

Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Institution Building
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Statement by H.E. Mr. Jan Grawls, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations

I have the honour to speak also on behalf of the Permanent Representatives of Brazil, Canada, Jordan and Switzerland in our respective capacities as Chairs of the country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Burundi. We also associate ourselves with the remarks made earlier this morning by the Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Wittig of Germany.

Mr. President, we welcome your initiative to hold an open debate on this important topic, and would like to take this opportunity to share lessons learned from our experience on the ground. Our intervention has three elements. First, we will present our views on the conceptual and substantive aspects of institution-building in a post-conflict context. Secondly, we will offer suggestions on how the United Nations system could more effectively contribute to that effort. Finally, we will address the role of the Peacebuilding Commission and the country-specific Chairs in advising the Security Council.

In our experience, the process of institution-building is a critical component of post-conflict peacebuilding. Where State institutions are missing or fragile, violence more easily spreads through vulnerable societies, organized crime finds easy purchase for illegal activities, and reconciliation and recovery are delayed. The building, rebuilding and strengthening of core State functions is the sine qua non condition for overcoming conflict.

In such context, local capacity is too often overwhelmed by daunting challenges. This is evident in all five post-conflict situations on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, despite the best efforts and commitment of the authorities concerned. One example is the lack of administrative resources in Liberia or the Central African Republic. There are only 91 magistrates available to deliver public administration services in the Central African Republic, and 13 magistrates in Liberia with proper legal training. Burundi's justice system is struggling to manage the 60 per cent of inmates awaiting trial in overcrowded prisons. In Sierra Leone, a dedicated national police force is hampered by the critical lack of available transportation.

Institution-building is about ensuring the sustainable, equitable and effective delivery of security and basic services to a national population. Functioning institutions not only protect citizens, but also empower greater participation in political decision-making, especially with respect to groups that are traditionally marginalized at the national or local levels. Critical examples include security forces that uphold human rights, a justice system that offers independent adjudication, transparent mechanisms for political participation, well-managed public administration, and effective strategies for spurring economic recovery and social development. In most post-conflict countries, it may also be important to deal with the past through processes of transitional justice and national reconciliation. Moreover, it is not enough to focus only on central Government. Conflicts often emerge from and disproportionately affect rural areas, where the extension of basic services tends to lag.

It is also important to enhance the capacity of institutions in charge of economic revitalization, public administration and the provision of basic services. These institutions are indispensable to promoting poverty reduction, which is a powerful tool for addressing some of the root causes of social strife and build long-lasting peace. Social policies may likewise have a positive impact in the political process.

While each post-conflict situation is different and there are no one-size-fits-all blueprints, our experience has yielded several useful lessons.

First, stable institutions cannot be imposed; they must be trusted and accepted by citizens. They have to be built and sustained by the individuals concerned. International institution-building efforts have to involve national actors at the outset in order to better identify and employ available local capacity. In this respect, civil society is a core pillar of institution-building, and the participation of women is of particular importance.

Secondly, institution- and State-building in post-conflict situations require sustained support from the international community. It is a matter of years, possibly even decades. It is complex. It is costly. It requires

predictability of resources and the will of the international community to remain engaged for a prolonged period.

Thirdly, institution-building requires responsive financing. The catalytic role of the Peacebuilding Fund should be supported and supplemented by other national and international mechanisms that allow a similar or higher degree of speed and flexibility.

Fourthly, institution-building involves negotiating competing objectives and a readiness to accept imperfect outcomes. One constant challenge lies in managing the dilemma between the slow pace of State institution-building and popular expectations for rapid improvement. Institution-building must go hand in hand with the delivery of basic services that directly impact the everyday lives of citizens.

Finally, when assessing the institutional weaknesses of post-conflict countries, the international community should adopt a comprehensive approach and take into account the factors that hamper social and economic development. In particular, roster-holders should consider increasing the availability of experts in social and economic policy, with enhanced emphasis on South-South expertise and greater participation by developing countries.

Allow me now to offer some suggestions on how the United Nations system could more effectively contribute to peace- and institution-building.

Starting with the role of the Security Council, the five country-specific configuration Chairs of the Peacebuilding Commission believe that institution-building deserves greater and more in-depth attention. As it requires both considerable time and resources, institution-building should be addressed in the early stages of peacebuilding processes. Likewise, when considering mission mandates, the Council should take institution-building into account in a manner that retains a tight focus on core stabilization priorities and relies on the comparative advantage of other actors. The Council should also continue to mandate integrated missions to deliver a comprehensive approach to peace consolidation, including by serving as a point of coordination with other actors in the international community.

The scope and complexity of institution-building often demands a wider and more sustained focus than the Security Council is capable of providing alone. Bilateral and multilateral partners and development actors have a critical role to play. Of particular importance are regional institutions and organizations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the East African Community. Aid coordination is also crucial for avoiding conflicting strategies, overlapping activities, critical gaps and inconsistent financing.

Within the United Nations system as a whole, there is an enduring need to better define the Organization's roles and responsibilities in key peacebuilding sectors, including institution-building. Doing so will enhance the overall efficiency of the United Nations system and enable stronger support for senior leaders in the field. In that context, relations with the World Bank and other multilateral forums, such as the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, are of crucial importance.

Closer institutional coordination is required, as cooperation with the United Nations remains too dependent on personal relationships or ad hoc arrangements in the field. Effective post-conflict institution-building also requires a wide range of specialized civilian expertise, particularly in the areas of justice, security-sector reform, governance, economic recovery and social policies. Yet, both the United Nations and the broader international community still struggle with how to develop and deploy such capacity in a timely and targeted manner. In particular, more attention needs to be paid to drawing on and building the pool of talent available in affected countries. That should be the first priority for institution-building efforts. Similarly, more work is needed to tap latent expertise within the global South.

For those reasons, it is important to further strengthen mechanisms for South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation between the North and the South. It is also clear that the United Nations can, and must, do more to provide field missions with the expertise they need. That will require the United Nations to both improve its own procedures and to serve as a platform for drawing on the wider capacity available within Member States. In that respect, the Chairs look forward to the recommendations of the review of international civilian capacities.

In the view of the Chairs, the United Nations peacebuilding architecture could be better used to foster and monitor institution-building efforts and to improve coordination among the full range of relevant actors. The Security Council should increasingly draw on, and better define, the Peacebuilding Commission's advisory role, especially in terms of supporting institution-building efforts undertaken by non-Secretariat entities, providing more sustained attention to peacebuilding issues beyond the immediate scope of stabilization efforts and addressing longer-term issues that have implications stretching beyond the period that the country is likely to be on the Council's agenda.

With respect to the countries on the PBC's agenda, the country-specific configurations strive to improve coordination of institution-building efforts in accordance with the peacebuilding priorities identified with national authorities. The Security Council could benefit from the experience and knowledge of the country-specific configurations by inviting the Chairs to brief the Council regularly on the progress of institution-building and other peacebuilding efforts, by consulting with the Chairs when renewing or amending mission mandates and by considering the participation of the Chairs in Council missions to countries on the PBC's agenda.

For other post-conflict countries, the Security Council could consider establishing regular coordination mechanisms with other international and regional actors, including the World Bank. A multi-tiered approach by the PBC can play a useful role in this respect, as can groups of friends of post-conflict countries.