

**Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Institution Building**  
**21st January 2011, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)**

*Statement by Mr. Jean-François Régis Zinsou, Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations*

I would first like to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's presidency of the Security Council and on the professionalism with which you are conducting its work for the month of January. I also congratulate your predecessor, the representative of the United States. I welcome the significant contribution of the Deputy Prime Minister of Timor-Leste to our debate this morning. I would also like to thank you, and through you the other members of the Security Council, as well as the Secretary-General, for their valuable contributions to this open debate on institution-building in the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding.

Institution-building is a crucial factor in stabilizing and strengthening sustainable peace in countries emerging from conflict. Its modalities must be studied in order to identify the conditions necessary for it to succeed fully in the countries affected. In this regard, I would like to share some modest reflections with the Council.

One of the most difficult and key challenges is to ensure that countries emerging from a devastating conflict do not relapse into violence. Here, I welcome the importance that the Council attaches to the efforts of the international community to promote peace processes. The first cardinal principle is to respect the need for national ownership based on the specifics and realities of each country concerned. The sole aim of external support should be to strengthen national capacities in order to establish and restore State institutions, centrally and locally. It must also mobilize civil society in order to credibly legitimize the exercise of power and the modalities for managing public affairs. The aim is to ensure as early as possible that peacebuilding plans launch a participatory and inclusive process that can restore basic services and restart economic activity in order to bolster confidence in and commitment to the peace process.

In designing different plans, we must seek to identify national capacities and establish a partnership with them so as to enable the established legal authorities to be self-sustaining, to develop their own expertise and ultimately to be capable on their own of providing essential services and of earning legitimacy in the eyes of their people. In order to help achieve such a partnership between local actors and external contributors, the United Nations must focus on knowledge transfer and require it as an essential criterion when recruiting external actors. The permanency of the institutions established depends on this requirement, and the Security Council should supply the directives necessary in that respect.

In this context, Benin has solved the problem of transfer of expertise by designating, for each foreign expert recruited to supervise a project, a national counterpart assigned to work in tandem with him or her in order to ensure that projects under way can be effectively carried out. Such experts are as likely to come from countries of the South as of the North, but they will come increasingly, we hope, from the South. We hope that the forthcoming report on civil capacity will address these issues.

Successful institution-building, in our opinion, involves strengthening analytical capacities and designing national strategies for a country's recovery and development, while establishing an optimal balance between the structural and functional approaches. That will allow us to determine whether new institutions must be established or if coordination and cooperation mechanisms can be set up to carry out specific functions to meet particular needs. Identifying and meeting needs effectively requires the establishment of a hierarchy of true priorities on the ground in order to create the conditions necessary to the success of activities under way, even in the face of the fact that, in a post-conflict country, every need can seem to be a priority.

Nonetheless, laying the groundwork in close cooperation with national actors can help to identify the absolute top priorities. Such work can help decide which measures to take immediately and which to implement in the short- and medium terms, with the criterion for setting deadlines being their importance to maintaining functions crucial to people's lives and the stabilization of the country. Such work must also seek to identify the most vulnerable populations to target for emergency programmes and the restoration of basic services.

In any case, it is always necessary to better integrate all efforts involved, including those relating to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; and to institution-building and the restoration of economic activity. This can be promoted through the granting of local procurement contracts through peacekeeping operations in order to rebuild local production capacity. That helps to generate resources locally in a way that can promote ownership of the recovery process. Thanks to its purview and broad membership, the Peacebuilding Commission is particularly sensitive to the causal links that can lead to a better analysis of data collected on the ground, which in turn can bring synergy to efforts to help synchronize peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

In that context, the Council can make use of the lessons learned by the Peacebuilding Commission in its work in various theatres of operation in the countries on its agenda. The mandates of peacekeeping operations must incorporate peacebuilding perspectives that take institution-building and the need for synchronization into account at an early stage. That will help to shorten the duration of peacekeeping operations and to transition as soon as possible into less complex peacebuilding missions designed to last longer because of the nature of their tasks and related long-term objectives.

The idea of devoting a part of the peacekeeping budget to financing priority peacebuilding activities in the countries affected must be expanded in order to alleviate pressure on the resources of the Peacebuilding Fund so that the Fund can truly serve the aims of conflict prevention in the broad sense of the term, including not only preventive institutional or operational support activities, but also post-conflict activities.

Current international affairs have many lessons to teach us on the need to demonstrate greater flexibility in applying criteria for the use of the Fund. It must remain a rapid-reaction instrument for promoting multilateral preventive diplomacy in all its forms and for supporting Member States in difficulty, whether or not they are classified as fragile States.