

Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Institution Building
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Statement by H.E. Mr. Peter Shwaiger, Deputy Head of the European Union to the United Nations

Let me start by thanking Bosnia and Herzegovina for organizing this debate on institution-building in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding. Your country, Madam President, has first-hand experience of the importance of a topic such as this and how deserving it is of the Council's attention. I also want to thank the Secretary-General, the Deputy Prime Minister of Timor-Leste and Mr. Peter Wittig, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their statements this morning.

The following countries align themselves with this declaration: the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia.

“Nothing is possible without men, but nothing is lasting without institutions”. That is a quote from Jean Monnet, the chief architect of European unity. The late Richard Holbrooke, the chief architect of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Peace Accord, once invoked those words when arguing that one cannot build peace without building institutions. As the concept paper (S/2011/16, annex) for today's debate underscores, national authorities are in the lead here, but the international community has an important supporting role to play. From our side, for the sake of brevity, let me highlight just three elements that we think are particularly relevant today: coordination, civilian deployment capacities and civil society involvement.

First is better coordination of the different international actors on the ground, including international financial institutions and bilateral donors. The Secretary-General's 2009 report on peacebuilding (S/2009/304) stated that it was incumbent upon the United Nations to spearhead such coordination, especially in the earliest phase. It also stated that that calls for stronger, more effective and better supported United Nations leadership teams on the ground. However, as the Secretary-General also acknowledged, those United Nations leadership teams, as well as the wider international community, need more clarity from New York on the roles and responsibilities of the various United Nations entities for the critical peacebuilding sectors. We hope to see further advances towards a more rational division of labour, including through incentives to cooperate and harmonize, and we encourage the Secretariat, funds and programmes to press on with the reforms.

Also, the potential of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) should be further unlocked through a strengthened link with the field so that United Nations leadership teams on the ground can profit more from its strategic guidance and political clout, including when it comes to institution-building. Furthermore, I would like to reiterate here the Secretary-General's remark that the Security Council could profit more from the PBC's recommendations in the Council's own early consideration of post-conflict situations, especially when there is a peacekeeping mission on the ground. That would help to tie a mission's activities into the wider coordinated peacebuilding and institution-building effort in a particular country. Let us not forget that successful institution-building, particularly in the security and justice sectors, helps pave the way towards the sustainable exit of any peacekeeping mission.

The second element that I want to mention is civilian deployment capacities. The European Union attaches great importance to the review currently under way in that area. A key task of the review's Senior Advisory Group is to develop proposals to ensure that the deployment of civilian experts in post-conflict countries serves the goal of building national capacity. We look forward to receiving the results of that civilian capacities review soon, and hope that they will be in the form of concrete and realistic objectives and recommendations, to be given appropriate follow-up.

The goal is a more demand-driven, dynamic and flexible civilian deployment that builds on existing national capacities and exhibits a strong South-South character. We hope that the review will chart a path to, for example, the increased global availability of civilian experts for post-conflict situations and the seamless interoperability of civilian capacities within the United Nations system and between the United Nations and other key players, such as regional organizations.

Another important point for us is the enhanced deployment of female civilian experts, in the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000) and the Secretary-General's action plan on ensuring women's participation in peacebuilding. Post-conflict institutions cannot be effective unless they are gender-equitable.

The third and last element that I will mention is civil society involvement. Bolstering civilian oversight mechanisms and local civil society organizations and giving those organizations a seat at the peacebuilding table from day one will enhance the legitimacy and demand-driven nature of both the priorities and the institutions devised there. That is what guides much of the European Union's institution-building assistance around the world.

For example, in Timor-Leste, in the framework of cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries, the European Union, at the request of the Government and together with the United Nations Development Programme, is working hard to strengthen the capacity of Parliament and the media. Among other things, we will provide media training to parliamentarians and organize seminars for journalists on the role and the functions of parliament in the democratic process.

Furthermore, the European Union has recently funded extensive research on participatory approaches to justice and security sector reform in a number of conflict-affected countries. We are happy to share the results of that exercise with interested partners. Finally, European Union security sector reform programmes, developed jointly with Governments in places such as the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, revolve around increased civilian and parliamentary oversight and accountability to citizens.

It is important to draw strategic lessons, as we are doing today, and to make them available in field manuals. At the same time, we are aware that one-size-fits-all solutions do not exist and that institution-building efforts will always have to be tailored to the specific post-conflict conditions on the ground. As the concept paper points out, national actors know those conditions best, and that is one reason that they should be in the lead. At the end of the day, successful institutional development cannot be transplanted from elsewhere, but is home-grown. That is why we are always happy to hear from the countries themselves, for example through today's statement by Deputy Prime Minister José Luís Guterres, whose country now chairs the Group of Seven Plus and co-chairs the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

Supporting home-grown institutional development has long been at the heart of much European Union assistance, be it in the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa, Afghanistan or Haiti. We would like to reaffirm our commitment to pursuing that cause and to working with national authorities, the United Nations, other international actors, civil society organizations and the people in post-conflict countries themselves.