commission's configurations. Significant progress was also achieved concerning the selection of topics identified on the basis of one or more of the following three criteria:

- Direct relevance to specific priorities for countries on the Peacebuilding Commission agenda (e.g., sustainable reintegration, rule of law assistance and national dialogue etc.)
- An attempt at further exploring lessons in recurring peacebuilding priorities in countries emerging from conflict (e.g., national capacity development etc.)

³ The synthesis report, entitled "Key Insights, principles, good practices and emerging lessons in peacebuilding" (12 June 2008), is available on the Peacebuilding Commission website (see footnote 1).

- An attempt at further elaborating on earlier discussions in the Working Group (e.g., experiences in regional approaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) etc.)

The Working Group was able to take forward another key recommendation from the midterm review held in June 2008 by drawing more effectively on the work of the United Nations system. The Working Group tapped into the experience of relevant United Nations operational entities with programming on the ground in countries on the Peacebuilding Commission agenda (e.g., United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions and Department of Political Affairs) as well as the experiences of the World Bank (e.g., in the context of regional approaches to DDR).

4. Evolving knowledge about post-conflict peacebuilding

It is generally agreed that post-conflict peacebuilding is multifaceted in nature. It encompasses security, political, humanitarian, human rights and socio-economic dimensions. An integrated and coherent approach to addressing these dimensions is fundamental to post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, which should be anchored in building national capacities to sustain peace and lay the foundations for sustainable development. The work of the Working Group addressed a number of interrelated challenges to this approach.

A number of meetings focused on “recurring and specific peacebuilding challenges”, including elections, local governance, transitional justice, internally displaced persons, budget support, environment and natural resources, rule-of-law assistance, national capacity development, regional approaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, coordination with regional and subregional organizations, and sustainable reintegration. Other meetings addressed “cross-cutting policy challenges for peacebuilding engagement”, including gender, regional approaches to peacebuilding, peacebuilding strategic frameworks and post-conflict compacts.

For each session, a concept note was prepared that summarized the current state of knowledge. Main lessons were presented and outstanding key questions of relevance to the Peacebuilding Commission were raised. If relevant and required, additional documentation, such as existing reports and background material, was provided prior to meetings. Panellists invited to meetings of the Working Group offered additional insight based on comparative experiences from selected countries. Member States contributed to discussions through the interactive discussions which followed the presentations made by panellists. These diverse inputs were incorporated into the Chair’s summaries of each session, which were widely circulated, including through informal channels, such as the Peacebuilding Community of Practice,⁴ and made available on the Peacebuilding Commission website.⁵

⁴ The Peacebuilding Community of Practice unites peacebuilding practitioners across the United Nations system, facilitating electronic discussions, real-time responses to technical queries on peacebuilding-related challenges launched by field-based practitioners, access to a shared online workspace housing key resources, monthly newsletters and face-to-face workshops.

⁵ See <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/psc-lessons.shtml>.

II. Key peacebuilding lessons learned

1. Drawing common lessons vs. the country-specific nature of peacebuilding

The work of the WGG has clearly illustrated that the evolving body of knowledge on peacebuilding must draw on concrete good practices and specific lessons from country, regional and institutional experiences. While requiring an integrated and coherent approach, there can be no “one-size-fits-all” template for peacebuilding strategies: each case is unique and each engagement has to respond to the country-specific context. Nonetheless, past experiences of countries and actors may have broader relevance and applicability. One of the main challenges, therefore, lies in determining the extent to which general principles may guide engagements in country-specific contexts.

2. Common and broad features

The meetings of the WGG have identified the following common features of post-conflict peacebuilding:

- Peacebuilding requires national will, ownership and capacity to resolve problems without recourse to violence. It needs to take place at the national, subnational and local levels and to involve the Government, civil society and the private sector.
 - Peacebuilding is a long-term investment by all relevant actors, and requires a shared vision and long-term strategy to address the root causes of conflict.
 - Early peacebuilding interventions must prioritize areas of potential risks to peace that are country-specific and context-specific (e.g., youth unemployment, security sector reform (SSR), DDR, livelihoods, light infrastructure etc.).
 - Accurate knowledge and sound analysis are prerequisites for the prioritization and sequence of peacebuilding activities. Certain post-conflict activities can serve as drivers of conflict and instruments of peacebuilding (e.g., return and reintegration of internally displaced persons, elections, SSR etc.).
 - Predictable and sustained provision of financial and non-financial resources is essential for peacebuilding.
 - Beyond specific risks and sectoral priorities (e.g., national reconciliation, rule of law, economic recovery etc), there are cross-cutting issues, such as gender and the role of women, that need to be mainstreamed in the overall peacebuilding effort.
 - Coherent and integrated strategies and policies are prerequisites to achieving effective international and regional support for national peacebuilding efforts. Yet these efforts are unlikely to yield the needed impact if not supported by sufficient capacity and resources.
 - Regional and transnational factors influence conflict dynamics and consequently post-conflict peacebuilding efforts.
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III. Thematic issues addressed: 2007-2009

The specific themes presented below were addressed by the WGG during the period 2007-2009.⁶ This section presents, in chronological order, the highlights of the discussions and the conclusions drawn by the Chair of the Working Group at each of the.

1. Peacebuilding, elections and risk reduction in post-conflict contexts (20 February 2007)

Elections are increasingly recognized as an essential instrument in the transition from conflict to peace. While serving as an important benchmark for post-conflict political consolidation, elections can also be conflict-inducing. Thus, they require close monitoring throughout the electoral process to avert any negative fallout. The record of post-conflict elections from around the world is mixed. Some countries have successfully held several rounds of elections, while others have witnessed renewed conflict following elections. Countries have used a range of strategies and mechanisms to alleviate the risks associated with elections. Comparative case studies confirm that successful electoral processes depend upon the following elements:

- A stable security environment.
- Institutions and mechanisms designed to ensure fair and free elections (e.g., (independent electoral commissions).
- A constructive role for the media, thus offering a platform for national dialogue.
- The commitment of the Government to provide a level playing field.
- Technical, financial and political support from the international community.
- Self-restraint on the part of all political parties and a commitment to honour the final outcome.

2. International Compacts: Successes, Challenges and Lessons (17 April 2007)

International compacts provide a framework for the international community's engagement with a post-conflict country on the basis of mutual accountability and joint commitment. The drafting and implementation of the Afghanistan Compact provided important preliminary lessons and international interest in developing similar international frameworks, such as the Liberia Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme, the Iraq Compact and the Timor-Leste Compact, as well as the Peacebuilding Commission's strategic frameworks for peacebuilding and cooperation in Burundi and Sierra Leone, respectively.

⁶ For the concept notes, background papers (if applicable), and Chair's summaries of each session, see <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/psc-lessons.shtml>.

In developing these instruments of engagement, international compacts need to be context-specific. Other lessons found:

- International compacts between internal and external partners should be based on the coordination and leadership role of a national Government.
- Joint monitoring mechanisms, with a manageable number of partners, are useful for tracking progress.
- It is necessary to harmonize and limit the number of benchmarks in assessing progress.
- It is also necessary to establish sound accountability mechanisms for the implementation of identified commitments.

3. Regional approaches to peacebuilding (8 June 2007)

The growing role of transnational drivers of conflict (such as cross-border flow of arms, refugees and “conflict trade”) has intensified the search for regional approaches to peacebuilding. Traditionally, there has been greater reliance on regional mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacemaking rather than on peacebuilding. However, peacebuilding efforts at the country level should be complemented with regional approaches.

Peacebuilding from a regional perspective can capitalize on a range of institutional mechanisms to address problems that cannot be resolved at the country level. There are examples of long-standing partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations (e.g., the Economic Community of West African States, the Organization of American States, Contadora). Other practical lessons include the following:

- The international community lacks the peacebuilding tools and instruments that can be deployed at the regional level since many Governments and intergovernmental organizations (including the United Nations) programme primarily operate at the country level.
- It is particularly important to identify concrete problems in an affected subregion. These problems are the focus of programming and support through cross-country or border-zone projects.
- Refugee flows, youth unemployment, drug-trafficking, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the illicit trade in small arms represent areas of critical risks to peacebuilding processes and normally call for a regional approach. West Africa and the Great Lakes Region in Central Africa are subregions where such an approach is crucial.
- The Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region provides a powerful instrument for regional peacebuilding by convening all relevant stakeholders with a view to arriving at shared analysis and identifying partnerships and joint actions.

- Given that socio-economic development is essential for sustainable peace, regional economic integration and trade can promote regional approaches to peacebuilding. The spill-over effects of regional economic growth would have far-reaching positive impacts on sustainable peace and development.
- There are encouraging developments by donor institutions. For example, the European Commission introduced regional funding envelopes through the European Development Fund to support the peace and security architecture of the African subregional organizations and finance fragile and post-conflict States.

4. Peacebuilding strategic frameworks, indicators and monitoring mechanisms (19 September 2007)

Peacebuilding strategic frameworks seek to contribute to building inclusive national capacities to tackle the root causes of conflict by aligning international political, technical and financial resources behind strategic objectives agreed with national actors. This meeting presented the findings from a comparative analysis of peacebuilding strategic frameworks and international cooperation agreements in major post-conflict contexts, including Kosovo, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan and Iraq.⁷ This meeting found that:

- A peacebuilding perspective should be introduced from the outset of an intervention alongside security concerns addressed by peacekeeping missions.
- Achieving sustainable peace requires participation, dialogue, ownership and leadership at the national level. Building tangible national capacities should be a major focus for the international community during a transition period.
- Concrete, measurable and time-bound indicators, overseen by a nationally led monitoring mechanism, are essential for sequencing priorities and assessing progress and setbacks toward agreed commitments.
- Greater aid effectiveness spurs national capacity and international confidence; donor conditionality, however, can undermine a peace process.
- Cooperation by, and support from, neighbouring countries provide a significant political and technical boost to national peacebuilding efforts.
- Peacebuilding strategic frameworks need to help sustain a political process and provide a platform for coherence and coordination of efforts.

5. Buttressing the State's fiscal capacities: comparative lessons from budget support (8 November 2007)

Mobilizing financial resources for peacebuilding is linked to effective national fiscal capacities.

⁷ This session also drew upon a paper entitled "Monitoring strategic frameworks for peacebuilding", which was prepared by the Peacebuilding Support Office in August 2007 in connection with the development of the Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism for the Burundi Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding. The paper is available on the Peacebuilding Commission website (see footnote 1).

Budget support can contribute to establishing or re-establishing a national public financial management system. Several steps are needed to rebuild fiscal institutions and to enable budget support, such as establishing a legal framework, building capacity in the Ministry of Finance, and designing simple policies and administrative procedures to activate fiscal institutions.

There are useful lessons from recent experiences with budget support:

- Budget support can be a useful aid instrument in post-conflict countries. This would depend on the presence of specific requirements in the macroeconomic and monetary environment, the political sphere and the management of fiduciary risks.
- Budget support should aim to reinforce the ownership by, and encourage strong commitment of, the recipient country.
- Budget support may be preferable to project aid whenever donor and recipient preferences are aligned and assistance is small relative to the recipient's resources. However, the two instruments may still be used together as long as they are tailored to the recipient's needs and capacity.
- Budget support may be instrumental in addressing urgent financial needs, consolidating key State functions and maintaining social stability.
- Donors need to design aid modalities in a manner which would enhance predictability and reduce volatility. In addition, current aid modalities need to be improved with regards to providing increased technical and managerial support to Government structures.
- Donors need to build capacity in the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank to enhance the management of liquidity due to budget aid inflows and to reduce transaction costs and longer term costs of managing liquidity.

6. Local governance and decentralization efforts in post-conflict countries (13 December 2007)

Effective and inclusive governance is considered essential for sustainable peace at all levels of government. Local governance is not identical to decentralization. It involves effective networks, relationships and partnerships with local leaders and the community, while decentralization refers to restructuring of authority to ensure a system of co-responsibility between central, regional and local levels of government. Successful decentralization faces special challenges in post-conflict contexts, including:

- A strong central government, which is rarely the case in post-conflict contexts.
 - Rapid decentralization might not be a good strategy for post-conflict contexts.
 - Political, bureaucratic and social will are critical for decentralization: Governments must decide that they want to decentralize.
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- Donors cannot force a Government to decentralize but they can create the will for it to take place.
- Budget support, with strong technical assistance from donors, can enable a country to absorb resources and build capacity at different levels of government.

7. Gender and peacebuilding: enhancing women's participation (29 January 2008)

The Peacebuilding Commission's founding resolutions call for gender mainstreaming in all of its work. The Commission also identified gender equality and human rights as cross-cutting priorities for peace consolidation in both Sierra Leone and Burundi. The Working Group further emphasized that peacebuilding involves women's participation in decision-making, and addressing gender-specific concerns, such as gender-based violence. Given the cross-cutting nature of gender, key lessons apply to several areas, as follows.

- Equal participation of women and men in peacebuilding processes, including peace negotiations and DDR programmes, can strengthen local ownership and contribute to greater equality between men and women in post-conflict societies.
- Gender-based violence can be properly addressed if there are sufficiently high numbers of women included in peace negotiations, decision-making positions, and post-conflict national and local governments.
- While essential, the existence of legal frameworks and policies should be reinforced with resources to end impunity for gender-based crimes.
- The following steps can be pursued to ensure implementation: (a) results-based reporting; (b) clearly outlined responsibilities of all national entities; (c) engagement of civil society; and (d) greater gender focus in peacebuilding in collaboration with regional organizations.
- Economic empowerment is critical to ensuring the meaningful participation of women. The role of women as generators of socio-economic development and as political leaders in local and national reconciliation must be acknowledged alongside their needs as victims.
- Gender mainstreaming is effective in the preparatory phase of programming and planning but less so in the implementation and monitoring phase.
- Serious gaps in research capacity, data availability, institutional mechanisms, targeted programming and financial resources are serious obstacles to overcoming the full participation of women in peacebuilding.

8. Justice in times of transition (26 February 2008)

Justice is a key dimension of peacebuilding, although the quests for justice and peace may be in conflict at times. Representing a society's need to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, transitional justice aims to ensure accountability, serve justice and facilitate reconciliation. There are different approaches to justice in post-conflict contexts, including restorative or traditional justice.

In post-conflict contexts, a comprehensive and holistic approach to justice would include criminal prosecutions, truth commissions, reparation programmes, security sector reform and memorialization efforts. Key lessons from comparative experiences in diverse contexts, such as Sierra Leone, South Africa and Cambodia, include the following:

- There is no single formula for addressing a past marked by massive and systematic abuse. Each society should choose its own path. However, it is necessary to examine prior national and international experiences to avoid repeating avoidable errors.
- National ownership and active consultation with, and participation of, the public, including victim groups, are essential.
- Timing and sequencing are important. The design of justice mechanisms and processes must balance the demands of the realities of what can be achieved in the short term. Adopting a comprehensive approach to transitional justice, encompassing judicial, non-judicial and restorative justice, would help in this regard.
- In designing transitional justice mechanisms, the need for a "transition to justice" should be taken into account to lay the foundations for a self-sustainable national justice system.
- Transitional justice measures should account for abuses suffered by women, as well as difficulties faced by men and women in accessing justice.
- There is a need for ongoing intellectual and practical exchange between transitional justice specialists and those working in related fields, such as conflict resolution, democratization, development, peacebuilding and anti-corruption.

9. Comparative lessons from addressing internal displacement in peacebuilding (13 March 2008)

Displacement can be a cause or consequence of violent conflict creating refugees as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁸ Internally displaced persons represent a group whose numbers have risen significantly due to intra-State conflicts. Situated at the nexus of humanitarian, human rights, security and development concerns, the needs of internally displaced persons pose special challenges for peacebuilding.

⁸ In addition to the March 2008 Working Group meeting, in May 2007 the Peacebuilding Commission convened a joint presentation by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres and the Representative of the Secretary General on the Human Rights of the Internally Displaced Persons, Mr. Walter Kaelin, on the relationship between peacebuilding and the resolution of the conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The main lessons drawn from internal displacement situations in Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi and Sierra Leone are as follows:

- Durable solutions for internally displaced persons are more likely to result from addressing their specific needs, such as security and access to property, livelihoods, basic services and infrastructure.
- The successful return of internally displaced persons requires that their safety during and after returning is guaranteed, their property and housing are restored, and the environment that sustains return is created by the Government and the international community.
- The quality of the process leading to the return of internally displaced persons is crucial. While internally displaced persons usually wish to return, they must be granted the free and informed choice between return to the place of origin, integration in the area of displacement or relocation in other parts of the country.
- Addressing the specific needs of the receiving communities receiving internally displaced persons is a prerequisite for sustained reintegration.
- To overcome the traditional dichotomies between humanitarian and development processes, a development perspective needs to be integrated into finding durable solutions for internally displaced persons.
- Quick and flexible funding is necessary to address early recovery needs.

10. From conflict to peacebuilding: the role of natural resources and the environment (8 May 2008)

There is growing recognition of the complex interplay between conflict, environment and natural resources. There are various pathways by which natural resources and environmental factors can contribute to conflict or serve as important tools for economic recovery, cooperation and confidence building in war-torn societies. The experiences of Sudan, Angola, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Liberia demonstrate the dynamic interaction between environmental factors and various socio-economic factors, such as ideology, ethnicity and poverty, in generating conflict.

Environmental factors can serve to destabilize countries by undermining government legitimacy, hastening migration and weakening the economy. There are useful lessons to draw from innovative policies and programmes that seek to address conflict risks and contribute to peacebuilding through equitable access to and use of land, natural resources and the environment:

- Rehabilitating the environment and securing livelihoods provide local communities with capacities to manage their environment, while contributing to peacebuilding through employment generation.
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- Access to land, including land distribution, is best addressed at an early stage, based on an understanding of the indigenous land tenure system.
- The complexities of land tenure are both political and technical. There is need for advocacy, capacity-building, training and development of tools to integrate land issues into peacebuilding.
- There are valuable lessons to be learned from previous international policy responses to natural resource issues, such as the Kimberley Process or the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. The Kimberley Process is a certification regime that successfully regulates the diamond trade by bringing the industry and civil society together on a voluntary basis. Similarly, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is an expanding voluntary scheme which has contributed to the increased transparency of finances by allowing the comparison of Governments' data on their income from natural resource extraction with reports by the extraction companies.

11. Special session: key insights, principles, good practices and emerging lessons in peacebuilding (12 June 2008)

The review of comparative lessons and good practices reveals that despite important differences among post-conflict countries, there are areas of common concern that merit sustained attention by the Peacebuilding Commission and national and international actors engaged in peacebuilding. The findings of the Working Group, as reinforced by the work of the Commission in its various configurations, indicate that the following are integral to successful peacebuilding:

- **Context-specific peacebuilding:** to address country-specific drivers of conflict, peacebuilding strategies must be informed by an accurate analysis of country realities.
- **National ownership:** the primary responsibility and ownership for peace consolidation rests with the Government and the people of the host country.
- **Strengthening national capacities:** the focus of international partners on speed of implementation should not undermine efforts over the medium and long terms to strengthen national capacities for conflict management.
- **Mutual accountability:** sustainable peacebuilding requires a strong partnership between the Government and the people of the host country and their international partners, based on mutual respect and accountability.
- **Sustained engagement:** peacebuilding is a long-term process requiring sustained and predictable engagement from all stakeholders. Despite the need to implement projects that provide tangible peace dividends, sufficient attention should be given to the sustainability of efforts.

- **Effective coordination:** to avoid duplication and gaps in peacebuilding, international, national and local stakeholders need to act in a coherent and mutually reinforcing manner. Existing mechanisms, such as post-conflict needs assessments, integrated peacebuilding strategies, poverty reduction strategies and monitoring and tracking mechanisms, are important instruments for effective coordination.
- **Integrating a gender perspective:** men and women are affected differently by conflict. Any peacebuilding strategy should address these differences, especially to ensure the elimination of impunity for gender-based violence, while contributing to gender equality and supporting women's full participation in, and ownership of, peacebuilding and recovery.
- **Encouraging a regional approach:** an effective peacebuilding strategy takes into account the regional or subregional dimensions of a conflict and provides a regional and/or international solution, in consultation with relevant Governments and non-State actors.
- **Prioritization, sequencing and timing:** when building peace in societies ravaged by violent conflict, everything is considered a priority. However, to use the limited resources most effectively, host Governments and international actors need to agree on key priorities and to sequence their implementation.

12. Comparative lessons from United Nations rule-of-law assistance (20 October 2008)

In developing integrated strategies for peacebuilding, the Peacebuilding Commission and the four countries on its agenda have identified the rule of law as a priority. The discussion in the Working Group illustrated that rule-of-law assistance must be an integral part of all national peacebuilding processes. The following lessons are of particular significance for countries under the Commission's considerations:

- Peacebuilding can have a lasting impact if it is based on legal and societal mechanisms to prevent a recurrence of violence.
- The long-term commitment of all relevant actors, a shared vision and a coherent approach are decisive factors for success.
- Inclusive consultative processes with civil society representatives and marginalized groups should result in more responsive and inclusive rule-of-law assistance programmes.
- The United Nations system and other rule-of-law assistance providers need to act with a unity of effort early in the peace processes in order to increase the benefits of such assistance.
- Investment in national capacity-building and strengthening of local expertise in the area of the rule of law is a critical component of United Nations assistance.

- The rule of law should guide long-term societal transformation in countries emerging from conflict.
- National ownership of the peace process is crucial and includes both State actors and the population. Carrying out regular dialogue with marginalized communities can help generate responsive programmes.
- Effective rule of law assistance programmes can help to build confidence among the formerly warring parties and can provide the basis for a new social contract.
- Rapid assessment is critical for identifying rule-of-law related challenges as well as appropriate United Nations entry points and sequencing of assistance.
- Rule-of-law assistance should prioritize the formulation and adoption of a constitution, combating corruption and strengthening public administration.
- Humanitarian and peacekeeping interventions should not prevent development actors from working towards sustainable peace, including through restoring national rule-of-law capacities.
- Rule-of-law capacities should be deployed rapidly with the objective of building national expertise based on existing local capacities.
- Rule-of-law training should be carefully assessed and tailored to address country-specific priorities.
- Rule-of-law assistance requires significant programmatic resources. International and national actors need to raise awareness of critical country-specific needs.
- International actors should keep in mind and try to mitigate the potential destabilizing effects of their interventions.

13. Learning from a regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration approach in the Great Lakes Region of Africa (24 November 2008)

Based on its earlier meeting on regional approaches to peacebuilding, the Working Group held a session to draw on key lessons from a regional approach to DDR. The meeting focused on the World Bank's multi-country demobilization and reintegration Programme (MDRP), which has been in operation since 2002 and represents an innovative approach to multi-country and regional programming in the area of DDR. The meeting aimed at identifying the unique features of MDRP in approaching DDR from a regional perspective and to extract appropriate lessons from this experience for other countries and subregions. Key lessons identified by presentations and discussions included the following:

- Experience with regional approaches to and programming of DDR is still very limited. The World Bank is undertaking an independent evaluation of MDRP which could inform a future Peacebuilding Commission lessons-learning exercise.
- DDR can only succeed when backed by a political settlement. Progress in, and challenges to, national and regional peace processes affect the pace and effectiveness of DDR programmes.
- There are real constraints in pursuing a regional approach to DDR given different political frameworks or different stages of peace processes. In many situations, however, it should be seriously considered as a way to prevent conflict spillovers.
- Regional DDR programming may help to establish communications channels on a variety of cross-cutting peace, security and socio-economic recovery issues across the concerned region.
- A regional DDR approach may help to harmonize key policy issues which could undermine the effectiveness of a country-specific DDR programme since armed groups often operate across State borders.
- To a large degree, State sovereignty could affect regionally based DDR on such issues as weapons management.
- Resource mobilization and capacities for reintegration remain among the key challenges for successful DDR programmes. In particular, communities should be prepared to receive and accept demobilized combatants, including through addressing property and land issues.
- A regional assessment of funding mechanisms for DDR could help to avoid duplication, reduce discrepancies in benefits among combatants across a region, result in greater funds predictability and enable flexibility in programming. On the other hand, it could create gaps between political and operational realities, as well as competition between regional and national programming.
- There is a need to explore lessons from successful regional DDR experiences in Central America, in particular at the operational level.
- Increasing the capacity of regional institutions would facilitate the sustainability of the regional focus on DDR

14. Comparative experiences in developing national capacities after conflict (15 December 2008)

The development of national capacities is an integral part of post-conflict peacebuilding and of sustainable peace. In States weakened by conflict, timely and carefully targeted capacity development programmes can assist in building a lasting peace. To this end, the objectives of the meeting were to extract key lessons from national capacity development experiences of selected post-conflict countries

and to contribute to the Peacebuilding Commission's ability to offer advice to countries on its agenda on key priority areas for national capacity development. The following lessons were drawn from presentations and discussions:

- National ownership is fundamental for all peace and capacity-building processes. Properly functioning institutions and other critical capacities cannot be "imposed" from the outside.
- Many post-conflict States face specific elements of State failure but are not failed States. Consequently, it is essential to identify existing national institutions and capacities and focus on their rehabilitation rather than their substitution with externally designed solutions and models.
- It is essential to differentiate between structural or pre-existing weaknesses in national capacities and those directly resulting from the conflict.
- It is important to adopt a holistic approach to capacity development, while identifying critical priorities. Challenges in post-conflict situations change over time. Similarly, priorities for human and institutional capacity development also change. National and international stakeholders need to be flexible and willing to adapt to changing circumstances.
- Key areas requiring immediate attention and capacity-development include electoral process management; managing the economy; strengthening the judiciary; de-mining; local governance; media and civil society participation; and strengthening the private sector's contribution to national development.
- The involvement and participation of all stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, economic associations, the private sector and local communities, are 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.

15. Promoting collaboration and improving coordination between the Peacebuilding Commission and regional and subregional organizations (30 March 2009)

The increasingly significant role of regional and subregional institutions in peacebuilding, including in countries on the Commission's agenda, highlights the importance of enhancing collaboration among all peacebuilding actors. To this end, the meeting aimed to extract lessons from the experiences ECOWAS, particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, and the experiences of OAS, particularly in Haiti.

The following key lessons and recommendations were drawn from presentations and discussions:

- National ownership and building of effective national capacities should be the fundamental principles guiding the engagement of international and regional actors in peacebuilding.
- Regional and subregional actors are often best placed to provide external assistance to peace consolidation efforts of national and local actors given their knowledge and expertise of the country's needs and priorities. Furthermore, regional actors may also be better placed to provide the political accompaniment and support often needed in post-conflict and fragile environments.
- However, regional organizations often lack the technical capacity and the resources to take full advantage of their expertise and political positioning. The Commission should explore opportunities to mobilize resources and technical support for the efforts of regional and subregional organizations in the countries on its agenda. The Commission should also foster coordination and a common approach among international and regional actors involved in the countries on its agenda.
- The work of the Commission on countries on its agenda must seriously consider regional and subregional dimensions of conflict and the particular needs of border communities. In particular, the Commission should explore creative opportunities for greater information sharing and collaboration with ECOWAS on Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.
- The Commission should seek enhanced collaboration and contribute to information-sharing and lessons-learning among regional and subregional organizations, stressing South-South partnerships. In this regard, the Commission should build on existing strategic partnerships and agreements between OAS and the African Union.
- The Commission should give serious consideration to the OAS proposal to convene a special forum of the Commission with regional and subregional organizations. Such a forum could lead to a more effective partnership between the Commission and relevant subregional organizations.

16. Lessons learned on sustainable reintegration in post-conflict situations (28 May 2009)

The meeting focused on the long-term implications of reintegration as an essential element for peacebuilding and for sustainable socio-economic development in post-conflict countries. The discussions extended beyond addressing the reintegration of ex-combatants to include broader efforts to rehabilitate the communities to which they return.

The work of the Commission to date has underlined the importance of sustainable community-based reintegration of demobilized former combatants, refugees, internally displaced

persons and other vulnerable groups in post-conflict countries. Sustainable reintegration constitutes an essential component of peacebuilding strategies in countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission such as Burundi and the Central African Republic. Key lessons identified from presentations of major institutional actors on the ground (e.g. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNDP/Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, International Organization for Migration) and the general discussion included the following:

- Sustainable reintegration processes require national and political will and capacity to reinforce local ownership.
- Sustainable reintegration requires a multifaceted approach that considers rule-of-law issues, socio-economic revitalization and the individual needs of returnees. To ensure the success of reintegration projects, integration must follow a single, coordinated and comprehensive strategy, taking into account humanitarian, security and development concerns.
- The first two years after the end of a conflict provide a critical window of opportunity. Consequently, there is a need for early mobilization and provision of resources. For example, compensation to the victims of violence is an integral part of peace consolidation.
- Psychological treatment of post-conflict trauma suffered by refugees, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants is critical to the sustainability of reintegration. There is also a need to focus on reconciliation, which is hard to measure, by including concepts like “closure”, which open new areas of programming and psychosocial support.
- It is crucial to resolve land and property issues at the earliest possible moment so as to mitigate the conflict potential inherent in this issue. Some case studies illustrate that the concept of “integrated villages” for returning internally displaced persons and refugees provide a successful path to sustainable reintegration.
- Reintegration efforts should initially target ex-combatants in the context of DDR processes. The focus, however, must gradually shift to include vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons, refugees or victims of violence and expand to families and host communities. The early involvement of internally displaced persons and refugees in the peace process is critical for reintegration processes.
- The host country plays a key role in the sustainable reintegration of refugees, as it can influence the pace and timing of the refugees’ return. While a hasty return can cause difficulties, protracted displacement entails potential risks and difficulties for socio-economic reintegration.
- The private sector must be involved in reintegration efforts as part of wider peacebuilding strategies. Possibilities for income generation and livelihood earning constitute important factors conducive to the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. The Government and the international community can raise awareness of the need to ensure sustainable livelihoods and

¹ The resolutions are available on the Peacebuilding Commission website at <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/>.

² The integrated peacebuilding strategies (strategic framework for peacebuilding) are available on the Peacebuilding Commission website (see footnote 1).

opportunities for returnees and former combatants, and can explore and promote the targeted recruitment of ex-combatants and other groups by the private sector.

17. Informal/informal follow-up: lessons learned from the Colombian DDR process and the “Contribution of Cartagena to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration” (2 October 2009)

The follow-up meeting to the Working Group meeting of 28 May 2009(see sect. 16 above) was convened by the Colombian High Counselor for Reintegration, Mr. Frank Pearl, who briefed the Working Group on lessons learned from Colombia’s experience and, the final report of the International Congress on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration entitled “The contribution of Cartagena to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration”,. The briefing addressed broader efforts called “inclusive integration” to rehabilitate the communities to which ex-combatants return. The discussion highlighted the need to make reintegration “fair” and “balanced” between all victims and vulnerable groups. The Colombian experience found that sustainable reintegration revolves around four key interventions:

- Justice is essential for sustainable peace.
- Education is vital to enable successful reintegration in society. Ex-combatants need psychosocial counseling, basic education (literacy and fast-tracked primary and secondary education) as well as vocational training that builds on existing skills to enhance job opportunities.
- Employment and job creation in partnership with the private sector and civil society, together with financial incentives and business ventures for companies, are essential components for a DDR approach. 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 and their reintegration must be accompanied by other measures or actions, including training and the involvement of social workers.

The briefing and subsequent discussion highlighted the following conclusions:

- The definition of DDR as a “platform for longer-term peacebuilding processes” and as a “pivotal instrument in peacebuilding”

Key challenges to national Governments are:

- Assuming a leading role in articulating local needs, perceptions and capabilities to the international community.
- Assuming an active role in policy formation, drawing on local demographic participation and good governance.
- Approaching peacebuilding and recovery with a desire to meaningfully address the root causes of conflict.

18. Lessons learned from national dialogue in post-conflict situations (14 October 2009)

The meeting examined the contribution of “national dialogue” as a means to build confidence among national actors and forge consensus on key political, economic and social measures in support of peacebuilding processes. Lessons were extracted from the case studies of processes in other post-conflict countries. National experts with experience in designing and facilitating national dialogue underlined the importance of coordinated and well targeted international and regional support for national processes.

The Working Group found that national dialogue varies in both scope and application. There is no “one size fits all” methodology for conducting and supporting processes. The exercise demonstrated that certain principles, such as inclusiveness and national ownership comprising government and political actors, State institutions and civil society, are a precondition for successful national dialogue. During the discussion, the following conclusions and lessons were highlighted, based on the presentations by participants:

- **National ownership is collective ownership.** National ownership encompasses the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, with links between the political and grass-roots levels, so that people feel their interests are represented. Fair representation of stakeholders must take into account power dynamics, but may also be determined based on the credibility of the actors in the eyes of the population in order to bring moral credibility to the process. Dialogues which are “hijacked” by one party will fail to deliver peacebuilding outcomes and may actually be counterproductive.
 - **Strong facilitation and the right leadership are essential for success.** The strengthening of existing national capacities should have priority over the creation of new and often expensive mechanisms to support dialogue. However, if dialogues are not well managed they may be vulnerable to political manipulation. It is important that facilitators have authority and credibility, as well as the commitment and resources to take recommendations forward. The question of how the process is implemented is as important as the question of who convenes the dialogue.
 - **Successful dialogues combine a strong political mandate with a capable technical secretariat and adequate resources attached to the implementation of recommendations.** To support a country’s stability, dialogue must be convened in a context of manifest political will, and civil and democratic behaviour by national actors. Improvization may lead to political opportunism and failure. Furthermore, mobilizing sufficient economic resources and technical capacities for the implementation of agreed outcomes and recommendations has been a major challenge to dialogue processes in post-conflict countries.
 - **National dialogue should be seen as a tool to support the peacebuilding and democratization strategy of a country, not as an end in and of itself.** National dialogues are one among many
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activities that can be applied in a peacebuilding context. Their outcomes can be optimized if they are part of a wider integrated strategy. National dialogues should be conceived alongside strategies for strengthening national institutions, complementing but not replacing them and with the ultimate aim of strengthening national mechanisms and capacities for managing tensions and preventing conflict in the long term.

- **Results of dialogue may include:** (a) tangible elements, such as the strengthening of institutions, government structures, courts etc. (b) specific products achieved through the dialogue process (policy impact), such as a better understanding of issues, priorities and challenges and of reciprocal needs and positions, as well as shared principles and goals or concrete policy recommendations (e.g., draft legislation) and (c) intangible elements, such as social cohesion and confidence-building between the Government, political parties and civil society. The contribution of the process to peacebuilding needs (process results) opens new channels for intersectoral communication (within society, between civil society and State), more commitment to collaborative leadership and a strengthened civil society which is legitimized as a partner in policymaking.
- **Plan for “process results”.** National dialogue can be a tool for achieving concrete “policy impacts” but its main contribution can sometimes be in producing “process impacts” that strengthen the capacity of society to engage in collaborative action beyond the national dialogue itself. In the process that leads to the development of the specific products of the national dialogue, important “intangible” elements for collaboration are produced. Transformed perceptions and attitudes, skills for dialogue and negotiation, channels and methods for communication are assets that can be recycled in further collaborative action. The development of these “process results” requires careful planning and follow-up. The best dialogue is designed with a follow-up-strategy, building on outcomes to ensure further impact.
- **Artificially initiated dialogues can lead to negative outcomes to the detriment of the peacebuilding process.** Excessive and inconsequential use of dialogue can lead to “dialogue fatigue”. The use of national dialogue as a political distraction or the manipulation of national dialogue with the intention of imposing predetermined results can result in political cynicism and delegitimize the use of dialogue as a constructive mechanism.
- **Visibility and transparency.** It is crucial to develop the necessary communication expertise to raise awareness about the dialogue process among stakeholders, including the wider population. In Burundi, an outreach strategy helped to create awareness about, and ownership of, the dialogue process, even in remote parts of the country. The experience further highlighted the importance of positive media coverage which does not exacerbate existing tensions. Visibility and transparency are also important tools of accountability by creating incentives for leaders to deliver on commitments made as the tangible outcome of a publicized dialogue process.

- **Role of the international community in support of national dialogue.** Depending on the context and while maintaining respect for the principle of local ownership, the role and relevance of the international community in the implementation of national dialogue will vary. In some instances, the international community may contribute indirectly by providing technical and financial support to national efforts, while in others it may be called upon to assume a more active role as a “guarantor” of the neutrality and transparency of the process. A balance must be struck between the level of visibility of the international community’s role and the need to ensure that this does not marginalize or erode local ownership. The role of the international community in any given dialogue should evolve throughout the process into a less significant and less visible role as national ownership strengthens. There is no single recipe for the appropriate involvement of the international community. However, if international partners become referees or judges of the dialogue process, something is not working.

IV. Taking stock and moving forward

On 9 December 2009, the Working Group convened a special meeting on the theme “Taking stock and looking forward”. The meeting was intended to engage the Peacebuilding Commission membership in an in-depth discussion on the historical contribution and future orientation of the Working Group.

The Chairs of the Commission’s four country configurations or their representatives served as panellists for the discussion: Ambassador John McNee, Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration; Ambassador Maria Luiza-Ribeiro Viotti, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration; Ambassador Peter Maurer, Chair of the Burundi configuration; and Ambassador Thomas Lambert, Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, replacing Ambassador Jan Grauls, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration.

Overall, there was general acknowledgement that the Working Group has a significant unrealized potential and that it can further contribute to the evolving body of knowledge on peacebuilding, which is essential for the evolution of the “Commission’s advisory role. The discussion confirmed the need to further refine the work of the Working Group by addressing the specific challenges facing the countries on the Commission agenda and the unique policy dilemmas posed by peacebuilding and by drawing on a wider array of expertise from outside the United Nations.

As a follow-up to discussions, a questionnaire was circulated to elicit the preferences of members of the Commission, on the future direction of the Working Group. The presentations and discussions at the meeting, including the results of the questionnaire can be organized around three issues, as set out below.

1. Purpose of the WGLL

Member States supported the view that the “Working Group’s main function should be to inform the Commission on best practices and lessons learned. Members generally believe that the Working Group should undertake concrete analysis of what has been done in Commission countries and what can be learned for the future (which is also the main task of the Peacebuilding Support Office).

While there are diverging views on whether or not the Working Group could potentially become an informal platform for knowledge-sharing and dissemination of information on peacebuilding, some members believe that the Working Group could potentially:

- Identify common and recurrent gaps within, and challenges to, peacebuilding, drawn from the experiences of “the Commission’s engagement in the countries on its agenda.
- Extract lessons learned from these experiences and provide concrete recommendations to help improve the “Commission’s advisory role/engagement in country-specific situations.

- Forge deeper links with, and facilitate outreach to the wider peacebuilding community, such as academics, policymakers and NGOs, as well as existing platforms, such as the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform.
- Tap and disseminate knowledge on peacebuilding within the United Nations system to a broad range of regional and international actors and countries emerging from conflict.
- Become a platform for cross-learning on process-related issues among different country configurations (e.g. good practice in the use of strategic frameworks).

There were, however, diverging views regarding whether the Working Group could become a forum for sharing experiences with countries for which a formal Commission engagement may not be required.

2. Working methods

In fulfilling the aforementioned purposes, the 'Working Group's working methods need to be further adapted. In this regard, the Working Group would:

- Remain an informal, open and inclusive forum in order to facilitate partnerships with a wide range of actors (e.g., countries, regional and subregional organizations, financial institutions, civil society and academia).
- Utilize existing platforms such as the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and the OECD/International Network on Conflict and Fragility working groups.
- Become a platform to utilize uncharted tools of communications and outreach, particularly to the field and practitioners (e.g., web-based discussions).
- Convene, upon request from the Organizational Committee or the country configurations, to examine any proposed topic.
- Meet in different public formats that would more productively engage the broader peacebuilding community.

Outreach to academia, policymakers and civil society organizations in conducting its work was largely viewed as a significant advantage for the Working Group. There was also broad agreement that the ideal frequency for meetings of the Working Group would be one meeting every two to three months, depending on the content.

3. Issues for discussion

Members identified a number of critical issues which the Working Group would be most suited to address, organized around broad categories:

- Thematic and cross-cutting issues for peacebuilding, such as reintegration, elections, reconciliation, role of women and youth employment.
- Process-related issues, such as financial tools for peacebuilding and engagement with regional organizations.
- Policy and strategic questions of particular conceptual relevance to the evolution of the United Nations peacebuilding agenda, such as |sequential versus synchronized approaches to peacebuilding, criteria for country selection, linkage between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, entry and exit strategies and measuring peace consolidations.

Given the Commission's primary commitment to support peacebuilding in the countries on its agenda, the intended beneficiaries of the comparative lessons and good practices presented at the Working Group are the Commission's country configurations and, through them, the range of national and international actors involved in peacebuilding in these countries.

Accordingly, the topics covered at the Working Group must correspond to the peacebuilding priorities of the countries on the Commission's agenda. Common and recurrent gaps in, and challenges for, peacebuilding drawn from the experiences of the Commission's engagement in the countries on its agenda must be identified.

In this regard, the Working Group can help extract lessons from the Commission and its broader experiences and provide concrete recommendations to help improve the Commission's advisory role and engagement in country-specific situations.

To this end, the Working Group may become a platform for cross-learning on process-related issues among different country configurations, such as good practice in the use of strategic frameworks.

However, while acknowledging the need for more effective cross-fertilization between the Commission's various configurations, there are diverging views on whether the Working Group could serve as a vehicle for initial discussions on engagement and disengagement (exit strategy) of the Commission, peace consolidation, and linkages between peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

In this regard, Member States may still need to further address whether they wish the Working Group's deliberations to feed into improving international efforts in support of peacebuilding.

Annex

Meetings of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, 2007-2009

1. Peacebuilding, elections and risk reduction in post- conflict contexts20 February 2007
 2. International Compacts: successes, challenges and lessons.....17 April 2007
 3. Regional approaches to peacebuilding.....8 June 2007
 4. Peacebuilding strategic frameworks, indicators and monitoring mechanisms19 September 2007
 5. Buttressing the State's fiscal capacities: comparative lessons from budget support8 November 2007
 6. Local governance and decentralization efforts in post-conflict countries13 December 2007
 7. Gender and peacebuilding: enhancing women's participation29 January 2008
 8. Justice in times of transition26 February 2008
 9. Comparative Lessons from Addressing Internal Displacement in Peacebuilding13 March 2008
 10. From conflict to peacebuilding: the role of natural resources and the environment8 May 2008
 11. Special session: key insights, principles, good practices, and emerging lessons in peacebuilding12 June 2008
 12. Comparative lessons from United Nations rule-of-law assistance.....20 October 2008
 13. Learning from a regional DDR approach in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.....24 November 2008
 14. Comparative experiences in developing national capacities after conflict.....15 December 2008
 15. Promoting collaboration and improving coordination between the Peacebuilding Commission and regional and subregional organizations.....30 March 2009
 16. Lessons learned on sustainable reintegration in post-conflict situations.....28 May 2009
 17. Informal/ informal follow-up: lessons learned from the Colombian DDR process and the "Contribution of Cartagena to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration2 October 2009
 18. Lessons learned from national dialogue in post-conflict situations.....14 October 2009
 19. Special session of the Working Group on Lessons learned of the Peacebuilding Commission: taking stock and moving forward.....9 December 2009
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