



Quaker United Nations Office

Remarks given at the ‘Workshop for Incoming Members of the UN Peacebuilding Commission’ on February 14th, 2011, hosted by the International Peace Institute and the Quaker UN Office in collaboration with the UN Peacebuilding Support Office.

Introduction

The three issues that we have on the table before us today were singled out in the PBC review. But beyond that, these are also key issues arising out of the deliberations that led to the establishment of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture in the first place. For example, the language of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document and the founding resolutions is that “The main purpose of the Peacebuilding Commission is to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery’: resource mobilization remains a key and challenging issue which we will be discussing in the second panel today, and the question of the form and content of integrated strategies is the context for the third session, on instruments of engagement. The issue of building national capacity is something that is inherent in the very nature of the architecture: the founding documents refer to the need to *assist* countries emerging from conflict – and yet it is clear that in many cases countries that have been affected by years of violence often have particularly weak institutions and deficits of skill and experience, and these weaknesses have to be addressed in order for the partnership that is at the basis of the peacebuilding enterprise to be viable.

First, let me address **Building National Capacity**.

Two major modes of assistance provided by multilateral organizations and donors are humanitarian response and long term development. This is an issue that comes up in the discussion of resource mobilization, but is actually very relevant here because these two modes of engagement can at times encompass quite different assumptions about the capacity of the country in question. In humanitarian response, particularly in emergencies, the underlying assumption is that the country lacks the ability to respond effectively itself (whether as the result of the triggering event or of systemic fragility) and so the external action is often about plugging gaps, providing capacity where it doesn't exist, and then exiting when the need is less. The humanitarian mode of action is largely about coordinating external assistance in responding to urgent needs. By contrast, in long-term development mode, the assumptions tend to be different: that the country in question is a capable partner, indeed is likely to be driving the prioritization of development action, and the role of external actors is one of providing assistance and resources. Peacebuilding fits uncomfortably between the humanitarian and development modes. Yes, there may be urgent humanitarian needs, but the only route to answering those needs long term is to assist the country in question in developing the ability to address those needs itself. On the other hand, the assumption of the long term development mode, that the country has meaningful capability to direct and absorb development assistance, may be too optimistic in situations of extreme fragility.

Secondly, it's important to be clear what capacity building means in a fragile and conflict-affected society. Institutional capacity and state capacity are important, of course. But the reality is that in many cases the capacity that has survived the violence, particularly beyond the capital, is not in state institutions but in the more informal mechanisms of civil society and the private sector, and it is critical to identify and uphold those capacities. In addition,

what needs to be rebuilt is not just bricks and mortar: a functioning body politic requires not just government building and trained civil servants but also the re-establishment of mechanisms of political dialogue and conflict resolution.

So the message around national capacity is threefold: first, that the instincts and assumptions of both humanitarian and development actors may need some recalibration in these conflict-affected environments: secondly, that national capacity means more than just government capacity; and thirdly, that sustainable peace requires robust mechanisms of political dialogue and dispute resolution and developing those capacities is as important as any others.

The conversation around **Resource Mobilization** also has a certain duality to it. The larger part of the discussion relates to increasing the level, prioritization and co-ordination of external assistance, particularly in the form of ODA (Official Development Assistance). In this context it has been noted that “the existing aid architecture – with rigid compartments for ‘humanitarian’ and ‘development’ aid that are governed by different principles, rules and regulations, and often managed by different departments of the same donor agency – is not adequately configured to match the challenges of these countries” (*Background Note: The Role of the PBC in Marshalling Resources for Countries on its Agenda*). External assistance in the form of increased Foreign Direct Investment is an area that is beginning to receive more attention, and we welcome the contribution that Rwanda can make as OC chair given its successful experience in this area. And the contribution of South-South cooperation and non-traditional donors is a key area that appears to be growing.

The second part of this discussion, though, is about developing and mobilizing *internal* economic resources within the country. The eventual aim is a country that is self-sufficient economically, with a robust economic foundation, distributed capital formation and a tax

base that supports the necessary functions of government. Here the discussion has included issues such as remittances and micro-finance of different sorts, and also corruption. This is an area that deserves more focus: economics is a significant driver of individual and political decisions. Yet in many fragile and conflict-affected countries, much economic activity is distorted by corruption or is actively illegal, often including illegal natural resource extraction, and trafficking in arms, people and narcotics. The regularization of such an economy is an enormously challenging task, but is critical to establishing sustainable peace where the interests of economic actors are aligned with those of society as a whole. Most importantly, although part of the picture is certainly to find ways to deploy external sources of capital, the key to sustainable internal resource generation is local, distributed capital formation in the context of a thriving, broadly based economy. This is a real challenge, and there are several aspects of this, such as the creation of mutual and co-operative organizations in the areas of loans, savings and insurance, where the discussion has barely begun.

The conversation on **Instruments of Engagement** also has two parts. On the one hand, there is a discussion about *which* instruments to use, given the existence of a number of competing plans and strategies, with varying degrees of credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness. For example, a key theme over the last 12 to 18 months has been coordination between the Integrated Peacebuilding Strategic Frameworks put together by the PBC and the Poverty Reduction Strategies overseen by the World Bank, and I imagine we'll hear more about that this afternoon. But just as important is the parallel conversation about what the priorities really should be in a fragile, conflict-affected country – indeed, it

could be suggested that this should be the primary concern, with the question of form being a secondary consideration.

In this context, it is interesting to look beyond the UN for a moment, to the Dili Declaration, which builds on the g7+ statement agreed by a representative group of conflict affected and fragile states last year. This statement identified a list of peacebuilding goals, which bear repeating:

1. Foster inclusive political settlements and processes, and inclusive political dialogue
2. Establish and strengthen basic safety and security
3. Achieve peaceful resolution of conflicts and access to justice.
4. Develop effective and accountable government institutions to facilitate service delivery.
5. Create the foundations for inclusive economic development, including sustainable livelihoods, employment and effective management of natural resources.
6. Develop social capacities for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.
7. Foster regional stability and co-operation.

This is neither the time nor the place for an extensive debate on this list, but I wanted simply to note the prevalence of goals that have to do with rebuilding society itself, rebuilding *relationships* between people: political dialogue, resolution of conflicts, social capacities for reconciliation. These are things that fragile and conflict-affected societies themselves are asking for, and it behooves us to listen and to make sure that these issues receive appropriate prominence in the priorities that are set, whatever the instrument that is used.

Thank you.

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