

Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Institution Building
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Statement by H.E. Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

The sustained attention of the Council to peacekeeping and peacebuilding is indicative of the fact that it recognizes that the success or failure of peacekeeping and peacebuilding will determine the continuing relevance of the United Nations and of this Council to many troubled parts of the world. My delegation would therefore like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate to focus on what is probably the most critical component of the peacebuilding agenda. We would also like to thank you for the concept paper (S/2011/16, annex), which we found extremely useful.

I thank the Secretary-General for his remarks, and I would also like to express our appreciation to the Deputy Prime Minister of Timor-Leste for his presence here and for his presentation on the remarkable strides that his country has made. I also thank the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Wittig of Germany.

Out of respect for the President's injunction to confine our remarks to four minutes, I will present only a summary of what I have to say. A more detailed paper has been circulated.

Peace cannot be restored to post-conflict societies and their citizens cannot be freed from fear and want unless national authorities are able to govern effectively. The capacity for effective governance, in turn, depends on the existence of institutions that enable these authorities to respond effectively to the aspirations of people.

Over the past two decades, this Council made huge investments in terms of manpower and resources in designing and running multidimensional peacekeeping operations. These have shown, at best, mixed results. A handful has delivered outcomes that may be termed satisfactory. Many have meandered as they attempted over a decade or more to be equal to the task of implementing their complex and ambitious mandates.

Unfortunately, conflicts persist, and we are now in the midst of another paradigm shift. One dimension of this shift — the attempt to define the scope of peacebuilding — is becoming ever clearer as fragile States define areas in which the international community can and is willing to support their nation-building activities. A second dimension — the relation between peacekeeping and peacebuilding — is also being clarified. However, a third dimension — the organizational context of peacebuilding — continues to lack uniformity. Some peacebuilding efforts are being managed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, others by the Department of Political Affairs and yet others by the United Nations resident coordinator system. At another level, the Peacebuilding Commission is working to expand its effectiveness. Peacebuilding, therefore, is very much a work in progress.

India brings to the table almost 60 years of experience in peacekeeping. We have contributed more peacekeepers to more peacekeeping operations than any other nation. We have also participated in every type of peacekeeping operation from truce supervision to the current generation of complex peacekeeping operations. Peacekeepers are early peacebuilders, and Indian peacekeepers have been among the earliest United Nations peacebuilders.

Our experience in transforming a colonial legacy into a modern, dynamic nation that enjoys both democracy and a rapidly growing economy has made Indian peacekeepers instinctively understand that no peace can be effective unless it is accompanied by the growth of local institutions. Indian peacekeepers in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, the United Nations Operation in Somalia II, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and elsewhere have made conscious efforts to assist local authorities in restoring national structures that had collapsed during conflict. Our peacekeepers have donned peacebuilding hats and attempted to restore administrative processes, strengthened local policing and activated judicial mechanisms in the areas they have served. They have attempted to work through indigenous mechanisms for conflict resolution and mediation in order to strengthen these local institutions so that they become viable political institutions. They have tried to get educational institutions to function and provided services, such as livestock clinics, to help local economies get going.

Political and administrative institutions that decentralize governance are, in our experience, the key to nation-building. Institutions must be locally relevant and include all stakeholders, particularly the weak and underprivileged.

India launched the largest-ever exercise in democratic decentralization about two decades ago. Administrative and legislative powers were transferred to village- and district-level bodies, and considerable thought and effort were devoted to making these institutions locally relevant. The key to the success of these institutions, we have found, lies in what we call inclusiveness. Our process of democratic decentralization has ensured the election of about 1 million women to representative offices at all levels. Empowering those who have traditionally been at the margins of society has strengthened and transformed both democracy and governance in our country.

Inclusiveness works in interesting ways. The decision of the Government of India to aggressively recruit women police personnel allowed us to field a female formed police unit — the first such formation composed entirely of women — in UNMIL. We understand that the presence of these Indian women police personnel has not only assisted in restoring faith in the local law enforcement system, but has served as an example to Liberian women.

No amount of international will can replace national will and commitment. Moreover, peacebuilding cannot be undertaken in a hurry. Our role as peacebuilders has to be to assist, through long- term and patient involvement, the creation of an environment in which this local will is allowed to express itself. It is also to provide the resources and the expertise that are often lacking in societies struggling to re-engineer themselves. All of this calls for the international community to make available a predictable and appropriate level of resources over extended periods.

It is hard to avoid the feeling that the United Nations presence on the ground is a ponderous bureaucracy rather than a lean institution that is quick to adapt and respond. Symptomatic of this malaise is the fact that the Secretariat takes up to 200 days to fill positions in the field, leading to worrying vacancy levels. The sourcing of these capacities must be driven by the needs of national authorities and not by priorities of the donors. It also stands to reason that these capacities need to be sourced from the Governments of nations that have experience of relevance to these national authorities.

Serious consideration must also be given to the idea of expanding the secondment of staff to the United Nations. This would allow the United Nations to rapidly access necessary capabilities, deploy them swiftly and allow rapid scaling up and down. It is also likely to be more economical.

In concluding, I would like to stress that, as a responsible global citizen, India will not be found lacking in responding to the challenge of maintaining international peace and security through the peacebuilding process. Through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme, we give training to some 5,000 foreign students and experts from 158 countries around the globe in approximately 220 courses. Similarly, through lines of credit, South- South cooperation and the India Development Initiative, we have contributed to nation-building activities in various countries. India has also contributed to peacebuilding through innovate multilateral mechanisms, such as the India-Brazil- South Africa initiatives in Haiti, Guinea-Bissau and other nations.