

## Consultation on the UN Secretary General's Report on "Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict"

22 June 2009

Organised by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

### Background

Pursuant to the Presidential statement issued by the UN Security Council on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, the UN Secretary General was invited to submit a report on "Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict" for the consideration of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Prior to its submission in July 2009, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP) held a consultation on the report's suggested agenda for action with Ms. Sally Fegan-Wyles, Senior Project Director within the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, and with a broad range of experts and experienced practitioners from the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding communities. The aim of the consultation was to raise awareness among the Geneva peacebuilding community on the approach suggested in the report and to generate an initial reflection on the operational implications of the report's recommendations.

During the first segment of the consultation, Ms. Sally Fegan-Wyles offered a brief overview of the report, highlighting main insights and key recommendations as well as identifying outstanding areas of action. Offering a critical assessment of these aspects, the second segment brought together the perspectives of high-level UN, NGO, and humanitarian representatives who focused on three main areas: collaboration between peacebuilding communities, selection and empowerment of peacebuilding leaders, and consultation with non-state actors as part of reconciliation efforts. The last segment contained a general discussion and provided a testing ground of these ideas from the perspective of practitioners representing organisations engaged in the field.

#### Key Issues Considered:

- ❖ National and UN leadership – In concrete terms, what does fostering leadership in the UN system entail? How can such leadership be nurtured? What needs to be done on the ground so as to achieve national ownership?
- ❖ Priority setting – What can be done to ensure that priorities are sequenced and balanced in an adequate manner at both national and international level?
- ❖ Reconciliation – How can the international community really help local actors on the ground build trust and work together for peace?

### Summary of Discussions – First segment

#### ❖ *General statement:*

The report reflects information gathered from senior government leaders actively engaged in peacebuilding efforts as well as from actors within the UN system and non-governmental organisations. Earlier stages of work produced a variety of diverging views, but managed to raise overall awareness with regard to the range of constraints, realities, and mandates faced by each set of actors. Cross-fertilizing ideas from different sectors, the report aims to be narrow in scope, focusing strictly on how

to summon peacebuilding capacity rapidly and effectively in the immediate period following the cessation of conflict.

Essentially, peacebuilding is understood as an intensely political process and the report attempts to make the link between political considerations and technical imperatives. Furthermore, the report envisages no single entity that can claim ownership over peacebuilding, but rather communities engaged in a combination of activities ranging from strengthening governance to revitalizing the economy, all carried out with an eye to preventing the country from relapsing into conflict. Finally, the report is reflective of widespread recognition that peacebuilding is, above all, a matter of building national capacity. Strategies need to be planned at national level, by national officials, at the beginning perhaps with intense international support. Peacebuilding strategies have to be country-specific and inclusive, proactively reaching out to women, young people, or minority groups at risk of exclusion. There can be no single template.

❖ *Content of report:*

In order to seize the window of opportunity for building peace and strengthen national capacity, the international community needs to be ready early enough. This demands predictable approaches, qualified leadership, and pre-positioning of resources geared up for urgent deployment. The agenda for action stresses in particular the leadership aspect, both at national and UN level. The Institute for Global Leadership and UNDP have been directing their efforts towards strengthening national leadership but otherwise this area remains under-addressed. UN leadership in its turn could be consolidated by means of pre-positioned and cross-pillar technical teams.



One of the most important tasks peacebuilding leaders should be in charge with is getting priorities right. When needs are numerous on all fronts but capacity is limited and resources are low, indentifying a small set of priorities is crucial. In this regard, the report details such issues as sequencing, timing, and trade-off. Achieving two main objectives can help ensure that priorities are set adequately. On the one hand, the report calls for a nationally-owned, inclusive, and participatory long-term plan (covering two to three years), which will provide the basis for international political and financial support. On the other hand, the report calls for an interim action plan to cover the first six months and to address the most pressing issues. This is to be developed on the basis of previously collected information and involving actors that are already on the ground. The advantage of this double-sided approach lies with its ability to balance the need for expedient action and the need for national ownership, thus leaving room for confidence building measures among national actors.

Financially speaking, the report advises reliance on existing mechanisms, such as multi-donor trust funds and bilateral funding. The Peacebuilding Fund is meant to be a catalyst that would release funding promptly and would fill in remaining gaps while not substituting ongoing humanitarian and development assistance.

❖ *Next steps:*

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, the Peacebuilding Commission will produce a paper reflecting its views on the report, and will subsequently submit it to the Security Council and the General Assembly for their consideration. A discussion of the report will also take place in Geneva on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, as part of the ECOSOC session on post-conflict transition. In terms of action, an interim implementation plan is in process, entailing significant internal work for the UN and involving multiple dimensions of the system. With regard to Geneva-based actors, continued dialogue in areas such as pre-agreed division of labor, clear responsibilities, pre-negotiated leadership structures, and funding instruments is expected. Furthermore, it is imperative that the broad humanitarian community be included in all peacebuilding efforts at the earliest stage.

## **Second Segment – critical assessment**

❖ **Leadership:** The humanitarian community welcomes the emphasis placed by the drafters of the report on leadership selection. In the humanitarian field, considerable progress has been achieved in terms of pooling together qualified individuals and strengthening the functions of the coordinators. Nevertheless, appointments are not followed by fast deployment and even when the right leader is finally in place, oftentimes there is insufficient authority residing with that particular office to ensure decisions are translated rapidly into action.

❖ **Priority-settings:** Putting structures into place such as integrated missions tends to overshadow the difficulty and the stakes associated with decision-making. Too often, UN Security Council resolutions place all issues considered on the same ground (e.g. human rights, security, good governance, rule of law), leaving matters of prioritization to individuals at local level. While the report touches on priority-setting it provides no answers as to what comes first for the UN itself.

❖ **Strengthening capacity-building:** the emphasis on building national capacity is very often focused on national administration and thus centered on the capital level. The report needs to be complemented with concrete suggestions on consultation processes with the private sector, NGOs, and the civil society. Mechanisms to hold governments accountable for their failures are also missing in the report. The focus on national ownership, on civilian involvement, and team approaches is clearly signaled but it misses a core challenge of peacebuilding processes — reconciliation.

❖ **Internal dynamic of change:** The report contains a very valuable segment on lessons learned in the field of peacebuilding, and develops a strong reflection on the organisation of the international community. Regrettably, the report says little about the core challenges of peacebuilding, namely building trust between internal actors and building capacities in society to manage conflicts in non-violent ways. Until the international community finds a way to help initiate and sustain 'internal processes of change' it cannot claim to have made real progress. Calls for closer cooperation between UN agencies and within the international community are welcome, but what is of utmost importance is how the internal actors govern their society and whether they learn to trust each other. Finally, the report does not cover "how" peacebuilding can be carried out more effectively (including consensus-building, setting priorities, involving all parties, partnering with local actors, etc) and therefore it is unclear how the report will help actors on the ground improve their performance.

❖ **The need for constant mediation and monitoring:** The implementation of the report's strategy requires the contribution of the broader peacebuilding community and the recognition that peacebuilding is unavoidably an extremely political process. Constant mediation on the part of the international community is required to create

an enabling environment in which joint perspectives can be developed and national strategies elaborated. Existing communities of practice can help in settling competency issues, can aid in the monitoring, evaluation, and assessment of national strategies, and may ultimately indicate whether these strategies are truly common, inclusive, and adjustable.

### Third segment: general discussion

❖ Operationalising the agenda of the report requires the existence of a peacebuilding paradigm that conceives peacebuilding less as phase done by one group after peacekeeping and before development, and more as a set of activities that can be conducted by many actors at any time. This entails establishing clear linkages among the various actors involved in peacebuilding- and envisaging reforming practices and institutions. Operationalisation also entails clear and regular reporting, regularized UN coordination, accountability of lead agencies, and flexible financing.

❖ Integrated missions should receive strong support as they produce a common vision for the UN field offices and produce better coordination between civil society and state organs. The PBC should further examine how to adopt a multi-tiered agenda consisting of lighter modes of engagement which work to support national blueprints for peacebuilding.

❖ The PBC and PBSO need to reflect on what their value added is. They need to reaffirm the importance of co-opting international partners and to dedicate capacity and dialogue for this purpose as OCHA does in the humanitarian field.

❖ Putting in place qualified leadership should be done earlier than suggested. The activities usually encompassed by peacebuilding can be foreseen well in advance by whoever has been trying to put an end to the conflict. This is what renders the teams already in place most authoritative and knowledgeable in terms of strategies and spoilers. Moreover, placing responsibility on national actors must be carried out cautiously since ownership is most likely still in dispute at this level.

❖ Humanitarian actors are indeed important during the early peacebuilding phase but they can also be of great assistance even before that. During conflict, there will be pockets of peace where national capacities of civil society or of local governments can be developed. For example, there is increased recognition that the skills of individuals placed in refugee camps should be capitalized upon. Such individuals can be trained as paramedics, paralegals, police officers etc.

❖ Given the numerous needs-assessments and conflict analyses carried out by different actors, what the peacebuilding community ultimately often ends up with is a conflict of analyses. Consequently, the strategies that flow from these analyses are divergent and ambiguity remains as to what are the elements that need to be dealt with upfront. Of great use would be, for instance, a comprehensive analysis detailing the instances when the UN should take the lead and the situations when it should take a back seat so as to avoid over-politicization.



❖ There is a need to consider in more depth the economics of recovery and peace processes. Frequently, war economies perpetuate in post-conflict situations and they are oftentimes harder to dismantle than any of the violent structures.

Corruption (e.g. extortion, racketeering) is, for instance, cited as one of the main obstacles to receiving health services (see “*Our world. Views from the field*”, opinion survey 2009, ICRC).

## Conclusion

- ❖ The report might be placing too heavy of a burden on national leaders, but the strategies it advocates are strongly grounded on country-specific approaches and general templates are resisted. Local officials need to devise their own strategies in light of capacities that are or would be coming into place, all the while benefitting from the guidance and technical support of the international community. The leaders making the decisions should be those who have in depth knowledge of the country, those familiar with thematic aspects of peacebuilding, as well as the individuals who can manage processes of interaction between national actors.
- ❖ With regard to the operationalisation of the recommendations made, it is important to bear in mind two points: firstly, the report is aimed at the Security Council and therefore considers the bigger picture as well as the political dimension of peacebuilding; secondly, the report is designed to look specifically at early stages of peacebuilding, leaving more detailed follow-up actions to be considered in the coming implementation plan.
- ❖ In terms of implementation, there is a commitment to use the Post-Conflict Assessment Needs (PCNA) process agreed upon by the EU and the World Bank. The PCNA process relies heavily on consultation with sub-national communities and it assumes partnerships with the civil society, both national and international. Further collaboration is needed so as to reduce the number of planning frameworks and to formulate an accessible ‘tool kit’ on key peacebuilding processes. Such collaborative action should bring about a wide consensus around a revised ‘tool kit’ that draws on existing good practices. Finally, efforts should be directed towards pushing forward a single community of practice, enabling a global conversation between various sectors of activities, which could contain multiple fora according to specific countries and issues.
- ❖ The key message taken away from the discussion of the report revolves around issues of leadership, of strategic priority-setting, and of mechanisms to support building national/local capacity to consolidate peace. Subsequently to this consultation, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is invited to consider the following: how to foster learning processes between the humanitarian and peacebuilding community; develop the practical understanding of the way to engage with civil society and local actors at national and sub-national level; contribute to the development of peacebuilding tool-kits and training material for both international and national actors.

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP) is a partnership between the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), Interpeace, and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO).

The GPP was created in order to provide a neutral arena for the development of innovative practical approaches to emerging peacebuilding practice. Based in Geneva, the Platform builds on the diversity and field experience of a broad community of peacebuilding practitioners, experts and policy-makers.

More information: Ms. Frédérique Guérin, Project Coordinator  
Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)  
7 bis, Avenue de la Paix, P.O. Box 1295, 1211 Geneva 1  
T + 41 22 906 83 27  
Email: f.guerin@gcsp.ch

## Participants

First Name	Family Name	Institution	Position
Andrea	Aeby	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)	Head of Policy Unit - Political Division IV - Human Security
David	Atwood	Quaker United Nations Office	Director
Laila	Baker	UNFPA	Humanitarian Liaison Specialist
Zubaidah	Bourquin	UNFPA	Early Recovery Coordinator
Alvaro	De Soto	GCSP	Associate Fellow and former UN Under-Secretary-General
Nicolas	Florquin	Geneva Call	Programme Officer for Africa, Research Officer
Jasmine	Fragnière	Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN	
Geoff	Gartshore	Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN	Deputy Permanent Representative for Disarmament
Catriona	Gourlay	UNIDIR	Researcher
Frédérique	Guérin	Geneva Peacebuilding Platform	Coordinator
Hannu	Himanen	Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN	Ambassador, Permanent Representative
Eylah	Kadjar-Hamouda	Terre Des Hommes International Foundation	Coordinator
Keith	Krause	Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding	Director
Chetan	Kumar	Senior Conflict Prevention Advisor	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP
Simon	Lawry-White	Inter-Agency Standing Committee Secretariat	Chief
Aisha	Majid	UNRWA	Intern
Jahal	de Meritens	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), UNDP Geneva	Coordinator, Global Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery
Brigitte	Minart	Permanent Mission of Belgium to the UN	Deputy Permanent representative
Michael	Moller	Kofi Annan Foundation	Executive Director
Corinne	Momal-Vanian	Office of the Director General, UNOG	Senior Political Adviser
Bethan	Montague-Brown	International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)	Associate Policy Officer
Sabrina	Rahal	Terre Des Hommes International Foundation	
Stéphane	Rey	Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs - Political Affairs III	Collaborateur diplomatique, Coordination ONU, Section Conseil de sécurité & Affaires politiques

Mohammed	Sahnoun	University for Peace	Vice-President of Upeace Council
Enrique	Sanchez	JPU/Interpeace	Programme Coordinator
Vanda	Santos	Environmental Emergencies Unit (Joint UNEP/OCHA)	Consultant
Ed	Schenkenberg	ICVA	Coordinator
Albrecht	Schnabel	DCAF	Senior Fellow
Renard	Sexton	Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch, UNEP	Project Adviser, Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding
Yasuko	Shimizu	UNHCR	Senior Operations Officer
David	Spence	Delegation of the European Commission to the UN in Geneva	Political Counsellor
Fred	Tanner	Geneva Centre for Security Policy	Director
Brinda	Wachs	UNECE	UNECE Focal Point for Peacebuilding
Ariane	Waldvogel	World Food Programme	Liaison Officer
Yiyang	Wang	CARE International	Program Quality & Accountability Assistant
Scott	Weber	Interpeace	Director-General
Céline	Yvon	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue	Special Adviser